



HOLMDEL TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT

"A COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE"

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
65 McCampbell Road
Holmdel, NJ 07733
tel: 732-946-1800
fax: 732-946-1875

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Sean T. Dowd, 732.946.1832

HOLMDEL TV STUDENTS SCORE BIG IN MEETING SUPER BOWL DIRECTOR

HOLMDEL (January 30, 2017) – Holmdel High School TV Production classes were given a unique opportunity to learn from an accomplished industry professional when Mr. Rich Russo, FOX-TV lead NFL director, came to talk to students about his work and experiences in the business.

Bryan DeNovellis, who heads up the Holmdel High School TV Production department, is always looking to provide his students with hands-on experiences in the classroom to give them a well-rounded view of everything that goes into a successful broadcast production. This includes trying to bring in broadcast professionals who can discuss various options for those interested in pursuing careers in television or the visual arts, and this is where Mr. Russo enters the picture.

DeNovellis met Russo in 2014 when the Holmdel High School football team was invited to visit Met Life Stadium to assist Russo and his Super Bowl production team as they set up their camera plan for the big game. Players practiced entering the field, running plays, and assisting the production staff in testing all visual aspects of the production in preparation for broadcast. DeNovellis says it was “quite an experience” for the players as well as his TV students who attended the event.

Russo, whose daughter attends the high school and is currently taking TV Production, was more than happy to accept the invitation to come to speak to the students about his career path and current position as one of the most highly respected directors in broadcast sports. In speaking to the classes, Russo naturally broke down what his role is as lead director for the most highly-viewed sporting event in the world, as he talked about all the responsibilities a director has with such a huge production. More importantly, he humbly focused on the fact that he simply sits in the director’s seat and emphasized the enormous talent and responsibilities of the entire production team in making the show what it becomes on the screen for the viewing audience. He likened the crew to an orchestra, where each individual member is integral to the success of the performance and emphasized the preparation and teamwork that goes into such an undertaking. The students were impressed by the cooperation and camaraderie that Russo described.

The most compelling thing that Russo discussed, however, beyond being involved with Super Bowl productions since 1986, working with John Madden and other broadcast stars, and having the opportunities to direct such high-profile events, was when he discussed what it took to get him where he is today. He discussed how he got his foot in the door as a part time researcher at

CBS in the early 1980's and how he learned the business by simply observing each position integral to the production. Russo admits he had no idea what it was he wanted to do after college, even after majoring in broadcast production. He explained to the students that he was drawn to directing only through experience and only after learning how to accept failure as part of the process. "You will all make mistakes, but it is what you learn from those mistakes that will help you develop," Russo offered.

Though the students were transfixed when Russo discussed the many opportunities he has had in television, from basketball, to college championship games, to NFL Europe, his most telling advice was when he simply asked the students to focus on the human and interpersonal aspects of their development. The director credits a good deal of his success to something his father once told him, namely, to treat others the way you want to be treated. "I'm grounded," Russo admitted, "and learned much of what I know from others." He told students to "keep your head down, do your job, but keep your eyes open, because this is where opportunities arise".

After dazzling the students with all the preparation that goes into producing the Super Bowl, which begins planning a year in advance, he kept bringing it back to the fact that each production, big or small, is equally important and requires teamwork to pull off successfully. Russo reminded students that they might not be in tune with their passion now, but that it will come in time, with experience. And they will only realize these opportunities when they understand that "communication is vital, so learn how to speak, to write, and always look people in the eye, and you will go places," Russo said. Certainly wise advice for high school students who are encouraged to practice these skills daily in Holmdel's classroom.

DeNovellis was more than pleased with Russo's visit and was grateful that his students had a chance to interact with somebody living out his dream, and who admits that anything can be achieved through hard work. Though as an instructor DeNovellis only has a series of three semester-long courses to provide his students with the experience they need, he feels that he has aspired to follow the school and districts goals of trying to share his expertise as a leader, and to increase student engagement by challenging them and getting them excited about the learning process. If Mr. Russo's visit is any indication, then Mr. DeNovellis is doing a pretty good job of that, and the students of Holmdel are fortunate to have these experiences.