

JAKE  
LAZELL

**PUNCH  
B A G**

Story by  
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Rocky meets Legally Blonde

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# INTRODUCTION

When a Teenage Girl pretends to be an accomplished boxer to impress a boy at school, she makes an enemy of the boy's hyper violent girlfriend who wants revenge in the ring.

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Coming of age stories are a poignant mix between sentimental storytelling and painfully relatable humour. However in British Film the coming of age genre is often ignored, a comment championed by Comedian and Director Richard Ayoade when his debut film *Submarine* released in 2010.

*Punch Bag* would be a needed, distinctly British, Coming of Age film. With a strong, uplifting message about developing self confidence and self respect. What begins as a feeble attempt of teenage girl to win affection becomes an empowering fight to prove her self worth to no one else but herself.

Rocky meets *Legally Blonde* meets British Secondary School.

# CHARACTERS

## **IN THE RED CORNER...** Michelle Henderson

The hero of our story. A nerdy recluse with not many friends, Michelle is the typical secondary school geek. Desperate for social mobility and to win the affections of her crush Jayden Prowse, the hero of the school, she begins to lie about her skills in the ring for his attention. This backfires when his Girlfriend challenges her to fight that the whole school wants to watch. Now she has to become the boxer she's pretending to be.

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## **IN THE BLUE CORNER...** Katarina Radcliffe

The most successful athlete in her school's history. An avid boxer but with a preference for punching those who can't punch back. And dating the most popular guy at the school. Katarina is the nightmarish combination of mean girl and school ground thug. Even the teacher's are frightened of her. When Henderson starts spouting off about her boxing skills in an attempt to steal her Boyfriend she decides to teach Henderson a painful lesson.

## THE SUPPORTING CAST...

### Mr Ferguson

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Eric Ferguson has been a PE Teacher for the last thirty years off his life. At this point he is just wasting away the days until he can retire to a remote village where he never has to speak to anyone ever again. As a youth he was incredible at any sport he tried his hand at but his true passion was boxing. His dreams of sporting glory have long since faded and now he watches idiots kick balls into nowhere or throw rackets into windows. And this irritating student Michelle Henderson has started nagging him for boxing lessons. He can't stand her but there's nothing else to do.

### Jayden Prowse

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The most popular guy at school, Jayden is used to being fawned over. He his friendly and charming persona is displayed to everyone he meets but he enjoys and thrives in the social hierarchy that school provides and would never actually make friends with someone beneath him, let alone date them. Michelle's attempts to win him are very entertaining but watching Katarina wipe the floor with her will be even better.

### Cliff

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Known only by his surname, Cliff is in his final year of secondary school. Needing money he works in the school library at lunch and as a cleaner for the school after hours. Often being an unwilling spectator to Michelle's training practice he becomes a sarcastic ally in her quest for glory. Despite not understanding what she sees in Jayden Prowse.

# STORY

## ACT ONE

Michelle Henderson, a nerdy girl with not many friends, has developed a large crush on the most popular boy in school: Jayden Prowse. She spends her days trying to impress him, despite him not paying much attention to her. She is finally successful when she lies to him, pretending that she is an avid and expert boxer. This spreads through the school and reaches the ears of Jayden's girlfriend Katarina who challenges her to a boxing match. Feeling trapped, Henderson agrees. Realising that she is going to get pummelled without help she begs a grumpy PE teacher named Mr Ferguson to train her. At first he refuses but with the help of fellow student Cliff, Henderson changes his mind.

## ACT TWO

Mr Ferguson starts Henderson on a rough training regiment that she doesn't respond well too. But over the time they form a bond and Ferguson starts using uncoventional strategies to help Henderson improve. Cliff also becomes a close friend and confidant. This has a positive impact on Henderson and she rises through the social ranks of the school, getting Jayden's attention.

This brings out the worst in Henderson, alienating Cliff in the process and neglecting her training. Her ego is brought crashing down however when she overhears Jayden and Katarina making fun of her realising Jayden has been setting her up to fail.

# STORY

## ACT THREE

A defeated Henderson returns to Mr Ferguson who to her surprise is very forgiving. He asks her if she still wants to fight and after considering it, she realises she does but this time she is doing it for herself. A training montage begins as Ferguson equips Henderson as best as he can. This time Henderson excels.

The day of the big fight arrives. Henderson hopes that Cliff will arrive to watch but she can't see him. The fight begins and Katarina has a clear advantage but Henderson doesn't give in. The fight becomes brutal. Henderson is giving her all but is on the ropes. As they wait for the final round to begin, Cliff arrives and gives her words of encouragement. Henderson returns to the ring and hits Katarina with a decisive blow. Henderson wins the match via score. She is victorious but doesn't care she calls out to Cliff and tells him that she loves him. She realises she doesn't his first name. He sheepishly admits its Adrian but Henderson have never seen Rocky and doesn't understand why that is funny.

Katarina and Jayden slink off as the rest of the school chants Henderson's name. She is a punching bag no longer.

# AUDIENCE

As a coming of age story PUNCH BAG would be primarily marketed towards a teenage and young adult target demographic. However it's empowering message and comedic style would also be ideal for older families and fans of sport films, meaning that a wide net of viewers would be available to market to.

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## — TONE AND STYLE —

Overall the film would have a light hearted tone that plays with some awkward, crude humour to remainful truthful to the awkward experience of growing up and finding yourself. As Henderson begins to take the upcoming fight more seriously, the story will begin to adopt a more serious tone to reflect her character arc and allow for the fight in the final act to be an intense finale that the audience will be truly invested in.

The film should have the heart of Rocky, the humour of Legally Blonde but the aesthetic of the inbetweeners. The style of the film should accurately reflect this, allowing each character's oddities shine through but maintaining a level of realism through out.



# POTENTIAL CASTING

Casting for the majority of the cast, specifically the students and protagonist, would preferably be unknowns that could embody the roles without any expectations. However the casting of the students should reflect a diverse range of ethnicities to portray an accurate and inclusive vision of the UK. It would be interesting to cast a Black British woman to play Michelle as it would give Black British women a character they can relate to in a genre which doesn't commonly have them as the protagonist.

For older characters such as Mr Ferguson actors such as Bradley Walsh, Martin Clunes or Greg Davies would be excellent choices. Being established actors who are mainly known for British TV they would understand the tone of the film completely and be able to guide the younger actors through the process.

# INSPIRATIONS

**PUNCH BAG** takes takes inspiration from a number of great films. A homage to both *Rocky* and *Legally Blonde*. And channelling the essence of other great coming of age films such as *Submarine*, *Lady Bird* and *Eighth Grade*.

Other large inspirations are sports drama/sports comedy films such as *Eddie the Eagle* or *Strictly Ballroom* would also be useful examples for setting the tone of the film. Another large inspiration would be sitcoms such as the *Inbetweeners* which highlight the awkward and sometimes uncomfortable but comedic landscape of secondary of which this film would inhabit.

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