

THE MIGHTY MIGHTY HORNETS

2023 DRAFT

SCREENPLAY BY ROBERT REQUEJO RAMOS

BASED ON THE MIGHTY MIGHTY HORNETS

BY MARK GALLAGHER & PATRICK DOLAN

05/25/2023

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

1974 NORTHFIELD, ILLINOIS - LAST DAY OF SUMMER

SERIES OF SHOTS - LIFE IN THE SUBURBS

A) A single prop fighter airplane flying through the sky. REVEAL, a remote control. A middle aged man pilots the toy plane while standing in his front lawn.

B) Church bells RING outside of St.Philip the Apostle Catholic Church. People pile through the church doors in Sunday attire.

C) A series of homes with big yards and driveways with station wagons parked out front.

D) A typical suburban mom grabs four big brown grocery bags from the backseat of a station wagon and walks them to her front door.

E) A kid slams his front door, picks up a bike from his front lawn and rides off. He catches up to a group of neighborhood kids on bikes. They ride past a mailbox labeled: ZERBIC.

F) A lanky teen with long hair and sun glasses sits on a front porch step. He snorts then hocks a loogie. He jumps up and yells at the kids as they ride past his front lawn.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

A lone bicycle in the middle of the street PEDALING with small untied cleats pushing down and around. THE HANDLE BARS with football pads hanging.

The boy behind the bike, MARK GALLAGHER, (13) teeny tiny for his age with messy bleach blonde hair, wearing football pants and an oversized white football jersey.

Mark rides down the street, he stops in front of MR. FIELDS (65), the man playing with the remote control plane.

MARK
Hey Mr. Fields.

MR. FIELDS
What do you want kid?

MARK
Can I play with your toy plane?

MR. FIELDS

It's not a toy kid. This is a collectors item. I built it myself.

MARK

Looks like a toy plane to me.

MR. FIELDS

Get out of here kid! You're bothering me!

Mr. Fields throws his hands up and drops the remote. The plane comes crashing down in his front lawn.

MR. FIELDS

Dag Nabbit! You see what you did?

Mark chuckles and quickly takes off down the street.

He stops on a dime in front of the Zerbic's mailbox. CLARK ZERBIC (16), the lanky long haired teen, jumps to his feet.

CLARK ZERBIC

Gallagher. Don't you even think about it.

Mark reaches into his pocket and pulls out a string of fire crackers and a match box.

CLARK ZERBIC

Don't do it Gallagher. That'll be the last firecracker you light after I break your fingers.

Mark smiles then lights the firecrackers and quickly throws them into the mailbox.

Clarks sprints off the porch towards Mark.

Mark speeds off.

CLARK ZERBIC

Come back here you little twerp! Come back here Gallagher! Come back here and fight like a man!

Clark's screams fade as Mark pedals off into the distance.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Mark turns into the gas station and stops in front of a soda machine. He looks around, no one in sight. He wedges his hand up the machine and pulls out a soda, clearly he's done this before. He smiles, pops the can and takes a big sip.

A GAS STATION ATTENDANT rushes out of the front door.

GAS STATION ATTENDANT

Get out of my soda machine you rat! I won't call the police next time! Next time I shoot!

Mark speeds off, soda in hand.

EXT. ST.PHILIP PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

A modest lush field shining gold and green in the late summer sun. A group of 14 young-teen middle school boys sitting near a tree. They sport an assortment of second hand football gear, beat up helmets and pads, stained football pants.

Mark rolls up, drops his bike, and walks over to the group, pads and soda in hand.

He throws his pads down and sits between two kids, TIMMY DUNN (13), tall with a bowl cut and big ears and PAT DOLAN (13), clean cut with freckles and a big smile.

TIMMY DUNN

Gallagher, aren't you a sight for sore eyes.

MARK

My best worst buddy Timmy Dunn. How the hell are you?

Mark and Dunn exchange high fives.

PAT DOLAN

And what am I, chopped liver?

MARK

Patrick. You're a good man.

Mark gives Pat a handshake.

MARK

Wish I could say the same for Dunn.

TIMMY DUNN

I swear, you're the worst Gallagher.

Mark smiles and takes a sip from his soda.

MARK

(exaggerated)

Ah.

A WHISTLE BLOWS. Two men wearing white polo shirts tucked into short black shorts stand tall in front of the kids. COACH NORB PABICH, (33) short sandy brown hair covered by a cap, great posture, handsome and fit. JIM CAGNEY, (27) loyal side kick and assistant coach, dark hair, and thin. Pabich squints into the sun.

COACH PABICH

Where the hell is everybody?

Pabich does a head count, pointing at each kid and whispering under his breathe.

Dunn turns to Mark and Pat.

TIMMY DUNN

What's Norb's deal?

MARK

I don't think we have enough guys to field a team.

PAT DOLAN

No way, we gotta have a dozen guys at least.

Pabich pulls his already short shorts up even higher and starts again.

COACH PABICH

Well hell! 14. Looks like we're going to have to do with what we got. Gentlemen, as most of you know, I'm coach Norb Pabich and this here's coach Jim Cagney. Welcome to another year of Hornet football.

The kids clap out of unison.

COACH PABICH (CONTD)

Looks like we're gonna be a small unit this year, but a unit never the less. For the next two weeks we'll be drilling and conditioning you into hard hitting, ground pounding football players.

TOM MULLIGAN (13), a short red head kid with thick rimmed glasses held together by tape, wipes snot from his face.

BACK TO PABICH

COACH PABICH (CONTD)

Men play football, and seeing as all of you are football players, hell you're all men in my eyes. Would you agree men?

ALL

(monotone and weak)

Yes.

COACH PABICH

Oh come on men! YES, COACH!

ALL

YES COACH!

COACH PABICH

I expect you men to be dedicated, to sacrifice your time, and to play with guts on the battle field each and every day. Can you men play with guts?

ALL

YES COACH!

COACH PABICH

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, sounds like some men finally showed up. What do you think Cagney, sound like some men showed up?

COACH CAGNEY

I don't know coach, looks like some of these guys got lazy on us, been sitting around drinking soda pop all summer.

Mark hides his soda can behind his back.

Pabich grins and gives a slight nod.

COACH PABICH
Well, we can fix that. Let's turn
those summer guts into football guts.
All right men, let's run.

Pabich blows his whistle AGGRESSIVELY. Cagney claps his hands. The boys jump up and run off.

COACH PABICH
(under his breath)
St. Philip... pray for us.

LATER

The kids run across the field in disorderly fashion.

Pabich and Cagney watch at a distance, focused on individual players. Cagney writes on a clipboard while Pabich dictates.

COACH PABICH POV - JOHNNY BARKER (13), oafish and significantly larger than the other kids, sweats profusely and struggles to make it down field.

BACK TO PABICH AND CAGNEY

COACH PABICH
Well, Barker's definitely on the line.
Put him down as a guard Jim.

COACH PABICH POV - BOB RYAN (13), a tall California jock type with long brown hair, jogs along cool and confident.

COACH PABICH (O.S.)
Bob Ryan's gonna be great this year.

BACK TO PABICH AND CAGNEY

COACH CAGNEY
Kid grew into a beast over the summer.
Could be a good fullback.

Pabich nods. Coach Cagney jots on the clipboard.

COACH CAGNEY
What about Patrick Dolan?

COACH PABICH POV - Mark and Pat playfully race around the field as they lap the rest of the team.

BACK TO PABICH AND CAGNEY

COACH PABICH
Great athletic ability. Definitely a
running back.

COACH CAGNEY
And Mark Gallagher?

COACH PABICH POV - Mark runs ahead of Pat, taking a lead.

COACH PABICH (O.S.)
Gallagher --

BACK TO PABICH AND CAGNEY

COACH PABICH (CONTD)
From what I understand he's a bit of a
bad apple. Not to mention he's very
small.

COACH CAGNEY
Kid's pretty fast coach.

COACH PABICH
Faster than a high school kid on prom
night.

Pabich and Cagney chuckle then stare at the field for a
moment.

COACH CAGNEY
I don't know about that coach, I mean
the kids playing high school ball are
definitely faster.

Pabich dismissively glances at Cagney.

COACH PABICH
Screw it, put em both down as running
backs. Linebackers on defense.

Pabich blows his whistle.

LATER

The team sprawled out on the field, sweaty and panting.
Pabich holds a clipboard and paces like a general.

COACH PABICH
Ok men, we got ourselves a football

team here. Brothers-in-arms. We may be undersized and undermanned. But god damn it if we're not going to work twice as hard. And if we do, I believe we can go all the way. Football's like war, if we're gonna win, we're gonna have to grind it out in the trenches. Do you men want to win?

ALL

Yes coach.

COACH PABICH

I said do you men want to win?

ALL

YES COACH!

COACH PABICH

We're not gonna waste any time.
Tomorrow we scrimmage. Full pads, full contact.

Pabich waves the team into a huddle. The kids get up and gather around the coaches.

COACH PABICH

Mighty things grow from small beginnings. Hornets on three. 1, 2, 3.

ALL

HORNETS!

LATER

Mark, Pat, and Dunn walk off the field, side by side with their bikes.

TIMMY DUNN

And just like that, poof, summer's gone.

PAT DOLAN

Summer was a blast, but I'm actually excited about 8th grade.

TIMMY DUNN

Yeah I'm excited, excited to get the hell out of here.

MARK

Yeah, I don't even wanna think about school.

PAT DOLAN

Come on man, you heard coach, this is our year. One last shot at bringing home the championship.

TIMMY DUNN

You're an inspiration to us all Patrick.

PAT DOLAN

Shut up Dunn.

MARK

Calm down fellas. Summer's not over yet. What do say we hit the ditch?

TOM MULLIGAN (O.S.)

You guys going to the ditch?

The boys stop walking their bikes. Mulligan struggles to ride his large awkward bike through the grass towards the boys.

MARK

Yeah man, we were thinking about it.

VOICE (O.S)

Hey Mulligan, catch!

A FOOTBALL FLIES THROUGH THE AIR.

Mulligan turns his head, the ball's heading straight at him. He panics, wobbles his handle bars, and falls off his bike.

The voice belongs to LIAM O'KELLY (13), messy hair, strong build for his age. He's accompanied by JAMIE CONLEY (13), short hair with a stocky profile. They crack up as they bike towards the group. They stop in front of Mulligan as he brushes himself off.

Pat sets his bike down and walks over to Mulligan.

LIAM O'KELLY

Christ Mulligan, you might wanna get a new pair of glasses.

JAMIE CONLEY

Yeah Mulligan. Get yourself a helmet

to protect that giant head of yours.

Liam and Jamie laugh.

Pat helps Mulligan up and onto his bike.

PAT DOLAN

Come on O'Kelly, you know Mulligan can barely ride a bike let alone catch a football.

Pat picks up the football and chucks it to O'Kelly. He catches it.

LIAM O'KELLY

Just practicing my long ball bud. That's all.

O'Kelly pump fakes the ball at Pat and Mulligan.

LIAM O'KELLY

You want some Patrick?

Mulligan flinches. Pat stares O'Kelly down.

PAT DOLAN

Stop playing Liam.

LIAM O'KELLY

Patrick, if you can't take a little joke. How you going to handle those shit talkers on the field?

MARK

Kick rocks O'Kelly, you're a space cadet.

Mark pushes his bike off the grass and rides off slowly.

LIAM O'KELLY

Big mouth for a such little boy Gallagher.

Mark forcibly stops his bike and glares at O'Kelly.

O'Kelly rides his bike in circles around the boys.

LIAM O'KELLY

You guys need to toughen up. Mulligan looks like he's going out for chess club, not the football team and

Gallagher's a pip squeak.

Jamie chuckles and starts riding in circles around the boys.

Pat walks over to his bike and picks it up.

LIAM O'KELLY (CONTD)
Just stating the facts fellas.

TIMMY DUNN
How'd you get to be such a shit head
O'Kelly? Spend too much time sniffing
Pabich's ass?

O'Kelly stalls his bike behind Dunn.

LIAM O'KELLY
Don't get me started Dunn. I'll tie
those ears of yours in a knot.

O'Kelly stops his bike. Jamie stops next to O'Kelly.

LIAM O'KELLY
So what's the play today gentlemen?
Bowling alley? The INCINERATOR?

Mark, Pat, and Dunn with dismissive looks.

Jamie nudges O'Kelly.

JAMIE CONLEY
Let's go to the Incinerator.

TOM MULLIGAN
No way!

TIMMY DUNN
Screw that.

MARK
Yeah, let's hit the ditch.

Mark slowly pedals off on his bike.

PAT DOLAN
We're going to the ditch.

Pat takes off on his bike.

LIAM O'KELLY
King of the ditch it is!

The rest of the gang jump on their bikes and follow. They ride off the field into the distance. Mulligan trails.

EXT. THE DITCH/ STREET/ THE INCINERATOR - DAY

The boys drop into THE DITCH, a 500 yard narrow drainage channel on the edge of the neighborhood.

They exaggeratedly weave in and out of the ditch on their bikes like fighter planes in battle -

O'Kelly drops in. Pat races behind him. Pat uses his front tire to BUMP O'Kelly's back tire off track. O'Kelly and his bike SLIDE TO THE GROUND.

Jamie drops in from one side. Dunn drops in from the other. They've both got momentum. They can't stop. They COLLIDE, but get up laughing.

Mulligan rides slow and conservative. O'Kelly gets on his ass. Mulligan freaks for a second, then gets KNOCKED by O'Kelly and falls off his bike.

The gang continues down the ditch. Mark stops to help Mulligan up. They ride off.

Mark speeds up, trying to catch Dunn's rear tire. Pat appears from behind and knocks Mark off his bike. Mark falls to the ground. Everyone else continues down the ditch.

For a moment, complete silence. Mark is ALONE. He looks around. He can hear his buddies yelling and laughing in the distance. He gets back on his bike and rides off.

The boys ride their bikes down the last section of the ditch, Pat leading.

PAT DOLAN
I'm the king of the ditch!

The other kids ride behind Pat. O'Kelly launches a football at Pat and hits him in the back of his head. Pat stumbles on his bike.

TIMMY DUNN
Well, at least our quarterback's got
an arm.

The boys laugh and gather around, leaning on their bikes.

Mark picks up the football from the ground.

JAMIE CONLEY
What should we do now?

TOM MULLIGAN
Let's go to the bowling alley.

TIMMY DUNN
No lets hit Gallagher's place and load
up on snacks.

O'Kelly looks at Mark and smiles.

LIAM O'KELLY
I got it. Let's play... Kill the man
with the ball!

The boys SCREAM.

Mark looks down at the football in his hands. He wedges the
football between his handle bars and pedals off as fast as
possible into the -

STREET

The gang in hot pursuit of Mark.

LIAM O'KELLY (O.S.)
Where you going Gallagher?

Mark continues to bike as fast he can until he reaches an -
OPEN FIELD, with overgrown wild grass and tall weeds.

JAMIE CONLEY (O.S)
He's going to the Incinerator.

Mark's bike starts to drag. He looks at his back tire, flat.
He drops his bike, grabs the football, and runs fast.

The boys are on his tail. They drop their bikes at the edge
of the tall overgrown grass and run after him.

Mark burns them, running twice as fast until he reaches -

THE INCINERATOR, a long abandoned industrial building on the
edge of the woods where the train tracks pass through. Mark
runs into the Incinerator.

The boys stop outside, catching their breath.

LIAM O'KELLY

What? You guys too chicken to go in there?

TOM MULLIGAN

I heard there's a hobo murderer who lives in there.

TIMMY DUNN

My big brother said the Incinerator used to be a morgue. They burned bodies in there.

JAMIE CONLEY

My Dad says they burned Nazis in there after the war.

INT./EXT. THE INCINERATOR - DAY

INSIDE

Mark grips the football tightly as he cautiously wanders through the dark maze, full of rubble, burnt garbage, overgrown plants, ambiguous old rusty machinery.

OUTSIDE

The boys, still fixed in front of the building.

PAT DOLAN

Gallagher! You can come out man!

They look on for a moment.

TIMMY DUNN

There's no way in hell I'm going in there.

LIAM O'KELLY

You guys sound like a bunch of girls.

A TRAIN HORN in the distance.

INSIDE

Mark walks upstairs, he sees a mattress and some old muddy clothes. He bites his nails and continues walking.

A LOUD HORN and SCREECH as the train speeds by. MARK JUMPS.

OUTSIDE

Mulligan points at the train.

TOM MULLIGAN

See that! I bet there's a couple of
hobos jumping off the train right now.

TIMMY DUNN

Gallagher's good as dead.

The train fades into the distance.

PAT DOLAN

Gallagher!

They stare at the Incinerator for a moment. Pat steps
forward.

PAT DOLAN

I'm going in there.

Dunn steps in front of Pat.

TIMMY DUNN

No way, you're crazy.

TOM MULLIGAN

Pat, if you go in there you're dead.

PAT DOLAN

Never leave a buddy behind.

TIMMY DUNN

Never trust a buddy.

Pat smirks at Dunn. They all stare at the Incinerator.

PAT DOLAN

Gallagher!

Silence for a moment. O'Kelly turns to face the group.

LIAM O'KELLY

Well boys, guess the hobos got em.

OUT OF NOWHERE, a football hits O'Kelly in the back of his
head. The boys burst into a fit of laughter.

Mark propped up in a window laughing.

INT. GALLAGHER HOUSE - DAY

THE KITCHEN

M.C. GALLAGHER (45), naturally beautiful with short brown hair pulled back in a head scarf, with a gentle smile and a lit cigarette perfectly suspended from her lips, carries several brown bags full of groceries into the kitchen. She places the bags on the kitchen counter. Her kids, JENNY (15) and JON (16), enter and help with the bags.

THE LIVING ROOM

A collage of family photos on the wall: school pictures and athletic portraits of the kids, family gatherings, wedding day, the family ski trip, baby pictures, a naval portrait.

A SMALL PHOTO OF MARK, slightly separate from the rest.

J.P. Gallagher (52), with neatly combed hair and reading glasses, sits in an arm chair in front of a stone wall fire place. He flips through a newspaper with precision. The headline reads: WW2 THE PACIFIC THEATER 30 YEARS LATER.

PAUL (3), the youngest of the Gallagher siblings, and STORMY, the family black Labrador, play by his feet.

J.P. looks down at Paul and Stormy with a sprightly smile.

J.P.

M.C.? Would you get some coffee going?

THE KITCHEN

M.C.

Sure will J.P.

M.C. opens a cabinet and pulls down a tin can. She opens the tin and adds some coffee to a pot on the stove.

Jenny and Jon look at each other, the perfect opportunity to make a clean getaway. Stormy follows them as they quickly slide out of the kitchen and into the -

HALLWAY and up -

A STAIRCASE, then past a half open door -

MARK'S BEDROOM

Decorated with football posters, a messy desk with magazines

and trinkets, a twin bed. Mark, fast asleep, sun protruding through his bedroom window.

Mark's older sister MARCY (18), ABRUPTLY SHAKES HIM.

MARCY

Wake up Mark. Mom's making breakfast.

THE KITCHEN

Mark, droopy eyed and yawning, walks in wearing his school uniform, a white polo and khaki slacks.

M.C. works the stove with both hands, she cracks an egg while flipping a pancake. Marcy washes a dirty plate and adds it to a high stack of shiny clean plates.

J.P., seated in the breakfast nook, his eyes fixed to the newspaper with complete concentration. Paul, seated next to him in a highchair, sticks his hands in some scrambled eggs and makes a mess.

Mark sits down across from his little brother.

M.C.

Good morning sweetie.

M.C. slides a plate of pancakes, fried eggs, bacon, and hash browns in front of Mark then kisses his forehead.

M.C. (CONTD)

Aren't you glad your father's back in town?

M.C. walks back to the stove. J.P. lowers the paper.

J.P.

Ready for the first day of school buddy?

MARK

Well, not really, I busted my tire on my bike yesterday and --

J.P.

(interrupting)

M.C. would you get me another cup please.

M.C. (O.S.)

No problem J.P.

J.P. nods his head in approval.

J.P.

Excellent. Sounds like a great day.

J.P. props his newspaper up and continues reading. M.C. brings a fresh cup of coffee over to J.P.

M.C.

Honey, if you need to, use your brother's old bike in the garage to get to school today.

Mark looks at the huge breakfast and pops a strip of bacon in his mouth.

MARK

Dad, did you have a growth spurt before you went to high school?

J.P. lowers the newspaper and looks at Mark with intention.

J.P.

Well, not really son. I probably didn't get facial hair til senior year of high school. Wasn't long after that I was shipped off.

Mark plays with his food, poking an egg yolk with a fork.

J.P. (CONTD)

But you know what my Lieutenant Commander told us before we went off to fight the Japs.

Mark looks up at J.P. with droopy eyes.

J.P. (CONTD)

It's not the size of the dog in the fight --

Mark mouths the words he's heard his father say a thousand times before.

J.P. (CONTD)

It's the size of the fight in the dog.

Paul SMASHES his scrambled eggs with his fist. Eggs fly all over the table and J.P.'s newspaper.