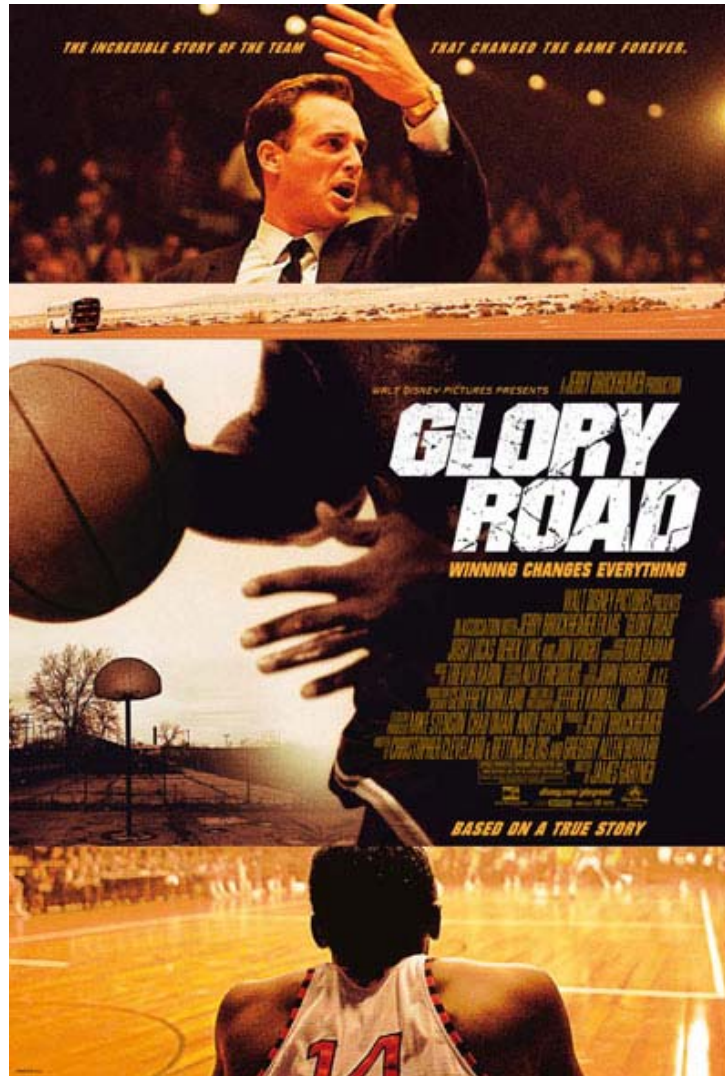


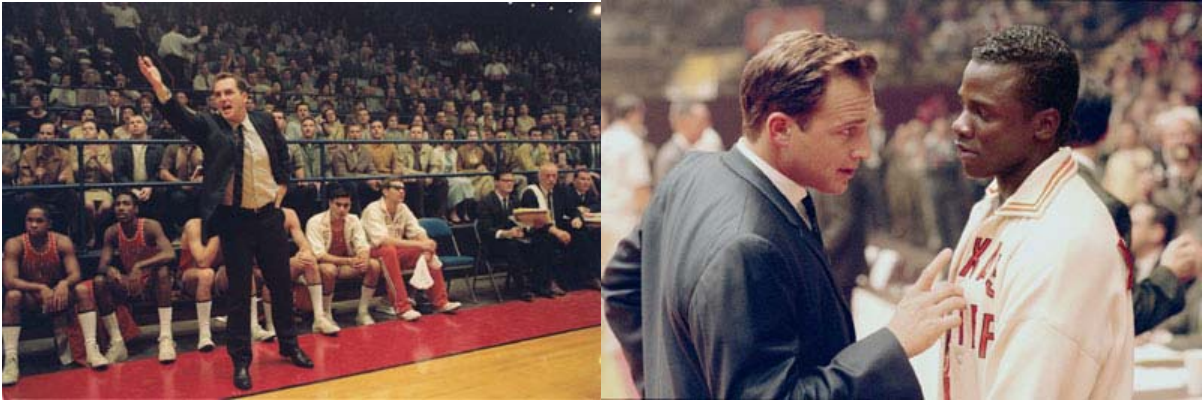
Glory Road Film Review:

“You'll play basketball my way. My way is hard” ...Don Haskins

The incredible story of the team that changed the game forever...



In 1966, Texas Western University started five African-Americans in the NCAA Championship basketball game, taking on Adolph Rupp's heavily favored all-white Kentucky Wildcats. The decision by Texas Western Coach Don Haskins to start five black players for the first time in NCAA championship history forever changed college basketball, breaking down a decades-long color barrier and paving the way for the game as we know it today. "Glory Road" is the story of how Haskins, a former high school girls coach, took over the basketball program at Texas Western, recruited the urban black players to far distant El Paso, then melded his new recruits with white players primarily from Texas to create a championship squad...L. Kent Wogamat, JournalStar.com



Glory Road is a great story, but that does not make *Glory Road* a great film. It is not a great film because this is another Jerry Bruckheimer/Disney by-the-book “racism is bad and hold on for a better day” type of flick. Just like *Remember The Titan*, we have a period piece film with a team of white losers suddenly getting a new coach that brings a group of talented black players to the team. Remember made \$120 million plus in the U.S., so it’s not surprising for Disney to greenlight *Glory Road*. Make no mistake the story of *Glory Road* is a highly important one that needs to be told. It is almost unimaginable in today’s age of black athletes dominating every aspect of high school, college and pro-basketball, except coaching, that there was a day forty years ago when black players were an after thought. Black ballers were not even recruited by major colleges because white racist thought they were “showoffs” and not dependable leaders. This theme of proving “black players are as good as white players” was also a subtle metaphor saying blacks were as good as whites in an overall sense. This is repeated enough times to make the point, but not truly upset anyone. We have no sense at all from watching *Glory Road* how the actual students or the professors at Texas Western treated the players. There would have to be some obvious racism from the student body. But this is a Bruckheimer/Disney collabo effort and that topic is never touched in their politically correct *Glory Road*.

There are a few dramatic scenes of racism where Nevil Shed, played pretty well by Al Shear, is beaten up in a dinner restroom and at a when the TWC team’s motel rooms were thrashed and splattered with blood smeared “Niggers Die” on the walls. But these insults were just quickly brushed over by the film. There are only glancing discussions about the Civil Rights movement going on and sometimes the film’s director, James Gartner, just got it completely wrong. At one point we are in the dorm room of TWC point guard Willie Worsely and he proudly points to a Black Panther poster on his dorm wall. Willie is trying to show that he is more militant than some of his other “white folk” tolerant black teammates. This is basically the same stock non-trusting brother character that was played by Sean Patrick Thomas in *Barbershop*. The only glaring problem with Willie’s scene is that in the Fall of 1965 Bobby Seale and Huey Newtown had not yet formed the Black Panthers. The Panthers were started almost a year later in October 1966. And to be honest black athletes were not championing their “pro-black” cause until after Dr. King was killed and Tommie Smith and John Carlos protested the ‘68 Summer Olympics in Mexico. I understand the sentiment and the powerful images Gartner wanted to use, but it is far too easy to know the Black Panthers did not influence TWC players.



The best parts of *Glory Road* for me was the way that editor John Wright kept a constant level of tension between the coaching styles of Adolph Rupp (John Voight) and Don Haskins (John Lucas). This back and forth pace in the final game keeps you on your seat and really into the final moments of the film. The game was won by TWC, but it was clearly a battle from start to finish. And I must say that other best part of the film for me was actually watching the film's credits that showed snippets of the real Texas Western players, Pat Riley and Don Haskins talking about that fateful game. It was like getting an early *Glory Road* DVD extras preview--and it was well worth it. Especially, seeing actual B&W film plays from the real 1966 NCAA championship game, like David Lattin's monster dunk and Bobby Joe Hill's back-to-back steals. It just reaffirmed how accurately Gartner managed to reproduce the basketball scenes depicted in the film. Bruckheimer had a lot of technical problems with correctly capturing the 1970's football scenes in *Remember The Titan*. *Glory* stays focused on what really happened and not what studio execs thought happen.

Notable performances were Derek Luke playing lead TWC point guard Bobby Hill. There was a funny scene with Harry Flourney Jr.'s, Mechad Brook, mother coming down from Gary Indiana to help him study and keep his grades up. This could have set up some great scenes with the mother staying in El Paso and attending TWC games. But she is gone after that scene and is never heard or seen in the film again. The film has many good actors who are giving nothing to do or say. Emily Deschanel, the star of Fox's *Bones*, does nothing as Haskin's wife more than pouting and rolling her eyes. Overall one should go see *Glory Road* not because of the film itself, but rather knowing the fact that Don Haskins had the vision and courage to start an all black line-up against Adolph Rupp's all-white Kentucky national championship team. Don Haskins made a definitive statement and important and overlooked civil rights act by doing what he did. It's not gone into much detail at all of Haskins racial experiences or social beliefs outside of basketball to show why he was so determined to change the system. Again this is why *Glory Road* is an okay film that could have been better if more conscious producers, director and writer, Bettina Gilois, had been involved from the jump. I do strongly recommend anyone seeing *Glory Road* and I give it three cheesecakes out of five.

Sincerely,

David L Watts a.k.a. Money Train





