



## **A TEN-YEAR HISTORY OF THE NFL GLOBAL JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP**

The NFL Global Junior Championship has evolved from a single game first played to showcase the talents of young American football players from Europe and Mexico in 1997 to become the exciting multi-team tournament that is today an integral part of the Super Bowl celebrations. In Detroit in 2006 the NFL GJC proudly celebrated its tenth anniversary at Super Bowl XL as teams from three continents converged on the famous Pontiac Silverdome.

The tournament has provided a platform on which future NCAA, NFL Europe and even NFL players have excelled. Among them is defensive end Constantin Ritzmann, who has spent time on the practice squads of the Buffalo Bills and Atlanta Falcons, and several national college champions.

Hoping to be selected in the 2006 NFL Draft are offensive lineman Frank Davis of the University of Southern Florida, who represented Panama in the NFL GJC in 2000, and wide receiver Skyler Green from LSU, who was a Team USA all-star in 2002.

When the 2005 college football season kicked off former Team USA quarterback Richard Kovalcheck started for Arizona against Utah, whose quarterback Brian Johnson had led the Houston-USA team in 2004.

Some of the biggest names in football have supported the event as either honorary chairmen or banquet speakers, including Nick Saban, Dan Reeves, Dwight Stephenson, Jake Delhomme, Mike Alstott and John Madden.

### **NFL Global Junior Championship Roll of Honor**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Gold Medal winner</i>	<i>Silver / Bronze</i>	<i>Most Valuable Player</i>
1997	Mexico	Europe	Constantin Ritzmann, DE, Europe
1998	Mexico	Europe	Constantin Ritzmann, DE, Europe
1999	Europe	Mexico	Constantin Ritzmann, DE, Europe
2000	Canada	Europe / USA	Nick Wishart, RB, Canada
2001	USA	Canada / Japan	Jay Davis, QB, USA
2002	USA	Canada / Europe	Jason Spadoni, RB, USA
2003	USA	Canada / Mexico	JC Cooper, LB, USA
2004	USA	Canada / Mexico	Brian Johnson, QB, USA
2005	Canada	USA / Mexico	Jerome Messam, RB, Canada
2006	Canada	USA / Japan	Samuel Fournier, RB, Canada

### **NFL GJC Team USA Head Coaches**

- 2000 Jim Dorsey, McEachern HS, GA
- 2001 Sam Roper, Seminole HS, FL
- 2002 Don Wattigny, Karr HS, LA
- 2003 \* Ed Burke Torrey Pines HS, CA
- 2004 \* Mike Johnston Katy HS, TX
- 2005 \* Corky Rogers, The Bolles School, FL
- 2006 Dick Cromwell, St Francis De Sales, OH

\* Was the reigning state champion or equivalent

### **NFL GJC Honorary Chairmen**

- 1997 Tex Schramm, President, Dallas Cowboys
- 1998 Darren Bennett, P, San Diego Chargers
- 1999 Dwight Stephenson, C, Miami Dolphins
- 2000 Dan Reeves, Head Coach, Atlanta Falcons
- 2001 Hassan Jones, WR, Minnesota Vikings
- 2002 La'Roi Glover, DT New Orleans Saints & Jake Delmomme, QB, New Orleans Saints
- 2003 Darren Bennett, P, San Diego Chargers
- 2004 Elvin Bethea, Hall of Fame DE
- 2005 LeRoy Butler, S, Green Bay Packers
- 2006 Herman Moore, WR, Detroit Lions



The adventure began at Super Bowl XXXI in New Orleans in **1997** when a quick and well-disciplined team of college freshmen and high school seniors representing Mexico proved too strong for a young Europe team and triumphed 30-6. In San Diego in **1998** in front of 9,000 fans, a 50-yard Europe field goal attempt fell short and Mexico was again victorious by a 13-12 margin.

**NFL Global Junior Championship I**  
Super Bowl XXXI, New Orleans, LA

**Mexico 30 Europe 6**

Honorary Chairman: Tex Schramm,  
Dallas Cowboys

**NFL Global Junior Championship II**  
Super Bowl XXXII, Chula Vista, CA

**Mexico 13 Europe 12**

Honorary Chairman: Darren Bennett,  
Punter San Diego Chargers

Team Europe won the championship at the third attempt at Lockhart Stadium in Fort Lauderdale prior to Super Bowl XXXIII in **1999**. Europe eliminated Mexico's ability to make the big play and roared to a 29-8 win. German defensive end Constantin Ritzmann, whose impressive performance the previous year had brought him to the attention of a Florida high school where he would play his senior year, claimed the MVP award. That same week he signed a national letter of intent with defending national college champion Tennessee.

In Atlanta in **2000** an expanded four-team tournament saw Europe sweep Panama 20-0 in the semi finals, while Canada edged hosts USA 9-3. In a Championship Game played in below freezing temperatures fans lit fires on the sidelines to fend off the cold as Canada secured a slim 7-6 victory. In the bronze medal game USA romped to a 38-0 win. Many Super Bowl activities fell victim to the ice storm, but not the Global Junior Championship.

**NFL Global Junior Championship III**  
Super Bowl XXXIII, Fort Lauderdale, FL

**Europe 29 Mexico 8**

Honorary Chairman:  
Dwight Stephenson, Center Miami  
Dolphins undefeated team of 1972

**NFL Global Junior Championship IV**  
Super Bowl XXXIV, Atlanta, GA

*Semi final:* Europe 20 Panama 0  
*Semi final:* Canada 9 USA 3  
*Bronze Medal:* USA 38 Panama 0  
**Gold Medal: Canada 7 Europe 6**

Honorary Chairman: Dan Reeves,  
Head Coach Atlanta Falcons

Tampa Bay, Florida, was the setting for the **2001** NFL Global Junior Championship V. The host USA team took advantage of early mistakes by Europe and stormed to a 49-5 semi final victory. Waiting for them to set up an all-North America final was Canada, 27-8 victors over Japan.

The bronze medal went to the speedy Japanese whose three interceptions including one returned 85 yards for a touchdown defeated Europe 14-7. In the final and trailing 21-19, the Canadians tried to snatch victory at the death. Only a sack and finally an interception with 24 seconds remaining kept the USA defense on top to ensure a host nation triumphed for the first time.

Defending its title in **2002**, the USA swept aside Europe 39-6 in the semi final as all stars from the greater New Orleans area high schools made their mark. Canada was determined to avenge its narrow loss of a year earlier and breezed into the final with a 54-12 destruction of Japan.



Europe claimed the bronze medal, winning 27-16 against Japan, while the Championship Game was again a close contest. With defenses on top the USA led 16-8 until Canada's Mike Faulds threw a Hail Mary touchdown as time expired to pull within two points. The deuce conversion attempt sailed agonizingly through the hands of a wide receiver and USA held on for victory.

The Team USA roster that represented the New Orleans area featured five players who went on to Louisiana State University, in defensive backs Vernon Russell and Troy Hankton, offensive lineman Garrett Wibel, running back Jason Spadoni and wide receiver Skyler Green.

**NFL Global Junior Championship V**

Super Bowl XXXV, Clearwater, FL

*Semi final:* Canada 27 Japan 8  
*Semi final:* USA 49 Europe 5  
*Bronze Medal:* Japan 14 Europe 12  
**Gold Medal: USA 21 Canada 19**

Honorary Chairman: Hassan Jones,  
 Wide Receiver Minnesota Vikings  
 Banquet Speaker: Mile Alstott,  
 Fullback, Tampa Bay Buccaneers

**NFL Global Junior Championship VI**

Super Bowl XXXVI, New Orleans, LA

*Semi final:* Canada 54 Japan 12  
*Semi final:* USA 39 Europe 6  
*Bronze Medal:* Europe 27 Japan 16  
**Gold Medal: USA 16 Canada 14**

Honorary Chairmen: La' Roi Glover,  
 Defensive Tackle / Jake Delhomme,  
 Quarterback, New Orleans Saints  
 Banquet speaker: Nick Saban, LSU

In San Diego in **2003** a record five teams competed as Mexico made a welcome return and outlasted Europe and beat Japan to finish third overall. Following a jamboree shootout round, Europe shut out Japan in the medal rounds to claim fourth place and place their opponents fifth. The Championship Game proved to be another thrilling encounter between USA and Canada. USA recovered from a 21-7 deficit in a dramatic fourth quarter to force overtime. Arizona-bound quarterback Richard Kovalcheck underlined his credentials and broke Canadian hearts with a second touchdown pass to Johnny Principato, who had also caught the game-tying score.

Texas state champion head coach Mike Johnston of Katy High School took charge of Team USA in **2004**. Although the Houston-Harris County all stars lost to Canada in the first round stages, they recovered to retain the NFL GJC crown with a 31-point shutout of their rivals from north of the border in the Championship Game. Mexico claimed third place from a spirited Japanese team, while the tournament welcomed a new competitor in Russia, as the European Junior champions replaced the Team Europe all-stars

**NFL Global Junior Championship VII**

Super Bowl XXXVII, San Diego, CA

*First round results:*  
 USA 24 Japan 3 / Europe 7 Canada 17  
 Japan 0 Mexico 14 / Canada 23 USA 29 OT  
 Mexico 7 Europe 12 / Japan 7 Canada 21  
 USA 7 Europe 0 / Canada 14 Mexico 0  
 Europe 14 Japan 7 / Mexico 7 USA 9

*Bronze Medal Games:* Europe 23 Japan 0  
 Japan 7 Mexico 21 / Mexico 10 Europe 5  
**Gold Medal Game: USA 28 Canada 21 (OT)**

Honorary Chairman: Darren Bennett,  
 Punter, San Diego Chargers  
 Banquet Speaker: Good luck video message  
 from John Madden

**NFL Global Junior Championship VIII**

Super Bowl XXXVIII, Houston, TX

*First round results:*  
 Mexico 7 Russia 0 / Canada 10 Japan 2 /  
 USA 28 Russia 0 / Mexico 6 Japan 0  
 Canada 7 USA 3 / Japan 12 Russia 7 /  
 Canada 14 Mexico 0 / USA 35 Japan 0 /  
 Canada 27 Russia 0 / USA 2 Mexico 0

*Bronze Medal Games:* Mexico 28 Russia 0 /  
 Japan 17 Russia 0 / Mexico 34 Japan 0  
**Gold Medal Game: USA 31 Canada 0**

Honorary Chairman: Elvin Bethea, Hall of  
 Fame Defensive End, Houston Oilers  
 Banquet Speaker: BJ Symons,  
 Quarterback Texas Tech



The **2005** tournament in Jacksonville, FL, saw Canada finally overcome USA in a thrilling championship game, outlasting the home team 38-35 at a packed Bolles School Stadium. Canada had also triumphed over the USA in the round robin stage and celebrated head coach Danny Maciocia's appointment as the new head coach of the Edmonton Eskimos of the CFL.

Canada saw leads of 14-0 and 31-14 chipped away before a touchdown by MVP Jerome Messam, who rushed for an incredible 308 yards, sealed a close victory. Mexico claimed third place for the third year running with a 42-point shutout of European Champion France and a 21-14 victory over Japan. The spirited Japanese team took fourth spot by beating France 21-13.

Many players on the 36-man Team USA roster committed to NCAA scholarships during the week of the tournament, as did Canada's Jerome Messam, who was bound for Rutgers. Riley Skinner (Wake Forest), Rod Owens (Florida State), Rocky Ross (UCF), Colin Peek (Georgia Tech), Randall Cox (Georgia Tech), John Russell (Wake Forest), Joe Singleton (Southern Miss.), Michael Hicks (Ole Miss), Jeff Griffin (Wake Forest), Craig James (Louisville), and Rick Taylor (Hawaii) all committed on national signing day.

**Coaching in the NFL Global Junior Championship** is a prestigious honor. The last four USA teams have kicked off the tournament with members of their coaching staff having won a state championship during the prior season.

Lou Valdin of GJCVI host Hahnville High School was a Team USA Assistant Coach having led his team to the 2003 Louisiana State Championship. A year later, Ed Burke led Torrey Pines High School to the 2003 San Diego CIF Championship and was Team USA Head Coach.

In 2004 Team USA was led by Mike Johnston of Katy High School, the Texas 5A State Champions. Following on the tradition in 2005, Corky Rogers of The Bolles School captured the 2004 Florida 3A State Championship before taking over the Team USA reins.

**NFL Global Junior Championship IX**  
Super Bowl XXXIX, Jacksonville, FL

*First round results:*

France 0 Mexico 12 / Japan 0 Canada 35 /  
France 0 USA 19 / Mexico 3 Japan 0 /  
USA 7 Canada 14 / Japan 6 France 7 /  
Mexico 0 Canada 6 / USA 31 Japan 0 /  
Canada 27 France 0 / USA 21 Mexico 0

*Bronze Medal Games:* Mexico 21 Japan 14  
/ Japan 21 France 13 / Mexico 42 France 0

**Gold Medal Game: Canada 38 USA 35**

Honorary Chairman: LeRoy Butler, Pro Bowl Safety, Green Bay Packers, Florida State University  
Banquet Speaker: Pat Kirwan, NFL.com

**NFL Global Junior Championship X**  
Super Bowl XL, Pontiac / Detroit, MI

*First round results:*

USA 7 Germany 0 / Canada 7 Japan 0 /  
Mexico 28 Germany 0 / Japan 7 USA 7 /  
Canada 13 Mexico 0 / Japan 7 Germany 0 /  
Canada 21 USA 0 / Mexico 14 Japan 0 /  
Canada 21 Germany 0 / USA 3 Mexico 0

*Bronze Medal Games:* Mexico 28 Germany 0  
Japan 10 Germany 0 / Japan 8 Mexico 7

**Gold Medal Game: Canada 10 USA 0**

Honorary Chairman / Banquet Speaker:  
Herman Moore, Pro Bowl Wide Receiver,  
Detroit Lions

The **2006** tournament was played indoors for the first time in the event's ten-year history at the Pontiac Silverdome in Michigan. Canada was in no mood to relinquish its title and swept convincingly through the first round without conceding a point. Team USA, under the leadership of three-time Ohio state champion coach Dick Cromwell, stole into the championship game with a field goal as time expired to defeat Mexico.

Japan took the bronze medal with a thrilling victory over Mexico as a gutsy call to go for a two-point conversion edged a close contest 8-7. In the Championship Game Canada's defense again held firm to shut out USA 10-0 and Samuel Fournier's dominant ground attack earned him the MVP award.