

Red Sox star stresses importance about giving back

Boston Red Sox star Kevin Youkilis has had numerous big hits during his Major League Baseball career, but Youkilis was an even bigger hit with Chelsea youths during a speaking appearance last Thursday at the Jordan Boys and Girls Club.

Youkilis told an attentive audience of Chelsea High students what it's like to be a professional baseball player and compete in front of a crowd of 37,000 fans at Fenway Park and in other ballparks, such as historic Yankee Stadium.

Youkilis, 28, who was a two-time All-American at the University of Cincinnati, also delivered an inspirational message about being a good person and contributing to one's community.

"You watch the Red Sox and we all work as a team," said Youkilis. "That's the biggest thing in life – to help each other and help out your family. The main thing I try to teach kids is be a family-oriented person – help out your brothers, your sisters, your cousins, and your friends."

Youkilis also stressed to his audience the importance of a good education.

"A big thing is you have to work hard in school," said Youkilis. "I wouldn't be where I am today if I didn't work hard in school. School is everything. It gives you a foundation, but it also helps you become something better in life. Without the schooling, you can't get far."

Youkilis opened the forum to questions from the audience and he answered one directly. "What's it like to hit a home run in Yankee Stadium?" was the first question.

"I think anytime you hit a home run, it's pretty exciting," responded Youkilis. "I hit one out earlier in the year off Andy Pettitte. It was very thrilling and it's kind of funny to say, to have 50,000 people booing you. It was actually the greatest feeling because people know who you are. At the end of my career, I'll probably look back and remember that I hit a home run where Mickey Mantle and Babe Ruth and so many other great hitters played."

Chelsea schoolteacher and coach Jay Seigal asked Youkilis what it's like to see and hear so many Red Sox fans cheering at other ball parks throughout the league.

"Playing for the Red Sox on the road is definitely exciting," said Youkilis. "To have all these fans cheering for you is a great feeling. It gets the opposition a little upset. They're playing at home and they're not getting cheered for as much as the Red Sox."

Youkilis graciously stayed long after his remarks to present Red Sox T-shirts to the students, sign autographs, and pose for photographs. He had clearly won over the youths and adults in the room with his eloquence, sincerity, intelligence, politeness, and upbeat and positive attitude.