

CORNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS

by

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FADE IN

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Low-budget room with cheap art hanging on the white cinder block walls. Flimsy curtains flutter by the open window. The sound of highway traffic drones in the background.

Seated by the window is CASPER WILLIAMS(32) with a lapel mic attached to his plaid flannel shirt. A 'John Deere' ball cap sits cockeyed on his head.

SUPER: CASPER WILLIAMS - 3 TIME NATIONAL CHAMPION

Casper, visibly uncomfortable, shifts in his seat.

CASPER

Yes, ma'am, you bet I remember the first time. It was with my Pa. He taught me to cornhole when I was just a tyke.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

That must be a pretty precious memory.

CASPER

Sure is. Remember it like it was yesterday. He got behind, had me bend over with one hand on my knee, and showed me how to hold my sack with just the right grip.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Do you still use any of your father's techniques or have you adopted your own style.

CASPER

As a matter of fact I do. I still practice what I call 'the reach around'. You know, it's how I hold my sack behind my back before I toss. I got that from him.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Sounds like a real father/son moment.

CASPER

Sure was. For such a big man, he had such...

(chokes up)

...finesse.

Casper turns and looks dreamily out the window. He wipes a tear from his eye with his shirt sleeve.

CASPER

Yes, ma'am. I credit my Pa for the man I am today.

EXT. IOWA STATE FAIR - CORNHOLE TOURNAMENT - DAY

The tournament court is ten feet wide and forty-five feet long with a cornhole board at each end. The pitcher's box by each board is regulation with meticulously graded sand.

The court is surrounded by straw bales with sponsorship banners from local agriculture businesses and a Mr. Frosty. Spectators stand shoulder-to-shoulder around the venue.

The most prominent banner is on the commentator booth midway by the court. It displays: 47th National Cornhole Tournament - American Cornhole Association.

COMMENTATOR BOOTH

At the booth sit two men: DON PARK (60) in a snap-front western shirt and straw cowboy hat; and BUCK LAUGHLIN (55) in an NBC Sports coat and tie. Buck looks out of place in the country fair setting.

Two television cameras with the call letters KORN and the NBC Peacock logo are on either side of the booth.

BUCK

Damn, it's hot. Is this normal?
Sweat's dripping down my ass crack.

PRODUCER (O.S.)

You're on in three. Three, two,
one, and-

BUCK

(holds mic)

Welcome to NBC Sports special presentation of the 47th National Cornhole Tournament in Des Moines, Iowa. I'm Buck Laughlin with NBC Sports from New York and to my left is Don Park, President of the American Cornhole Association.

DON

Thank you, Buck. It's an honor to be here for the final match.

BUCK

And it's my pleasure to be back here in America's corn belt. When I heard that they needed coverage for a cornhole tournament, I couldn't resist.

DON

Now, Buck, being from New York and all, how familiar are you with cornhole?

BUCK

There's cornhole and then there's cornhole. This...

(splays hands to the court)

...is new to me.

DON

Ah, very good. So, for you and our friends at home, cornhole is a centuries old pastime similar to horseshoes.

CUT TO:

CLOSE-UP OF A CORNHOLE BOARD

A two-foot by four-foot plywood board set at a 30 degree angle. A six-inch diameter hole is located about nine-inches from the top.

DON (V.O.)

Instead of tossing horseshoes onto a steel stake, we pitch bags into a hole of a slanted board.

BACK TO:

COMMENTATOR BOOTH

Don holds a small cloth bag to the camera for a moment then hands it to Buck.

Buck rubs his chin in deep thought while squeezing the bag. He turns to Don.

BUCK

Yes, not quite what I was expecting. So, Don, why cornhole? Why not just call it a bean bag toss?

DON

I'm glad you asked. Firstly, the bags are filled with corn kernels, not beans. The corn breaks down and emits a fine powder that acts as a lubricant so it slides on the board better.

Buck runs a hand through his hair and shakes his head.

BUCK

A natural cornhole lubricant?

DON

Exactly.

BUCK

Still not sure why the name since
the cornhole expression I know goes
back to-

Don cuts him off.

DON

The Native Americans of the Plains.
To be exact, the Blackhawk tribe
was known to toss pig bladders with
corn kernels for sport.

Buck opens his mouth to speak and changes his mind.

BUCK

Right. So, tell us about the rules
and what should we be looking for?

DON

The game play is simple. The
players stand side-by-side in their
pitcher's box, alternating pitches
until all four bags are tossed.
After which, they take score and
toss from the other end. First
player to twenty one wins the game.
Best three out of five games wins
the match.

BUCK

Simple enough. Any special plays?
Grand slams? Hail Marys? Flea
flickers?

Buck chuckles at his own remarks.

DON

A true "cornholer" has their own
lingo. An ace is a single bag on
the board, whereas an airmail is a
toss in the hole without it
touching the board.

BUCK

Nothin' but net, you might say.

Buck checks his watch.

BUCK

Sorry, Don, hold that thought. The match is about to begin. You can talk us through the play.

CORNHOLE COURT

An OFFICIAL (60) in a striped referee shirt stands mid-court with a bullhorn.

OFFICIAL

Ladies and gentlemen, the Iowa State Fair committee is proud to welcome, three-time National Champion, Casper Williams!

Casper Williams trots out to the center of the court and waves. The crowd cheers and chants "Casper! Casper!".

He takes off his ball cap and bows to the crowd. His pasty white bald head is a blinding contrast to his tan face.

DON (V.O.)

Casper is what you call a Cornstar.

OFFICIAL

And welcome, everyone, his challenger and first time finalist, GRETA VAN NOSTRAND!

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND - PRE-RECORDED - DAY

GRETA VAN NOSTRAND (17) sits at a picnic table. A pretty but plain girl in a long country-girl dress with a high neck. Children play on a swing set and slide in the background.

SUPER: GRETA VAN NOSTRAND - CORNHOLE FINALIST

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Greta Van Nostrand. How does it feel to be the youngest finalist in the American Cornhole Association National Tournament history.

GRETA

Um, pretty good.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

That's an understatement, I'm sure. Do you have any special strategy planned to beat the champion?

GRETA
 Um, yeah, but, um, if I told you
 I'd have to kill you.

Greta laughs at her own joke and blushes. She stops suddenly and waves her hands frantically.

GRETA
 No, no, I didn't mean that. It was
 a joke, right? I mean...
 (flustered)
 ...oh, forget it.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
 That's okay, Greta. I got the joke.
 I was just wondering-

A boy, LUKE (3), runs up and taps Greta on the shoulder.

LUKE
 Can I go on the slide?

GRETA
 Sure, sure, go ahead.

Luke runs off.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
 Your brother's cute.

GRETA
 Oh, no, that's my son, Luke.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
 Oh.

BACK TO:

CORNHOLE COURT

Greta, in her Sunday best ankle-length dress, waves to an adoring crowd. She joins Casper at one end of the court in her pitcher's box.

OFFICIAL
 According to the A.C.A. rules, the
 challenger tosses first. Whenever
 you're ready, Greta.

COMMENTATOR BOOTH

Buck leans forward in excitement while Don remains stoic.

BUCK
 So, are the players allowed to
 taunt or mess with their challenger
 in any way?

DON

Well, they're supposed to be still and quiet but some players are quite talented at under-the-breath comments.

CORNHOLE COURT

Greta takes her stance and prepares to toss. Casper stands still until, as Greta makes her move, he COUGHS.

Greta's toss goes wild and lands in the dirt in front of the board.

DON (V.O.)

Ew, not a great start. That's what you call a dirty bag.

BUCK (V.O.)

Now, that's just not right. That was a cheap shot.

DON (V.O.)

It's a shrewd game, Buck.

Casper's turn. His toss lands on the board, circles the edge of the hole but doesn't go in.

DON (V.O.)

And that's a rim job.

BUCK (V.O.)

Of course it is.

Greta takes her shot. It hits the front of the board and slides into the hole. The crowd goes wild.

DON (V.O.)

Nicely done. A Slick Woody.

BUCK (V.O.)

Really, Don? I'm having trouble with this.

DON (V.O.)

It's simple, Buck. She slid it up and right into the cornhole.

BUCK (V.O.)

Never mind.

MONTAGE: ALTERNATING PLAY BACK AND FORTH

- One color bag knocks another off the board
- Casper pumps his fist after a great shot
- Greta makes an obscene gesture to Casper

-- A high-arc airmail in the hole

-- Casper squats on the ground with head in his hands as Greta points and laughs

END MONTAGE

COMMENTATOR BOOTH

Buck's sport coat is gone, his tie loosened, and he wipes sweat from his forehead. Several empty beer cans are crushed on the table in front of him.

BUCK

Well, Don, here we are. The score is tied and Casper has honors.

DON

Yes siree bob, not since the Fleming brothers final of 1982 have we seen such a match. I still don't know if those two have spoken since.

BUCK

That's a story for another time. Let's go back to play.

CORNHOLE COURT

Casper and Greta alternate shots. Casper lands four bags on the board to Greta's one.

OFFICIAL

Final throw. Quiet, please.

The crowd goes silent.

Casper stands in his pitcher's box twitching and muttering under his breath-

CASPER

Miss. Miss. Miss. Miss.

Greta throws her last bag side arm. It hits in front of the board, skips, knocks off three of Casper's bags and goes in the hole.

DON (V.O.)

A grasshopper, backdoor, hammer!

The crowd goes wild. The Official holds up Greta's hand.

OFFICIAL

Ladies and gentlemen, may I introduce our new National Champion, Greta Van Nostrand!

Casper drops to his knees and cries.

COMMENTATOR BOOTH

Buck leans back in his chair. His raised arms reveal huge sweat stains.

BUCK
Unbelievable!

He slaps Don on the back hard enough to knock his hat askew.

DON
Yes, quite the storybook ending.

BUCK
Well, folks, until next year, and I will be here, practice your slick woody and never pass up a chance to cornhole. I'm Buck Laughlin for NBC Sports.

EXT. IOWA STATE FAIR - FOOD COURT - LATER

Casper, red eyed, sits at a picnic table and eats a corndog. A mic held in front of him.

CASPER
Oh, yeah. I'll be back next year. I'll cornhole every chance I get until then.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
Do you have a training partner?

CASPER
I've been training with my brother, mostly. Maybe I'll ask my sister if she'd be up for some cornholing. I dunno. We'll see....

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
Good luck, Casper. Until next year.

Casper nods to the camera and returns to his corndog.

FADE OUT