

SIDELINE

"Coach"

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For Daddy, the greatest coach there ever was

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EXT. HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

SUPER: KANSAS CITY, MO. 2005

On the sideline, COACH GARY DOUGLAS African American (36), wears a shirt that reads, "Hit Somebody." Tattoo sleeves on both arms. His hands slam against the clipboard as he SNARLS--

His team in red jerseys runs to the sideline, takes their helmets off and takes a knee. Coach Douglas GRABS the jersey of #26, JASON DOUGLAS, African American (17), tall, built like a professional player and energized. He has a new tattoo on his neck of an "8 ball."

COACH DOUGLAS

We got one play left to make it to state. We're coming to you.

JASON

Yes, sir!

COACH DOUGLAS

(to the team)

We will be going to state, young men.

TEAM

Yes, sir!

The team IRRUPTS in a roar of cheers then runs back on the field.

The ball is hiked. Jason runs and spins, he's open. The ball is launched, and he catches it. Just as he enters the end zone he is hit, hard enough to knock him off his feet. He lies motionless on the field.

Coach Douglas runs to the end zone. Jason's leg is clearly broken, but he clutches the football.

JASON

Did I score, Coach?

CUT TO

INT. DOUGLAS HOME - AFTERNOON

Coach Douglas opens the door to a waiting ELISE DOUGLAS, African American (13), average girl, who stands next to TONY DOUGLAS, African American (19) and smaller than Jason, with his arm around her.

Jason enters in a full cast from his groin to his ankle. Elise and Tony try not to react, but their faces show fear. Elise cries.

ELISE
(to Jason)
You gonna be okay?

Jason with tears in his eyes remains speechless as Coach Douglas shakes his head. Elise hugs her brother, Coach Douglas and Jason lock eyes.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. DOUGLAS HOME - SUNRISE - PRESENT

Coach Douglas, now 53, blinks hard at the memory as he sits on the porch and drinks coffee with a bowl of oatmeal.

DOCTOR (V.O.)
I'm sorry, Mr. Douglas but Jason
will never be able to play football
again.

Coach Douglas sips his coffee and rocks in his chair.

INT. JASON'S HOUSE - MORNING

Jason, now 34, lays in bed and stares at the ceiling. His "8 ball" neck tattoo now faded. His right leg is exposed with major surgery scars throughout. On his nightstand sits a scale, baggies and remnants of white powder. He rubs his leg a bit then with some effort rolls out of bed.

INT. TONY'S HOUSE - MORNING

TONY DOUGLAS, now 36, clean cut in a full suit, grabs a coffee cup from his wife NATASHA DOUGLAS (30s), an African American woman with a serious AIR about her.

NATASHA
Sell lots of houses, the more
expensive the better commission,
Mr. Executive.

She smiles big, Tony forces a smile as DEREK DOUGLAS (14), African American and average size wearing a football jersey, enters. He tosses a football.

DEREK

I thought we could throw a couple
before school.

TONY

Oh, sorry, can't. I'm already
dressed for work.

Derek is disappointed. Tony doesn't notice.

TONY (CONT'D)

But do great things, son.

NATASHA

He means stand out. Be better than
the best.

TONY

(to Derek)

Be you.

Derek smiles and goes into the kitchen as Tony exits.

EXT. DOUGLAS HOUSE - MORNING

Elise, now 32, is thick, beautiful and solid. She wears a
South High School TEACHER shirt as she exits the house onto
the porch.

ELISE

(to Coach Douglas)

Gotta get some gas before school.
I'll see you there.

She kisses him on his forehead and walks to her car.

INT. ROSS REAL ESTATE BROKERS - MORNING

Tony enters the building. A man in a tailored suit enters
next to him.

MAN

(to Tony)

You know, I appreciate when our
entry level people dress up for
work. You'll get there.

Tony smiles until the man is out of sight then lowers his
head.

EXT. GAS STATION - MORNING

Elise pumps gas and drinks out of a large gas station styrofoam cup as DRAKE BURNS (17), African American, wears a team jersey walks up to her.

DRAKE

Yo, Miss D. You know you my favorite teacher, right.

ELISE

Umm hmm, why aren't you at school already?

DRAKE

I missed the bus. It was for a good reason though, I had to find my white Air Force Ones, you know how I do.

He takes a step back to show off the outfit. They laugh.

DRAKE (CONT'D)

I'll buy your next pop, any size you want. So, can I get a ride? You know I can't be late.

ELISE

Pop is my coffee. Get in.

Elise and Drake get in the car and exit the gas station. They turn onto the main street.

A woman, also in a South High School TEACHER shirt, exits the gas station and sees them.

EXT. SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - MORNING

From the parking lot Elise walks towards the building as Drake runs onto the field.

Coach Douglas stands in the end zone as three boys, one of them Derek, line up to run the 40 yard dash. The whistle blows, the boys run. Derek smokes them all.

COACH DOUGLAS

4.9, Derek, but we all know you can do better.

As Elise walks towards the entrance to the school, she looks back at the field that is in DISREPAIR.

PATRICIA BLEACHER (47), African American woman and the school principal, stands at the door.

MRS. BLEACHER
Boys look good.

ELISE
Morning, Principal Bleacher, they
are missing some equipment, but I'm
sure Coach will work that out.

Mrs. Bleacher, annoyed.

MRS. BLEACHER
And I'm sure if Coach Douglas needs
it, he will come and ask.

Mrs. Bleacher opens the door and enters the school.

MRS. BLEACHER (CONT'D)
Good day.

INT. GYM LOCKER ROOM - OFFICE- MORNING

Elise sits at the desk in the football office. The locker room lives in a haze of dark corners, a reflection of the outside.

She opens her phone and reads "City Sports News."

A door OPENS and CLOSES hard. Tony enters.

TONY
Where's dad?

Elise looks at him; he knows the answer.

TONY (CONT'D)
The field, right.

Elise gives him her phone.

ELISE
Derek ran a 4.6 in the 40.

TONY
(reading)
Fastest in the whole damn state.
He's a star.

He smiles and gives Elise back her phone. She goes back to reading, but he lingers.

ELISE

You must need something. My brother Tony never visits us in the hood unless he needs something. You showing a house down here?

She laughs.

TONY

I need you to do me a favor.

ELISE

Get one of our *thugs* to kick your wife's ass?

TONY

I'm serious.

ELISE

As am I. We already have the stray dog at the house.

TONY

Seth is still there?

ELISE

Pops has to save his players at all costs.

He sits, distant.

ELISE (CONT'D)

What's up? Jason in trouble? Did he get arrested again? Hey...

TONY

I need you to ask dad for some money... for me.

ELISE

Tony, you too damn old to ask me to do your dirty work. Get your hands all in the pile of shit that you built for yourself.

TONY

You can make him listen. I just can't ask him again.

ELISE

It's bullshit. Stop gambling.

TONY

You stop doing your shit, and I'll
stop doing mine.

ELISE

My shit don't have me coming to you
for help.

TONY

Please.

He exits.

EXT. SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - MORNING

The boys quickly break. Coach Douglas grabs Derek's face
mask.

COACH DOUGLAS

You doing good, but I don't want
you to hurt yourself. Your body is
still developing.

DEREK

I'm ready, Coach. This is all I
want. I won't get hurt.

COACH DOUGLAS

Derek.

Derek lowers his head a bit.

DEREK

Yes, sir.

The boys run to set up in their formation. The ball is
snapped. Derek outruns everyone again. The team starts to
celebrate while they watch the ball being launched towards
Derek in the end zone as-

A POLICE CAR pulls into the parking lot. The boys stop and
look.

Derek catches the ball for a touchdown, but no one sees.

A white officer, JEFF LYNCH (30s), is tall, clean cut and
muscular. He makes his way to the sideline. Coach Douglas
blows the WHISTLE. The boys run to the sideline.

COACH DOUGLAS

Mr. Grayson, step forward please.

JAY GRAYSON (16), African American boy, moves through the crowd, eyes fixed on the ground.

JAY

Sir?

COACH DOUGLAS

Take off your helmet and pads.

He does as the team watches. He places them on the ground with care.

JAY

I'm sorry, Coach.

COACH DOUGLAS

I am too, son. Head up. I'll call your mother. Not a word until we get there.

Jay puts his hands behind his back in preparation to be cuffed. Lynch HANDCUFFS him and escorts him to the police car.

Three boys in the back walk in the direction of Lynch and Jay. VICTOR WELLS (15), African American and socially awkward boy with a huge afro, removes his helmet and steps in front of the three ADVANCING boys.

VICTOR

Yo, it ain't worth it.

The boys stare down Victor, who lowers his head and moves aside.

BOY 1

This is bullshit, Coach.

BOY 3

We just gonna let him go?

BOY 2

That ain't how niggas do they boys in my hood, Coach.

COACH DOUGLAS

What you gonna do? You gonna kick the police ass? Kill Coach Lynch? A man who comes up here to help you? He has a job to do too.

BOY 1

How they gonna come to the field and arrest him?

COACH DOUGLAS
Would you have rather they did it
in front of his mother? His little
brother, James?

BOY 3
I'm out, Coach. This ain't no team.

COACH DOUGLAS
You mean this ain't no gang.

BOY 3
Fuck naw it ain't.

BOY 1
You a black man; you supposed to
get this shit and be as mad as we
are. You be talking all this shit
but don't never stand up for us.

Boy 1 walks AGGRESSIVELY closer to Coach Douglas followed by
the other two boys. No one else moves.

BRIAN DOUGLAS (17), African American, is six feet six inches
tall with broad shoulders.

His AUTISM keeps him silent while his solid presence says
everything he can't. He stands between the boys and Coach
Douglas.

BOY 1 (CONT'D)
Say something?

Silence.

COACH DOUGLAS
It's okay, Brian. Let them go if
they want to.

The three boys stand strong for a moment then SLAM their
helmets on the ground.

COACH DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
(sternly)
You have a choice. Every day, all
of you have a choice. What
happened?

Silence.

COACH DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
What the hell happened?! You ain't
on the street right now.
(MORE)

COACH DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

Right now, you in my house, and in my damn house, you are all grown ass men. Men speak. It ain't snitching. I'm trying to help him. Speak damn it.

JAVON WILSON (17), African American big boy weighing at least four hundred pounds, stands and raises his hand.

COACH DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

Mr. Wilson?

JAVON

My little brother said the police were passing around a picture of a boy that looked like Jay about a robbery at the liquor store.

COACH DOUGLAS

(to the boys)

That true?

JOSE AYALA (16), who is Hispanic and one of the skinniest boys in the group, stands next to Javon.

COACH DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

Mr. Ayala?

JOSE

I live in the same complex on Paseo. They got evicted last week.

COACH DOUGLAS

I can't help what I don't know. Mr. Grayson possibly made the choice to rob a liquor store. The rest of you did not...

EXT. AN ALLEY - MORNING

Coach Douglas' voice can still be heard as Tony walks to a black SUV.

A hand reaches out; Tony places a wad of MONEY and a marked betting form in the hand and walks away.

COACH DOUGLAS (V.O.)

We have got to stop playing the victim to circumstances and help ourselves. You want to be better, then be better. You want to get out of this place, then get the hell out.

(MORE)

COACH DOUGLAS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You want to sit on your asses and complain when shit goes down, then do that. But don't do nothing then stand high and mighty like you are a part of the solution...

EXT. A PARK - MORNING

Coach Douglas' VOICE can still be heard as Jason sits on a PARK BENCH.

He takes out a small PLASTIC BAG and holds it in his hand. Another man approaches, sits next to him and slips him money. Jason stands, intentionally drops the bag to the ground and LEAVES as the man picks up the bag and is gone.

COACH DOUGLAS (V.O.)

Help yourself to get out of the system that is waiting to steal you. Show up for yourselves, young men. We are each other's family. I'll always have your backs. Because for some of you, we might be all you have...

EXT. SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - MORNING (CONTINUOUS)

Mrs. Bleacher walks onto the sideline. Everyone is silent as Coach approaches.

COACH DOUGLAS

(to the team)

Run that last play again.

The boys run into formation.

MRS. BLEACHER

Saw the police car.

COACH DOUGLAS

Umm hmm.

MRS. BLEACHER

Anything I should be concerned with?

COACH DOUGLAS

Nope. Just Coach Lynch checking in.

MRS. BLEACHER

Right. At the school board meeting tonight they are proposing a new District Athletic Director position.

COACH DOUGLAS

You trying to move to the D.O.?

MRS. BLEACHER

You know me. I go where I'm needed. And I do what's necessary to get there.

COACH DOUGLAS

Here?

Mrs. Bleacher looks at the boys.

MRS. BLEACHER

Raise state test scores. But if this team has another winning season-

COACH DOUGLAS

Athletic Director, here you come.

Mrs. Bleacher lightly touches his hand.

MRS. BLEACHER

A part of the package is a possible Assistant Athletic Director.

COACH DOUGLAS

Is that right?

MRS. BLEACHER

You have that winning season, I'll take you with me. No more coaching, no more bullshit. A nice office working next to me.

(leaning in)

With a door that locks.

Mrs. Bleacher smiles and exits the field.

Coach Douglas blows his whistle, and the boys gather around him taking a knee.

COACH DOUGLAS

Back to Mr. Grayson, be mad. Be so pissed that you can't see straight, but never get in another man's business.

KEVON WILSON (17), African American, is also a big boy and Javon's twin brother. He stands in the back of the group with his eyes to the ground.

KEVON
I know, Coach, but we don't be
feeling like we have choices.

CHRIS ELLIS (17), African American, who is wearing the "quarterback" jersey, looks to the coach.

CHRIS
Tomorrow is our first game, and I
choose to hand it to they asses. I
don't lose.

Chris drops his helmet and begins to run around the track. Seconds later, a majority of the team is side by side with him.

A few PLAYERS linger by the sidelines.

COACH DOUGLAS
Still on the team?

KEVON
We don't know, Coach.

COACH DOUGLAS
Figure it out.

KEVON
We don't know!

Coach Douglas looks at the boys a moment longer then walks down the sideline to the other group of players.

One player decides to join the team RUNNING.

The second player sits next to Kevon.

The final player walks to Coach, DROPS his helmet on the ground, takes his jersey and pads off, drops it HARD at Coach's feet.

BOY 1
I'm dead with or without you,
Coach.

COACH DOUGLAS
Always bet on life.

BOY 1
Can't do it no more.

He looks at the team one last moment then walks off the field. Elise, runs onto the sideline.