

Coach bets on 'Blue Chips' to turn his life around



Coach Pete Bell loves his work. He loves the game. He loves the boys he transforms into disciplined men on the basketball floor. He loves to win.

The coach hates excuses. He hates cheating of any kind. He lates the hyporrisy and the hype that undermine his sport.

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Coach Bell is at a crossroads in his career and in his life. Bell is at a crossroad in his career is in Jeopardy, and his devil's chaite involves the search did it is chaite involves the search for high school basketball crop, the light school basketball crop, the Jeopardy college program covers—the chait of the light school basketball crop, the Jeopardy of the Jeopardy college program covers—the control of the Jeopardy college program covers—the Light of the Jeopardy College of the Jeo

present.
Nick Nolte is Pete Bell, head couch of the Western University Dolphins, former national champions who have slipped out of the

national rankings in recent years.
Under pressure, Bell and the school's athletic director (Bohr Cousy) legin a scarch for players who can turn their ailing program around.

Bell is tipped to the availability of some bona fide prospects: Noon Bodeaux (Shanguille O'Neal) in New Orleans, Butch McRae (Anformer "Penny" Hardmay) from a parochial academy in Chicago, and Rieky Roe (Matt Nover) from the Indiana cornfields.

While wreatling with the ethics of using readily available alumnifunds to compete for these athlets, the voice of his conscious is echeed by that of his school teacher ex-wife Jenny (Mary McDonnell), who knows his failings don't include a willingness to corrupt the game he loves.

White we even at the price of his principles — will determine his actions. A local reporter (Ed O'Neill) is trying to prove he's already lost the battle, and a powerful alumni booster (J.T. Walsh) is waiting to cover the spread that will ensure that loss.

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"There are two reasons I'm in-capable of cheating," coach Bell explains. "One is, I might get busted and thrown out of coach-tenching these kids how to play basketball and how to become men."

And the second reason? "I might not get caught."

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"I love basketball," said Fried-kin, who has worked out with the

PREVIEW

Boston Celtics for each of the past 17 years. "For a long time now, I've wanted to make a film set in that world. And "Blue Chips" was simply the best baskethall script I'd ever read."

First written 12 years ago by Ron Shelton, "Blue Chips" dealt with themes of corruption, morality and ambition that have been at the heart of much of Friedkin's work, from his Oscar-winning "The French Connection" and "The Exorcist" to "To Live and Die in L.A."

These conflicts as represented in the world of sports — specifically in baskethall — had previously caught Friedkin's attention in "The Killer Instinct," a book written by baskethall legend Bob Cousy. In it, Cousy explores his own incessant drive to succeed in a business whose unrelenting pressure often compel its most passionate champions into alliances with the very forces that corrupt the sport they cherish.

In the central roles of the "Blue Chip" recruits, the filmmakers decided to hire athletes who had some acting ability rather than actors who could perform on the court with lesser skill.

"I wanted to look at the players in this film and know that these guys are really playing," said Friedkin. "I wanted there to be no doubt that you are watching great athletes in competition."

"Frankly, I didn't know if we could have found good enough ne-

that's a great tearning experi-ence."
Prior to stating the film, Chen had never ridden a horse. "At first I was seared of the horses," re-calls Chen, "but after we got to Alaska we started riding three or four hours at a time and they made a rider out of me. I enjoyed it so much, I'm in the process of buving one!"



Basketball: Coach Bell (Nick Nolte, center left) recruits Blue Chip athletes Neon Bordeaux (Shaquille O'Neal, left), Butch McRae (Anfernee "Penny" Hardaway, right) and Ricky Roe (Matt Nover) to the Western University Dolphins in "Blue Chips."

tors in the sports world," said Mi-chele Rappaport. "Now I'm con-vinced we couldn't have gotten anyone better than Matt (Nover) and Anfernee ("Penny" Harda-way). And Shaquille's smile just lights un the screen."

UPCOMING MOVIES

There's something for every-one at the movies. Here's a list of what's in the wings: Opening Friday, Feb. 18: "Reality Blies" — Funny in-reverent take on love and life for post-Baby Boomers in the 1990s. Stars Winona Ryder, Ethan Hawke, Ben Stiller, Janeane Garofalo, and Steve Zabu.

Janeane Garofalo, and Steve Zahn.

OpenIng Friday, Feb. 25:

"Body Snatchers" — A new telling of the classic science fiction tale of alien invasion. Stars Gabrielle Anwar, Meg Tilly, Terry Kinney and Forest Whitaker.

"Sugar Hill" — A powerful saga about redemption, love and the price two brothers must pay to fulfill their destinies in a high stakes game of death and profit. Stars Wesley Snipes, Michael Wright, Theresa Randle, Clarence Williams III, Abe Vigoda and Erie Hudson.

nams III, Ace vigous and Livine Hudson.

"You So Crazy" — A one man stand up comedy show starring Martin Lawrence, star of the hit Fox series "Martin."

"8 "8 Seconds" — Based on the true story of Lane Frost, a champion rodeo buil-rider and

his meteoric rice to fame.

Opening Fridny, March 4: .

"With Honors" — The true, story of Harvard University students who befriend a home-

students who befriend a homeless man.

"The Chase" — A romanticcomedyd about a falsely convicted bank robber who takes avbeautiful heiress hostage andmakes a run for the Mexican'
border. Stars Charlie Sheen,
Kristy Swanson, Henry Rollins, Josh Mostel and RayWisc.
Wisc.

Wise.

Opening Friday, March.

11:

"Guarding Tess" — Tess is
the beloved former first lady
who is running her secret service detail ragged. Tired of
being at the mercy of her impefirms will one young agent

being at the mercy of her imperious will, one young agent squares off with her in a class of wits as unremitting as it is hilarious.

Opening Wednesday, March 30:

"Thumbelina" — Animated feature based on the beloved Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale about a ting gift 'no bigger than your thumb," and her adventures as she follows her heart.

Explosive thriller marks Seagal's directing debut lack of greed. They have hig families and are content to live in and around the same area. They are a very cooperative people, and that's a great learning experience." adventure story. I look at it as a film about human responsibility, and that's my reason for doing it. However, Steven's action-adven-ture fans are not going to be dis-appointed in the least. This mov-ic is crammed with a great deal of very exciting action.

Warner Bros.' new action thriller, "On Deadly Ground," starring and directed by Steven Seagal, opens Friday at metro De-troit movie theaters. In addition to Seagal, the film stars Michael Caine and Joan Chen.

Caine and Joan Chen.

Filmed on location in Alaska and northern Washington state, "On Deadly Ground" tells of the aggressive drilling activities of Aegis Oil, an independent company under the leadership of its renegate president, Michael Jennings (Michael Caine). When Forest Trit (Seagal), a roughneet who puts out oil-rif fares for Jonnings, learns of Aegis' environment-incentening behavior, he attempts to stop the company from drilling on native Alaskon (Inuit) land, but instead, finds himself fighting for his own life against Jennings and his men.

Taft teams with Masu (Chen), an Inuit activist, to defend him-

on Inuit activist, to defend him-self and his homeland against the oil company, which culminates in

Comedy hard

on the ears

PREVIEW

on explosive battle of wits and

an explosive battle of wits and muscle.

After starring in five hit films and becoming one of the world's most popular action stars in re-cent motion picture history, Sea-gal now expands his skills as a di-rector on a story which appeals not only to his sense of adventure, but also responsibility to our fel-low human and natural surround-ines.

low human and natural surveysings.
As a first-time director, Seagal would have to contend with a script that called for Alaskan blizzards, explosions, oil fires, dogsleds and horse chasses.
Chen traveled to Alaska before production began for "On Deadly Ground" to understand her character.

"I tried to learn the Inuit lan-guage and something about their culture," said Chen. "Their way of life is so beautiful. It's a sim-ple, basic life, with a complete

appointed in the reast. It is a large a deal of very exciting action. "We have helicopter explosions, martial arts battles, gan battles, mountains exploding, oil wells blowing up," adds A. Kitman Ho, one of the producers. "The action is exciting, but the majestic Alaskan setting will really remain in people's memories. Watchign this gorgeous — and fast-disappearing landscape, we're all reminded of how priceless our environment is, and how easily we can lose what we take for granted." it so much, it in the process of buying one!" For Robert Watts, the opportu-nity to produce an action film with a conscience was too great to resist. "What really appealed to me about "On Deadly Ground" is what underlies the basic action

Enter our contest

Tell us about one of life's most cherished moments — your first kiss — to enter our "My Girl 2" contest.

The first 10 entries will receive movie posters from "My Girl 2." The best three entries will win plaid financh boxer shorts with "My Girl 2" embroidered on the leg — they're really cute.

Write down your memories, 100 words or less, and send

them to the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Attention: Keely Wygonik, 36251 School-craft, Livonia, 48150. Call (313) 591-7279 to fax entries.

Galla) 591-7279 to lax entries.
Deadline for entries is
Thursday, Feb. 24. The three
winning stories will be printed
on our movie page on Thursday, March 3.

If you have any questions,
don't hesitate to call me at
(313) 953-2105.



Here is what some of your friends and neighbors had to say about recently released movies.

Barb lovan of Redford faxed us these comments about "I'll Do nything. "If a relaxing night away from

"If a relating night away from coreaning kids is what you seek — don't see 'I'll Do Anything." wrote Iovan. "My ears actually hunt from listening to this child — the female lead — scream repeatedly, in the days of films like Blank Check' and 'Home Alone' acquels I guess we are to find whining, spoiled kids endearing.

"Here is noof that I'vou expect."

whining, spoiled kids endearing.
"Here is proof that if you expect
a certain type of movie when you
walk in the door, you may be tileappointed. Although I was aware
the plot involved a child, I did not
know that she was one of the
main characters. There is one tocally unnecessary adult nude
scene which flashes across the

screen.
"On the bright side, Julie Kavner gives a solid supporting role, and Nick Nolte gives a fair

Betty Jean Awrey of Plymouth Fownship agreed with Iovan, and said "I'll Do Anything," was "aw-ful, horrible, terrible, I wouldn't



If you've seen a new movie lately, either good or bad, we want to hear from you.
Call Keely Wigsonik, Entertainment editor, 953-2105, to comment on newly released movies. If you reach her voice mail, leave your comments, aname, city and day-time phone number. To fax comments, dial 591-7279. Or write: Entertainment Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 30251
Schooleraft, Livonia, MI 48150.



Awrey left her comments on my voice mail, and recommends — "Thindsephia," "Grumpy Old Men," and "Mrs. Duttfire." She said "Shadowlands" was excellent.

The next time you go to the movies, give us a call and let us know what you thought about the film. See Reel to Reel for Information on how to submit your reviews.



