

## ‘The Perfect Game’ Proves That Baseball Fiction is Duller Than Truth

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on April 19, 2010 - 1:43pm

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Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – The 1957 Little League team from Monterrey, Mexico, was the first non-U.S. team to win that league’s World Series. That is a fact. “The Perfect Game” creates a story based on that fact that is as improbable as a team from Mars winning the big game.

The story begins in the dusty Mexican town south of the Texas border that looks like it was last used for a Pancho Villa movie. But this is 1957, and the town’s boys are baseball crazy, seemingly knowing every statistic, including that Sandy Koufax is a rookie for the Brooklyn Dodgers. They have passion for the game, but no structure.

In a very strange sequence, a real baseball appears out of nowhere, which replaces the woven rags the boys were using before. If they can only find a coach, their team might be complete. It just so happens that one of the villagers used to be part of the St. Louis Cardinals. Cesar (Clifton Collins, Jr.) is convinced by one of the plucky boys that creating a Little League team is his destiny, which has also received the blessing of local priest Padre Estaban (Cheech Marin).

Through the prayers and the hopes of the townspeople, who are stuck in dead-end jobs working for the steel factory, the boys are formulated as a team and head north to Texas to compete in the Little League playoffs leading to their World Series in Pennsylvania.



Cheech Marin (left) as Padre Estaban and Clifton Collins Jr. as Coach Cesar with the Little Leaguers of ‘The Perfect Game’  
Photo Credit: © 2010 IndustryWorks Pictures



As they keep winning and getting closer to their goal, they recruit a African American preacher (John Cothran Jr.) to pray with them before each game, connect with a female reporter (Emilie de Ravin) straight out of "His Girl Friday" and take some winning tips from Negro League legend "Cool Papa" Bell (Louis Gossett, Jr.). There are no obstacles they can't overcome in the road to victory.

Without any knowledge of the real events that took place around the historical championship, the truth about would have to be either too ordinary to create the tension for a dramatic sports movie or much more interesting than what is actually depicted. There are real elements abounding in the narrative – Cesar's secret St. Louis Cardinal past, the segregated southern restaurants of the 1950s and the Monterrey Little League team itself – but everything becomes diluted and sappy within William Dear's direction and W. William Winokur's fairy tale script.

The boys on the team are used as props for the story's morality. They roll on the grass because "they've never seen grass before." They refuse to come out of the dugout before a game without a proper blessing (which allows a local African American preacher to represent that demographic to join up) and they have the usual sports movie types (fighter, noble star, girl-crazy boy) to act as a greek chorus to the clueless adults.

And what narrowly drawn adults they are. Even the villains, mostly authority figures around baseball and the Little League, can't help loving those golly-gee boys from Mexico. Lessons are doled out in diners (where the boys invent Molé sauce for the local yokels), through the media (the female reporter named Frankie tells the world this wondrous story), Coach Cesar (who ends up confessing that he wasn't who he was with the Cardinals) and of course through the church (God is their clean-up hitter).



One of the Monterrey Ball Players Gets Tips from Louis Gossett, Jr. as Cool Papa Bell in 'The Perfect Game'

Photo Credit: © 2010 IndustryWorks Pictures

An unexpected portrayal comes from Cheech Marin, formerly of Cheech and Chong, who has become a fairly established character actor since his drug antics days. His Padre Estaban persona would have made a hilarious hallucination if it were placed in one of the 1970s Cheech and Chong movies, which succinctly demonstrates that you never know where you're going until you get there.

The disclaimer here, of course, is that this film is "great for the entire family." But in its essence it does a disservice to the real story, which probably had more prejudice, grit and barriers to overcome than this sanitized Disney-esque version portrays. The world, especially in the narrowcasting of the 1950s, could be a cruel place. And there is no lying in baseball. Or is that crying?

*"The Perfect Game" opened in Chicago and elsewhere April 16th. Check local theaters for listings. Featuring Clifton Collins Jr., Cheech Marin, Emilie de Ravin, John Cothran and Lou Gossett, Jr., directed by William Dear. Rated "PG"*



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