

Zachary Levi, Kurt Warner hope 'American Underdog' inspires audiences with improbable NFL success story

By Peter Sblendorio
New York Daily News

Long before his new movie tackled one of the NFL's great underdog stories, actor Zachary Levi was moved by Kurt Warner's journey.

Warner's improbable ascent from grocery store employee to a Super Bowl MVP is the subject of the new sports drama "American Underdog," which stars Levi as the Hall of Fame quarterback.

"I love any true-life sports

Cinderella story, and this one is one for the ages," Levi told the Daily News. "I saw it happening in real time back in '99 and was so blown away and inspired by it. Then I got the offer and I read the script, and there was just so much more."



Michael Kubeisy

Zachary Levi in "American Underdog: The Kurt Warner Story."

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"American Underdog" begins during Warner's lone season as a starter at the University of Northern Iowa and follows his struggles to make it with an NFL team before joining the Arena Football League.

"The hard part of making this movie is that a lot of people do know the story," Warner said. "You can look it up. It's been chronicled. People have talked about it."

He ultimately signed with the St. Louis Rams ahead of the 1998 NFL season and became their starter the following year, throwing 41 touchdown passes as the leader of a high-powered

offense nicknamed "The Greatest Show on Turf."

"That's going to be the backdrop for the movie," Warner said. "But what they're really going to see is the story behind that. The story that helped me to get to that point, to become the player and the person that I was at that point."

The film depicts Warner's relationship with his wife, Brenda, who was a single mother of two when they met. It also shows the financial struggles the couple faced early in their relationship, which caused Warner to take a job stocking shelves at a Hy-Vee supermarket in Iowa before his football success.

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