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Next Goal Wins (2023 film)

Next Goal Wins is a 2023 American sports comedy-drama film directed by Taika Waititi, who co-wrote the screenplay with Iain Morris. It is based on the 2014 documentary of the same name by Mike Brett and Steve Jamison about Dutch-American coach Thomas Rongen's efforts to lead the American Samoa national football team, considered one of the weakest soccer teams in the world, to qualification for the 2014 FIFA World Cup. The film stars Michael Fassbender as Rongen, alongside Oscar Kightley, Kaimana, David Fane, Rachel House, Beulah Koale, Will Arnett, and Elisabeth Moss.

Next Goal Wins premiered at the 2023 Toronto International Film Festival on September 10, 2023, and was released in the United States on November 17, 2023, by Searchlight Pictures.^[4]^[5]

Premise

Dutch-American football coach Thomas Rongen faces the option of being fired or accepting an almost impossible task: to convert the American Samoa national team, considered one of the weakest football teams in the world, into an elite squad.

Next Goal Wins



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	<u>Taika Waititi</u>
Screenplay by	<u>Taika Waititi</u> <u>Iain Morris</u>
Based on	<i><u>Next Goal Wins</u></i> by <u>Mike Brett</u> <u>Steve Jamison</u>
Produced by	<u>Jonathan Cavendish</u> <u>Garrett Basch</u> <u>Taika Waititi</u> <u>Mike Brett</u> <u>Steve Jamison</u>
Starring	<u>Michael Fassbender</u> <u>Oscar Kightley</u> <u>Kaimana</u> <u>David Fane</u> <u>Rachel House</u> <u>Beulah Koale</u> <u>Taika Waititi</u> <u>Will Arnett</u>

The storyline also includes fa'afafine player Jaiyah Saelua, who was the first transgender player ever to compete in a World Cup qualifier game.^[6]

Cast

	<u>Elisabeth Moss</u>
Cinematography	<u>Lachlan Milne</u>
Edited by	<u>Nicholas Monsour</u>
Music by	<u>Michael Giacchino</u>
Production companies	<u>Imaginarium Productions</u> <u>TSG Entertainment</u> <u>Defender Films</u> <u>Garrett Basch Production</u>
Distributed by	<u>Searchlight Pictures</u>
Release dates	September 10, 2023 (<u>TIFF</u>) November 17, 2023 (United States)
Running time	104 minutes ^[1]
Country	United States ^[2]
Language	English
Budget	\$14 million ^[3]
Box office	\$18.6 million ^{[4][5]}

- Michael Fassbender as Thomas Rongen
- Oscar Kightley as Tavita^[7]
- Kaimana as Jaiyah Saelua
- David Fane as Ace
- Rachel House as Ruth
- Beulah Koale as Daru Taumua^[7]
- Will Arnett as Alex Magnussen
- Elisabeth Moss as Gail
- Uli Latukefu as Nicky Salapu
- Chris Alosio as Jonah^[7]
- Lehi Makisi Falepapalangi as Pisa
- Semu Filipo as Rambo
- Ioane Goodhue as Smiley^[7]
- Rhys Darby as Rhys Marlin
- Angus Sampson as Angus Bendleton^[7]
- Luke Hemsworth as Keith
- Kaitlyn Dever as Nicole
- Hio Pelesasa as Samson
- David Tu'itupou as Tall David
- Levy Tuiala as Chief Sila
- Loretta Ables Sayre as Rambo's mother

- Frankie Adams as Frangipani
- Taika Waititi as an American-Samoan priest^[7]

Production

Development

It was announced in August 2019, that Fox Searchlight Pictures had set up an initially unspecified project that would see Taika Waititi write and direct prior to his obligations to *Thor: Love and Thunder* (2022).^[8] It was later revealed as being a feature film adaptation of the 2014 documentary *Next Goal Wins*.^[9] Waititi, Garrett Basch and Jonathan Cavendish serve as producers, with Andy Serkis, Will Tennant and Kathryn Dean as executive producers.^[10]

Casting

In September 2019, Michael Fassbender entered final negotiations to star in the film.^[11] He would be confirmed the next month, alongside Elisabeth Moss entering negotiations to join.^[12] In November 2019, it was announced Kaimana, Oscar Kightley, David Fane, Beulah Koale, Lehi Falepapalangi, Semu Filipo, Uli Latukefu, Rachel House, Rhys Darby, Angus Sampson, Chris Alosio and Sisa Grey had joined the cast of the film, with Moss being confirmed.^{[13][14][15]} In December 2019, Armie Hammer joined the cast of the film, playing an executive with Football Federation American Samoa.^{[16][17]}

Filming

Principal photography began in November 2019 in Honolulu, Hawaii,^{[14][10][18]} and wrapped by January 2020.^[19] In December 2021, it was announced that Will Arnett would be stepping in for Hammer following allegations of sexual assault made by multiple women against the latter. The part, initially intended as a cameo, was expanded when Arnett joined.^[17] In May 2023, Kaitlyn Dever was announced as part of the cast.^[20]

Release

The film premiered at the 2023 Toronto International Film Festival on September 10, 2023,^[2] prior to its commercial release on November 17, 2023.^[21] The film was originally set to be released on April 21, 2023,^[22] before being postponed to September 22, 2023,^[23] and then to its current date. The film's cast, however, was unable to attend the premiere due to the restrictions imposed by the 2023 SAG-AFTRA strike.^[21]

Home media

Next Goal Wins released for digital platforms on January 16, 2024, followed by a Blu-ray and DVD release on February 27, 2024.^[24]

Reception

Box office

Next Goal Wins grossed \$6.7 million in the United States and Canada, and \$11.9 million in other territories, for a worldwide gross of \$18.6 million.^{[4][5]}

In the United States and Canada, *Next Goal Wins* was released alongside *The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes*, *Trolls Band Together*, and *Thanksgiving*, and was projected to gross around \$5 million from 2,240 theaters in its opening weekend.^[25] It went on to debut to \$2.5 million, finishing eighth at the box office.^[26] The film made \$1.6 million in its second weekend (a drop of 35.1%), finishing in 11th.^[27]

Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 45% of 165 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 5.3/10. The website's consensus reads: "*Next Goal Wins* finds director/co-writer Taika Waititi with his heart in the right place, even if his crowd-pleasing aim has noticeably strayed from its target."^[28] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 44 out of 100, based on 42 critics, indicating "mixed or average" reviews.^[29] Audiences polled by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "B+" on an A+ to F scale, while those polled by PostTrak gave it an 86% overall positive score, with 65% saying they would definitely recommend the film.^[26]

See also

- List of association football films

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