



Afghan Girls Can Kick

Director: Bahareh Hosseini, UK/Afghanistan, 2007, 50 minutes

Under the Taliban, women's freedom in Afghanistan was almost entirely curbed. For five years, women went through life veiled, usually indoors, excluded from education and, of course, from sports. Now some women are seizing their chance to do what they couldn't before. *Afghan Girls Can Kick* is a portrait of teenage girls breaking stereotypes set by an intensely conservative Afghan society. As players in Afghanistan's first ever women's national football team, these young women are escaping poverty while gaining self-esteem and confidence. For security reasons, no international team has ever played against them in Afghanistan; at a friendly game on Peace Day, NATO's women soldiers are no match for the Afghani team.

When the team is invited to a tournament in Islamabad, it's the first time they will play a game on a real soccer field. The film follows the team's preparations for their first international matches, concentrating on a few players. As a child, Roya had to collect waste paper on the filthy streets of Kabul's slums to provide fuel for her family. Through an Afghan charity, she received an education and found she had a talent for football. She now plays centre-forward for the national women's team. Other members of the team recount their problems with the Taliban and how football helped them see a future in present-day Afghanistan, beset by insecurity and suicide bombings. The film offers a rare insight into the lives of young Afghan women, showing them not as passive victims, but as people striving for a future.

PRECEDED BY:

Journey My Heart

Director: Reil Munro, Canada, 2007, 9 minutes

What begins as a documentary about the rigours of physical training becomes a complex portrait of a Pow Wow jingle dress dancer. Joanne Soldier runs miles and weight-trains in an effort to fulfill a spiritual calling that links her with her elders and the generations to come. Originally from Swan Lake, Soldier reveals the physical commitment and cultural necessity of her art form.

Classified for younger audiences. No membership required.

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