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## Film Review

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physician whose discovered the link between football and brain damage while working as a forensic pathologist in Pennsylvania.

He first recognized something was amiss while performing an autopsy on the Pittsburgh Steelers' former center Mike Webster (David Morse), who died at 50 from a combination of amnesia, depression and dementia. Dr. Omalu was shocked to observe that the Hall of Famer had the brain of a very old man, so he decided to posthumously examine those of other National Football League vets who also passed away prematurely.

Lo and behold, the research revealed they all had suffered from CTE, ostensibly as a result of the pounding their skulls had taken on the field. Unfortunately, when Omalu subsequently attempted to go public with the his findings, he was threatened and discred-



'Concussion' opening Christmas Day is based on facts and stars Will Smith as Dr. Bennet Omalu, who discovered Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy in athletes who played contact sports, like football.

ited by the army of lawyers and quacks hired by Commissioner Roger Goodell (Luke Wilson) to protect the NFL's image.

Thus unfolds *Concussion*, a David vs. Goliath saga reminiscent of *The Insider* (1999), the similarly-themed expose recounting the real-life ordeal of the intrepid whistleblower who took on the Tobacco Industry when it was still hell bent on denying any link between smoking and cancer. An interesting factoid which bears men-

tioning is that *The Insider* was directed by the aforementioned Michael Mann.

*Concussion*, however, was directed by Peter Landesman (Parkland). He adapted it to the screen with the help of investigative journalist Jeanne Marie Laksas from "Game Brain," an article she published about the cover-up in the October 2009 issue of GQ magazine.

Landesman surrounded Smith with a talented cast, starting with the

gifted Gugu Mbatha-Raw as Omalu's feisty wife Prema. The dramatic personae also includes Oscar-nominees Alec Baldwin (for *The Cooler*) and Albert Brooks (for *Broadcast News*), as well as Hill Harper, Richard T. Jones, Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje and Eddie Marsan.

But make no mistake, *Concussion* is a marvel-

ous Will Smith vehicle, one that he'll undoubtedly get to drive for the duration of awards season, possibility all the way to the Oscars on Feb. 28.

★★★★ Excellent

Rated PG-13 for profanity, mature themes and disturbing images

Running time: 123 min.

Distributor: Sony Pictures

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Headquarters in Kent, WA  
25120 Pacific Hwy S, Ste 200  
Kent, WA 98032  
253.945.8800 • 800.573.8333