'Varsity Blues' boils down to teen soap opera Beek's character is content to sit on (Jon Voight) and his father (Thomas away. "Varsity Blues" is hardly impor-

By Sam McKewon Senior editor

It was amusing to watch James Van Der Beek, of angst-ridden teen Harbor (Amy Smart).

s h o w "Dawson's Creek" at a recent premiere party, call his character in the new movie "Varsity Blues" completely different from the role he plays on the small tube.

It might be, if you consider he Southern JAMES VAN DER BEEK plays Jonathon Moxon, a reluctant high school accent. And instead of (Jon Voight) in the coming-of-age Texas football film "Varsity Blues."

loving

movies, he plays football. Oh yeah, and his hair's been cut. And it's brown. But the differences more or less end right there.

Yes "Varsity Blues" is a movie about high school football - Texas high school football, to be exact – and it would hope to ensnare you in its world of high-pressure athletics, with a little teen-girl skin tossed in for good measure.

But make no mistake, "Blues" is a soap opera with pads on. Its characters, including Van Der Beek's backup quarterback Jonathon Moxon, play out much the same hour-long drama that can be seen on the WB Network: oversexed, over-the-top and a little too smart for your (or their) own good.

"Varsity Blues" is the tale of West Canaan, Texas – more specifically, the West Canaan Coyotes, the high school football team that the town revolves around.

The town is geared toward football like a machine. There are huge pep rallies. Life-size billboards litter the yards of the players. The starters can attain just about any luxury they want, especially their choice of beautiful women who always seem to dot the movie landscape.

It's Moxon who wants no part of it. As backup to best friend Lance Harbor (Paul Walker), Van Der

a chance to escape away to college with his intelligent, sensitive and, of course, gorgeous girlfriend Julie

Harbor has to get hurt. He does, and

of Lincoln

The rest can be guessed. Moxon

fights with his dad, the coach, his girlfriend, his friends and himself. A

couple of people get naked. Players steal police cars and go to strip clubs. You know, the regular high school kids' night-out

Director Brian Robbins ("Good Burger") wants to capture the truth and honesty of high school life and the pressure of small-town sports. Some of it's there, but the movie's too glossy and overwrought to really

Worst is Voight, who creates a character who is borderline insane. It's doubtful he, as his character asserts, could change quarterback pitted against an obsessed and abusive football coach academic records of players who disobey him, thus denying them entrance into college. Coaches don't

Well, Van Der Beek can't be a have this power, nor would they get backup the whole movie, so Lance away with it if they did.

The whole movie boils down to he loses all the fame and possibly his the big game and Moxon's big speech girlfriend, Darcy (Ali Larter), who to the team. There's no reason to goes after Moxon. Moxon is pres- reveal who wins the big game; if one sured by the winning-obsessed coach looks hard enough, the trailer gives it

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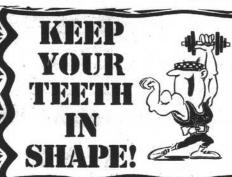
tant; its vision gets lost and the acting isn't believable. It is somewhat entertaining and good for a laugh, because, after all, nobody really lives like this.

Hey, it's a lot like "Dawson's

The Facts

Title: "Varsity Blues" Stars: James Van Der Beek, Jon Voight **Director: Brian Robbins** Rating: R (adult content, language)

Five Words: "Varsity Blues" is hardly



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