

HBT HIGHLIGHTS

8th Grade Washington DC Field Trip

By Gabby Ho

From reflections on civil rights to exhibitions detailing our planet's history, our 8th grade students embarked on a trip filled with iconic monuments and world-renowned museums. Each day provided opportunities for students to connect classroom activities to real world experiences.

Wednesday, November 19th

At about 5am, students embarked upon a lengthy ride of 7 hours to our nation's capitol. Each bus arrived around 1pm to meet with their tour guides and commence a day packed with an impressive array of landmarks and museums. During a short stroll past the White House, students were given ample time to take pictures, standing a mere field away from the symbol of our nation's executive power. During the hour at the Smithsonian National Museum of African History and Culture, students learned about the profound impact of African culture in America and an extensive history of oppressors and advocates, leaving students reflective and inspired. "We say in the preamble of our Constitution, "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union". See, we knew it wasn't perfect from the beginning. We knew it needed changes." pointed out museum tour guide Ed.

The group also visited the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, where irreplaceable artifacts exhibited our country's history from abolitionists to the lightbulb. The day also encompassed the memorials of Franklin D Roosevelt, Martin Luther King Jr., and Thomas Jefferson, showcasing the power of knowledge and conviction being voiced. The schedule followed at the Pentagon City Mall with time for both dinner and leisurely shopping. "My favorite part of Wednesday was seeing and settling in the hotel room. I found it really fun because we got to relax and sleep after waking up so early. Do not room with your loud friends. I got 6 noise complaints. Still, it was completely worth going because the scenery was beautiful." noted Bethany Yu. After that, students concluded their long day being situated at Hyatt Regency Crystal City at Reagan National Airport, a comfortably lavish hotel with lights out at 10pm.



HBT HIGHLIGHTS

8th Grade Washington DC Field Trip

By Gabby Ho

Thursday, November 20th

On the second day of the trip, students reflected on the significance and sacrifice of the U.S. military at Arlington National Cemetery, also witnessing the meticulously synchronized Changing of the Guard ceremony and a flower-laying ceremony assisted by students Aavya Tayal and Bradley Zelniker. “It was such an honor for me to be one of the students selected. It was an amazing experience.

As I was laying the wreath, I felt proud of our military and the work they put in. Personally, I think it means a great deal to the military when kids like us participate in these things, because it shows we care, and our generation is the future of tomorrow.” noted volunteer Aavya Tayal. Following the cemetery, students visited a prominent symbol of our nation; the U.S. Capitol. Upon entrance, students watched an introductory film to the U.S. Capitol, with the latin phrase “E pluribus unum”, meaning “out of many, one” revealing the message of democracy inherently being a work in progress.

Inside, the students explored the rotunda’s artistic depictions of American history and the National Statuary Hall, where each state is represented by a statue of an American advocate. Moving onto a solemn yet powerful note, students were introduced to the National Holocaust Memorial Museum with a booklet detailing the life of one of the Holocaust’s many victims. Students experienced the sobering lessons of how racially targeted and dehumanizing propaganda, resistance, and hatred can leave lasting consequences on generations to come. Students additionally visited the Washington Monument, WWII Memorial, Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History and Lincoln Memorial emphasized themes of unity, resilience, innovation, and progress in a world that demands and constantly challenges humanity.

To end the day on a lighter note, students shared time at Dave and Buster’s, both dining and enjoying games with friends.



HBT HIGHLIGHTS

8th Grade Washington DC Field Trip

By Gabby Ho

Friday, November 21st

Friday's departure featured one final stop at the National Air and Space Museum, where students explored the years of continuous innovation in aerospace. From detailed airplane models to immersive simulations, the museum offered students an inside view on both the limitations and opportunities aviation has to offer. As well as military advantages, the exhibits presented a plethora of civilian applications such as commercial travel, search and rescue missions, and entertainment. Students set off for their drive back to HBT, concluding the field trip at about 7pm.

Through confronting hard lessons of our history as well as celebrating progress and unity, the trip created a new perspective of history from the viewpoint of kids our age. As students returned home, they carried not only new memories, but a renewed understanding of how our past influences our present.



DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

Homecoming Carnival

By: Samantha Zheng

The Syosset Homecoming Weekend is full of fun, games, and excitement. It took place this year on October 17th-19th. Cheers for the Varsity Football Game filled the crisp Friday evening air, and was followed up with fun, festivities, and more. The Homecoming Carnival featured activities for all ages, including exhilarating rides, club stands, and games that attract visitors from the Syosset community. Reese Lee, an HBT student, shared that, "The Syosset Homecoming Carnival had numerous rides and activities for students and parents to have an enjoyable time. Overall, the carnival was very fun and had a very festive air." People enthusiastically rode many rides and ran all over the place. The night was filled with fun festivities, creating lasting memories for many people. The carnival rides, games, and food were provided with the help of an external company called Blue Sky Amusements. With the help of the Syosset School District and the help of various clubs, the Homecoming Carnival created a successful and memorable time for all guests.



Pictures of the Syosset High School
Carnival. Courtesy of Samantha Zheng.
18 October 2025

HBT HIGHLIGHTS

Club Highlight: Model UN

By Gabrielle Ho

“Understanding the world, one debate at a time.” - Rishaan Sarda

Thriving as one of the most nationally-recognized academic clubs, Model United Nations (Model UN) is a chance for students interested in debate and diplomacy to engage in intellectually challenging scenarios.

What is the UN?

The United Nations is an intergovernmental organization with the mission of “peace, dignity and equality on a healthy planet”. It was founded on October 24th, 1945, succeeding the League of Nations who had failed at their mission with the start of World War II. Currently renowned as the most important world organization, the United Nations fosters global harmony, addresses precarious issues and works to protect human rights.

What is Model UN?

Model UN is a club focused on tactics, negotiation, public speaking, and most importantly—confidence. Alongside fellow peers, students step into the shoes of a country’s UN delegation and draft solutions to critical global issues. In this club, you not only exercise your social skills and ability to conference with foreign country delegations, but you also build a strong individual voice and communication skills that will help you in any future you wish to pursue. Balancing education and fun, Model UN gives students the chance to show how our voices can change the world.

Syosset Model United Nations Conference, abbreviated SyoMUNC, is the annual assembly that takes place at the high school in May. MUN participants get to show all of the hard work they’ve done to the rest of the participants throughout the entire district. Participants showcase all of the skills they’ve learned throughout year in formal and informal debate, written resolutions, how to research, how to improvise speeches, and how to take our next step as the next generation of world leaders.

One of the best parts of Model UN is that it is student-driven, meaning that all lessons, practices, and materials are created by a talented board of members: Marieke Van Berkel, Gabby Ho, Rishaan Sarda, Derek Koenig, Laiba Yasir, Smrithi Varadarajan, and Oliver Cooney. Our club advisors, Ms. Villalba and Ms. Nunziato, offer valuable support while letting the students drive many decisions.

Model UN isn’t just about competition, but connection. Many friendships are formed through Model UN as members navigate tense humanitarian crises or draft solutions for geopolitical conflicts with support from one another. Finally, Model UN proves that bonafide change stems from an open-mind, an ability to compromise, and a backbone.

HBT HIGHLIGHTS

8th Grade Social Studies Classes Step into the Shoes of America's Leading Gilded Age Entrepreneurs

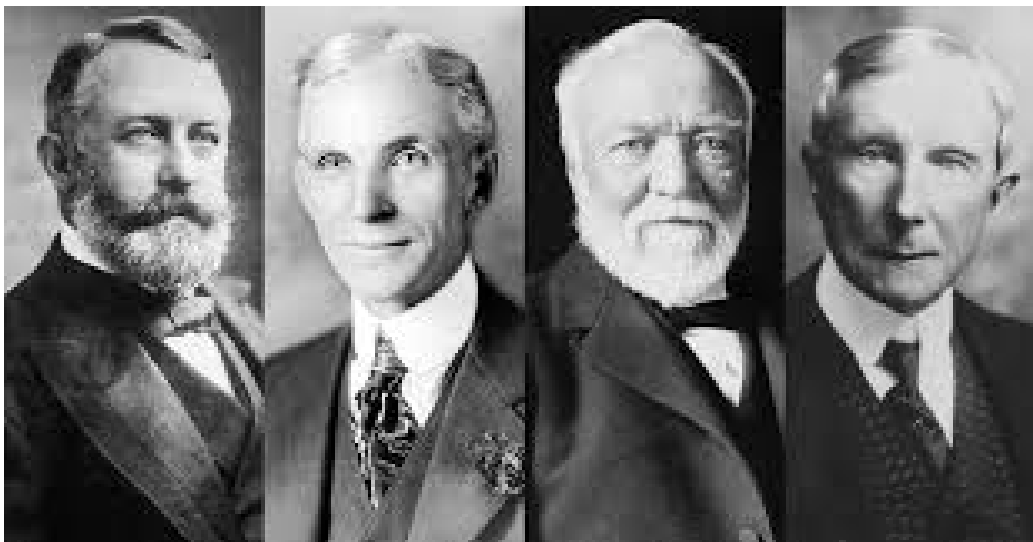
By Gabrielle Ho

On November 13th, 2025, our 8th Social Studies classes turned the clock back to the late 1800s with an immersive “dinner party,” not as intrepid historians, but as a select few of USA’s most influential industrialists. Each student walked into the classroom as not just experts on their magnate’s occupation, but on their corporate strategies, family lineage, and personal philosophies.

During the exchange, our entrepreneurs discussed the industry they worked in, how they obtained their status and capital, their accomplishments, and their various charitable contributions. Participants agreed that the exchange benefitted their overall understanding of this era and offered them a chance for lively conversation and best of all, fun! Samantha Zheng shared, “The entrepreneur dinner was an event that allowed students to take in the knowledge of what was going on during the Gilded Age.”

Students enthusiastically interviewed each other, sharing their experiences and passions. Whether it be revolutionizing the USA’s railroad industry or the labor issues of their era, each student thoroughly deepened their understanding of the USA’s rapidly advancing economy, further using this knowledge to determine each entrepreneur’s underlying identity of “robber baron” or “captain of industry”.

To bring the gathering to a close, students were asked to post some of their key takeaways in a Padlet, answering the question, “Which entrepreneur do you think most impacted the United States?”. The Gilded Age teaches us that economic innovation and entrepreneurship can drive progress, but can also be dangerous without ethical oversight and formalized employee protection. Our history reflects today’s workplace hierarchy, but the chance to decide whether a cycle of profit and exploitation is continued or improved lies within each of us.



HBT HIGHLIGHTS

Ambassadors and RISE Program

By Gabrielle Ho

A new initiative in HBT—the Ambassadors Program—was introduced this year with the goal of welcoming social interactions and fostering positive energy. Every Friday during 7th period, 8th grade students get the chance to engage in activities with their fellow Ambassadors and RISE group members, building essential connections and communication skills. “I love this program because it offers students a chance to socialize and learn from one another. It is vital to students’ success to be able to socialize and learn with their peers. I also think that it is an incredible program because it gives kids the chance to socialize with kids they might not know.” explained Mr Muller, the teacher and program organizer behind Ambassadors and RISE. Initiatives such as the Ambassadors Program, which emphasizes collaboration among peers, are highly impactful in supporting individuals from diverse backgrounds.

As seen in our health class curriculum, having a support system is crucial for navigating challenges and cultivating a positive personal image. “I think it’s an amazing opportunity for RISE students to socialize with their peers. It creates a more inclusive and accepting community.” notes ambassador Connor Lo. Through lively environments and uplifting recreation, the Ambassador Program elevates student leadership, awareness, and respect.

Lapses in judgment—whether it be moments of exclusion, insensitivity, or ignorance—are part of the human experience. No community is perfect, but growth and progress can only come from acknowledgement and a commitment to transforming reflection into action. HBT does this through its Ambassadors Program and other positive initiatives, like Advisory, revealing our school's unwavering commitment to learning, listening, acknowledging, and acting for the greater good.



Photo of the Ambassadors and RISE Students engaging in a fun Bingo activity. Courtesy of Gabby Ho. 7 November 2025

HBT HIGHLIGHTS

Club Highlight: Asian Connection Club

By Gabrielle Ho

Recently formed by HBT's social worker Ms. Chan, Asian Connection Club is a place where students share experiences and recognize the diverse traditions of Asian cultures. Contrary to popular perception, Asian Connection Club is not exclusively for Asian participants, but an initiative taken to celebrate the vast array of customs across Asia. Its mission is "to create an environment where students of diverse backgrounds, not only of Asian descent, can come together to explore and appreciate each other's heritage and customs."

In the club's recent meeting of 3/17, the club's board members put together a short slideshow detailing the traditions, symbolism and activities of Hanami, otherwise known as cherry blossom viewing, which originated in Japan. With regards to the flower-viewing parties done during this festival, club members were provided with snacks and origami paper for the social portion of the meeting. However, delving into the history and the customs of a holiday is merely one of the many activities the club has planned, as the rest of the school year will be filled with movie days, cultural crafts, cultural presentations, and the like.

Despite being run for a month, HBT's Asian Connection Club rapidly expands with nearly 70 members, offering an opportunity to exchange not just one's cultural identity but one's individual belief and conviction, creating an environment of belonging as well as a fun place to chat and enjoy snacks. Through its growth as a whole and vibrant atmosphere, the club strives to build meaningful intrapersonal relationships and a strong sense of agency in its members.

Club Information:

We meet Tuesdays after school. Location may vary. Our class code is ivxrpdkz. It's never too late to join!

HBT HIGHLIGHTS

7th Graders Take In Zootopia 2

By Valerie Kong

While most students were doing Thanksgiving activities in class on November 26th, the 7th graders left HBT during 3rd period. They were on a trip to the Regal movie theater (a part of the United Artists Movie Theatres) to watch Zootopia 2, a two-hour movie that had only been released that very day!

The 7th graders were provided with a bag of delicious popcorn, along with a drink of their choice. For the first ten minutes, they were hit with a blast of trailers about movies that would be released in early 2026. Some examples were “Avatar: Fire and Ash” and “Project Hail Mary.”

Most of the 7th graders left positive reviews on the movie. “The movie was good, and it was funny too,” remarked William Yu from Team 7-2. For me, the movie was creative and ambitious. It taught a lesson about courage, greed, and determination that middle school students could embrace.

If the experience of being in a theater with your friends during the school day wasn’t thrilling enough, after the movie, students and staff headed back to HBT to enjoy fresh slices of Mario’s Pizza. The teachers worked hard to get everyone served quickly while Mr. Narraine, one of our assistant principals, openly praised the students for their good behavior at the movie.

Overall, this field trip was a great experience. If you were to find a 7th grader in the hall and ask him/her about it, I will guarantee you they will go on and on about the excitement of the whole day. It was a great day of bonding and camaraderie amongst the entire 7th grade. We look forward to more opportunities for entertaining field trips like this one.



HBT HIGHLIGHTS

7th Graders Watch Zootopia 2 (photos)

By Valerie Kong

Team 7-3 students enjoying the field trip

Photos Courtesy of Ms. Nunziato



HBT HIGHLIGHTS

7th Graders Head to the Bronx Zoo!

By Valerie Kong

On May 19th, 2026, HBT seventh graders traveled to the Bronx to visit the adorable and dazzling animals in the – you guessed it! – the Bronx Zoo. This trip was certainly an unforgettable experience.

The students began their trip on a luxurious coach bus. Most could agree that the opportunity to ride on a coach bus instead of a normal school bus already made the trip way better. The air conditioning on the bus instantly soothed students after being in the hot air outside all day.

The students got the opportunity to view many interesting animals. They made connections to concepts they learned in science class, such as feeding relationships and ecology.

Although the students had to face hot weather and a rush to get back to HBT on time, they still expressed a positive attitude towards the trip. “I honestly liked it, because I got to hang out with my friends,” remarked Brayden Qu.

A message to sixth graders: the Bronx Zoo field trip is a trip you certainly wouldn’t want to miss! You get to have the ultimate experience with exploring with your friends, and ride on an awesome coach bus! This field trip is a seventh grade tradition – seventh grade wouldn’t feel complete without it!



OP-ED

Taylor

Is Taylor Swift *Still* on the Rise?

Swift

By: Valerie Kong

Renowned singer-songwriter Taylor Swift, known for her autobiographical songwriting and artistic adaptability, has been facing some criticism, even from Swifties, in the wake of her newest album release, "The Life of a Showgirl." Many people are wondering if this was just one unlucky album, or if Taylor Swift's music will change forever.

There are many theories swirling around that might explain the artist's noticeable change in musical style. One popular idea is that her new focus on love and a serious relationship has sparked a change in the way she approaches her work.

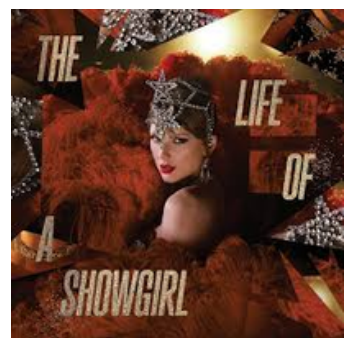
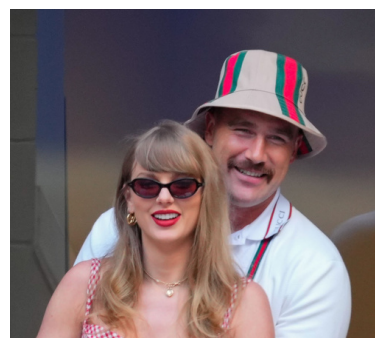
For instance, in a recent interview, she discussed her reasoning for not performing at the Super Bowl. She explained that it was out of loyalty to her boyfriend, Travis Kelce, who was playing in the game. She talked about how it felt unfair for Kelce to be "sweating in a tight game on the field", while she was just thinking about a song.

Not all fans agree with this decision or her explanation. Many argue that her reasoning is flawed. Performing a Super Bowl halftime show can be just as stressful as playing in a major football game, especially when singing in front of millions of people who could potentially judge or dislike the performance. Others believe she would not have given this excuse if it were not specifically for Kelce.

In "The Life of a Showgirl," Taylor Swift has released a song, "Opalite," which is Travis Kelce's birthstone. This tells us that she takes her relationship with Kelce pretty seriously. People have said that "Opalite" is Kelce's favorite song in "The Life of a Showgirl."

In summary, "The Life of a Showgirl" is more than just another album—it's a record-breaking phenomenon. According to many music news sources, this album has shattered incredible records, like achieving the largest U.S. sales week in history and giving the artist the most No. 1 albums as a solo artist. Out of all her releases, this one is clearly the biggest record-breaker.

Still, it's not just about the numbers. Many of us "Swifties" are left wondering if this new sound signals a permanent shift. Was this really just one different album, or has this iconic artist changed directions forever? Only time will tell if her legendary loyalty to her original style has changed, leaving fans eager—and maybe a little worried—about what she will do next.



ARTS & CULTURE

The Devil Wears Prada 2

By: Reese Lee

On May 1st 2026, the widely anticipated movie, The Devil Wears Prada 2 was released in theaters, the movie followed Andy Sachs (played by Anne Hathaway) returning to the fashion industry to help save the Runway magazine, the movie had familiar faces and characters, such as Meryl Streep coming back to play the role of Miranda Priestly, the editor in chief of Runway, Nigel played by Stanley Tucci also came back as a fan favorite. Emily Charlton (played by Emily Blunt) also played an important role in the movie.

I enjoyed the movie very much, seeing Andy all grown up and thriving in her own life felt so important because we saw how much she was struggling in the first movie. There were also many parallels to the first movie, such as Andy getting an assistant that was very similar to her in the first movie. The outfits everyone wore were impeccable and beyond beautiful, really living up to the expectations of the fashion industry. Another part that stood out to me were the numerous celebrity guest appearances, from Heidi Klum to Karl-Anthony Towns, and most notably, an appearance from Lady Gaga herself, when she performed at Milan Fashion Week. The film was packed with nostalgic elements that made viewers reminisce about the first movie while simultaneously seeing their favorite characters thrive in life.



NATIONAL NEWS

New York Statewide Phone Ban

By Reese Lee

It's the hot topic in every conversation—from classrooms to lunchrooms, the NY Statewide Phone Ban takes every talk by storm. This ban is so significant, numerous people are even writing about it for their research assessment. But first things first—what is the phone ban?

The New York Statewide phone ban was proposed by the Governor of New York, Kathy Hochul, who announced that all K-12 public schools in New York State would adopt a bell-to-bell restriction on internet enabled devices, which includes but is not limited to, phones, tablets, and smartwatches. These devices are not allowed on school grounds during a school day. This ban was made to make sure students could focus more on learning in classrooms instead of being on their phones.

Pros of banning phones in schools:

Banning cell phones in schools seems like a good idea as it may help students focus better and succeed in school. The phone ban may help reduce distractions in classrooms and keep students focused on doing their academic work. Students can also pay more attention in classes and talk to their peers more. It can also prevent people from cheating on exams and homework assignments. Without phones, students may spend more time talking face-to-face with peers, instead of being buried in a screen, which can help build stronger friendships and connections.

Cons of banning phones in schools:

Banning cell phones in schools causes many different problems for students. Students may not be able to contact their families during emergencies, and cannot alert their family if something comes up during the day. Students also may use their phone to do quick things, like checking a grade, calculating a math problem or searching something up. Some students may also rely on music to help calm their nerves in class or drown out noises.

Keeping the restriction in heated debate, students and staff express a variety of opinions about this ban. Through each controversial opinion, students continue to discuss the positives and negatives—so, what's your perspective?

NATIONAL NEWS

The Roblox Lawsuit

By: William Yu

Have you ever wondered if your favorite game cares more about money than your safety? That serious question is at the heart of the crisis facing Roblox—and now it's official. The massive online platform is facing a major legal battle because the lawsuit against it has been finalized. The accusation is explosive: Roblox is being sued for allegedly refusing to take action against predators, choosing to prioritize company profit over the safety of its young users.

This refusal has had terrible results. Sadly, many children who play the game have mistakenly trusted dangerous individuals, thinking they were just friends, and shared their private information. We're diving into the drama surrounding these serious claims, the controversial AI banning system, and the story of one player who tried to make the platform safer, only to be banned himself. The Roblox gaming platform is facing some serious heat, and a recent incident that caught my attention shows why. Believe it or not, a player was supposedly banned just for saying "hi"! But the real drama surrounds a well-known social media user, called Schlep, who has been actively working to make Roblox a safer place. Schlep often records videos where they find and report online predators, helping to get them arrested. This sounds like a hero, right?

Here's the surprising twist: Roblox banned Schlep! They removed him from the platform and even deleted the items he created, forcing him to stop posting his helpful videos. Roblox stated that the reason for the ban was that Schlep was supposed to report the predators to Roblox first, before going to the police or posting online. This felt like an outrageous decision to many players.

The Problem with AI

Adding to the controversy, Roblox is currently using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to monitor content and issue bans, rather than having real people consistently check things themselves. Roblox has been sued in several U.S. states, including Texas, Louisiana, Kentucky, and Michigan. After many months, the company has finally banned some truly inappropriate games, but the threat of predators hasn't gone away.

Many players are worried about the AI system. It seems to be overly sensitive and mindlessly banning innocent players. For example, if a player reports someone else and types the word "inappropriate" in the report, the AI might ban the reported person automatically. Also, the AI doesn't seem to carefully check if an avatar is actually inappropriate before banning it.

The Big Picture

Many players agree that none of this would be happening if Roblox took better care of its own platform. The lawsuits have made many players uneasy, as their favorite game could potentially be shut down. Some unhappy players are even throwing insults at people like Schlep for taking action! In summary, the debate over Roblox's safety and future is heating up. While some worry about the game disappearing, the big issue of predators remaining active on the platform is still a major concern that needs to be solved.

SPORTS

AN INTERVIEW WITH A PHENOMENAL FOOTBALL COACH

By: Dylan Tufaro

Football is more than just a sport for Coach St. John-it has been a lifelong passion that shaped his career and the players he works with today. In this article, we take a closer look at what inspired him to become a coach, his experiences working with middle school athletes, and his goals for the football program at HBT.

Early Inspiration and Love for the Game

Coach St.John's journey began when he was just seven years old. His dad, who was a talented football player himself, signed him and his older brother up for peeewe football. From that moment on, he fell in love with the sport. He remembers watching college and NFL games with his dad every weekend-memories that helped fuel his passion even more.

As he grew older, he played throughout middle school, JV, and Varsity. What drew him in the most was the uniqueness of football: eleven players working together, each with a specific position and purpose. He loved the rules, the structure, the teamwork, and the challenge.

Coaching Career and Experiences

When Coach St.John first became a teacher, he also stepped into the role of JV football coach at the high school level. He continued coaching JV and Varsity teams for twelve years before shifting to middle school football.



Continued on the next page...

SPORTS

AN INTERVIEW WITH A PHENOMENAL FOOTBALL COACH - CONTINUED...

By: Dylan Tufaro

He eventually joined the coaching team at Southwoods and now has been coaching at HBT for the last five years. Working with 7th and 8th graders has given him the chance to help young athletes build skills early and develop a strong foundation for the future.

What he Loves Most About Coaching

For coach St.John, the best part of coaching is watching athletes grow. Nothing compares to seeing a student learn a skill in practice and then successfully use it in a game. One memorable moment he shared was from this season: "A first year-football player learned how to run a slant route and scored a touchdown". Moments like that he says are what makes coaching worthwhile.

Team Culture and Expectations

Coach St.John believes that a great team is built on positivity and support. His motto, "Make your teammate great", encourages players to lift each other up. He expects his athletes to come to practice ready to learn and with a positive attitude. Coach St. John emphasizes that how players treat each other matters just as much as how they perform on the field.

It was a pleasure to interview Coach St.John and learn about his commitment to teamwork, positivity, and teaching. We are lucky to have a teacher and coach right here at HBT!