

DROPSHOT

Written by
David Bertran

david@davidbertran.com



OVER BLACK.

We hear a DIAL TONE. Then, three numbers are DIALED.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
Nine-one-one. This is Emergency
Operator 238.

ELLIOTT (V.O.)
I need an ambulance. I need an
ambulance, right away.

*

EXT. T.S.T.A. - PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

An OVERHEAD SHOT of a lonely booth on an empty street, barely lit by a lamp post.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
What is the address of your
emergency?

SUPER: "ONE WEEK TO THE BOWL"

ELLIOTT
There's a kid... He is bleeding. A
lot! It's Julian. Julian Barnes is
bleeding.

As we BOOM DOWN, a shaky boy, ELLIOTT MCKINSEY (14) is revealed to be holding the phone.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
OK. What's the address there?

ELLIOTT
I just... I just don't want him to
bleed to death! You know? It's
important that he doesn't die.
Very important.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
Of course. I still need an address
though.

ELLIOTT
It's, uh... It's...
(looking around)
It's the T.S.T.A. The T.S.T.A.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
The Academy?

*

ELLIOTT

Yes.

OPERATOR (O.S.)

And what happened exactly to Julian?

ELLIOTT

Are you sending the ambulance?

OPERATOR (O.S.)

In a moment, we'll send help--

ELLIOTT

Send it now!! Why are you not sending the ambulance!?

OPERATOR (O.S.)

We'll send an ambulance right away, son. But first I need you to calm down. Can you do that? Can you take a deep breath for me?

Elliott antsyly shakes his head.

OPERATOR (O.S.)

Tell me what happened to Julian.

A profile shot of the booth now shows us Elliott turning and looking directly INTO THE CAMERA.

ELLIOTT

I stabbed him. I stabbed him. Hurry up.

Elliott SQUEEZES his grip on a SHARP PIECE OF METAL, which he holds in his right hand.

OPERATOR (O.S.)

I understand. And what is your name?

ELLIOTT

I already told you. It's the T.S.T.A. And I need an ambulance. What more do you need to know!?

OPERATOR (O.S.)

Help is on the way. But I need a name here.

Elliott is done. He drops the phone and heads out of the booth.

*

OPERATOR (O.S.)
Don't hang up. Stay with me, son.

Elliott, annoyed, walks with determination and urgency.

As he makes way, he tries to improve his GRIP on the sharp piece of metal. Several times, until he finds--

--a perfectly LOCKED GRIP.

CUT TO BLACK:

EXT. T.S.T.A. - OUTDOOR AREA - SUNSET

A dusty, rusted WIRE FENCE in the foreground. As we slide left, it turns into a deep-spaced, high wire fence, stretching as far as the eyes reach. Orange, Vietnam-like sky.

SUPER: "EIGHT WEEKS TO THE BOWL"

A single file of sweaty shirtless TEENAGERS in olive-khaki shorts sprint for their lives in between the lines of wire.

Lots of EFFORTS. Intense.

We hear what SOUNDS like muffled, spaced--

GUN SHOTS

--in the distance.

One of the teenagers TRIPS and STUMBLES. He bumps into a couple other guys yet manages to stand and regain pace.

A LOUD MILITARY BLOWHORN goes off over the PA speaker system.

We keep sliding, crossing over another wire fence, to REVEAL--

--a TENNIS COURT.

COURT #1

Gun shots are now REVEALED to be--

--powerful, FLAT TENNIS SERVES aimed at the BUTTOCKS of a well lined up pack of five TENNIS PLAYERS.

With the handle of their racquet between their legs, they all bend over at the baseline, on other side of the net.

POW!

A fast serve hits the bottom of the far-end player. Ouch.

A SECOND SERVER goes at it.

POW!

Another hit.

Nobody moves. Nobody makes a sound. The guys are taking it like champions.

POW!! POW!!

Two last serves bust two other butt cheeks.

TENNIS SERVER

Yeehaw!!

The PA SYSTEM now BLASTS a popular, animated--

--WHISTLING SONG.

Drill's over.

Players DANCE and WHISTLE the catchy tune.

COURT #4 - ENTRY DOOR

JULIAN (16), a blonde, Boris Becker look-alike, movie-star sense of entitlement, carries a big tennis bag on his shoulder, and a BROKEN RACQUET in his right hand.

Sweaty but zero hairs out of place. Julian chews gum as he leads the way out of the court, with a purposeful, arrogant walk.

Julian is followed by EVAN (16), a mocking, relaxed, skinny fella, whose main purpose in life is to piss everybody off.

EVAN

(as Alex DeLarge, from "A
Clockwork Orange")

Welly, welly, weeeeelly!

Two JOGGERS wipe the screen.

EVAN

Oy!! Julian! How was that for some
ultratennis!?

JULIAN

Sucked.

EVAN

Enough to beat my *droogie...* *right-right!!?*

JULIAN

Fuck off.

Julian SMASHES his broken racquet inside a big trash can, as he gets out of the court and leads the way into the--

PATHWAY BETWEEN COURTS

Still a fast-paced walk-and-talk scene.

EVAN

A bit of a pain in the *gulliver*, maybe?

JULIAN

Love-thirty handicap, pal. Play an even match, for once...

(to himself)

You'd have no fucking chance.

EVAN

Right-right! Just the *gulliver*, then!

Evan enjoys getting on Julian's nerves.

JULIAN

Can't play like your mother in the Challenger circuit, pal.

EVAN

Don't speak of mother! Mother kicks ass, *brother!*

JULIAN

Fuck you and fuck your mother, Evan.

Julian is done with the conversation and EXITS THE FRAME. We stay with Evan as he approaches for a joyful CLOSE-UP.

EVAN

(smiling)

Right-right! Fuck off, then!

RED (O.S.)

You two!!

Evan turns his head--

 EVAN
 Whoopsie doo!

--and gets a move-on.

Behind him, a single line of energetic STUDENTS animatedly JOG TOWARDS THE CAMERA and EXIT THE FRAME WHISTLING the CHORUS of the same song.

THE BLEACHER AREA

It was a weathered, stocky, Irish-looking coach, wearing a large straw hat, the one who SCREAMED at Julian and Evan. His name, RED WILSON (46).

His thick, low-pitched voice is powerful and intimidating. You don't mess with this guy.

Julian and Evan SPRINT as fast as they can to reach the bleachers.

 RED
 How long does it take two grown men
 to pack up after the horn? Just
 tell me, guys. I am interested.

Red is surrounded by four other players. He holds a clipboard with a score sheet and a walkie-talkie.

Red grabs his pen.

 RED
 Julian.

 EVAN
 6-3.

 RED
 Julian.

Silence.

 RED
 I said Julian!

 JULIAN
 (soft)
 3-6.

Julian has a cool checking-out-my-racquet-strings pose, avoiding eye contact.

RED
No shit. What happened?

EVAN
Jules played well. I just painted
every line today.

JULIAN
Shut up. Just shut up.

EVAN
I said you played well!

RED
(to Julian)
Is that true? Did he outplay you?

JULIAN
Not since he started talking like a
retard.

RED
What if Evan does the Bowl?

JULIAN
It was a Love-Thirty handicap, Red.
I mean, impossible. Give me no-
handicap and it's a bagel.

Red shakes his head in disbelief and writes down the score.

RED
Bagels are from New York, and you
haven't left Florida in a long
time.

Evan loves it.

RED
Move it, guys.

ELEVATED TERRACE

An elevated sundeck overlooks the entire academy, with dozens
of tennis courts stretching as far as the eyes reach.

On it, SUSAN PARSONS, a polished, attractive TV REPORTER in
her 30s, walks towards the camera, addressing directly her TV
audience.

SUSAN

Just a couple of months away from the American Bowl in Miami, Florida, we talk today with legendary tennis coach Tony Sala, owner of the world-renowned tennis academy of the same name, the first full-immersion, boarding school of its kind, responsible for launching the careers of some of the most successful tennis pros in the circuit.

Susan now reaches the interview area and sits in a stylish wicker armchair.

She turns to face TONY SALA (60s), who sits in another wicker armchair across Susan.

SUSAN

Welcome to TennisBound, Tony.

Italian-looking, with impossibly-tan leather skin, Tony is the kind of fella that went to war and came back to tell you all about it. The human condition, the meaning of life, he'll tell you all.

Tony wears dated tennis attire, a golden-chain holding old-lady sunglasses and an incredible smile.

TONY

You got it.

The set is surrounded by a few CAMERAMEN and ASSISTANTS, who observe closely.

SUSAN

Now, Tony. Your critics say you haven't brought anybody new to the circuit in a long--

TONY

Competitors.

SUSAN

Excuse me?

TONY

My competitors. Not my critics.
(a bullshit grin)
I don't have critics, Suzanne!

Tony closes his eyes and throws his ARMS UP IN THE AIR as if he was blessed by divine love.

SUSAN

Susan.

TONY

Let me see.

(keeping count with his
fingers)

We got Peters. We got Brown. We got
Martinez... Should I go on? Fifteen
American Bowl winners, baby!!

SUSAN

But it's been a while. What role
does the American Bowl play in the
school's program?

TONY

Let me say this. Our friends in
Miami have been ins-tru-men-tal in
taking our students to the Pro
tour. Remember. Only academy. In
the world. With a Wild Card, baby!!

SUSAN

Indeed. It's a unique and
exceptional honor that the academy
can send one of its students
straight into the main draw.

TONY

It couldn't be any other way,
Suzanne. The Bowl and the Tony Sala
are like Fred Astaire and Ms.
Rogers, women and diamonds,
spaguetti and meatballs! In-
separable. Un-breakable. A perfect
symbiosis.

SUSAN

Who do you have in your back pocket
for the Bowl, this year, Tony?

Tony leans forward and smiles.

TONY

Oh, I have someone very special.
Let me tell ya. Immense talent. I
haven't seen a talent like this in
years. Top 10 in the world in five
years. Gua-ran-teed, Suzanne.

PATHWAY TO CENTRAL COURT

SHARICE WILLIAMS (56), African-American, a loyal right-hand commander with too much to do and too little time.

A fast-paced walk-and-talk scene.

SHARICE
Elliott Mckinsey. He is fourteen.

RED
I got no room, Sharice.

SHARICE
Ranked #200 Statewide. Very consistent rallies. Great footwork.

RED
I got some of that.

SHARICE
He is a Fort Lauderdale dropout.

RED
Hm-hm.

SHARICE
What.

RED
Most certainly, he is not an FLT dropout.

SHARICE
He is too.

RED
Let me explain something to you, Sharice. People don't drop out of FLT. The same way people don't drop out of Tony Sala. They get kicked out.

SHARICE
Whatever, Red. Tony wants him.

RED
I didn't know we started taking rejects now.

SHARICE
You don't understand. We need him. Badly. Tony thinks he is the one.

(MORE)

SHARICE (CONT'D)

(pause)

He wants Elliott for the Bowl.

RED

This year?? No way. I have Julian.
He used to think Julian was the
one.

SHARICE

That was different and you know it.
There was some financial pressure.

RED

It was only two months ago,
Sharice!

(pause)

I am still going with Julian.

Sharice pulls Red's arm and makes him stop.

SHARICE

He needs to be housebroken though.

RED

I wish you stopped talking about
students as if they were puppies.

Red looks up ahead and frowns.

RED

What's going on?

Sharice seems to know the answer to that and lets Red walk
ahead and find out for himself.

A MYRIAD OF PEOPLE. Students, coaches and parents SURROUND
CENTRAL COURT. They are all obsessively fixated on a young
kid acing drills on the court.

We meet, once again, young tennis star Elliott McKinsey.
Uncomfortable with the attention, avoiding eye-contact, he is
the cool kid that doesn't know is cool.

Sharice catches up to Red.

SHARICE

He needs to be housebroken, Red.

RED

He is not your puppie, Sharice.

(pause)

He's mine.

Red is mesmerized at all the attention this kid garnered.

SHARICE
 (eager)
 Should I send him over to you
 tomorrow?

A beat. Red's mind has left the conversation.

SHARICE
 Red!

RED
 Start him off with José.

SHARICE
 Red!!

RED
 (stern)
 Do it, Sharice.

One firm look at her.

SHARICE
 Fine. He is your problem now.

Sharice forces a FOLDER on Red's chest, and she walks away.

SHARICE (O.S.)
 (softly)
 Asshole.

Behind Red, an interested bystander is REVEALED--

--to have been EAVESDROPPING through most of the
 conversation.

He is a polished, elegant, stylish fellow, which we will
 later know as BYRON BARNES(51).

Byron closely stares at Elliott, as he packs his tennis bag,
 and quickly turns to assess the attention garnered around
 him.

Finally, the PA SYSTEM cuts the popular WHISTLING TUNE that
 had been filling the airwaves in the background as we also--

CUT TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: "DROPSHOT"