

# Football flick more than instant replay

By L. Kent Wolgamott

At last we have a sports movie which, in the words of one of its characters, sees through the game.

*North Dallas Forty* delivers a well-placed body block on big-time football in general and on the Dallas Cowboys in specific.

And rather than celebrating artificial victories on the field of battle, the movie explores the victory of a good, but controversial athlete.

Based on the novel by Peter Gent, a former wide receiver with the Cowboys, the movie details eight days in the life of a wide receiver for the North Dallas Bulls, Phil Elliott (read Peter Gent).

## movie review

Portrayed with great style by Nick Nolte, Elliott is an aging end with the best hands and worst attitude in the league.

**NOLTE'S FLABBY** body and brilliant performance as he works out injuries are sharply contrasted with the stunning physiques of real life pro football players in the film.

Elliott's belligerent attitude, which provides much of the film's irreverent humor, also is contrasted by the mechanical winning-is-everything attitude of his coach B.A. (here read Tom Landry), played with cold calculation by G.D. Spradlin.

B.A. believes in God and in his computer, which gives maximum performance figures and shows that Elliott has a childish attitude.

Equally childish, but much more valuable to the Bulls is star quarterback and Elliott cohort, Seth Maxwell.

This good-ole-boy (here read Dandy Don Meredith) takes the same drugs as Elliott, smokes dope and drinks Jack Daniels, but he has to play every Sunday and therefore is a valuable property.

Mac Davis is a natural Maxwell and proves to be a fine actor in his rookie performance.

**ALSO MAKING** his first movie is Oakland Raider John Matuszak as O.W., an offensive guard and fellow hell-raiser with Jo Bob (Bo Svenson) who in the words of Elliott, is here to remind us that the biggest and the meanest make all the rules.

Completing the line up is Charles Durning as a foul-mouthed assistant coach who kicks the appropriate butts so the sanctimonious B.A. can remain above the fray.

Other interesting characters include a reserve quarterback, (here read Craig Morton—Roger Staubach) who reads the Bible before games and is led down the primrose path to sin by Maxwell and the owner of the Bulls, (here read Tex Schramm) played by Steve Forrest.

**THE SCREENPLAY** written by Director Ted Kotcheff, producer Frank Yablans and Gent, deviates little from Gent's novel which shows a man struggling with survival in a business which began as a game.

His internal struggle is the basis for the film and director Kotcheff shows us the triumphs and turmoil of the locker room and its relation to the board room.

The movie's crushing climax successfully delivers more insight into the world of sport than Howard Cosell has in all his appearances and, again in Elliott's words, it got pretty ugly.

*North Dallas Forty* shows the public a portion of the ugly business side of big-time football which the NFL would just as soon see left uncovered.

For football is much more than a game played on the field on Sundays and images are easily crumbled.

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