

The 5th Quarter

✖ 5th Quarter, The Park Entertainment | Starring Ryan Merriman, Aidan Quinn, Andie MacDowell

The 5th Quarter is a faith-based film that portrays the heart-wrenching true story of the Abbate family. I knew I was in trouble when I practically cried while watching the trailer, and I was right. Within the first 10 minutes of the movie, I was sobbing.

This movie depicts young athlete Luke Abbate's death, how his family copes with their loss and the touching way they honor him. In February 2006, 15-year-old Luke was a passenger in a tragic car accident caused by reckless driving. Luke, the only one with fatal injuries, died two days later from irreparable brain damage.

The scenes surrounding Luke's death are some of the most touching and sincere scenes in the movie, such as the emotional moment when his parents (Aidan Quinn and Andie MacDowell) made the difficult decision to donate his organs. His organs are given to five people, including a young mother whose life is saved with Luke's heart. Other moving scenes include seeing a hallway outside his hospital room filled with concerned friends, teachers and coaches and when Andy's father rolls his casket out of the church, tears streaming down his face.

After Luke's older brother Jon (Ryan Merriman) returns to Wake Forest University, he considers giving up football. In a generic sports montage, we see his trainer getting him into shape again. "You've got to start living for two. You've got to make your brother proud," Jon's trainer says to encourage him. In honor of his brother, Jon adopts Luke's football number five, which replaced his longstanding 40.

One of the more poignant scenes of the movie is when Jon starts a tradition to honor his younger brother at his football games. At the beginning of the fourth quarter in every game, he looks back at his family (sitting in section five) and holds up his hand with five fingers outstretched. As time goes on, the rest of the team repeats this gesture. Eventually everyone in the stands honors Luke with the signal at the end of the third quarter, which becomes known as Luke's quarter, or the fifth quarter.

Although Wake Forest was picked to finish last in the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) college division in the 2006 season, the Devil Deacons had the best season in the whole history of Wake Forest that year, and their coach, Jim Grobe, was honored as the ACC Coach of the Year. The film did shoot scenes in Wake Forest's arena, but also used a lot of footage from that season.

"I could never have recreated those games without using the actual footage," said Rick Bieber, the movie's writer, director and producer.

I had the pleasure of seeing Bieber talk about his latest project. "All I tried to do was replicate authenticity. I didn't try to make up anything," Bieber said about how he drew the line between fact and fiction when making this film. "It is what it is ... real people dealing with real-life tragedy."

Also at the screening were Steven and Maryanne Abbate. When discussing the film, Steven mentioned that they lost their youngest son in February 2006, and noted that he did not think it was mere coincidence this movie was released five years later. "I think someone bigger than us is in charge," he said.

I got the sense that Bieber did his best to portray the Abbates' experience without editorializing. This is a tragic but uplifting story, and although the film has a few cheesy moments, its message is powerful. It delivers some intense moments when different family members are shown coping but it has inspiring moments as well. The football scenes are very encouraging, and one of the happiest moments comes toward the end. Don't be discouraged into not seeing this because of the subject matter. It surprisingly finds a way to not be completely depressing. This is a touching story, but will leave you feeling good at the end.

The 5th Quarter releases March 25 in 125 theaters throughout the southeast. Bieber and the Abbates hope it receives enough

support this

weekend

to roll out nationally. This movie is rated PG-13 for thematic elements.

Some profanity is used when Luke's family expresses frustration

and sadness over his death. While one parent refuses to cope, the other

drowns

out the sorrows with alcohol.

[Click here to watch the trailer.](#)