

"RUBE"

FADE IN:

EXT. NIGHT

SUPER: Mississippi River, 1912

A human chain of workers, about a dozen standing waist-to-chest deep in the river, labor through a driving rainstorm.

Barely distinguishable in their heavy rain gear they struggle to relay massive sandbags for placement in an earthen levee at the end of the chain. A blast of frost punctuates each breath.

HIGH ON THE BANK

Supervisor ROB HARRIS, observes his workforce. He is joined by COLONEL WALKER. Harris must yell over the storm.

ROB HARRIS
Colonel, how's she doin' in town.

COLONEL WALKER
'Bout half under still but she's starting to recede. How're your boys holding up, Harris?

ROB HARRIS
They're holdin' up just fine, sir?
Course I've been spellin' 'em some.

COLONEL WALKER
How 'bout the big fella?

IN THE RIVER

A large figure at the end of the chain, much larger than the other men, stuffs the sandbags into the levee. He grabs each bag with one, handling two bags-at-a-time with greater ease than the others exhibit with a single bag.

ROB HARRIS (OVER)
Worked right on through. Can't get him to break. Damnedest thing I ever did see.

COLONEL WALKER

Well, don't stop him now. We got
a town to save.

BACK TO THE RIVER

The large man stuffs another pair of sandbags into a crevice
in the levee.

EXT. CONNIE MACK FIELD, WEST PALM BEACH - DAY

A BASEBALL PLAYER strains with every stride, a COACH
screaming as the player sprints towards third base.

COACH (O.S.)

Dig, dig, dig, dig!!!

A CLOUD OF DUST explodes into the air as the player slams
into the bag.

IN THE OUTFIELD

Palm trees, rising up from behind the OUTFIELD WALL, wave
gently in the breeze. The wall is adorned with West Palm
Beach signs and advertisements, vintage 1950s.

A LARGE BILLBOARD under the scoreboard above the left field
wall, proclaims: "Welcome to West Palm Beach and Connie Mack
Field/1951 Spring Training Home of the Philadelphia Athletics"

Connie Mack Field is a cozy single-deck ballpark, seating
capacity about 2,500. The grandstand is divided into two
sections, separated by a walkway. The lower five-row
grandstand is bathed by the Florida sun. The 20-row upper
section is shaded by an overhanging roof, supported by a half
dozen steel pillars. Only a handful of fans have filtered in
for the early practice session.

MOVING IN SLOW on CONNIE MACK, 88, seated in the lower
grandstand's second row, by himself, near the third base.
Mack, the Athletics' patriarch, is tall, thin and sits erect.

A living Norman Rockwell painting, the elderly gentleman
seems an anachronism in the 1950s. His straw hat, vested suit
and high starched shirt collar are from a different era.
Despite his straight-laced trappings, Mack exudes a genteel
warmth and charm. Any kid would want this man for his
grandfather.

In his right hand, Mack holds a rolled-up scorecard, which
rests gently in his left palm. He studies the baseball
practice as if the World Series were on the line.

UNDER THE GRANDSTAND

JOE, 11, peers through a small hole in the grandstand wall. The bill of Joe's PHILADELPHIA A's BASEBALL CAP pops up and his nose scrunches as places his eye right almost directly on the hole. Suddenly, Joe turns and motions for someone to join him.

JOE
Come on, Petey. We can watch from here.

PETEY, 11, catches up, half out-of-breath.

PETEY
Joe, ya think anybody saw us?

JOE
Naw. I sneak in all the time.

Joe returns to his viewing.

JOE (CONT'D)
Look, there's Jimmy Dykes.

PETEY
Jimmy who?

ON THE FIELD

A small contingent of REPORTERS interview Athletics' Manager JIMMY DYKES, 54, a shorty, stocky old-school manager.

JOE (OVER)
Jimmy's the A's new manager. He's taking over for Connie Mack.

PETEY (OVER)
Connie who?

BACK TO UNDER THE GRANDSTAND

Joe pulls away from his peephole, incredulous.

JOE
Geezus, Petey. Don't you know nuthin? Connie Mack, the Grand Old Man, the Tall Tactician. He managed the Athletics for 50 years. They named the field here for him. Why, my old man says there weren't no baseball before Connie Mack.

BACK TO THE FIELD

REPORTER #1

Jimmy, how does it feel to replace the man who managed this team for a half century?

Dykes smirks. He's heard it before.

JIMMY DYKES

Nobody can replace Mr. Mack. I won't try do that. I just wanna get through this season. Then I'll worry about another forty-nine.

REPORTER #2

Worried he'll be looking over your shoulder?

JIMMY DYKES

Worried the greatest mind in baseball might be looking out for me? No. Besides, Mr. Mack gave me his word: this is my team to manage. I don't know about you boys, but I can't think of another person whose word I'd rather have.

BACK TO UNDER THE GRANDSTAND

Joe continues to secretly survey the action.

JOE

There's Bobby Shantz warmin' up. Betcha be's pitching today.

PETEY

Are you sure we're okay here?

JOE

Awww, don't be an old lady.

BACK TO THE GRANDSTAND

Joe and Petey are practically dragged across the grandstand walkway by an usher-security guard, GRIFF, early fifties. Griff is given a degree authority for six weeks each spring and wants to exercise all of it. He grasps the boys by their shirt collars as he pulls them along. Petey is scared out of his wits. Joe is more perturbed than anything.

GRIFF

Damn kids. I'm gonna teach ya once
and for all.

The commotion diverts Connie Mack's attention from the field.

CONNIE MACK

Whoa there, Griff. What have we
here?

GRIFF

It's these dam..er, darn kids,
sir. Snuck in without payin'.

He yanks Joe up a little higher.

GRIFF (CONT'D)

This one's done it before.

CONNIE MACK

Now, now. We're can't be turning
away future season ticket holders.

Joe

(to Petey)

It's him. Connie Mack!

PETEY

The Tall Transmission?

JOE

The Tall Tack-tish--

GRIFF

Quiet, both of ya. Whadda want me
to do with these two, Mr. Mack?

CONNIE MACK

Why don't you should escort these
fine young gentlemen to these
seats right here in front of me?

Grudgingly, Griff releases his grips. An escort isn't
necessary as the boys scurry down to the front row seats.
Mack motions for Griff to fetch some drinks.

CONNIE MACK (CONT'D)

Well now, boys. I don't believe
I've had the pleasure. I'm Connie
Mack.

Petey, initially shaken from the Griff ordeal, quickly warms
up to the kindly old man. He turns to face Mack and kneels on
the grandstand seat.

PETEY

I'm Petey. We know who you are.
Well, Joe did. He knows everything
there is to know about baseball.
He's teachin' me.

Joe, for once following Petey's lead, kneels up on his chair.

CONNIE MACK

Wonderful. Maybe he can teach me
a few things as well.

JOE

Gee, Mr. Mack. I bet you seen all
the great ones. Who was the best?

CONNIE MACK

Oh, good gracious, Joseph. That's
a difficult question. But, I'd
have to say Ty Cobb was the best
all-around player.

Mack notices Petey is trying to work up the courage to ask a
question.

CONNIE MACK (CONT'D)

And what might be on your mind,
Peter?

PETEY

Well, I was just wonderin', I was
wonderin', who was your favorite
player?

CONNIE MACK

My, you boys certainly ask the
tough ones. I've had the privilege
of managing so many wonderful
men...Albert Bender, Edward
Collins, Edward Plank, Robert
Grove, Mickey Cochrane, Frank
Baker...

Mack's smile grows even warmer, his eyes gleaming.

CONNIE MACK (CONT'D)

And then there was The Rube.

Petey looks to Joe, who shrugs.

CONNIE MACK

My stars, you two baseball experts haven't heard of the greatest pitcher the Athletics ever had...for that matter, the best in all of baseball.

JOE

Better'n the Big Train, Walter Johnson, or the Big Six, Christy Mathewson, or Rapid Robert Feller or --

CONNIE MACK

Hold on there, Joseph. You need to use a change-up from time to time. You named some mighty fine pitchers, all right, but none had a better combination of speed and curves than Rube.

Griff returns to serve the boys and Mr. Mack some cold drinks. The boys grab the cups but their attention remains fixed on Mr. Mack.

CONNIE MACK (CONT'D)

Why, Rube's curve would start at your waist and, LICKETY-SPLIT, drop to your ankles. They called it The Dominator because he dominated hitters with it.

JOE

Aw, come on. Then how come I never heard of him?

CONNIE MACK

Hmmn. I do wonder that myself, Joseph. Let me put it this way. Do you boys know the story of Peter Pan?

PETEY

Sure, the boy who wouldn't grow up.

CONNIE MACK

That's correct. You see, Peter wouldn't grow up. Rube couldn't grow up.

PETEY

Was that his real name, Rube?

CONNIE MACK

My mercy, no. His given name was George, George Edward. But the world knew him as Rube. Then again, some of his managers had several names for him.

EXT. PITTSBURGH BALLPARK - DAY

SUPER: Pittsburgh, 1900

The stands are packed with anxious fans. A small group of Pittsburgh players meet at the pitcher's mound, including their very agitated player-manager, FRED CLARKE, 32. Clark is smallish in size but tough as nails, especially when riled.

FRED CLARKE

Where the hell is that rabbit-brained, fire-chasing, son-of-a-bitch?

EXT. - DAY

CLOSE ON RUBE, mid-twenties, wearing Pittsburgh baseball uniform. Rube leans forward, glares ahead. He shakes a baseball, defiantly, just below his chin.

RUBE

I'm gonna mow you down.

WIDE TO REVEAL

Rube is in the middle of a boys' sandlot game. Up to bat is BILLY, 8, the smallest of the lot. He chokes up nearly halfway on the bat. His oversized cap nearly blocks his view. He bites his lip, trying to mimic Rube's determined look.

BILLY,

Ya won't get The Dominator by me.

Physically, the large, powerful Rube is out of place. Mentally, he's right at home.

Rube's frown softens to a wide, goofy grin. After an exaggerated windup, he lobs the baseball towards Billy. With a ferocious swing Billy makes contact. The ball loops over Rube's head and trickles between the stunned second baseman and shortstop.

Billy dashes to first base, barely able to contain himself. A runner rounds third and heads home with the winning run.

Billy stomps on the first base bag as the defensive players throw down their gloves in disgust -- except for Rube.

Rube rushes over to Billy, as do Billy's teammates. Rube hoists Billy to his shoulders for a triumphant ride. As the celebration continues the PITTSBURGH BALLPARK looms in the background.

EXT. PITTSBURGH BALLPARK - DAY