

## Personality, Sports and Coming of Age in Film and Fiction

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### Abstract

Inclusive education is the need of the hour, which does not only mean inclusion of the maximum number into the folds of education but also including maximum relevant instructions and knowledge inside the system. Sports and games are absolutely necessary to make education holistic. Within the scope of this paper I would like to study three novel series and films that deal with sports and games. In doing so I hope to prove that the playing of sports (along with receiving classroom education) allows each of these individuals or the protagonists of these pieces to develop certain qualities that help them know their own selves, realise their potentials, their strengths and weaknesses, and find their purpose; making them confident, mature and respectable individuals and even leaders.

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**Keywords:** Holistic Education, Inclusive Education, Sports, Personality Development, Coming of Age, Film.

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The novels and films which are original or adaptations of novels and fictionalised narration, or adaptation of real life incidents, that I will be analysing in this article are all coming of age or Bildungsroman<sup>1</sup> tales or narratives about young people coming to terms with the world and realising their purpose or place in it. Any Indian acquainted with the philosophical thoughts engendered in the country cannot forget or ignore Swami Vivekananda's prescription "You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through study of Gita", to the youth of his nation; and indeed most of my colleagues quoted these words at the very outset of their papers while the others referred to it to strengthen their arguments. To me, in its simplest form, heaven is a state of peace and happiness, and I too have enjoyed such moments of pure bliss, often in my childhood when playing games involving chasing around friends in a park or one's backyard,

<sup>1</sup> *Bildungsroman* and *Erziehungsroman* are German terms signifying "novel of formation" or "novel of education", the subject of such a narrative is the development of the protagonist's mind and character, in the passage from childhood to through varied experiences - and often through spiritual crisis - into maturity, involving recognition of one's identity and role in the world; Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* is considered as the best example of such a novel. MH Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 7th edition, (2003 reprint), Singapore, Thomson Asia Pte., 1999. This term is specifically used for literary pieces like novels as explained above, while the phrase 'coming of age' which means the same thing is used for films. I have used the second one here as I am dealing with two films, a novel series which has also been adapted on the big screen.

or just running with the wind with no care in my mind, feeling the exhilaration from the effort and the speed, and moving to the rhythm of my own heartbeat! According to my timetable set by my vigilant mother what used to follow these chasing and running sessions in the evening was home work and study hours and surprisingly concentration was better with hardly anything called 'stress' during those years; compared to my teenage years, when one is burdened with the secondary and higher secondary examination syllabi of our educational system, which usually starts from standard seven or eight, and one has to cut down on play time to accommodate the private tuitions and extra practice hours that the syllabi demand. Therefore, the relevance of the papers on the necessities of sports in the curricula, a lot of which were technical in nature, were not lost on me even though I have not received any formal or academic training in Physical Education, I could relate to and agree with them and draw parallels from my area which is the study of literature and the arts.

The aim of education is to help an individual realise one's full potential and establish oneself in one's area of interest and expertise. The question here is whether the inclusion of sports and games in the curriculum facilitates the realisation of one's potentials and desires and arms one with qualities necessary to succeed, making education holistic; and also whether it helps an individual in developing one's personality and in gaining self-confidence. In this paper I will concentrate on the Harry Potter<sup>2</sup> novels by J. K. Rowling and their Warner Bros. film versions<sup>3</sup> from 2001 - 11, the 2005 Walt Disney (Buena Vista Pictures) production *Ice Princess*, and the 2006 Columbia Pictures film *Gridiron Gang*, all of which deal with sports and very young protagonists, who are in search of their destiny or are struggling for their very existence in a tangled web of expectations of others, personal aims and ambitions, desires and socio-economic constraints as well as emotional problems. While in Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, the fantastic school for different and exceptionally talented children like Harry Potter, among other things Harry plays the magically aided game of Quidditch<sup>4</sup>,

<sup>2</sup> JK Rowling's seven books in the Harry Potter Series were published by Bloomsbury Publishing, UK in the following order: *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (26 June 1997), *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (2 July 1998), *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (8 July 1999), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (8 July 2000), *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (21 June 2003), *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (16 July 2005), *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (21 July 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Warner Brothers Pictures distributed the 8 films (the 7th book was made into a two-part movie) over a period of ten years; it is the highest grossing film series of all time.

<sup>4</sup> *Quidditch* is a wizarding sport that is played in the magical world and is overseen by the International Confederation of Wizards' Quidditch Committee, and falls under the jurisdiction of Department of Magical Games and Sports, part of the Ministry of Magic. It is the magical equivalent of football. The game is played by two teams comprising seven members each who are on broomsticks and airborne, and it involves four balls: a Golden Snitch, a Quaffle and two Bludgers. There is one Seeker in each team who seek the illusive little winged golden ball, the Snitch and end the game by catching it and scoring 150 points. While the snitch remains in air, the Quaffle is used by the three Chasers of each team to score goals by tossing the Quaffle into one of the three goal posts on each side; each goal has 10 points and the Keeper guards the three goal posts of his team. The two Bludgers are used by the two Beaters of each team to hit the players of the opposing team, while they are beaten away from one's teammates. After the Snitch is caught the team with the highest score wins. Of course the Snitch avails a great advantage and therefore the role of the Seeker is most important in Quidditch. Harry becomes a Seeker in his very first year at Hogwarts and becomes the Captain of his House team in his 6th year, the second last year of his school-life.

which is a team sport, and around it the events of the entire academic year or school calendar revolve, more so in the novels than in the films. In the *Ice Princess*, the teenage protagonist Casey Carlyle struggles to juggle her commitment towards her academic goal, i.e., winning an undergraduate scholarship to the Harvard University with her newfound desire to excel at figure skating. And in the *Gridiron Gang* where Sean Porter, who works with juvenile delinquents at the Kilpatrick Detention Centre, Los Angeles, introduces the football (American Football) to the young interns in the hope of harnessing and channelizing their excessive aggression and negative energy into a positive engagement. We shall assess these cases individually and see what role sports and games play in the formative years of the individuals in these stories, and whether they are instrumental in developing their personalities, improving their self esteem and confidence, and in helping them realise their full potential.

For those who are not familiar with the extremely popular Harry Potter novels, seven in all, which made their struggling creator a bestselling author overnight, these novels are about an orphaned boy of eleven, who lives with relatives that do not love or want him, is suddenly informed about his special powers as a wizard, and of a celebrity status that came to him ten years back when he survived the attack of an extremely powerful evil wizard, who killed his parents but failed to kill Harry and instead was gone without a trace since then, bringing deliverance to the wizarding world. Therefore, Harry Potter is a hero without his even knowing why. From ill fitting hand-me-down clothes, a broom closet for a bedroom, and ten years of neglect and indifference, the under nourished boy finds himself the inheritor of a vault full of gold; and the cynosure of the gathering in an opulent dining hall of his new found home, the wizarding school. Because Harry has been brought up in the muggle world (which means the world of the ordinary people who are without magic), he has no idea whatsoever about the magical world, its rituals and practices, rules and regulations, or its good and evils. Though Harry does not perform well in his classes or give any proof of his expected magical talents immediately, he displays bravery (inherent in him, the trait for which he gets selected into the House of Gryffindor) and resilience whenever challenged, and an unmatched kindness towards all who are in need of it. Harry discovers his flying skills out in the field, accidentally, when his rival Draco Malfoy, who has an evil streak in him and thus belongs to the dark House of Slytherin and also hails from a powerful and dark wizarding family, flies away with a trinket belonging to one of Harry's friends, Neville Long Bottom. Despite being forbidden to fly on his broomstick without supervision as he is a freshman Harry chases after Draco, and makes a very surprising catch saving his friend's toy from shattering against a school window. Professor McGonagall, the supervisor of Harry's house spies the excellent catch, Harry's swiftness, agility and his superb flying skills from inside this aforementioned window, recognises the prodigy and appoints Harry the new Seeker of the Gryffindor Quidditch team. We are also told in the same book that Harry is the youngest Seeker in a hundred years.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997).

Before Harry learns the fundamentals of the new world that he is thrown into he gets the additional responsibility of the Seeker in the prestigious Quidditch team of Gryffindor House. Though the Seeker's role is of utmost importance in a match, the game is after all a team sport. The teammates perform several tasks like scoring goals, defending their teammates from Bludger attacks and driving the Bludgers towards the opponents, preventing goals and looking for the tiny and swift Golden Snitch while mounted on their broomsticks and airborne, therefore, balance and speed also become very important, and pushing, shoving and foul play are also a part of it all. Coordination between mates, fellow feeling and team spirit are required in any sport of this nature which are not as important in individual sports.

The New South Wales Government website on Education and Communities directs schools and guardians to encourage their children to participate in team sports. The site points out that team sports provide important lessons on personal values, also children who play team sports are less likely to feel isolated and lonely; they help kids deal with winning and losing issues, as they win with others and of course do not lose alone; they also help kids overcome shyness.<sup>6</sup> Harry as we know never had a sense of belonging or was made to think himself worthy of anything before he joined this exceptional school. As an orphan he was lonely, shy and isolated in the world of people who did not understand his special qualities, we come to know that he was deliberately isolated from the world of magic, his own world, to protect him from plots of revenge and threats to his life, but he was isolated and unloved nonetheless.

A privately managed California firm states in its website [education.com](http://www.education.com)<sup>7</sup> that team sports check the ego of a growing individual who learns to be less self centred and more supportive by looking out for one's teammates, the player learns that it is not 'I', but 'We' are playing the game together and 'We' stand to win or lose, and face the consequences together. The same site also gives the three Ps of team sports: practice, patience and persistence that each individual has to put into to make the team successful. We do not see many practice sessions in the film versions of Harry Potter, but in most of the novels early morning long practice sessions are described by the author; for example, for his first three years (and books) Harry's captain Oliver Wood organises three practice sessions a week, increasing it to five before matches, and books the pitch very early in the morning before any other team can rise and spy on their moves. Both the above mentioned websites also talk about how children bond better with their parents and siblings by playing together as a family.

In Harry's case his teammates and friends are his only and true family members, as through the series it is with the help of their selfless love for him and their unflinching

<sup>6</sup> "Benefits of team sports", URL: <http://www.schoolatoz.nsw.edu.au/wellbeing/fitness/benefits-of-team-sports> (accessed on 19/Oct/2013).

<sup>7</sup> "The Benefit of Team Sports", URL: [http://www.education.com/magazine/article/Ed\\_Benefits\\_Team\\_Sports/](http://www.education.com/magazine/article/Ed_Benefits_Team_Sports/) (accessed on 19/Oct/2013).

support in the face of danger that Harry's destiny is realised to a great extent. The Weasley family, which treats Harry as one of their own are also his teammates in Quidditch; the older twins Fred and George Weasley play as Beaters, and in the last book one of them dies protecting and fighting for Harry Ron Weasley Harry's best friend plays as the Keeper and always watches out for him, and and their youngest sister Ginny Weasley, who also becomes his girlfriend and wife, plays as a Chaser. Harry realises that he shares many characteristic traits with his enemy and evil wizard Voldemort,<sup>8</sup> what keeps him on the side of good and resist Voldemort's offers is his sense of belonging, instilled by the kindness shown to him by the good witches and wizards.

By the word Seeker we understand somebody who is looking for something, either material or abstract. By becoming the youngest Seeker inside the game in a hundred years, Harry also becomes the youngest and a rare individual with a clear purpose in the game of life in the magical universe of the novels. He seeks information or knowledge, and happiness which come with companionship, the two things that were denied to him before his re-entry into his own world. He seeks the cause of his fame, the death of his parents and his survival, and the purpose behind his staying alive. He also seeks the truth behind the predictions made about him time and again, which requires his becoming a powerful wizard by mastering all the spells and magical lessons imparted in the classrooms, and reading the clues left behind for him.

Careful readers of Harry Potter will agree that the three P's: practice, patience and persistence are important personal values for anyone with a goal, especially for a young man like Harry who has very little to fall back on in terms of experience other than what he gains from different lessons at school, learns second hand from the experiences of teachers, friends and well-wishers who share information and give him clues out of their kindness and sympathy for him. Just like a Seeker in a game of Quidditch is aided by the Chasers, Beaters and Keeper while he or she seeks the Golden Snitch, the precious and most coveted piece in the game, Harry receives the aid of all his schoolmates, professors and well wishers to fight back the dark forces that keep reoccurring and threatening his life.

The websites also mention the lessons that young people imbibe from their coaches and efficient team leaders, and the leadership qualities that can be developed through team sports. Harry's first captain Oliver was a true believer in the three Ps, and Harry followed his example not only when he became the captain, but also while leading his friends in other battles. For example, forming the band of his fellows christened Dumbledor's Army after their principal, teaching them the difficult Patronus Charm to fight Dementors, and leading them against the oppressive regime of Dolores Umbridge in the fifth book of the series, Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (2003); or leading the entire school and all the good magicians in the final battle against the dark

<sup>8</sup> As early as the second book, Chamber of Secrets (1998), where he is able to speak in Parseltongue, like Voldemort, that is the language of the snakes.

army lead by his arch enemy Voldemort in book seven, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows (2007). Through the seven novels the reader walks with Harry and follows him as he grows into an adult and fulfils his destiny.

From the magical and fantastic universe of Harry Potter we shall shift our focus to the realistic world of Casey Carlye in the Walt Disney film *Ice Princess*, directed by Tim Fywell. Our seventeen year old protagonist could be any American teenager aspiring to go to an Ivy League University. Casey loves physics; she is a bright student, very hard working but shy and is considered a geek<sup>9</sup> by her classmates. To win her scholarship to Harvard she needs an impressive summer project that not only stands for her brilliance but also carries some unique personal trait which would speak of her as a person, making the connection between herself, her interest and her dedication clear and concrete. While watching a Figure Skating competition with her math-lover best friend she decides to use this sport for her project. Casey enjoyed skating on the pond outside her house as a child, though she never took it seriously enough to go for formal lessons, she still enjoyed her occasional spins on the ice. Therefore, she feels it would have both the personal and academic edge required to win the coveted scholarship. She takes her video camera to the local rink and observes the skaters at practice, studying and analysing their moves, especially their spins and loops to come up with a unified theory proposing measured and calculated turns, angles and postures for correct execution of such routines.

To take it one step further, she joins skating classes and she tries out her calculations on herself and video records it in order to prove her own hypothesis of application of physics to improve execution of competitive figure skating techniques; surprising herself and her best friend with her perfection. By doing so she also wins new friends, fellow skaters who help her break her geeky image. Casey is so intrigued by her treble success that she makes a conscious effort to manage her time and squeezes in skating practices between her study hours, though she does not have the money or her mother's approval to learn figure skating to be able to compete professionally. But she is very intelligent and extremely resourceful and goes after what she wants; she uses her knowledge of physics to help improve her friends' skating and in return for her favour shares their private ice time for her own practices! She also works part time at the rink's snack bar to make some money. She skips two levels and becomes a junior skater to everybody's surprise at the evaluation meet.

Her mother thinks skating is an unwanted diversion from her real goal, which is Harvard; which is also her mother's dream for her. Straining to juggle work, sports and academics, and stressing to excel while being constantly opposed at home by her mother and at the rink by her friend and rival Gen's mother, skating Coach Tina, is a crisis hour for Casey. But she perseveres, finds her real desire, and turns down

<sup>9</sup> *Geek* is an unfashionable or socially inept person, and a knowledgeable and obsessive enthusiast e.g., a computer geek. URL: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/geek> (accessed on 19/ Oct/ 2013).

the Harvard scholarship to keep skating! The character who mirrors some of Casey's growth process but is actually a foil to her is the fellow skater, and Coach Tina's daughter Gen, who also abandons her mother's dream of her becoming a celebrated skater just before getting recognised. But unlike Casey, Gen does not find out her true calling in the scope of the movie. Casey emerges as an individual, and because of the holistic nature of her education which includes both academics and sports, she is able to make a correct, mature and calculated choice (as there is an age limit, a shelf-life for every skater unlike academics, especially in their country, where academics can be picked up after an interval at any age) between her dream and her mother's dream for her, as it is her life and only she can know what makes her truly happy, that Gen isn't qualified enough to make.

From the conversations of her mother and her coach in the last scene we come to know that Casey would continue to college with a major in physics and also skate, managing the number of classes to fit in her practice sessions. She does not give up her first love physics, but realises that a college other than one of the top institutions might understand her needs and aid in fulfilling her commitment to both her passions, and any college would accept her after viewing her brilliant summer project! The shy, tongue-tied geek of the first half an hour of the film turns into a confident young lady, finds a boyfriend in Gen's brother Teddy from being a social outcast and multitasks her way to adulthood, making the audience awe at her ability and a promising future!

Let us now turn our eyes from the realistic fiction of Casey Carlyle to the real-life Cinderella-story of the Kilpatrick Mustangs, an American football team consisting of juvenile detainees at Camp Kilpatrick in Los Angeles, California; in the sports film *Gridiron Gang* by director Phil Joanou.<sup>10</sup> Though the movie is a fictionalised version of the real incidents, the background to the story is brutally true. The members of the Kilpatrick Mustangs are not individuals in a magical world like that of Harry Potter; they are part of the cold reality. Nor are they like Casey Carlyle, who perseveres and everything falls in place with a happy ending; most of the juvenile detainees either grow up to become criminals, or are killed in gang wars or encounters, those that strive to make a good life for themselves find it difficult to get accepted by the society which continues to look at them with suspicious eyes. In the US, in all but four out of its fifty states, anyone charged with committing a criminal act, before his or her seventeenth or eighteenth birthday, is initially processed as a juvenile defendant.<sup>11</sup> In New York and

<sup>10</sup> I am talking about the use of sports in youth related issues in the 2006 Hollywood film *Gridiron Gang* that I have watched, which is loosely based on the team's success in the 1990 season and not the 1993 Emmy award winning documentary of the same name, which I have not had the opportunity to watch yet; but have read about online.

<sup>11</sup> All information regarding Juvenile Delinquency and Justice has been compiled from, and can be found in the following government, educational institution and NGO websites, URLs: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/> (accessed on 19/ Oct/ 2013), [http://www.justice.gov/usao/eousa/foia\\_reading\\_room/usam/title9/crm00116.htm](http://www.justice.gov/usao/eousa/foia_reading_room/usam/title9/crm00116.htm) (accessed on 19/ Oct/ 2013), <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/42/5601> (accessed on 19/ Oct/ 2013), <http://www.justicepolicy.org/research/index.html> (accessed on 19/ Oct/ 2013),

North Carolina, however, all accused persons are charged as adults at the minimum age of sixteen. In Illinois, Michigan, Texas and eight other states the minimum age is seventeen. In other states such as Washington, the minimum age depends on the seriousness of the crime. Once processed in the juvenile court system, some juveniles are released directly back into the community to undergo community-based rehabilitative programs. Some juveniles who may pose a greater threat to the society and to themselves are detained in a supervised juvenile detention centre. By holding juveniles in secure detention, appearance in court is ensured while also keeping the community safe and risk-free. Juvenile detention centres do not intend to be punitive, the state or local jurisdiction is usually responsible for providing education, health, assessment, recreation, counselling and other intervention services with the intent of maintaining a youth's well-being during his or her stay in custody. However, these correction centres also face lot of problems from overcrowding and lack of positive, effective change in their inmates, and sometimes gang wars continue even inside such protected institutions. There are also corrupt agencies like the PA Child Care, a detention centre in Pennsylvania USA, which was part of the Kids for Cash scandal in which judges took favours in exchange for imposing harsh sentences on youth offenders so that the detention centres would get better business.<sup>12</sup> Again, minors tried as adults never get a fair chance at improvement. As a result, too many children with good chances of rehabilitation are pushed early on the road of crime instead of being given counselling, support, and accountability. In many cases, the same young people keep returning to the centre even after months or years of detention, as well as after going through a number of counselling sessions and other training programs.

Camp Kilpatrick, a Los Angeles County Probation Department facility in California housing more than a thousand inmates, faced similar problems. Its inmates come from both white and coloured population of the region and belong to different street gangs. These gangs are very aggressive and pose threats to both the society and their own members. They are constantly involved in drug curtails, thefts and robberies and they are adamant enough to kill other gang members at sight. The supervisors of Camp Kilpatrick were challenged by frequent squabbles that broke out into serious fights inside the establishment, and it was not infrequent for them to receive the news of the death of a former inmate in a shootout, or drive-by shooting on the street. While it was evident that existing facilities were failing on the whole a sports program was started in 1986 with the formation of a basketball squad, and in 1988 the camp added an eight-man football team, which Sean Porter who worked at the camp with these young men

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<http://children-laws.laws.com/child-protective-service> (accessed on 19/ Oct/ 2013),

<http://www.justia.com/criminal/juvenile-crimes/> (accessed on 19/ Oct/ 2013),

& <http://culturelag.wordpress.com/2012/03/08/juvenile-delinquency-andjustice-in-the-united-states/> (accessed on 19/ Oct/ 2013).

<sup>12</sup> URL: <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/02/23/pennsylvania.corrupt.judges/> (accessed on 19/ Oct/ 2013).

was influential in developing.<sup>13</sup> In 1990, while under Porter, the program went into full swing with an eleven-man football team and a full season's worth of games.

The Emmy Award winning documentary *Gridiron Gang* aired on television in 1993 chronicled the Mustang's 1990 miraculous season, which was the inaugural season for the team. In 2006 a Hollywood movie of the same name was released giving us a dramatized version of how the lives of several young men were changed forever by football. Sean Porter, also the coach of the Kilpatrick Mustangs was of the belief that the sport would teach the young men to work as a team, to be responsible, to focus and to be confident, but above all he had hoped to teach them to be positive and accept challenges no matter what the result and not choose to run away or go for the easy and the wrong way. Porter never thought he would be successful enough to discipline the boys and make them win a real match but consequently it did happen. As a result of Porter's initiative and experiment, which was opposed by many initially, the Mustangs succeeded in changing the lives of many boys. At first it was difficult to get established school or college teams to play with these boys, as they carried a stigma with them, but eventually their good work was appreciated by mainstream clubs and institutionalised teams and the Mustangs gained a lot of experience in the fields and accolades for their efforts. A lot of these boys who played on the team swear that their lives were changed and they learnt to walk the straight path thanks to the game of football. Once they realised their own worth and developed a sense of esteem in themselves by scoring goals or winning a match, they had to preserve that, and many chose not to tarnish or waste this hard earned treasure, that is their respect for themselves and others. Jason Lamb<sup>14</sup>, Joseph Lucero<sup>15</sup> and Michael Black<sup>16</sup> are some

<sup>13</sup> The information on the making of the movie, its characters and the real incidents as well as information about the Camp have been compiled and are available in these web pages, URLs: <http://www.chasingthefrog.com/reelfaces/gridirongang.php> (accessed on 19/ Oct/ 2013), <http://www.pressetelegram.com/general-news/20080521/camp-kilpatrick-buildingpositive-attitudes-with-athletics> (accessed on 19/ Oct/ 2013) & <http://articles.latimes.com/keyword/camp-kilpatrick-mustangs-football-team> (accessed on 19/ Oct/ 2013).

<sup>14</sup> 'Porter's investment in Jason Lamb proved to be one of those successes. He came under the coach's direction as a 17-year-old car thief in 1990. He had a dreadful relationship with his family, self-confidence issues and a history of escape attempts from other camps. Porter reached out and made him a wide receiver on the squad portrayed in the documentary, one that eventually made it to the city championships. "It was definitely life-changing for me," Lamb said. "I'd been in trouble a lot, but once I got into the program, I never tried to get out again." Today, Lamb, 33, works as a salesman in North Hollywood and has repaired some relations with his family. Though it took him some time after he played for the team, he stopped getting in trouble. He even makes it out to some games to cheer on his old squad.' Quoted from staff writer Brent Hopkin's article, "Just like a Movie as in Film, Real-Life Probation Camp Football Program Offers Kids a Chance." URL: <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/JUST+LIKE+A+MOVIE+AS+IN+FILM,+REAL-LIFE+PROBATION+CAMP+FOOTBALL...-a0151352264> (accessed on 19/ Oct/ 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Former inmate Joseph Lucero, who even had a speaking part in the film, today works closely with gang members from Los Angeles neighbourhoods, as he tries to lead them to a better future. URL: <http://www.chasingthefrog.com/reelfaces/gridirongang.php> (accessed on 19/ Oct/ 2013).

<sup>16</sup> Willie Weathers, whose cousin Roger is killed early in the film, is in fact based on a real person Michael Black. Michael Black is the biggest on-field success story to come from the program. After leaving Camp Kilpatrick, the star running back played at Washington State, and then for the Seattle Seahawks and Dallas Cowboys. URL: <http://archives.starbulletin.com/2006/10/09/sports/story04.html> (accessed on 19/ Oct/ 2013).

real people who were detained at Camp Kilpatrick, played on the Mustangs team and were much benefited from their experience.

The delinquency of most youths is owing to psychological problems, originating in low self-esteem, emotional or intellectual poverty and lack of confidence. These lead to frustration, which finds its way out in aggression and anti social activities with poor guidance, in simple words. What Porter did was channelize all the frustration and subsequent aggression into the sport and in the process he harnessed the explosive energy of these disturbed young fellows, providing them with an out-let to vent their negative feelings and thoughts, and purging them off their violent desires. One can see in the movie these so called hardcore criminals crying at losing a match,<sup>17</sup> or bringing flowers to their coach Porter when his mother is terminally ill.<sup>18</sup> Their soft side is not a sign of their weakness but their acceptance of their human nature and their newfound wisdom to accept defeat, mourn for it and move on to try harder for the next time and not to nurse a grudge.

We have journeyed from the alternative universe of a fantasy to a realistic fiction into the harsh real world that we inhabit and traced the beneficial effect of including sports and games in the curricula of educational and corrective institutions. The simplicity with which the introduction of sports improved the personalities and shaped the lives of the delinquents at Camp Kilpatrick is perhaps one of the prime causes behind frequent inclusion of sports and games in films and fictions, the positive influence that sports can have on young minds and the love the youth feel for sports and games make the fictional and fantastic tales including sports as their theme more real and easily acceptable to us. The suspense, the thrill, the emotions players and the audience feel during a match is similar to the suspense and thrill, and emotional involvement while reading an adventurous tale or watching an equally dramatic film. The inclusion of sports in the fantastic Harry Potter series makes the fantastic world of witches and wizards with their magical quests, problems and solutions not so remote and different from ours; the spirit of the team sport and the events of the year revolving around a central sports week/ day/ event make it closer to the world of us the non-magical readers who will fondly remember their college or college Sports day/ week for the rest of their lives!

The choice between a career in sports or in academics makes Casey's story more realistic and relevant, and many teenagers about to enter the world of the adults with

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<sup>17</sup> As depicted in the film, the Camp Kilpatrick players really did cry after losing their first football game. "They didn't know how to handle that type of loss," Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson said in an interview. After viewing the film, test audiences found this part of the movie hard to believe, that gang members would cry like that. This prompted the filmmakers, including director Phil Joanou, to include during the credits the same real life scene from the documentary. Other documentary clips were also added, such as the part from the film where Kenny Bates confesses, "I just want my mom to love me." URL: [http:// www.chasingthefrog.com/reelfaces/gridirongang.php](http://www.chasingthefrog.com/reelfaces/gridirongang.php) (accessed on 19/ Oct/2013).

<sup>18</sup> "This scene from the film did happen. Malcolm Moore brought Sean Porter into the gymnasium (not a dorm as shown in the film). There, the kids gave Sean flowers for his mom, and he began to cry." Ibid.

the end of their school life may easily identify with the dilemma faced by Casey. Like the help rendered in real life in the case of the juvenile delinquents or the imitation of the same by authors and film makers in fictionalised narrations, the potent role played by sports in shaping the mind, body and personality of the youth is undeniable. It is not only necessary to include them in our syllabi but it is also important to encourage the youth to participate in them, instead of opposing and thinking of them as diversions or distractions from mainstream, textbook or classroom education.

British Author Neil Gaiman in his lecture explaining why using our imaginations, and providing for others to use theirs, is an obligation for all citizens, urges us not to decide which book is 'good' or appropriate, and which book is 'bad' for a child.<sup>19</sup> In doing so, he states, we prevent children from developing the habit of reading and rob them of the world of imagination, creativity and individuality. He points out how comic books are looked down upon by those who believe only classics are readable, informative and instructive. He advocates that each child should be allowed to read according to his or her taste and only then they will enjoy reading and develop the habit. He also condemns those who think reading fantasy and imaginative literature is escapist as he believes, that solutions are often found outside the problem and in alternative situations. Similarly, we should not make up our minds for textbook education and against the kind received in the playground. We should include both, not only to provide both the facilities to one kind of student, but to include more individuals inside to folds of education; to make classroom education attractive by providing incentive to exceptional sportsmen.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Neil Gaiman, "Why our Future Depends on Libraries, Reading and Daydreaming", [theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com), Tuesday 15 October 2013 14.51 BST, URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/oct/15/neil-gaiman-futurelibraries-reading-daydreaming> (accessed on 16/ Oct/ 2013).

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