

## Top 5 Sports (spork) Movies

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While searching for a new Top 5 topic, I stumbled upon an ingenious term coined by ESPN writer Bill Simmons: namely, the “spork” flick, which he defines as a term “to cover any chick flick that disguises itself as a sports movie, except enough is in there to make male AND female viewers happy.” To follow my list of the Top 5 spork flicks of all time. Feel free to offer me any I might have missed.

### Rocky (1976)

A surprise? Not really, if you watch it again. What made the original Rocky great (and where the sequels went off the tracks, in my opinion) is that the original is just as much about Adrian ([Talia Shire]) as it is Rocky ([Sylvester Stallone]). While it is remembered for its still powerful training sequences and the final fight, it is a very sweet and moving romance at its core. Just as Rocky is trying to prove to the world and to himself that he is not a loser, so is she. She slowly emerges from her shyness and from under the thumb of her brother Paulie ([Burt Young]) in order to find a new life with Rocky. The shameless but wonderful ending, in which he yells her name as she runs to the ring, is still guaranteed to get the tear ducts flowing. In the final shot, you realize they both have won.

{moseasymedia media=http://www.youtube.com/v/m8DIBN\_LLiA}

### 2) Bull Durham (1988)

Bull Durham is perhaps the best movie about America’s two favorite pastimes: baseball and sex. Crash Davis ([Kevin Costner], in perhaps his best role), a permanent minor leaguer near the end of his career, is assigned as the catcher/tutor of slow but gifted pitching prodigy Nuke LaLoosh ([Tim Robbins] in a crucial early role in his career). Both eventually strike up a romance with Annie (a very sexy [Susan Sarandon]) who is the resident baseball geek and “mascot.” The film does not have any highly dramatic sports moments (and thankfully doesn’t have a God like reverence for the sport like some other baseball movies do), yet it seems clear the makers know and have a passion for the sport. It also features fully fleshed out characters who we come to care about.

### 3) Jerry Maguire (1996)

Though more chick flick than sports flick, Jerry Maguire still offers a perceptive look at the oftentimes cutthroat world of sports agents. [Cuba Gooding Jr.] steals the show and is believable in his role as an NFL wide receiver (not as easy a role to pull off as one might think).

### 4) Brian’s Song (1971)

Though, unlike Jerry Maguire, perhaps more sports flick than chick flick, the film has a strong, undying marriage at its core. It is also, TV movie or not, one of the greatest tearjerkers ever (not in small part due to its haunting, beautiful score). The true story of Chicago fullback Brian Piccolo ([James Caan]), who succumbed to cancer at age 26, can make even the most hardened sports fan cry, especially when close friend Gayle Sayers ([Billy Dee Williams]) mentions Piccolo at an awards ceremony (“I love Brian Piccolo, and I’d like all of you to love him. . .”).

### 5) Heaven Can Wait (1978)

A remake of the 1941 film *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*, the primary sport in the plot is changed from boxing to football. Rams quarterback Joe Pendleton ([Warren Beatty]) is accidentally taken to heaven 50 years too early. To compensate for his mistake, the angel who took him too early places Pendleton's soul into the body of a recently murdered millionaire. Pendleton then, using his newfound money, purchases his old team in the hope he can once again quarterback them to the Super Bowl-while starting, at the same time, a romance with a woman who confronts him on his recent business decisions ([Julie Christie]). This charming, funny film ties in enough football to qualify it as a spork flick, particularly since it closes with an extended sequence at the big game.