



The AFI DOCS Interview: ALONE IN THE GAME Creator/Executive Producer David McFarland

Description

Posted by [Larry Gleeson](#)

ALONE IN THE GAME exposes the outdated ideas and outright prejudices that make competitive sports one of the gay rights movement's final frontiers, and shows how a new generation of queer and transgender athletes are scoring victories on and off the field by standing up for their rights and demanding a chance to compete.

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Athletes featured include NBA center Jason Collins; soccer stars Megan Rapinoe and Robbie Rogers; Vanderbilt football player Riley Tindol; high-school athlete Trevor Betts; and Layana White and Haley Videckis, who found love on the Pepperdine Christian University women's basketball team and lost their scholarships.

AFI spoke with creator/executive producer David McFarland about the film, which plays AFI DOCS Friday, June 15. Get tickets [here](#).

AFI: What led you to pursue documentary filmmaking?

DM: The advocate in me was called to action, and the creative in me couldn't be left behind. For me, documentary storytelling is about bringing a hidden world to audiences to help create change and make a real difference in the lives of others.

AFI: What inspired you to tell this story?

DM: I have the privilege to examine these issues at the highest levels of sport — live these issues, really — up close and in person, and these experiences have given me a true and factual understanding of just how serious these problems are for LGBT athletes and how great an impact the world of sport can make when the right decisions are made by those in positions of power. When there is no current out gay male professional athlete actively playing in the Big 5 major leagues, you know we have a serious problem that affects the future of sport and the well-being of our LGBT athletes.

AFI: How did you find the subjects in your film?

DM: Being immersed in the world of sport and the LGBT community for the past three decades, combined with my professional experience, I have developed a trusted and confidential network that often leads me to closeted athletes, athletes in crisis and/or athletes who have faced head-on a culture of exclusion from sport.

AFI: What was a particular obstacle you faced while making the film?

DM: One of the biggest obstacles in making the film was getting certain key power parties in sport to *show up* and participate. This begs a very serious question for our leaders in sport: are we living in a time when equality and inclusion truly exists for LGBT athletes?

What do you want audiences to walk away with after screening your film?

DM: I really want the audience to understand that even though America's cultural, social and political climate is becoming increasingly accepting of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) citizens, competing and participating in sport is still considered to be an unsettling and unsafe environment for many LGBT athletes, coaches and sport administrators on and off the field. I hope that communities all across this country will see this important film and take action to ensure that the opportunities and dreams are the same for all athletes, coaches and those who participate in sport regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The obligation is on us all, regardless where in the sports power matrix you reside, or even in society as a whole.

AFI: Why are documentary films important today?

DM: They allow us to walk in the shoes of others, building a sense of shared humanity through real-life experiences, that give voice to the truth and strives to hold those in power accountable. In a time of uncertainty and "alternative facts," telling stories in the documentary form matters more now than ever. Documentary films can and do inspire change, and while that change may be incremental, it is nonetheless real. They engage the heart and the mind with evocative, inspiring and emotional storytelling that can make a significant difference in the lives of others.



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