

THE EVO-ONE STORY

The long-standing tensions between China and the US are only deepening in today's political climate. Can a once-in-a-lifetime volleyball tournament bridge this famous cultural divide, if only for a chosen few?

Directed by Rocío Mendonça

SYNOPSIS

Cultural connections on and off the court

It all started over beers, as most stories with crazy Australians do. In 2024, Justin Fuller, a volleyball dad and international business owner, had a bit too much to drink at his son's tournament and asked, "What if we took the boys to China to play volleyball?"

His son thought it was just a drunken rambling. His coach thought it was a joke. But four months later, 15 American high school volleyball players - the Nighthawks - boarded a plane to China to face off with some of the nation's top college and semi-pro teams at a tournament we named the Evo-One.

Most of the boys had never left the country. They'd spent their lives insulated from much of the world. And what they'd heard about China? Not good. The long-standing political tensions between our governments have spilled over into stereotypes and suspicions we hear in movies, on television and in the news every day.

But, is American wariness of the Chinese deserved?

That's what The Nighthawks were about to find out in a total cultural immersion experience built around a volleyball tournament.

Turns out, it takes more than a language barrier, cultural differences and decades of political turmoil to keep teenage boys from being teenage boys. The boys made friends instantly when they met the Chinese players at a welcome dinner for the event. As soon as they were let loose from their official formal dinner seats, the boys from both sides of the Pacific were using Google translate to talk to each other, speaking the universal language of making TikToks, talking about girls, and reveling in the silliness and freedom of youth.

On the court, however, they were ruthless competitors. The Nighthawks, formed only weeks before boarding the plane to China, endured repeated trials by fire on the court as they competed against teams older and more experienced. They learned about themselves, team dynamics, the uniquely Chinese way of playing volleyball.

The Chinese Office of Foreign Affairs was thrilled to support Evo-One, as they work diligently to nurture US/China relations. The Chinese government gave the boys unprecedented access to state officials, facilities and hospitality. In this wildly new environment, whether at the top of a mountain at Kuliang or meandering through the Seven Alleys in Fuzhou, the boys discovered what it truly means to be a good teammate on the court and a global citizen.

The Evo-One Story is a volleyball story, and it's not. It's a story of how young people, no matter where they are in the world, are the same. The cultural differences that keep our worlds apart are nothing in the face of real humanity, in any language.

BIOS



Director Rocío Mendonça

Rocío Ribeiro Mendonça is a filmmaker and photographer from Buenos Aires. She graduated as a Film Editor from ENERC and is currently studying Art Criticism at UNA. She has worked in film postproduction since 2017. Her work has been featured in film festivals such as Festival de Cine de la Havana and streaming platforms like Netflix.



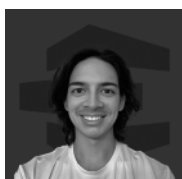
Lord and Commander Justin Fuller

Australian-born Justin Fuller was once accidentally on the Fijian Olympic Rowing Team, is quite handy with a bullwhip, and is also the mastermind behind the Evo-One Invitational and the Nighthawks. His building materials company, Evolution, has factories in Quindou and the Fujian Province in China, and over the past 20 years, Justin has learned that the Chinese are some of the most helpful, kind and intelligent people on the planet. They also play some mean volleyball.

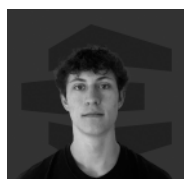


The Nighthawks

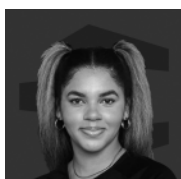
Hailing from around the metro Atlanta, GA, USA area, the Nighthawks' players and coaches are a testament to hard work and dedication.



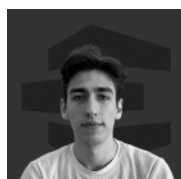
Coach
Joshua Eide



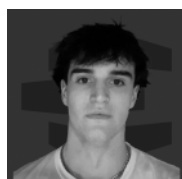
Assistant Coach
Callen Ferguson



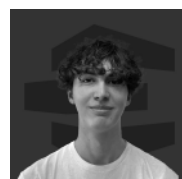
Assistant Coach
Desiree Blount



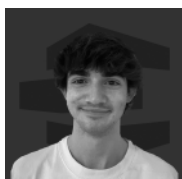
Assistant Coach
Nico Rousseau



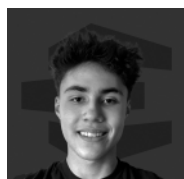
Player #1
Patterson Heilman



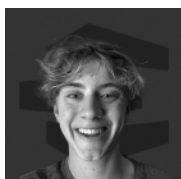
Player #2
Caedmon Devries



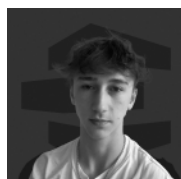
Player #3
Brennan Malone



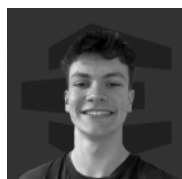
Player #4
Colt Fuller



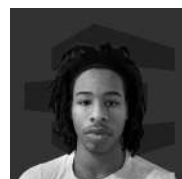
Player #5
Joshua Karshna



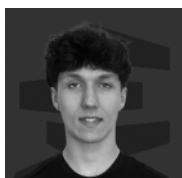
Player #6
Noah Price



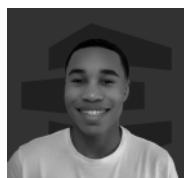
Player #7
Graylon Ody



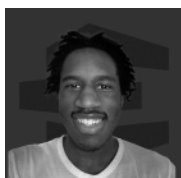
Player #8
Jaxson Clark



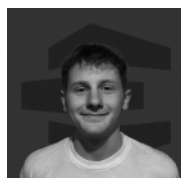
Player #9
Kai Morgan



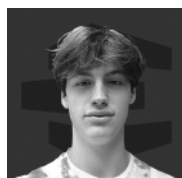
Player #10
Jaeden Cedor



Player #11
Marcellus Owens



Player #12
Andrew Mayhew



Player #13
Rory Rand

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What was the inspiration for the film?

As far as we know, nothing like this has ever been attempted before. We managed to go from the very first drunken idea “We should take the boys to China to play volleyball” to a full-fledged international volleyball tournament in just four insane months. And once we got closer to the date, it occurred to us – this is a big freaking deal. These American kids don’t know anything more about China than mall Chinese food and the stereotypes they’d heard all their lives. This trip is going to change their lives and outlooks forever. We had to get it on film, just in case the journey was as amazing as we had hoped. And it was. And more.

Why China?

Evolution founder and Evo-One mastermind Justin Fuller has had factories in China for more than 20 years, so he knows the country very well. China is billed as the opposite of the US, and he knew that the boys would enjoy some much-needed culture shock by competing and fraternizing with the Chinese boys and being immersed in Chinese culture. With his connections in and knowledge of China, he knew it would be an ideal location to bring his crazy idea to life.

What was the boys’ biggest takeaway from Evo-One?

Across the board, the boys were shocked that China and the Chinese people were so different from what they had been led to believe. China has such an undeserved bad reputation in the US. It only took a single day interacting with the Chinese players for the boys to make friends. Sure, there was a language barrier, but Google translate solved that. In any language, on any continent, humans are more alike than they are different, and it was a beautiful thing to see our American boys make that realization.

What’s the central theme of the documentary?

The central theme of Sport Knows No Boundaries is that we have more in common with other cultures than we do differences.

MEDIA STILLS



MEDIA STILLS



BECAUSE WE CAN

DIRECTOR AND EDITOR: RODRIGO MENDONÇA ASSISTANT EDITOR: SEBASTIÁN PÁVEZ CAMERA: GEORGE ANDREWS
SOUND EDITOR: MIGUEL KANCEPOLSKY TEICHMANN COLOR CORRECTION: ANDY GONZÁLEZ CHINESE FILM CREW - FUJIAN ZHONGMENG FILM CO., LTD.
HEAD VIDEOGRAPHER: WEI RAI ADDITIONAL VIDEOGRAPHERS: HUANG KEWEN, YANG HUI, HUANG YIBANG, YU YONG, WU JIANGPENG, WANG HAOFEI,
WU DONGHAN, QIU GUOFENG, QING YUHAO LORD AND COMMANDER: JUSTIN FULLER PRODUCTION ASSISTANT: CAROL YU
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT: ELLA WILSON TROPHY COMPANY: UNIVERSE SCULPTURE TROPHY ARTIST: LIU YIHUA
MUSICIANS: TIM AND DEE FROST GRAPHIC DESIGN: RAQUEL ARCIDACONO

NR NOT RATED
The Content of this film
has not been rated

EVOLUTION

RELEASE DATE
5TH APRIL 2025

SPECIFICATIONS



Evo-One Trailer

[WATCH HERE ↗](#)

Genre: Documentary, Sports

Format: Mp4

Run time: 1 hour and 4 minutes

OUR WEBSITE

Learn more about the Evo-One Invitational and the Nighthawks at evo-one.org

CONTACT

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