

= Pilot (Friday Night Lights) =

" Pilot " is the first episode of the sports drama television series Friday Night Lights . The episode premiered on the NBC network on October 3 , 2006 . It introduces the men and women involved with the Dillon Panthers , a Texas high school football team . In the pilot episode , the team is preparing for the first game of the season , which will be the first game under new head coach Eric Taylor .

The show is based on the 2004 film Friday Night Lights , which was in turn based on the 1990 non @-@ fiction book Friday Night Lights : A Town , a Team , and a Dream by H. G. Bissinger . Peter Berg , who is Bissinger 's cousin and who directed the film , wrote and directed the pilot episode , and served as executive producer for the series . While some of the actors from the movie returned to act on the show , most of the actors were cast specifically for the television series .

Critical reception of the show was good to average , with a general appreciation for the realistic portrayal of Middle America . Generally speaking , however , there were serious doubts about whether the show would be able to stay on the air very long , though it has since gone on to complete five seasons . The episode 's viewership of just over seven million was characterized as disappointing , though it did relatively well among men aged 18 to 34 .

= = Plot = =

It is Monday morning , and five days until the first game of the season for high school football team Dillon Panthers . While coach Eric Taylor is surveying the field , some of the players are getting ready for practice . Fullback Tim Riggins is recovering from a hangover , and his brother Billy warns him that he could be kicked off the team if he does not show . Meanwhile , second @-@ string quarterback Matt Saracen is preparing lunch for his grandmother , before his friend Landry Clarke drives him to practice . At the stadium , a television crew is conducting interviews . It is revealed that coach Taylor , who has recently been made head coach , used to coach the exceptionally gifted quarterback Jason Street . It also becomes clear that there is a deep @-@ seated conflict between Tim Riggins and the brash and loud @-@ mouthed running back Brian " Smash " Williams . Later , at the local fast food restaurant where the players regularly hang out , Landry and Matt try to approach the coach 's daughter Julie . She insists that she does not associate with football players . They assure her that Landry is not on the team and Matt gets virtually no playing time because of Street , but she still rebuffs them both .

On Tuesday night a pep rally is held at the local car dealership . The owner and host is Buddy Garrity , who is also the father of Jason Street 's girlfriend Lyla . Coach Taylor is surrounded by members of the local community questioning him about the game . It is gradually emerging how important football is to the town , and the great responsibility that rests on Taylor 's shoulders . His wife Tami , meanwhile , is reluctantly recruited by the society wives to join their book club . Riggins ' girlfriend Tyra Collette tries to stoke up trouble by flirting with both Street and Smash . Wednesday goes by with a team visit to a group of elementary school football players who idolize the older boys . The two teams recite the Lord 's Prayer together . On Thursday night , the night before the game , Street and Riggins are at a party . Riggins lays out his plan of Street going to the National Football League and Riggins living off one percent of Street 's salary . Then they can retire to a ranch where Riggins will act as Street 's caretaker . They make a toast to " Texas Forever " .

On game night , coach Taylor gives a pep talk where he warns the players against taking the opponents ? Westerby High School ? too lightly . They say their rallying cry , " Clear Eyes , Full Hearts , Can 't Lose ! " and enter the field . The first half is problematic for the Panthers , and at the end of the second half , the visitors make a potentially game @-@ winning interception . Street is the only one left to make a tackle . He succeeds , but the tackle is so hard that he remains prone on the ground . The crowd is left in silence as the starting quarterback does not move , and has to be taken off on a stretcher to a waiting ambulance . Coach Taylor now has to put in the highly unprepared Saracen , who initially makes several silly mistakes . The coach tells him to relax and focus , and Saracen manages to connect with Smash , who scores a touchdown . Riggins recovers

the ensuing onside kick for the Panthers . In the final seconds of the game , Saracen throws a long pass to a receiver , who makes it to the end zone for another touchdown . As the Panthers win the game , both teams gather at mid @-@ field to pray for Jason Street . Team members then head over to the hospital , where Street 's condition is still unclear . Riggins and Smash reconcile , while Julie tries to comfort Lyla . In a voice @-@ over , coach Taylor is heard saying that " We are all vulnerable , and we will all at some point in our lives fall . "

= = Production = =

= = = Conception = = =

The television series Friday Night Lights was based on the 2004 movie Friday Night Lights , which was in turn based on the 1990 non @-@ fiction book Friday Night Lights : A Town , a Team , and a Dream by H. G. Bissinger . The book describes the 1988 season of the Permian Panthers , a high school football team in Odessa , Texas . While the movie was set in 1988 , the television series takes place in the present . Peter Berg ? who is Bissinger 's cousin ? co @-@ wrote and directed the movie , and also wrote and directed the Friday Night Lights pilot . In addition to writing the script of the pilot , he also executively produced the entire project together with Sarah Aubrey and John Cameron .

Berg expressed regret in interviews about having to sacrifice certain story lines in the movie , due to time restraints . The television series allowed interpersonal issues to be addressed more in depth . " The idea was to create a television show that exists as much more of a soap opera , or an exploration of human beings , " said Berg in an interview , " than as a chronicle of a football team 's pursuit of glory . " The series was filmed partly in Austin , and a call went out for local football players to play part roles in the show . In an attempt to maintain an authentic Texas environment , elements were incorporated from local society . Football scenes were filmed at the local Pflugerville High School 's Kuempel Stadium and at the RRISD Complex , while uniforms were based on those of real @-@ life Pflugerville Panthers .

= = = Casting = = =

Casting of the show included using some of the actors who had already appeared in the movie , including Brad Leland as Buddy Garrity , a character similar to the one he had played in the movie , and Connie Britton as Tami Taylor , wife of coach Eric Taylor . Britton had felt that the female story lines were underplayed in the movie , but was promised by Berg that these topics would be given more attention in the television series . Kyle Chandler , playing the role of head coach Eric Taylor , said he had played some high school football , " but I was no good " . He recalled showing up to an early meeting with Berg after a friend 's party where he " had too much to drink , smoked too many cigarettes " and was generally quite tired . Berg liked that look , since he wanted the coach to appear old and weary . " You need to drink a lot of scotch and smoke a lot of cigarettes , " he advised .

Scott Porter , playing the role of quarterback Jason Street , knew that his character would be paralyzed from the first episode on , and said that this was a big part of the reason why he took the role . Porter played high school football as a wide receiver . He also played on a highly successful team in high school , and described himself as huge fan of the Friday Night Lights movie . Meanwhile Taylor Kitsch , the show 's Tim Riggins , said in an interview that he was able to relate to his character based on his own personal experiences : " my father is out of my life , more or less " , he revealed in an interview , " So I discover stuff that maybe I wasn 't even dealing with as a person . "

Zach Gilford said about his character Matt Saracen that " there are different parts of it from people I know growing up or people I 'm tight with now " . He credited Peter Berg with coming up with the Saracen character , and said he was grateful to " have some of the most realistic and heartfelt

storylines . " When asked which of the actors would have been drafted highest by the NFL , he replied " Probably Taylor [Kitsch] . He 's a good athlete , but Scott will kill me for saying that . Scott played football growing up and he has a good arm , but Taylor is faster and I think that would help his draft status . " Gaius Charles , who plays " Smash " Williams , graduated from the Carnegie Mellon School of Drama in 2005 , determined to find a job within a year , which he did with Friday Night Lights . He describes himself as " all right " at football , but says that he was taken aback by the intensity of the plays on the set .

Mack Brown , the head coach of the University of Texas at Austin Longhorn football team , plays a cameo in the episodes . He appears in the pep rally scene , where he is a member of the local community questioning coach Taylor . Brown played without a script because , according to Berg , " you 've heard fathers for 33 years , so you ought to know what to say . " Kyle Chandler , as coach Taylor , was reportedly surprised by Brown 's intensity .

= = Reception = =

Lisa de Moraes , in her " TV Column " for The Washington Post , pointed out that in spite of critical praise , the show 's premiere did poorly with viewers . With 7 @. @ 17 million viewers , it had " the worst ratings performance for any series premiere in the official 2006 @- @ 07 TV season . " On the other hand , Cynthia Fuchs of PopMatters wrote that the episode 's good performance among the coveted demographic of men aged 18 to 34 could be a saving grace . The episode was nominated for an Artios Award for " Best Dramatic Pilot Casting " . Casting director Linda Lowy was the nominee for the award , which was won by the series Brothers & Sisters for the episode " Patriarchy " .

The pilot of Friday Night Lights received good to middling reviews . Virginia Heffernan of The New York Times gave the episode a very good review , and suggested the series could be good enough to transcend the medium of television . She praised the " intelligent performances " of the actors , and though she found the " Smash " Williams character less convincing than the others , she thought it improved towards the end . She also appreciated the use of audio to tell the story : the buzz of a surgeon 's saw or the sound of skin stuck to leather . Keith Phipps of The A.V. Club , wrote " I appreciate the feel for the high stakes attached to small @- @ market school sports , the knowing take on the high @- @ school caste system , and the details of family life . " Still , he worried that America was " failing to fall in love with " the show , and expressed doubts as to whether it would be allowed to survive .

Henry Goldblatt , writing for Entertainment Weekly , gave the episode a grade B. He accused the show of abandoning the " racial diversity and the gritty poverty " of the film , but still allowed that Peter Berg had " kept the thrust " . The Matt Saracen character was singled out as particularly promising . While positively contrasting the show with other teen @- @ age dramas like One Tree Hill , Goldblatt also had doubts about its staying power . Variety 's Brian Lowry called the show " Earnest , beautifully shot and perhaps more organically religious than anything else in primetime " . Still , he felt the show was " like one of those family programs middle America and conservatives pine for that too few of them actually bother to watch " . He pointed out that the show had to compete with both House and Dancing With the Stars , among women as well as men , in order to survive . The Washington Post critic Tom Shales called the show " Extraordinary in just about every conceivable way , " particularly emphasising the quality of the cast . Shales did have issues with the documentary style of show 's camera movements , but still thought it could be the " best new drama series of the season " .