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NO ONE WINS ALONE

AMERICAN UNDERDOG

BASED ON THE TRUE STORY OF LEGENDARY QUARTERBACK KURT WARNER

TEAM DISCUSSION GUIDE

AMERICAN UNDERDOG DISCUSSION GUIDE

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"AMERICAN UNDERDOG is just an amazing movie. It's going to be a huge hit. Inspirational. Motivational. Spiritual. Just a very moving true story of a true American underdog—a fighter who believed in his dreams."

DABO SWINNEY - Head Football Coach, Clemson University

AMERICAN UNDERDOG

AMERICAN UNDERDOG shares the inspirational true story of Kurt Warner, who went from stocking shelves at a grocery store to throwing touchdowns in the Super Bowl. Throughout the journey, he experienced surprising opportunities, disappointing failures, people who supported him, and those who doubted him. His amazing story is one of vision, perseverance, faith, and overcoming obstacles.

Sports teams are encouraged to watch this movie together in theaters and experience the unbelievable career path that Kurt Warner took. Teams will be inspired, encouraged, and motivated by what can happen when you have a never-give-up attitude and take advantage of each opportunity that is given. The movie shows us what is possible when dreams are pursued with the right heart and mind.

This **AMERICAN UNDERDOG Team Discussion Guide** leads you through 5 themes from the movie that can be applied to sports—and to life. It's designed for sports teams to have conversations that help them grow, build chemistry, persevere, and strengthen teamwork.

Coaches should provide an opportunity for their team to watch the movie and then give players dedicated time to "huddle up" and discuss each theme as an entire team or in smaller groups of players. Provide space for players to really reflect, share, and ask questions.

To view the trailer and find out how you can watch AMERICAN UNDERDOG, visit AmericanUnderdog.movie/Inspires.

THIS GUIDE CONTAINS SPOILERS, AND IS INTENDED TO USE AFTER A GROUP HAS SEEN THE FILM.



ON THE BENCH WAITING

HUDDLE UP #1

Early in the movie, Kurt Warner is shown as a backup quarterback, sitting on the bench waiting for an opportunity to start at the University of Northern Iowa.

His passion to be the starter in college was evident as he makes a plea to the head coach: “Coach, 10 more games, and my dream is gone. I’ve been working my whole life for this. Please ... coach, I’m not going to quit because that’s not what leaders do; I just need to know how to get on that field.”

Kurt also had to wait four years before having a real chance in the NFL ... and then again when he first joined the St. Louis Rams.

Being on the bench is hard when we’d rather be on the field in the action. Along with patience, we need to ask (like Kurt did) what it’s going to take to become the starter, and then humbly make the necessary changes and sacrifices.

Many of us are waiting for an opportunity but may not be ready yet. While Kurt was waiting, he was improving as a player and growing as a man. God was preparing him to handle the blessings he’d eventually receive.

When we find ourselves in a season of waiting, the challenge is to use the time wisely and prepare for a chance to get in the game. When we ask God, He'll show us how we need to change and grow as a person, which is valuable even if we never make it onto the field.

God uses our seasons of waiting for His purposes and to get us ready for what's next. Remaining patient and trusting His timing are daily battles, but God gives us strength not to quit and builds us up while waiting on the bench for His unique plan to be revealed.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I don't like waiting for an opportunity, but I trust in You and Your plan. I pray You would change me and prepare me as I wait. I know You are good and loving and Your timing is best. I place my hope in You. In Jesus' name, I pray, amen.

SCRIPTURE:

Psalm 27:14 (ESV)

"Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!"

Micah 7:7 (AMP)

"But as for me, I will look expectantly for the Lord and with confidence in Him I will keep watch; I will wait [with confident expectation] for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me."

Romans 5:3-5 (NLT)

"We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because He has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love."

James 1:12 (ESV)

"Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him."

Romans 12:12 (ESV)

"Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer."

TALK IT OVER:

1. Every sports team has both starters and backups, and every player has spent time on the bench. What have you learned about yourself and the team when you've watched from the sideline?
2. What has been your response while waiting for a chance to get on the field? In what ways have you grown personally and as a player during the wait?
3. Challenge the team's backups (and even the starters) to humbly approach the coaching staff by asking what they need to do to improve their game and how they can be better prepared when an opportunity presents itself.
4. If you're a starter, in what ways are you willing to help your backup get better for the sake of the team? If you're a backup, how are you learning from the starter and asking questions? How are you supporting the starter while you wait?





EMBRACE BEING AN UNDERDOG

HUDDLE UP #2

Kurt Warner is the ultimate underdog story. He came from a small Iowa college where he only started for one season and was out of school for four years before getting his NFL opportunity with the Rams.

Most scouts and coaches considered him too slow and not athletic enough to play the highest level of football. In the movie, the Rams offensive coordinator, Mike Martz, says, “This guy is old, slow as molasses, and frankly he’s beneath the standards of this franchise ... there is no way this guy makes the team, no way.”

Despite being undrafted and overlooked, Kurt not only made the team, but he won a Super Bowl, he was the Super Bowl MVP, and was the NFL MVP twice. Ultimately, he became a Hall of Famer.

Many of us can identify as being “underdogs” on or off the field because of our shortcomings, weaknesses, lack of experience, and past mistakes. However, even when limitations and odds are stacked against us, the God who created us will accomplish incredible things through us with His power as we trust Him.

God has used the most unlikely people and surprising circumstances to accomplish His will while demonstrating His goodness and supernatural ability. A few Biblical underdogs include David, who was too small (1 Samuel 16:7), Gideon, who lacked confidence (Judges 6:14-16), and Moses, who felt inadequate (Exodus 3:10-12). These men were flawed and weak, but God did great things with them as “underdogs.”

Let’s remember that when our heart is for God, He strengthens, empowers, and equips us to accomplish more than we could ever imagine on and off the field ... and He does amazing things in us and through us as “underdog.”

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I place my trust in You and believe that You can do anything. Sometimes I feel like an underdog and so inadequate. However, I know You are powerful, so please help me have confidence and hope that You’ll do the unexpected in me and through me. In Jesus’ name, I pray, amen.

SCRIPTURE:

1 Samuel 16:7 (ESV)

“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.’”

Judges 6:14-16 (NIV)

“The Lord turned to him and said, ‘Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?’ ‘Pardon me, my Lord,’ Gideon replied, ‘but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.’ The Lord answered, ‘I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.’”

Exodus 3:10-12 (NIV)

“‘So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.’ But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?’ And God said, ‘I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.’”

1 Corinthians 1:27-29 (NLT)

“Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And He chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.”

Deuteronomy 7:7-8 (NLT)

“The Lord did not set His heart on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other nations, for you were the smallest of all nations! Rather, it was simply that the Lord loves you, and He was keeping the oath He had sworn to your ancestors. That is why the Lord rescued you with such a strong hand from your slavery and from the oppressive hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.”

2 Corinthians 12:10 (NIV)

“That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

TALK IT OVER:

- 1.** In what ways are you inspired by Kurt Warner’s story of being overlooked and doubted?
- 2.** What do you consider your shortcomings and weaknesses?
- 3.** What has been your underdog story and what motivates you to keep going? How have you seen God use you for His purposes despite your weaknesses?
- 4.** How have underdogs on your team inspired you?
- 5.** How does our team overcome each other’s weaknesses as we look to make the team as a whole strong?



TEAMMATES ON THE JOURNEY

HUDDLE UP #3

Kurt Warner is the lead character in **AMERICAN UNDERDOG**, going from stocking grocery shelves to throwing touchdowns in the Super Bowl. But throughout his journey, key people—such as his wife, teammates, and coaches—encouraged, challenged, and pushed him to keep going.

There is a crucial scene in the movie where Kurt had a bad game in Arena football and afterward was practicing late at night in the cornfields. The team's coach and Kurt's teammate were there motivating and helping him when he needed to get better.

Then when Kurt got to the Rams, the movie shows his teammate, Isaac Bruce, encouraging him after receiving criticism from offensive coordinator Mike Martz during practice.

Later in the movie, a conversation with Coach Martz inspires Kurt, who was struggling at the start of the game, to settle down and play well the rest of the way.

Kurt didn't make it to the Hall of Fame alone; he had the support of many people along the way. This is true in our own journeys too.

We need teammates who will pick us up and help carry our burdens when we're struggling. We need them to encourage us in the locker room, inspire us in the huddle, and challenge us in practice. We also need to be that kind of teammate.

Teammates and coaches who point us toward Jesus are the best kind of encouragers. If we're going to grow in our faith, we must surround ourselves with people who not only cheer us on, but also hold us accountable. We need them to push us to keep going and improving ... both on and off the field.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I pray I would be the type of teammate that encourages and motivates others to trust You. Help me be the kind of teammate who comes alongside others when they need help. Please teach me what to say. In Jesus' name, I pray, amen.

SCRIPTURE:

Hebrews 10:24-25 (AMP)

"Let us consider [thoughtfully] how we may encourage one another to love and to do good deeds, not forsaking our meeting together [as believers for worship and instruction], as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more [faithfully] as you see the day [of Christ's return] approaching."

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (ESV)

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."

Galatians 6:2 (NIV)

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Proverbs 13:20 (ESV)

"Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm."

TALK IT OVER:

1. How has a teammate or coach encouraged you when you really needed it, or motivated you when you felt like giving up on or off the field?
2. Why are teammates so important in our journey of faith as we follow Jesus? In what ways are teammates helping you grow and holding you accountable?
3. In what ways do you need to improve in being a more encouraging teammate?
4. What type of motivation or encouragement is most beneficial to you in life and in sports?





LIFE IS A JOURNEY, NOT AN EVENT

HUDDLE UP #4

In the movie, there's a scene in the garage where Brenda's dad gives this advice to Kurt: "Life is not about what you can achieve; it's about what you can become. It's a journey son, not an event."

This true statement represents how Kurt's story ended up playing out. He may have won a Super Bowl and eventually made it to the Hall of Fame, but the movie showcases his journey through many key moments that included doubt, mistakes, and difficulties.

Each step along the way not only helped Kurt become an MVP on the field, but more importantly, become a committed husband, loving father, and outspoken follower of Jesus. Overcoming tremendous hardships and challenges enabled him to grow into the inspirational man who many look up to today.

Kurt's entire journey (not one event or one game), is what deepened his faith, developed his character, and turned him into a significant athlete, not just a successful one.

An important question for us to unpack today is whether we're more focused on what we can achieve in life or more concerned about becoming the person God created us to be.

Are we frustrated by our lack of sports' achievements and basing our worth on accomplishments on the field? Or are we thankful for the journey God has us on because we trust He's transforming us and growing our character?

Just like a season isn't about one game but rather the steps along the way that contribute to the team's development, the same is true in life. When we give our lives to Jesus, it's not just an event of receiving salvation, but stepping into a lifelong journey of following Him and becoming more like Him.

So, what are we becoming?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me be more concerned about who and what I'm becoming instead of what I'm accomplishing. I pray You'd continue to transform me and change my character as I walk this journey with You. I desire to become the person You created me to be. In Jesus' name, I pray, amen.

SCRIPTURE:

Psalms 25:4-5 (ESV)

"Make me to know Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; for You I wait all the day long."

Colossians 2:6 (NLT)

"And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow Him."

Matthew 16:26 (ESV)

"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?"

Ephesians 2:10 (AMP)

"For we are His workmanship [His own master work, a work of art], created in Christ Jesus [reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, ready to be used] for good works, which God prepared [for us] beforehand [taking paths which He set], so that we would walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us]."

TALK IT OVER:

1. Why is it valuable to view life more as a journey than an event? Why is it important to view your team's season as a journey?
2. What type of team have you become this season? How has this season affected who you've become as a player and as a person?
3. In what ways has the team grown this season and how have you personally grown?
4. How would you describe your personal faith journey? Where are you in that journey right now?
5. Are you more focused on what you can achieve on and off the field or are you driven to become more like Jesus?





LIVING THE DREAM

HUDDLE UP #5

The movie begins with a young Kurt Warner watching football on TV, as his dream of becoming a football player in the NFL is born. The pursuit of this dream motivates Kurt throughout the movie, as he relentlessly overcomes obstacles to make his dream a reality.

Although God had big plans for his life, Kurt has moments of doubt and at one point asks this question: “I’m just wondering why God would give me a dream that’s probably never going to come true.”

Brenda then challenged him with her response, “Kurt, if this is your dream, you have to go fight for it.”

Kurt’s life demonstrates how wonderful and hard it is to chase a dream through the ups and downs, and to see it come true. We have dreams in our lives, but as we chase them, it’s important to confirm that our dreams are from God, instead of our selfish desires.

We can rest assured that if God places a desire in our hearts, we can confidently push forward knowing He’s going to guide us each step of the way. We’ll most likely face opposition, roadblocks, doubts, and other challenges, but if God shows us what He wants us to do, we must continue to fight for the dream He’s given us.

You may have a dream for your sports career, or your team may have a dream to win the championship, and yet, God's plan for your career or season may end with a loss or injury. The good news is, when our hearts are aligned with God and our desires are rooted in Him, even if our personal dreams don't happen, His dreams and purposes for us will come to fruition.

When we choose to follow Jesus, we can trust that He'll do far more in our lives than we could ever dream up on our own.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank you for the visions and dreams You've placed in my heart. Please give me the strength to persevere when the dreams haven't arrived and help me to trust You each step of the way. Thank you for Your faithfulness. In Jesus' name, I pray, amen.

SCRIPTURE:

Ephesians 3:20-21 (AMP)

"Now to Him who is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly more than all that we dare ask or think [infinitely beyond our greatest prayers, hopes, or dreams], according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen."

Psalms 37:3-5 (NLT)

"Trust in the Lord and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper. Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you your heart's desires. Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust Him, and He will help you."

Philippians 2:13 (AMP)

"For it is [not your strength, but it is] God who is effectively at work in you, both to will and to work [that is, strengthening, energizing, and creating in you the longing and the ability to fulfill your purpose] for His good pleasure."

Psalms 37:23-24 (AMP)

"The steps of a [good and righteous] man are directed and established by the Lord, and He delights in his way [and blesses his path]. When he falls, he will not be hurled down, because the Lord is the One who holds his hand and sustains him."

Habakkuk 2:3 (AMP)

“For the vision is yet for the appointed [future] time. It hurries toward the goal [of fulfillment]; it will not fail. Even though it delays, wait [patiently] for it, Because it will certainly come; it will not delay.”

TALK IT OVER:

- 1.** What dreams do you have for yourself and your team this season? Are you willing to fight with perseverance to accomplish those dreams? Is everyone on the same page?
- 2.** What dreams do you have for your life and where did those dreams come from? Did you seek the Lord and get confirmation that they are from Him?
- 3.** What is the difference between God-given dreams and dreams we come up with on our own?
- 4.** Are the dreams you’re pursuing honoring God and bringing Him glory?
- 5.** Have you seen any of your dreams come to fruition?

ABOUT BRYCE JOHNSON

Bryce Johnson is the President and Founder of UNPACKIN’ it Ministries, a ministry that challenges, encourages, and inspires sports fans to follow Jesus and become more like Him. Through the weekday faith and sports devotional, *UNPACK this*, UNPACKIN’ it Podcasts, and events, sports fans engage in sports conversations that lead to faith conversations. Bryce is the author of *The Fantasy Football Fellowship Playbook* and contributor to the Bible App, as well as, a speaker and emcee based in Charlotte, North Carolina where he lives with his wife, Jodi, and daughters, Maddie and Mikayla.

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