

Champion

New Zealand TV: 1989 : dir. Peter Sharp : TVNZ : 89 min
 prod: Ginette McDonald : scr: : dir.ph.:
[Milan Borich](#); [Louise Perry](#); [Scott Harman](#)
 Michael James; Janice Gray; Sara Peirse; Alistair Douglas; Meredith Braun; Don Selwyn;
 Peter Tait; Brian Carbee; Jo Groser; Tony Groser; Augusta McDonald; Peter Bland

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ ♀ Z ♀	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "The Critics' Film Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

No further information currently available. Not to be confused with the 1949 Kirk Douglas boxing film of the same title, or a 1973 Hong Kong film of the same title, or the 1983 British film starring John Hurt as a jockey fighting against cancer, or the 1990 Roumanian/Canadian children's film about an Olympic gymnast. This one's a 1940s tale of racism and battlefield trauma set in provincial New Zealand. "The Champion" is the name of a boys' comic favoured by the narrator.

Rex Pascoe (Milan Borich), ±11, is delighted to learn he'll be sharing his bedroom for a few weeks with an American soldier on convalescent leave, at the invitation of his mother, who responded to a newspaper call for host families. He'd have preferred a pilot, but any battle veteran will do. His face plummets when the family go to collect the GI, Jackson Coop, from the bus and he proves to be a young black man. "The missus didn't mention you were a darkie," Rex's father observes cheerfully, "Would you like a beer?". Rex's dad is the town barber, moonlighting as illegal bookie and black marketeer, but if he's a rogue it's an affable one, and Jackson's colour is not really problematic to him. Certainly not when compared to two southern yankee GI's who also arrive in town, and immediately pick a quarrel with the nearest black face, a Maori who happens to be town policeman.

Rex is mortified when, at his mother's suggestion, the family guest shows up at his school next day to talk to his class. Jackson gamely fields questions from the kids – "Do they still have slavery in America?", "Have you ever met Al Capone?" – but is insensed by the thinly-concealed racism of Rex's schoolmistress. The boy warms to him gradually, and Jackson meets Rex's friend Leo (Scott Harman), son of a Greek immigrant family, and Rex's nemesis Sara (Louise Perry), an illegitimate half-Maori girl living with her embittered white grandmother, who waters down the town milk in her spite at the world. Jackson readily identifies with Sara's plight, and brokers an uneasy truce between her and the two boys. She spends much of her time alone on a moored derelict riverboat of her grandmother's, pining for the day her mother will return and take her away.

The GI has problems of his own. Wounded fighting the Japanese in the Pacific, he dreads having to return to active duty. Any whistling sound throws him into a profound terror.

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