

First, to quell any rumors, I did not train Reese Witherspoon and I did not hang out with Owen Wilson! The fact is, I was asked to be on the set of the movie "How Do You Know" featuring Reese Witherspoon and Owen Wilson to ensure the running scenes looked legitimate, and that the actresses in the scenes will actually come across as "athletes" on the big screen. It was an interesting and educational day!

I learned that dozens of people are required to make even the simplest scenes shoot flawlessly, and in that regard I learned that it can also take 9 hours to film just 2 scenes (yes, seriously)! The latter was the result of the complexity of the scenes, for which my "run coaching expertise" was just a small part in the grand scheme of things. The directors painstakingly monitored the subtlest details in each scene, and although the reasons for their disapproval on certain takes seemed trivial at the time, I did come out of it with a better appreciation for the movie-making process. Therefore, any aspirations I had for taking my movie scripts to Hollywood are now buried.

Reese (first name basis now) is very down-to-Earth, she talks to everyone on the set, and was very friendly to bystanders. She is also a good runner, and by that I mean good mechanics and speed, so she really didn't need any coaching from me at all. Her co-star also turned out to be a good runner, so they made my job very easy. I incorrectly guessed Reese's athletic background (gymnastics), but the background showed, and I have much respect for her after working with her for a day. And after seeing what it takes to do the same scene over and over and over again, without any hitches in speech or mannerisms, all of the aspirations I had for taking my acting skills to Hollywood are now buried too.

As for the work I did, and perhaps the one coaching blurb I can insert, I was asked to select "background runners" for one of the running scenes. So it was my job to select which girls "looked like runners." And similarly to when I work with the runners I coach in the DC area, the most common technical error I saw on the part of auditioning runners is the improper use of their arms while running (regardless of speed). If I could make a plug for having a running coach, that would be one advantage at the very least—assistance in creating an efficient running stride.

In the end, I will remember that James L. Brooks, the executive producer of one of my favorite shows, *The Simpsons*, asked for my advice when shooting Reese's "throw-up scene". I will remember that Reese's bodyguard nearly broke every bone in my hand when he shook it (I think I got his point). I will remember that it's a privilege to see great acting up-close and personal. And I will remember that the buffet-style lunch they offered us was fit for a king in my eyes, so all the more reason to find an excuse to take my coaching services to Hollywood!

Keep on reaching for the stars ☺,

Mike



(Bodyguard in blue shirt, me avoiding eye contact post-handshake)





(reviewing the footage with JLB!)



(the throw-up scene)