

Cockin'

By Connolly, Noonan, Oddy

Ext. Wide Shots of New York City, then Harlem.

A Reporter's Voiceover (Jeremy Schaap): New York City. Harlem. From these streets have come...

(A Bunch of African-American young men playing basketball on a playground during the daytime sometime in the 1960s)

Schaap: (V.O.) Ballin'...

(A Bunch of African-American young men break dancing on a streetcorner during the daytime sometime in the 1970s)

Schaap: (V.O.) Break-dancin'...

(A Bunch of African-American young men busting rhymes on the street during the daytime sometime in the 1980s)

Schaap: (V.O.) Rappin'...

(A Bunch of American-American young men engaged in a two man street fight during the daytime sometime in the 1990s)

Schaap: (V.O.) Ultimate Fightin'...

(A Bunch of African-American young men engaged in a crazy dance routine during the daytime sometime in the early 2000s)

Schaap: (V.O.) Crunkin'...

(Now we see reporter Jeremy Schaap walking down the daytime streets of Harlem. He is dorky guy in his late 30s but he looks imminently reliable and straightforward.)

Schaap: And now, a new Sport has immerged, borne of these same urban streets. The difference is that it is the work of these two young men—

(And now we see Connolly and Noonan seated on the front steps of a Brownstown looking all serious.)

Schaap: "Two white boys," as they call themselves—have taken what was once a little-known backstreet pseudo-sport and taken it to the suburban masses.

(Schaap turns a corner and looks straight into the camera.)

Schaap: It's called Cockin'.

Schaap: (V.O.) Not as in cold-cockin'...

(A white man punches out another white man in some stupid 80s type movie)

Schaap: (V.O.) Or as in a rooster—

(A rooster perched on a fencepost is shown, a white title card appears under the bird with the word "cock" to clarify for people)

Schaap: (V.O.) cockadoodle doing...

(The rooster unleashes a crack-of-dawn crow.)

Schaap: (V.O.) Or even simply a firearm (gun) cockin'...

(A .357 Magnum is cocked straight at the camera.)

(Now we see Schaap again, walking along the street)

Schaap: No, this is Cockin', as in Shuttlecockin'.

(He turns and now we see Connolly and Noonan playing some strange form of street badminton.)

Int. Interview. Schaap, Conno, Noons

Schaap: How did Cockin' begin?

Noons: Well we both grew up playing a lot of tennis.

Conno: And ping-pong.

Noons: That's right. Rob was even a junior tennis champion—

(Show a photo of 12 year old Conno smiling and holding up a tennis trophy.)

Conno: I was. (I met Pete Sampras) (That's true)

Noons: After College we both moved to New York City—and Harlem 'cause it was still relatively cheap back then. And we were looking for, um,

Conno: Some exercise.

Noons: Yes. But we soon discovered that all the tennis courts up in Harlem were in horrible disarray.

(Show Conno and Noons walking thru a completely trashed series of tennis courts: no nets, washed out lines, and debris everywhere. Show of shot of them attempting to play tennis but it quickly ends with Connolly tripping over a cinder block and Noonan signaling that it's time to call it quits.)

Noons: And, unfortunately, the apartment we were living in at the time, we just didn't have the space for ping-pong—

(Conno and Noons playing ping-pong in a room barely big enough to fit a table.)

Noons: So we were, uh...

Conno: Stumped.

Noons: Yeah.

(Conno and Noons slump down into their crappy couch.)

Schaap: (V.O.) That night, Rob and Mark went for a walk...

(Conno and Noons, dejected, walk down a nighttime city street.)

Schaap: (V.O.) "To clear our heads," their words, not mine. And what they found...

(Conno and Noons peer around a corner into an alleyway, light illuminates their faces and astonishment registers on both their mugs.)

Schaap: (V.O.) Would forever change their lives...

Back to the Interview.

Schaap: What did you see?

Conno: It was a group of African-American men—

Noons: They had car headlights turned on—

(Continue the Conno and Noons re-enactment of the scene: they approach the cars, the lights, etc...)

Conno: That's right. And they were playing something that we initially thought it was badminton—

Noons: We didn't know any better. It looked like badminton.

Conno: Yeah. But no, it was, uh...It was something else.

Schaap: What was it?

Noons: It was Cockin'.

(Schaap walking down another Harlem street in the daytime.)

Schaap: But where and when those first pioneers started Cockin'...Well that is open to debate.

Interview with an old African-American Man who wears dark sunglasses and has the feel of an oldtime jazz musician.

Willie: Man, I was Cockin' back before those boys were even a glint in their daddy's eye.

Schaap: (V.O.) This...is Willie McTell.

(Footage of Willie and Schaap walking down the street together. Then black and white footage of Willie from the early 1960s holding a badminton racquet, smiling and looking handsome and young.)

Schaap: (V.O.) The last survivor of the personally dubbed, "Cockin' Four"

Willie: Back then we were Cockin' all the time. All the time. Me and Sonny Johnson and Tommy Blue and Carmine Torres. It was a beautiful time, man. The mid-sixties...

(Show stock "Sixties" type footage: hippies, music, political rally's, etc.)

Willie: (V.O.) Flower power. Peace. Political awareness. And Cockin' was about all that.

(Show a bunch of young people Cockin' on a baseball field in Central Park. They are all smiley and carefree.)

Willie: It wasn't 'til the mid-seventies that things started to fall apart...

Schaap: What happened?

Willie: Drugs, man. That's what happened.

(Show shots like Panic in Needle Park, seventies junkies, etc.)

Willie: Took hold. Then took their toll. First we lost Tommy. Then Carmine. And finally even Sonny.

Schaap: How did you survive?

Willie: Barely. I was lucky. Cockin', something we created together, the Cockin' Four, something that was beautiful and innocent and happy...had turned ugly and mean. Cockin' became...out of control (dangerous). Seventy-six I had a Cockin' match, I was all strung out, not thinking straight...took a Cock in this eye. (He points to his left eye behind the dark sunglasses)

(Show a re-enactment with a young African-American actor. A Shuttlecock flies high in the sky. The Man looks up for it, the sun blinds him, then the Cock drops down straight at the camera and darkness...)

Schaap: But that didn't clean you up.

Willie: No, sir. You would think that it would. But no. Three years later I took a Cock in this eye...I even hit such rock bottom I tried to play,

(Continue re-enactment with the young Man wearing the same dark sunglasses Willie now wears moving about aimlessly trying to “feel” and “hear”)

Willie: (V.O.) I actually tried to get on the court and play by sound and feel...

(Ibid. The Shuttlecock, nowhere near Willie, lands on his side of the court for a point but he has no idea. People look at him with sad eyes and nod their heads No.)

Willie: (V.O.) That was the end.

Willie: I haven't touched a racquet since.

Ext. Street. Schaap walks along the streets yet again.

Schaap: For almost three decades Cockin' remained a fringe sport. What began as something innocent, something beautiful, turned underground, mysterious, and perhaps misunderstood. Played in the shadows. Mostly at night. The devil's hour...But then...the unlikeliest of players...

(We see a shot of Conno and Noons playing a small, street Cockin' match)

Schaap: (V.O.) Would take up the Cockin' torch (the Cock) and turn the sport on its head. (cock)

Back in the Interview.

Noons: We started playing, on the street, in front of our apartment—

Conno: In broad daylight.

Noons: And people seemed to like it.

(Cockin' Montage. Quick shots of the rise of Cockin'. Conno and Noons playing all over town in all sorts of places but always during the daytime.)

Schaap: (V.O.) Mark and Rob started Cockin' not just up in Harlem...but in the Bronx...Queens...Jersey City...Staten Island...and here...(and now we see Schaap again on a streetcorner, smack dab in the middle of...)

Back to Interview.

Schaap: What would you say was the turning point?

Conno: (a slight smile) Williamsburg.

Noons: (a slight smile) Williamsburg.

(Show shots of Williamsburg. People walking around, etc...)

Schaap: (V.O.) June Fourth, Two thousand and five. Or the day known in the Cockin' community simply as...

(On the Street Interviews with Kids, Adults, Old People, etc...)

Kid 1: The Cock Fight.

Kid 2: Cock Fight!

Adult 1: Cock Fight.

Teen 1: Cock Fight.

Adult 2: Cock Fight.

Teen 2: Cock Fight.

Old Lady: Cock Fight.

Kid 3: Cock Fight!

(Show actual footage shot from this epic June 4th Cockin' match between Conno and Noons. They go back and forth, fighting, sweating, working so damn hard. Points go on for seemingly endless periods of time. The crowd cheers each damn point. Truly, a match to put a sport on the map.)

Back to Interview. Schaap, Conno, and Noons watching a TV they have set up showing this epic duel.

Schaap: What were you guys thinking at this point?

Conno: My back! My back!

Noons: My knees! My knees! Jesus, look at us.

Conno: Wow. I am a mess.

Schaap: When was the last time you guys saw this?

Noons: Oh, it's been...(he looks to Conno)

Conno: I don't know. A year?

Noons: Something like that, yeah.

(Show more of the match)

Schaap: (V.O.) Seven hours and fourteen minutes later, this Noonan volley, a heroic lunge from Connolly, the now mythic belly flop...and the match was over. And Noonan might have won, but ask either of them, and there was no winner that day except for Cockin'.

Back to Interview.

Schaap: How many hits did you guys get?

Noons: Well after we cut down the match to a ten minute highlight reel 'cause seven hours is a lot of Cockin' for anybody—

Conno: Yeah, that's too much Cockin'—

Noons: In one sitting it is. After we did that, that first week we got around thirteen million hits.

Conno: Something like that.

Schaap: (V.O.) And then Cockin' caught on. First, suburban kids started Cockin'. Then college kids were Cockin'. Young Adults started Cockin' after work or on the weekends. And the next thing you knew, even Baby Boomers...were Cockin'. (show all this, of course, in quick clips)

Conno: Apparently Cockin's very big in retirement communities. That's what my Gran tells me. (he shrugs) Who knew?

Ext. A Suburban Street.

(Conno and Noons are showing Schaap how to play Cockin'.)

Schaap: Now what am I doing?

Noons: You just gotta—it's all in the wrist.

Conno: (from cross-court) And the footwork.

Noons: Yeah.

Schaap: Okay.

(They hit the shuttlecock back and forth.)

Noons: That's good.

Conno: There you go!

Schaap: (as he plays) It feels like tennis, but not. It feels like badminton, but not.

Noons: Right.

Schaap: It even has kind of a...racquetball feel to it.

Conno: Kind of.

Schaap: But less aggressive.

Noons: Starting out. It gets pretty intense later on.

Back to Interview with Willie.

Willie: I got nothing against those two guys. I give 'em some credit. They filmed it. They put it on this Internet. It caught on. Good for them. But they got lucky. And if not for Tommy Blue and Sonny Johnson and Carmine Torres and me...there'd be no Connolly and Noonan. I mean let's be honest,

(We show shots of Conno and Noons Cockin' with Schaap.)

Willie: (V.O.) Just 'cause Elvis made the Rock N' Roll huge (accessible) don't mean he made Rock N' Roll. He didn't invent it. And neither did Connolly and Noonan invent Cockin'.

Back to Interview.

Noons: Well there's something to be said for that, sure. No, we didn't invent Cockin'. We never said we did. But we did take Cockin' to the next level. To a national stage. Does our being white help? Honestly? Probably. Do I feel bad about what we've done with Cockin', where we've taken Cockin'? No, no I don't.

Conno: We're just two normal guys who love Cockin'...And I don't think that hurts anybody.

(Show Connolly in his Land Rover driving around suburban streets at dusk.)

Conno: (V.O.) In fact, I think it can help a lot of people. And I'm inspired—especially when I drive through some suburban street—

(And now we see two kids in the middle of a quiet, dead end, cul-de-sac street Cockin'.)

Conno: (V.O.) and I see two kids still out there Cockin' after their Mother's probably already called them in for the night...

(Conno, puts his land rover in to gear and pulls away, we see he has a tear in his eye the scene touches him so.)

(The two kids keep Cockin' in the quiet summertime magic hour light.)

Conno: (V.O.) And that's what it's all about. (And that's why we Cock)

Conno: (back in the interview, just his face) That's what it's all about. (That's why we Cock)

Blackout