

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

A documentary like *Wheel Turn* has a very prominent spot in the sports media landscape. It would be a powerful piece to show on the Supersport Channel. Part of the incentive behind making it came from the desire to challenge conventional coverage of disabled sport. Our focus was wheelchair basketball. This sport is filmed and broadcast with little variety in shot size and sequence choice. The result is usually a locked down camera covering the game from a high angle. This makes the coverage dry and boring and the players seem quite insignificant. This may arise from the fact that disabled sport does not hold as much status as able-bodied sport.

The documentary *Murderball* was refreshing in its rough, raw and honest look at disabled athletes. The quad rugby game sequences used many close-up shots of facial expressions and wheels turning as well as often shooting from a low angle to make the players look powerful. We took elements of this and used it in our approach to filming and editing.

When working in the genre of social documentary there needs to be an ongoing awareness of how this piece is commenting on society and societal structure. Questions need to constantly be asked by the filmmakers. Such as who is being represented, how are they being represented and what notions of identity and existence are being confirmed or challenged? Considering our subject matter these were very important things to consider. Since our production schedule afforded us maximum editing time we were able to address these concerns in detail. They should have been brought in during shooting but for a number of reasons were not.

This documentary may not be newsworthy in a conventional journalistic sense but it holds a lot that people need to hear. It challenges the stereotype and idea that people with disabilities are less active and physical than able-bodied people. There is a general assumption that because some people may be paralysed or missing limbs they are therefore less energetic than other people. Through *Wheel Turn* we wanted to show that in many instances this judgment may be unfounded. Disabled people are not passive participants constantly needing the help of able-bodied people. Through the framework of an Eastern Cape wheelchair basketball team we show that physical disability does not determine a lifestyle. The case studies in our documentary reveal that it is possible to

succeed on many levels in a physically orientated society. The stories of both Maria and Adrian reveal that it is possible to re-build a life after an accident that causes disability. Deonette and Siseko have lived with their disabilities for much longer. But they too highlight the fact that disability does not have to be a determining factor in how they run their lives. The presence of wheelchair basketball as a lens through which to learn about these people is important. Playing wheelchair basketball represents a commitment to including an energetic, physical and sport-focused aspect to their lives. It was essential to challenge stereotypes of disability in the very arena of which it finds itself: the appearance and use of the body. Even though the sport may be modified to accommodate peoples' different physical abilities wheelchair basketball is still essentially basketball.

The audience that would enjoy *Wheel Turn* is wide and varied. As we live in a very sports-orientated society the focus on wheelchair basketball makes it appealing. There is a tension built up throughout the documentary that holds people. The countdown towards the provincial qualifier is exciting. This interest in the final game grows as people become more involved in the lives of the case studies.

There needs to be more focus on Siseko and the Border Brumbies. It is only Thutzelo who speaks about Siseko. His profile needed to be more in-depth. Although we chose the Eastern Spears as our team of focus, equal research and time should have been spent with both sides. This does reveal our identity as three white filmmakers. Although our re-edit did remedy a lot of the glaring racial biases.

The people who comment in this documentary are wide and varied which is good. We built up the stories of both sides to increase interest in the final sequence of the match. As the audience gains insight into the players and their lives, their perceptions of disabled people should ideally be challenged. It is our wish as filmmakers that people come to the final sequence watching it not as a game of disabled people playing wheelchair basketball but as people playing in a provincial qualifying match.

The subsequent death of Deonette and a number of other players brings poignancy to the piece.