

Buddy Games

Buddy Games is a 2019 American comedy film directed by Josh Duhamel in his solo directorial debut and written by Duhamel, Bob Schwartz, and Jude Weng.^[4] Produced by Duhamel, Michael J. Luisi, and Weng, the film centers on a group of six friends that reunite after a five-year hiatus to engage in a challenging set of dares and games and help lift one of their own out of depression and also have a chance of winning \$150,000 while doing so. The cast includes Duhamel, Dax Shepard, Olivia Munn, Kevin Dillon, and Neal McDonough.

The project was originally announced in June 2017 as a deal with WWE Studios, with the cast joining shortly thereafter and filming commencing two months later in Vancouver. The film held its world premiere at the 2019 Mammoth Film Festival and Saban Films acquired distribution rights for the United States in July 2020.^[5] The film received mostly negative reviews from critics, with most criticism directed at the plot, humor, direction, and characters.

Plot

Every year Bob and his friends compete in the "Buddy Games", a series of obstacles meant to bring them closer together. Shelly has won six times, most recently defeating Bender in the final round via a paintball competition. During their drunk celebrations, Shelly teabags one of his friends who has passed out. Bender and Nikki (Shelly's wife) joke about shooting Shelly in the scrotum in retaliation for Shelly's behavior. It is later revealed that Bender aimed the gun at Shelly, but Nikki pulled the trigger. Shelly eventually loses both of his testicles (which he keeps secret) as a result of the accident, but Bender takes the blame to save Shelly's failing marriage and as revenge for Shelly's mistreatment.

Five years later, Shelly is suicidal and has been admitted to the hospital. His marriage to Nikki has failed and he is now living with his mother. Shelly's mother calls Bob, now a successful and rich businessman, and orders him to start the Buddy Games again so that Shelly will have something to live for. When Bob suggests to Shelly they compete with their friends

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Produced by	<u>Josh Duhamel</u> <u>Michael J. Luisi</u> <u>Jude Weng</u>
Starring	<u>Josh Duhamel</u> <u>Dax Shepard</u> <u>Kevin Dillon</u> <u>Olivia Munn</u> <u>Dan Bakkedahl</u> <u>James Roday</u> <u>Rodriguez</u> <u>Nick Swardson</u>
Cinematography	<u>Luke Bryant</u>
Edited by	<u>Kenneth Marsten</u>
Music by	<u>Alex Wurman</u>
Production company	<u>WWE Studios</u>
Distributed by	<u>Saban Films</u>

again, Shelly agrees so long as Bob does not reveal to anyone the loss of his testicles and that Bender not be invited. Bob agrees to these terms.

Bob calls all his friends (except for Bender) who all enthusiastically agree to participate. Bob's girlfriend is less than enthusiastic about Bob participating in the buddy games again, and after a fight she leaves via helicopter. Meanwhile, Bender finds out about the return of the Buddy Games from the other friends and surprises Bob at his mansion. To spare Bender's feelings for not being invited, Bob lies to Bender by telling him that to play in the Buddy Games this year, he will have to pay a \$10,000 entry fee. Bob also reveals that Shelly lost both of his testicles, which shocks Bender.

Release dates	February 10, 2019 (Mammoth Film Festival) ^[1] November 24, 2020 (United States)
Running time	90 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English
Box office	\$852,378 ^[2] ^[3]

The group then travels to a secluded cabin in the woods, but Bender arrives unexpectedly. He announces that he was able to acquire the entry fee by selling all of his late mother's possessions and giving hand-jobs to the homeless. He also reveals to the group that Shelly lost both of his testicles when he offers Shelly vials of his own sperm so that Shelly could have children if he wanted. Bob then reveals to Bender that he was not actually invited and that he had made up the entry fee so that Bender's feelings would not be hurt. Frustrated, Bender goads Bob into offering a cash prize of a hundred thousand dollars to the winner of the competition by relating how each of the friends, except for Bob, need the money. Shelly then begrudgingly accepts Bender in the competition.

The first day of the games includes an eating competition, a race on mini motorcycles, a water slide, a mud crawl, and a watermelon smash. Bob wins the first leg of the competition because Shelly misses the finishing line flag which is placed in the air after the water slide. In the next challenge each of the friends drink an entire bottle of laxatives before being tasked with picking up a woman at a bar. Bender wins the competition by tricking and teasing his friends. In the following competition, the friends smoke a joint and then strap a raw piece of steak to their heads. A komodo dragon is then released into the room and the friends compete to see who can stay the longest in the room. Shelly wins, seemingly losing his mind, and biting the dragon's tongue as it flicks at him.

Bob, Shelly, and Bender all advance to the final stage of the games. The night before the final competition, the friends celebrate by drinking pina coladas but unbeknownst to the rest of the group, Shelly has spiked these drinks with Bender's semen. The friends then watch a commercial which Durfy has appeared in, but mock it. Frustrated, Durfy wanders in the woods and is attacked by a rabid animal. Bob, Doc and Zane search for Durfy and upon finding him, convince him that he should continue acting by encouraging him to perform an impromptu scene.

Meanwhile, back at the cabin, Bender has fallen asleep and Shelly kidnaps him and duct tapes him to a tree. In the morning, Shelly destroys Bender's van (a gift from his late mother which he has been living in) by crashing it into a tree as revenge for shooting him. Bender then reveals that it was Nikki who shot Shelly.

The following day, the three finalists, Bender, Bob, and Shelly don protective gear and hunt each other in a field using bows. Bob's girlfriend, Tiffany arrives to support him but Bob is immediately eliminated by being shot in the hand. Bender and Shelly then face off and while Shelly is able to get the drop on Bender, Bender catches the arrow mid flight. Bender and Shelly then fight hand to hand, resulting in Bender winning the competition and the cash prize.

Tiffany then proposes to him stating that he must now be ready to move on from his friends and the Buddy Games, which Bob rejects. Enraged, Tiffany beats Bob, Doc, Zane, and Durfy.

In the credits, Zane reveals that he is gay to Doc and Durfy secures a role on a CW show. Shelly, after avoiding all contact with Bender, is kidnapped by Bender who reveals that he used part of his winnings to purchase artificial scrotums for Shelly.

Cast

- [Josh Duhamel](#) as Bobfather
- [Olivia Munn](#) as Tiffany
- [James Roday Rodriguez](#) as Zane Rockwell
- [Kevin Dillon](#) as Doc
- [Dan Bakkedahl](#) as Shelly
- [Sheamus](#) as Thursty
- [Dax Shepard](#) as Durfy
- [Nick Swardson](#) as Bender
- [Neal McDonough](#) as himself
- [Jensen Ackles](#) as Jack Durfy (cameo role)

Production

The film was directed by [Josh Duhamel](#) in his directorial debut and co-written by Duhamel, Bob Schwartz, and [Jude Weng](#). Filming began in August 2017 in [Vancouver](#).^[4]

The casting of [Sheamus](#) and [Nick Swardson](#) was announced in June 2017,^[4] with [Kevin Dillon](#), [Dax Shepard](#), [Olivia Munn](#), [James Roday Rodriguez](#), and [Dan Bakkedahl](#) joining two months later.^[6]

Release

This film was released digitally on November 24, 2020.

Reception

On [Rotten Tomatoes](#), *Buddy Games* has an approval rating of 16% based on 25 reviews, with an average rating of 3.9/10.^[7] On [Metacritic](#), the film has a weighted average score of 22 out of 100, based on reviews from 6 critics, indicating "generally unfavorable reviews".^[8]

Cath Clarke of *The Guardian* gave the film one out of five stars, and described it as "a buddy gross-out movie that's unfunny and offensive in equal measures."^[9] [Richard Roeper](#), from *The Chicago Sun-Times*, rated it one out of four stars, and wrote that the film's "middle-aged, self-absorbed clowns are so repugnant and uninteresting and small-minded and awful, they make the gang from *Tag* look like the [Knights of the Round Table](#)," adding that it is a "legit contender for worst movie of 2020".^[10] [Johnny Oleksinski](#), for the *New York Post*, gave it zero stars out of four, and strongly criticized its lack of character development and pervasive [toxic masculinity](#), concluding that "*Buddy Games* leaves you feeling dead inside."^[11]

The Hollywood Reporter's Frank Scheck criticized the film as a "paean to arrested male adolescence", and faulted the screenwriters for sacrificing actual comedy for excessive gags, though he added that Bakkedahl delivered an "undeniably vanity-free, no-holds-barred performance".^[12] Mick LaSalle, from *The San Francisco Chronicle*, gave a more positive assessment of the movie, writing, "It has a wicked sense of comedy that occasionally is quite funny", but once the games begin anew, it becomes "mere spectacle". He also found completely implausible Duhamel's character's preference for spending time with his "flatulent, disgusting friends" rather than his wife, played by Munn, who is "the best thing in every movie she's in", but only has limited screen time in this film.^[13]

Reality television adaptation

In April 2023, CBS announced that it had ordered a reality competition series inspired by the film, produced by Bunim/Murray Productions, Dakota Kid Productions and CBS Studios with Duhamel as host and executive producer.^[14] The series premiered on September 14, 2023.^{[15][16]}

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External links

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