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Tired Tropes

The tired trope I have decided to write about is “Quest for the National Championship,” a common trope in sports-related anime. As an anime fan, I have grown fond of the sports sub-genre, due to the suspense and action thrill. This trope seems to be the plot of, if not all, then 90% of sports anime. The overall theme is that there’s a main character who is either really skilled at a sport or really poor at a sport, but both share the same goal: to become the strongest and win the national championship for their team. The main character typically has some transformation within this trope, where if he is the best player, he typically has a selfish “I can win all by myself” attitude, or if he’s the worst player, then there’s usually the “I may not be the best, but I going to do all that I can to help us succeed”. Two anime instantly come into mind: a swimming anime titled Free and a volleyball anime titled Haikyuu!! In both anime, the main characters share one of the two mindsets I mentioned, and there is a thirst for the national championship.

If the sub-genre of the anime is sports, then this trope is almost always going to be inserted, because at the end of the day, people play sports to win the title. As a sports anime lover, I have to accept that in every anime, at the end of the story, I know that the team will win, but sometimes I wish that once the series concludes with the team not winning it all. We always highlight the dream of winning it all, but what about the other side- when you don’t win it all,

when you tried so hard and it still wasn't enough- I wish I saw more of that. Haikyuu is a series that is currently ongoing. Still, the creators have announced the final season, and as a fan, I have concluded that when the series is all said and done, the anime will again fall into the cliché and win the national championship. Although yes, I and all sports anime lovers are tired of this trope, we keep on coming back and consuming a new sports anime as if it is the first time watching something with this theme. The answer to this is simple: it is the journey that the anime will take us to achieve greatness, which is the beauty and the essence of all sports anime. From character development, the team becomes like a family, learning the lore behind each character and understanding why they act the way they do. I believe that anime creators continue to use this trope because of the motivation it gives the viewers.

Whenever I watch an episode of Haikyuu, I start to wonder about playing the sport of volleyball. I wonder if I, too, can become great at a sport quickly, as long as I put the effort into it, and I'm sure that all fellow viewers think the same. Whenever I learned why the main character in Free acted so selfishly, I began to view him in a different light; no longer the guy holding the team back, but now the guy who is misunderstood. That is the beauty of this trope: it can be reused over and over again, but each creator will put their own twist to it that will make you fall in love all over again. Don't get me wrong, as I write this paper, I am annoyed by this trope and wish that I could see the other side of things, but I understand why, although this trope has been stretched thin, it still has a massive impact. There have been instances where you see the team lose, but this is only a minor setback to set up for the grand victory.

To this date, I have yet to see this tried trope be truly flipped, modified, or outright refused when it serves as the main plot of a sports anime, though I suspect elements of such subversions exist in other forms of media outside the anime realm. Even so, within the world of

sports anime, it seems almost inevitable that I will continue to encounter it, as the “quest for the national championship” has become cliché. This tired trope resonates strongly with viewers, making the trope enduring and emotionally impactful, even if the narrative structure itself is familiar.