



## **SOUTH FLORIDA EMBRACES THE NFL GLOBAL JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP XI**



At noon on Wednesday, January 31, 2007, French teenager Maxime Guy kicked off the NFL Global Junior Championship XI. His bold but ultimately ill-fated onside kick was recovered by opponent Japan, who proceeded to cruise to a 28-0 victory. The eleventh annual Super Bowl event was underway.

The six teams of 40-man rosters aged 19 and under from six nations and three continents had met two days earlier at an official Welcome Banquet at the Fort Lauderdale War Memorial Auditorium. Miami Dolphins defensive end and NFL Defensive Player of the Year Jason Taylor began the proceedings by speaking at a press conference for local and international media.

The appeal of the banquet for 800 invited guests, including players, coaches, the Japanese Consulate and local South Florida families spread far and wide. Detroit Lions offensive lineman Frank Davis, who had represented Panama in the 2000 games, was interviewed by a Detroit Free Press reporter who had spent an hour and \$80 on a taxi ride from the Super Bowl Media Center to get his story. The tournament was also featured prominently in USA Today.

Each visiting player from Canada, France, Japan, Mexico and Panama was accompanied at the banquet by the host families that housed them during the tournament. Local families from five Broward County schools opened their doors to the young athletes and adopted them from the time they arrived on Sunday until their departure eight nights later. During the week the gracious hosts took their 'sons' to the mall, the movies, and the beach, to dinner, a hockey game, visited the Seminole Indian Reservation and of course enjoyed Super Bowl parties.

"It is wonderful to see how this game has grown from being played between two teams in New Orleans in 1997 to what is now a six-team, nine-day spectacle," said founder and organizer Patrick Steenberge.

After practicing at their respective host schools on Monday and Tuesday, the teams got down to business on Wednesday at Lockhart Stadium in Fort Lauderdale. Japan and Canada each won, leaving France in third place in the National Conference standings. Canada edged Japan 7-0 to advance to Saturday's Championship Game with dreams of defending the title that has been held north of the border since 2005.

Mexico beat Panama 6-0 in the American Conference opener then the Team USA Football roster of Broward and Miami-Dade County student athletes breezed past Panama to set up a winner takes all clash with the Mexicans. It was the home team that progressed to the Championship Game by a score of 16-0 over Mexico.

Camera crews from TV Azteca, Univision, CBS Newspath, local NBC, ABC and CBS affiliates and Channel 23 Miami interviewed the athletes, as did NHK and NTV from Japan, Pride media from the UK and national broadcaster France Television.

After two more days of practice and cultural exchanges, the teams reconvened at Lockhart Stadium on Saturday, February 3 – the eve of Super Bowl XLI. Panama won for the first time in tournament history, beating France 14-6 to claim fifth place. Mexico gained revenge over Japan from a year earlier in Detroit with a 25-17 victory to take the bronze medal.

All-time NFL leading rusher and three-time Super Bowl winner Emmitt Smith joined Jason Taylor to perform the Championship Game toss as the Miramar High School band performed and local recording artist Giorgi sang the national anthem. Team USA, coached by Mark Guandolo of nearby Chaminade-Madonna Prep in Hollywood, raced to a 7-0 lead, but eventually fell 23-13 as Canada retained the NFL Global Junior Championship.



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Venue: Lockhart Stadium, Fort Lauderdale

Dates: January 28 – February 3

Teams: Canada  
France  
Japan  
Mexico  
Panama  
United States

Honorary Chairman: Jason Taylor  
VIP guests: Emmitt Smith, Frank Davis

Host schools: Pine Crest School, University School, Cardinal Gibbons Preparatory School, North Broward Preparatory School, Western High School

Team USA: Head coach Mark Guandolo, Chaminade-Madonna Prep

Print media: Miami Herald, Sun-Sentinel, USA Today, Super Bowl XLI Program, local weekly titles, Detroit Free Press

TV: WTVJ NBC Channel 6, WFOR CBS Channel 4, WSVN FOX Channel 7, WPLG ABC Channel 10, FOX Sports Net, NFL Network, CBS Newspath, Channel 23 Miami, NHK (Japan), NTV (Japan), France TV, Rogers (Canada), Pride Media (UK), BECON (high school broadcaster), Sunshine Network, Sold Out TV

Radio: SIRIUS Radio, 790 The Ticket, WQAM, Clear Channel 610

Sanctions: National Football League "Official Event of Super Bowl XLI"  
South Florida Super Bowl XLI Host Committee  
NFL International and NFL Europa  
USA Football  
National Football Federation Canada (NFFC)  
American Football Federation Japan (AFAJ)  
Football Federation of Mexico (FMFA)  
American Football Federation of Panama (AFFP)  
International Federation of American Football (IFAF)

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