

# Grand Prize Winner: Game of the Week

Broward County Public Schools, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

GRAND PRIZE  
WINNER



## PROGRAM

Game of the Week

## PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

To promote public school education through high school sports and enhance the community involvement of school board members.

## SCHOOL BOARD PRESIDENT

Carole L. Andrews

## SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Judie S. Budnick  
Darla L. Carter  
Beverly A. Gallagher  
Stephanie Arma Kraft  
Robert D. Parks  
Marty Rubinstein  
Lois Wexler  
Benjamin J. Williams

## SUPERINTENDENT

Frank L. Till Jr.

Sports draw crowds. School board meetings generally don't. Broward County merges the two with Game of the Week, a weekly streaming video Internet broadcast that attracts attention to the district's success stories and helps board members become more visible in the nation's fifth-largest school system.

The five- to seven-minute broadcast on the district's Web site usually features a high school football game or other school athletic event. During the show, school board members have appeared to talk about the importance of partnerships, the value of athletics in public education, and the need for public and parent support of schools.

"Game of the Week" operates on a nine-month school year; archived segments are shown during the summer. In addition to football games, sports events ranging from track and field to girls' basketball are covered. One segment each year focuses on Broward's college recruiting fair, created to further academic opportunities for students.

The idea came from an October 2002 school board retreat. Board members wanted to use technology to publicize the district's successes. They also were looking for a way to heighten their public presence in a huge district with 28 high schools and 271,339 students. Damian Huttenhoff, director of student support services, suggested that athletic events could be just the right venue.

"More people will attend high school athletics than any other school event. It's where the public comes," says Huttenhoff, who attends two or three high school games each week and all the district's special events. "It's where the community comes together, where parents can be engaged. It's wholesome entertainment that teaches character values."

Huttenhoff took notice when a new local TV channel with a focus similar to ESPN, the national sports cable network, began a special Friday evening sports feature that highlighted various high school teams from around the county. He realized the district could use a similar strategy to promote teams on its Web site, while taking an opportunity to celebrate how public educa-





tion builds character and teaches values through athletics and other activities.

Game of the Week has been “a hit ever since,” Huttenhoff says. The project has become a way for school board members to see and be seen. It celebrates the events that are covered and shows school board involvement and board support of athletic facilities.

Until the show, the only time most Broward County

Damian Huttenhoff, director of student support services for Broward County Schools, interviews school board chair Carole Andrews for a Game of the Week feature. Game of the Week celebrates the accomplishments of student athletes such as Plantation Colonels quarterback Jarred Strong (shown in action, opposite page). Strong received a four-year scholarship to attend the University of Pittsburgh in the fall of 2004.

citizens saw their school board in the enormous district was during its meetings, which are carried on cable television.

“That puts board members in a setting where they’re looking down,” Huttenhoff says. “The Game of the Week puts them out among people, mingling with people.”

Enthusiasm, pageantry, and school spirit are all associated with high school athletics, providing a setting that casts board members in a positive light. The project might become a model for other large school districts seeking better communication with huge, diverse constituencies.

One reason for the program’s success is the district’s high-profile Web site, which is full of updated and useful information in several languages. “Our strategy is to have multiple things on the Web site so people will go there on a regular basis. It becomes a major communication tool,” says Superintendent Frank Till Jr. “Our community knows to look to our Web site.”

Till credits Huttenhoff with recognizing the site’s potential and helping the board put it to work. The Game of the Week has helped the board promote partnerships between each municipality in the county and the school system.

Over the next four years, the district has earmarked \$20 million for improvements in athletic facilities. The Game of the Week provides a vehicle for the system to recognize municipalities for their support of interscholastic athletics.

District officials say the program also strengthens their relationships with Broward County businesses. For example, Game of the Week’s sponsor for 2003-04 is the North Broward Hospital District, the county’s largest provider of medical and physician services.

“It’s not just about a football game. It’s about a community and being part of a community, and athletics is a major part of our community,” Till says. “It’s really an attempt for this behemoth we call Broward County Schools to say that we really care about our community, and we want to tell them what’s going on.”

For information, contact Damian Huttenhoff, director of student support, at (754) 321-2550 or by e-mail at [damian.huttenhoff@browardschools.com](mailto:damian.huttenhoff@browardschools.com). The district’s Web site is [www.browardschools.com](http://www.browardschools.com).