

2011 Koltanowski Conference

The Rise of Chess in Brownsville

Presentation by:
Clemente Rendon, TCA President



Brownsville Chess- City Facts

- City of Brownsville was originally established in 1848
- Brownsville is a city located in the southernmost tip of the state of Texas
- Brownsville is the 16th largest city in the state of Texas with a population of 175,023
- Hispanics comprise 93.19% of the population
- Region is consistently one of the poorest or the poorest in the country



Brownsville Chess- *History*

- Brownsville chess was started in 1989 by J.J. Guajardo, a teacher at Russell Elementary in Brownsville
- The chess program was initially used for trouble making students as a form to incentivizing better behavior
- Russell won it's 1st Elementary State Championship in 1993
- Bi-Monthly chess tournament were run in Brownsville, which started to draw more schools and students.
- Elementary State Champs every year from 93-99 (seven straight years)
- *The Brownsville Herald* and other area newspapers ran stories about Russell Elementary' s state championships. This brought local notoriety to players in area, more people started to see chess as very positive for the community

Brownsville Chess- *Kings of Brownsville*

- Documentary by Higher Ground Entertainment
- Tells Story of rise of Russell Elementary' s rise

[Video Link](#)



Brownsville Chess- *UTB Chess Program*

- UTB is largely a commuter school of just over 17,000 students. There is an open admissions policy, the school does not require SAT scores.
- UTB Chess Program was started in 2001 by UTB President Dr. Juliet Garcia and Clemente Rendon. Rendon had won a chess scholarship to UTD in 1999, and at the time was serving as president of the UTD Chess Club. They both agreed it would be a wonderful idea to give an opportunity for Brownsville chess players to continue their education in Brownsville.
- The UT-Dallas Chess Program, founded by Dr. Timothy Redman enjoyed considerable successes. UTB wanted to have a program that would be able to compete with the UTD model on a national stage
- The chess program would also benefit the community by offering additional chess resources, including access to high rated players (at the time there were no titled players in Brownsville) and free community events

Brownsville Chess- *UTB Chess Program*

- The program really took off when Russell Harwood, who had coached Morning Side Elementary into the first ever National chess title for the valley, joined the UTB Chess Team in 2006 as the Chess Director.
- GM Gilberto Hernandez, the highest rated chess player in Mexico, joined as the coach of the program in September of 2006.
- The program was able to initially recruit a Woman's Master, Nelly Estrada, IM Daniel Fernandez and GM Timur Gareev.
- The program quickly rose to the top 5 in the nation. In 2007, UTB was named Chess College of the Year
- UTB Currently has four grandmasters, including coach Ronen Har-Zvi, GM Timur Gareev, GM Axel Bachmann and GM Mauricio Flores. The program also has IM Max Cornejo, IM Alfonso Almeida, WIM Nadya Ortiz, and WM Luciana Morales.
- Team's current average GPA is above 3.0

Brownsville Chess- *News Stories*

- [Chess Champs Together, Like It Or Not](#): CBS Morning news, June 29, 2007
- [Check Mates](#): Texas Monthly, February 1, 2007
- [Chess Masters at UT-Brownsville](#) Houston Press, April 9th, 2008
- [Chess Kids](#): June 22nd, 2010 HBO's "Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel"

Brownsville Chess- *Chess Mates*

Ran on CBS Morning news, June 29, 2007

[Video Link](#)



Brownsville Chess- *Bryant Gumbel*

Ran on HBO, June 22nd, 2010

Chess Kids

Correspondent: Mary Carillo

Producer: Lisa Bennett

On the southern tip of Texas, near the Mexican border, one of the most surprising success stories in sports is being written. With a population of 175,000 that is 90% Hispanic, Brownsville has rocked the quiet world of chess by turning young players into champions. Launched as a morning pre-school activity at Russell Elementary School in 1990 by educator Jose Juan Guajardo, chess quickly grew in popularity. Within a few years, elementary schools were winning state titles, with middle and high school championships not far behind. As prodigies from hardscrabble, academically struggling city schools accumulated national titles, even the local college program distinguished itself, ranking among the nation's best teams. REAL SPORTS correspondent Mary Carillo journeys to Brownsville to see how one of the most impoverished cities in the country rallied around the sport and carved out a niche as a hotbed of chess - one pawn at a time.

Brownsville Chess- *Educational Opportunities*

Executive Order for the White House Initiative on
Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans
October 19, 2010.

Presidential introduction by Javier Garcia

[Video Link](#)