

Montevideo – Dream of Soccer in the Balkans

By Sophie Braccini

No need to be a Balkans historian to appreciate the movie that opens September 14 at the Orinda Theatre, Montevideo. The story set between World War I and World War II Yugoslavia is more about sports and what passion and dreams can achieve than why Croats would not join the Yugoslav national team.

Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay, is where the first soccer World Cup is to be held. In the relatively newly formed kingdom of Yu-

goslavia, will a soccer team emerge and will it find the funding it needs to go there?

Montevideo is a classic story of coming of age and redemption through sports and friendship, saved from 'deja-vu' by its unusual historical and geographical setting. Also, the film's optimism will warm many hearts. As one character says in the movie, "People are all the same, only their shoes are different."

At the beginning of the movie, the



Photo provided

Yugoslav team is opposed to the Belgrade team, an antagonism that's hard to understand without the historical perspective.

It's the late 1920s in Belgrade. The final dismantlement of the Ottoman Empire led to the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 where the relatively new kingdom of Serbia and Bulgaria were enemies. During World War I Serbia was invaded by Austria and Germany and was allied to France. Croatia and Slovenia were joined to Serbia after the war to form the Kingdom of Yugoslavia with a centralized authority in Belgrade that was not always well accepted.

Throughout the movie, tensions with the Bulgarian team and the Croats – who refuse to join the Yugoslav national team, thus removing the King's support – serve as a backdrop to magnify the Serbian nationalism over an illusive Yugoslav identity.

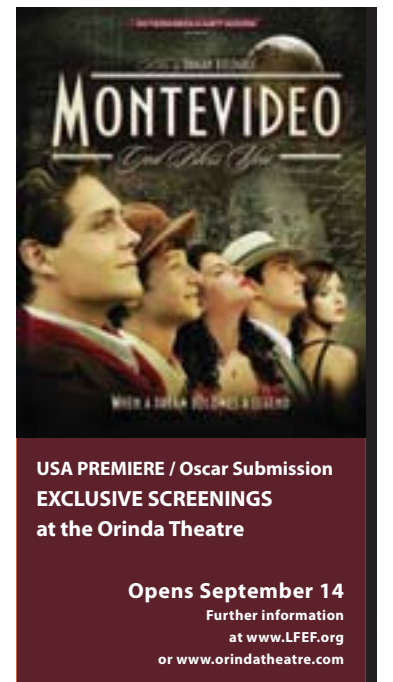
Although Croats and Bulgarians are not presented in the best light in this Serbian movie, this is not a geopolitical lesson and American viewers will feel very familiar with the story of a poor young man who wants to

live his dream as a soccer player, and carries the war metal of his dead father sewn to the inside of his jersey. There is a little bit of Field of Dreams in the movie, even if the game is soccer and not baseball. "Play well and they will come... if they come, you will go to Montevideo."

No need to be a soccer fan to enjoy Montevideo, either. The sports segments of the film are short enough, and dramatic, so even Steven Colbert would not fall asleep. There is also the requisite amount of love affair and mild amorous imbroglio to satisfy all audiences. The love stories are totally predictable, but the actors are young and give a fresh performance that makes it almost believable.

The backdrop of the roaring '20s is just sketched, but it is obviously not the main purpose of the movie to depict that era. Soccer enthusiasts will probably enjoy witnessing the birth of the popularity of their sport of choice. In the movie, the Belgrade national stadium is no bigger than a middle school field, and becoming a soccer player is certainly not viewed as an option for a young man.

It is interesting to note that the film, which is being shown in Orinda for one week as part of the International Film Showcase, is based on a true story; the Yugoslav team finished third place in Montevideo. For more information about the Showcase, visit lamorindatheatres.com.



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Family Focus

Handling Your Child's Complaints

By Margie Ryerson, MFT

I personally believe we developed language because of our deep inner need to complain. ~Jane Wagner

It is often difficult for parents to listen to a child's complaints. Sometimes it can get overwhelming, especially if you are trying hard to please this very child. If you are on a special family vacation and your child continually grouches about the heat or too much sand in his swimsuit, it can be hard to be sympathetic. You want your child to appreciate all that he has and not focus on life's minor irritants. And, of course, you'd like to have fun together and enjoy each other's company.

If a child complains and finds fault excessively, his parents may worry that he could be depressed or have low self-esteem. It is understandable that parents with a chronically dissatisfied child will become concerned and frustrated.

Here is an example of the scenario I sometimes witness: Two loving parents brought in Nathan, age nine and the oldest of three boys, for counseling. Nathan is bright, energetic, and articulate. Unfortunately, much of his communication centers on his dissatisfactions and resentments toward his parents, siblings, teacher, and some students at his school.

Nathan's parents are hard-working and conscientious. They give their time, resources, and love to their boys. Therefore, it is quite a shock to experience this level of negativity from Nathan. His parents have tried talking to him and showing him positive ways to approach people and situations that trigger him. They have asked him what they can do better in order to please him. They have pointed out how some people have it much worse than he does. They have tried to emphasize how proud they are of him and his talents.

The only thing they haven't given to Nathan is simple listening, understanding, and acceptance. Nathan's parents think that if they let him focus on his frustrations he will become even more negative. They worry that he will reach a level of despair that

will alienate him from others. So they try to boost him up instead of giving attention to his many complaints. Or they tell him he complains too much and has to stop.

I encouraged Nathan's parents to have him evaluated for depression and other conditions that could be responsible for his unhappiness. It is always crucial to rule out serious physical or psychological problems. When Nathan got a clean bill of health, I worked with his parents on ways to help him.

We practiced a sympathetic approach:

Nathan: "I hate doing homework. I never have enough time to play."

Parent: "It's hard having homework and not getting to play as much as you'd like."

Nathan: "It's not fair."

Parent: "I know. I didn't like homework either. If you start now and get it over with, at least you'll have an hour before bed to play."

If he's complaining about you, it may be more difficult to remain calm, but the same approach applies:

Nathan: "You're mean. I always get punished when it's not my fault."

Parent: "I see that you're upset and don't think I'm being fair. And you think your brothers get off while you get blamed too often."

Nathan: "Yeah, how come I always get blamed and they never do?"

Parent: "I'm glad you told me this. I'll try to watch more closely from now on since I love you and I don't want you to have to feel this way."

It's important to delay addressing the inflammatory words Nathan used – "mean," "always," and "never" until after you have acknowledged his message. If a parent first scolds and demands respect, a power struggle can develop, causing a child to become even angrier because his initial message wasn't acknowledged and now, on top of that, he is being disciplined.

You don't have to agree with your child's complaint in order to be com-

passionate and understanding right away. Later on, when he is calm and more receptive, you can help him think through how he used insulting words and a mean tone of voice when he complained to you. Then suggest some ways to re-state his message for next time and have him practice. And you can also encourage him to examine whether or not his complaint and its intensity were justified.

Sometimes a child complains out of habit or to get attention. Or he may derive the payoff of being able to frustrate his parents. You can take control by setting a limit on complaints to one per day. He will become more aware of his tendency to complain, and he will learn to prioritize his complaints and perhaps put things in better perspective.

One huge benefit of showing your child compassion and understanding when he complains is that you allow him to be "real" with you. You will be able to have a more genuine relationship if he feels that he can be himself and still receive acceptance and approval from his parents.



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