

Film Review: Dull Story of Extraordinary Survival in ‘Unbroken’

Submitted by [NickHC](#) [1] on December 24, 2014 - 4:04pm

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CHICAGO – Olympic runner, plane crash survivor, and WWII POW Louis Zamperini had an extraordinary life of defeating even more profound conditions from cruel nature and fellow man. His is a tale of grandiose cinematic potential, especially considering our desire for beat-down underdogs and their gauntlets of adversity, but such gets a surface-level treatment from director Angelina Jolie’s underwhelming tribute “Unbroken.”



Rating: **2.0/5.0**

The film is a chronicle of Zamperini’s struggles, a narrative that beats a character down specifically to see them endure. Embodying Zamperini is Jack O’Connell, a rising actor with an immense amount of power inside him, even though this movie undersells it with whimsical stoicism. (If you’re looking for a great role to see the biggest sense of this, I recommend his 2014 bloody-knuckle prison drama “Starred Up.”)

“Unbroken” has a strange flaw in that it makes plain a man of astonishing heroism. From the very beginning of the story, fate looms on what will happen to him, as if the experience he went through is all a part of some higher being’s plan. Louis is introduced in the middle of a dogfight in WWII, his life in the hands of enemies that may or may not shoot down the plane he’s flying in. This modern presentation is then interspersed with images of young Louis (portrayed by C.J. Valleroy) absorbing pointed advice about resilience and spirituality from the sermon he spaces out during at church, or from his older brother. At a young age, Louis becomes a 1936 Olympic runner, dashing for America’s glory in Germany, but is sent to World War II before he can race again.

Later on in a second plane, Louis’ life takes its unfortunate fall towards becoming a prisoner to cruel fate, as he is shot down with a few others. Stranded on the ocean for almost 50 days, Louis and two others (played by Domhnall Gleeson and Finn Wittrock) attempt to keep their spirits up as nature slowly eats at them. When the men are then rescued, that’s only half of the hardship that they must face, as they become captives to Japan.

While lasting through horrors of WWII Japanese prison camps, Louis is then faced with direct human opposition in detainment camp leader Mutsushiro Watanabe (newcomer Takamasa Ishihara). Singled out for his Olympic ability, Louis is directly terrorized by Watanabe, who struggles to break him with relentless physical and mental abuse.

“Unbroken” opens everywhere on December 25th. Featuring Jack O’Connell, Domhnall Gleeson, Finn Wittrock, Jai Courtney, Garrett Hedlund, and Takamasa Ishihara. Screenplay by Joel Coen & Ethan Coen, Richard LaGravenese and William Nicholson; adapted from the book by Laura Hillenbrand. Directed by Angelina Jolie. Rated “PG-13”



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'Unbroken'

Photo credit: Universal



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