Even though it stars the insufferable George Clooney, seeing as how "Leatherheads" was a football movie, I felt it was my civic duty to once again dispatch the trusty Mitch to the theaters to review this one for us. Clooney plays Dodge Connelly, a 45 year old star of the Duluth Bulldogs, a professional football team in 1925. Renee Zellweger plays the hot reporter from the Chicago Tribune. What did Mitch think of this one? Find out in his latest film review for us here at TCF.

The Great Movie Drought of 2008 continues.

I have only found five movies released so far in 2008 that I've felt were interesting enough to review...and there is ZERO chance that any of them will end up anywhere close to what will finally be my Top 10 of this year. Granted, there is almost always a dearth of quality films released any year between January 1st and April 30th, but this year has been the worst in memory. The only movie that has received any universal critical acclaim has been "Horton Hears a Who", a kiddy movie that doesn't tend to be the type of film reviewed here.

So this week, we had "Leatherheads" coming out. It's a football movie. It's a comedy. It has one of the best actors in the world

in George Clooney, doing something that he is so good at; poking a lot of fun at himself. It has Renee Zellweger playing the type of role that Katherine Hepburn used to do so well.

But it also has a paper thin plot, which ultimately dooms this film to "an OK DVD rental" status.

"Leatherheads" isn't a bad movie...it's just not a very good one.

The concept is great, as is a lot of the delivery. Clooney plays Dodge Connelly, a 45 year old star of the Duluth Bulldogs, a professional football team in 1925. As known by most of us diehard NFL fans, professional football was a vagabond sport back in that time, far less popular than the college game. Clooney, who also directed, does an excellent job in getting the tone right; the uniforms, the players' backgrounds, the atmosphere of Prohibition Era Mid-West, and the field conditions (the final game was played in so much mud that you'd swear it was based off an old Browns game at Municipal Stadium). Game attendance was low, and teams folded on almost a weekly basis.

Duluth becomes one of those victims, forcing Dodge to try to do something else for the first time in his life...which he fails miserably. Needing a way to get back into the game, he comes up with the idea of recruiting the most popular player in the country; Princeton hero Carter "The Bullet" Rutherford (John Krasinki of TV's "The Office"), an All-American matinee idol who also happens to be a war hero from WWI, a man who single-handedly forced the surrender of

an entire company of Germans.

Accepting the lure of big money, Carter is soon on a train to Duluth with Dodge, and accompanying them is Chicago Tribune hotshot reporter Lexi Littleton (Zellweger), who has her eyes on more than just a fluff piece on the "too good to be true" Hero.

True to what you would expect from a "screwball comedy", the repartee between Zellweger and Clooney is quite enjoyable to watch, and Clooney follows the best tradition of making both characters as sharp and witty as Hepburn and Cary Grant. The give and take between Clooney and Krasinski also works very well.

So what doesn't work? The slight script. There has to be more to a movie than just snappy one-liners between two talented actors. The sub-plot of Lexi's snooping into The Bullet's past is some serious wasted celluloid. Also not very interesting are several Fight Scenes that are hopelessly hokey, including the obligatory bar fight between the Bulldogs and a group of soldiers in a speakeasy, ending with the groan inducing images of Randy Newman playing the piano with one hand and busting a booze bottle over someone's head with another. And of course, the fight ends with all of them singing a boozy song after becoming pals. Prior to that, Dodge and Carter have a "fight for honor" that lasts supposedly 30 minutes or so...with both me getting constantly punched in the face, but neither getting a bruise.

But worst is that the football games themselves are completely unbelievable. They just weren't that interesting, and none of the

"players" came across as anything close to athletic, especially the gangly Krasisnki running with an awkward gate that made Forest Gump look graceful.

In the first article I wrote for this site, I listed the Best and Worst Sports Movies ever made. One of my major complaints I had against almost every football movie is that they ALWAYS think the final game showed must end with The Big Play. No exception here...much to my chagrin.

And that's really a shame...as this movie had so much going for it, and in many ways, it is still very enjoyable to watch for the banter and atmosphere. It's a lot better than such football films as Adam Sandler's abominable "The Longest Yard" or "The Game Plan", but my expectations were much higher.

My Rating: Bill Nelsen (2 ½ footballs).