

'The Redeem Team' captures what it takes to bounce back in basketball



CHENNAI: Much like “The Last Dance,” Netflix’s latest basketball-focused outing “The Redeem Team” is exhilarating, making fans out of those who might have little interest in the sport.

Considered giants of the game, the US men’s basketball team faced a shattering defeat at the 2004 Olympics in Athens when they lost to Yugoslavia in the quarter finals and went home with a bronze medal.

It was a blow to American pride, but the team bounced back and in this documentary director Jon Weinbach analyses the hardships faced by the players.

The team reigned supreme at the 2008 Beijing Olympics and Kobe Bryant, who tragically died in a helicopter accident in 2020, was one of the heroes. Poignantly for fans of the sporting star, the film features interviews with him, as well as megastars LeBron James, Dwyane Wade and the coach of the team, Mike Krzyzewski.

Viewers get the chance to understand Krzyzewski's methods, as well as the psychological impact the devastating 2004 loss had on the team despite long-held views on America's basketball dominance.

“There was a lot of optimism on America's place in the world. All of those things contribute to a certain kind of atmosphere. And so when you have that kind of atmosphere, you're looking for things that you can feel good about as an American. In American sports, basketball culture was sacrosanct. But there was a moment when even that was teetering,” Krzyzewski says in the documentary.

He turned all this around by teaching his players the spirit of sportsmanship and camaraderie, captured beautifully through the lens of Diego Hurtado de Mendoza and Diego Trenas.

It is this narrative that is perhaps the most interesting aspect of the documentary — building a cohesive team of basketball legends was, perhaps, the major hurdle Krzyzewski faced in the run up to the Olympic games.

“There is this magic to team building,” Weinbach says. “Guys of this level really have nothing to gain from the experience except the honor of playing for the United States and for each other. If they can do it, what does that say about our ability to come together on other things?”

The perspectives of these stars are engaging, as is the tense game footage and news coverage from the time, all of which is woven together to create an enjoyable watch.
