

CAMPAIGN

IMG serves up an ace as Miami residents rally behind upgrades

By Janelle Hawthorne



Miami-Dade County residents voted largely in favor of improvements to Crandon Park.

Client

Sony Open Tennis tournament, IMG (New York)

PR agency

Schwartz Media Strategies (Miami)

Duration

August-November 2012

Budget

\$30,000

IMG, owner of the Sony Open Tennis tournament, proposed upgrades to Miami's Crandon Park so the venue can continue to host the annual event. Miami-Dade County's charter requires two-thirds of the public to approve the refurbishments.

Strategy

With only a fraction of Miami residents attending the tournament this initiative needed to educate voters on privately funded improvements to the park and the positive economic impact the tournament makes on local businesses.

Tactics

A number of tennis greats were enlisted to support the effort through several channels, including Roger Federer via Facebook, a phone recording from Venus Williams, and TV and radio interviews by Mary Joe Fernández. Calls to action were issued daily to the tournament's social media base and the voting public via Twitter, Facebook, and Schwartz Media Strategies' blog.

Pitches to local papers including The Miami Herald focused on the improvements of a public park for year-round use at no cost to taxpayers, as well as the importance of upgrades to other tournament hosts. The newspaper endorsed the development, putting it in front of thousands of Miami-Dade voters and business leaders a week prior to voting day.

"This campaign was won by educating the public of the benefits of a yes vote," says Sam Henderson, director of PR at IMG/Sony Open Tennis. "The earned media generated along with marketing initiatives were essential to getting those messages across early."

Results

The referendum won 72.6% of the countywide vote, exceeding the two-thirds requirement. More than 525,000 residents voted in favor of the initiative.

Future

Schwartz Media Strategies will continue to work with IMG and Sony Open Tennis.