

# Dawson gets the Blues

by Deanna Symoski  
staff writer

Yep, Dawson has another case of the blues and to those of you that follow *Dawson's Creek* like it's the new religion, that probably isn't news. But this time, it's James Van Der Beek (or as a guy in my class put it: 'James Van Der Whatever His Name Is') and he's got *Varsity Blues*. Now, before you stop reading, let me just say that the ability to name every poster in Dawson's room is NOT a prerequisite for seeing this movie.

In fact, forget everything you think you know about James Van Der Beek: "Teen Beat" cover boy, and let me introduce you to James Van Der Beek: Actor. Starring in *Varsity Blues* as John Moxon (a.k.a. Mox), Van Der Beek plays a skilled second-string quarterback and professional bench-warmer who prefers to hide Vonnegut in his playbook and ignore the coach. But in this small Texas town where football is the breath of life itself (they erect giant billboards on the star players' front lawns), that's not the behavior proud fathers expect from their

sons. They have to play and they have to win. So when the starting quarterback sustains a crippling injury five games before the Coyotes' twenty-third championship title, Mox is called in to save the day.

But the journey from zero to hero isn't all it's cracked up to be. Sure, the whole school loves him, the head cheerleader wants him and the guy at the corner store keeps giving him free beer. Sounds great, except ignoring the coach is no longer an option.

Treating his team of boys more like an infantry of soldiers, Bud Kilmer (Jon Voight) could make Stone Cold cry. From banging on their helmets with his whistle to dragging them around by the face masks, the name of Kilmer's game is humiliation. And it's only now as the team's leader that Mox discovers the lengths Kilmer will go to for a win.

This film, however, is about more than football, drinking and whipped-cream bikinis, although that might be enough for some. Somehow the innocence of little league is stolen away by the politics of scholarships and bragging rights in a town with nothing to hold on to but its own warped

obsession. And it's up to Mox and the rest of the team to put a little dignity back in the game and in themselves.

Watching Mox struggle between his own version of life and that which is dictated by Kilmer is like watching someone you might actually know. He wrestles with his sense of duty and honor in a way most of us do when uncomfortable expectations are set. Van Der Beek does an exceptional job creating a character that is likable without being soft, and admirable without being perfect. In a sense, he's the all-American kid, but with all the imperfections American kids possess. Mox, quite simply, is one of us, and at the same time the kind of person we would all like to be. Van Der Beek's talent for subtlety gives Mox the emotion this character (and the audience) demand.

Although some of the characters are cliché, others are molded with careful precision. Ron Lester's "Billy Bob" does more than serve as the film's sight gag; his pitiful obedience to Kilmer implies a deeper inner turmoil. And Voight's militaristic Kilmer is so contemptible you can't

help but find yourself cursing at him under your breath. As for the fathers, you want to hate them, too, for pushing so hard, but when you realize memories of old glory days are all they have left, hate turns to pity.

*Varsity Blues* is both extremely entertaining and smart—think of it as *The Waterboy* meets *The Breakfast Club*. Director Brian Robbins captures the intensity of football as he intermingles professional players with the actors, creating a spectacle worth watching all on its own.

In addition, the soundtrack is one of the best alterna-metal compilations to date—it should be, this is an MTV Production, after all—and worth checking out even if you don't see the film. The song "My Hero" by the Foo Fighters especially helps to make true movie moments out of ordinary scenes.

Still, I know some of you may choose to pass because Dawson is in it, but don't. *Varsity Blues* is simply a great film and coming off the chaos that is Super Sunday, no other movie could be more appropriate. And to that guy in my class, pay attention: it's James Van Der Beek: hero.



James Van Der Beek stars as John Moxon, a skilled second-string quarterback whose team is relying on to bring home the twenty-third championship title for his small-town Texas high school.

## Behrend swings in Reed Commons with Big Tubba Mista

Sarah Edwards  
Staff Writer

Last Saturday night the Reed Commons was transformed into a happening swingers' club with Big Tubba Mista as the hep cat performers. Over 400 people came prepared to jump and jive with the 7-piece band of swingers from Harrisburg. Free lessons were given from 8-9 p.m. and then the band began their first set of swinging tunes.

The name Big Tubba Mista is taken from a legendary mobster that was known as a fast-living hustler. When these hustlers took the stage at Penn State they not only moved fast but also used their style and slick sounds to win over the crowd. With songs like

"Killer on 37th Street" and "These Are The Days" the band made the Commons rattle with rhythm and stomping feet. Most of the songs they performed can be found on their new CD entitled "The Sting That's Swing." Linda Kaleta, RUB Desk staff assistant said "It was a great swing band. They were really energetic and made you feel like dancing."

Big Tubba Mista takes on a mobster appeal with some of the band members having nicknames like "The Godfather" Snavelly who plays alto sax and clarinet and Johnny V who captures the snazzy sounds of the band with his voice. "Big" Bob Breechbill is phenomenal on the drums and "Dr. Vegas" Gadd knows how to strum his bass. The entire

band depended on each other and worked together so well that it was fun watching them groove.

People were grooving as well on the dance floor: either teaching moves, learning new swing techniques, or creating dance steps of their own. From 8 until midnight the music never stopped and neither did the Penn State Eric Swing Club. Of course if people needed a break from dancing there were plenty of refreshments and friendly people to talk with or watch dance. I believe Lee Ericson, 04, Communications summed up the evening best when he said that "Swing Dancing is the best thing to come along since... SPAM."

### ARE YOU UP TO THE CHALLENGE???

In honor of Black History Month, the Association of Black Collegians is sponsoring a writing contest. In a hundred (100) words or less, describe how an African American person (living or dead, famous or not) has impacted your life.

Deadline for submissions is Monday, February 22, 1999. Submissions can be turned into the Division of Undergraduate Studies office, located in the Reed Union Building. All submissions must be typed and include name, semester standing and major.

The winning author will receive a gift certificate to the Behrend bookstore and their work will appear in the February 25, 1999 issue of the Behrend Beacon.

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