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Kevin Youkilis had critics, but many will miss 'Youk'

By Matt Rocheleau and Derek J. Anderson | GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS JUNE 25, 2012

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TAMIR KALIFA FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Matt Grendal (center) and Jay Martinage (right) spoke with a friend outside a sports bar near Fenway Park Sunday.

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For the past nine seasons, Red Sox fans have showered appreciation on Kevin Youkilis by bellowing out his nickname, “Youk.”

When the cheers died out after Sunday’s game, some said they were shocked, enraged, and heartbroken to learn the 33-year-old infielder had been traded to the Chicago White Sox. But others wholeheartedly welcomed the departure of No. 20.

“I love Kevin Youkilis. I thought he was a great player. He brought a lot to the team,” Gary Martins, 28, of Swansea said inside the Cask ’n Flagon bar next to Fenway Park. “It’s sad to see him go.”

Martins and his wife had sat in the grandstands near first base Sunday and watched the hometown team defeat the Atlanta Braves, 9-4.

When they made a postgame stop at the bar afterward, they were surprised to learn from TV screens that they had

witnessed the end of Youkilis's career in Boston.

"I liked yelling 'Youk,' " said Martins's wife, Alissa, 32. "I'll definitely miss that."

But others were happy to see the Red Sox cut ties with Youkilis. They said that they felt he was a problem in the clubhouse and that his production had waned lately.

"It's all the pink hats standing up yelling Youk," said Jay Martinage, 27, of Nashua, referring to the term some use to describe less devoted and knowledgeable fans.

His friend and fellow lifelong Sox fan Matt Grendal, 27, of Foxborough agreed and said he was embarrassed that fans gave Youkilis a standing ovation Sunday when he was replaced by a pinch runner.

"He hustles. He busts his butt. But he's such a jerk," Grendal said. "Him and [Josh] Beckett need to go."

Paul Allen, 25, who lives in the North End, watched the game from seats near the third-base line Sunday.

"They needed to get rid of Youkilis," he said. "There's no room left for him now. They're trying to do the best thing for the team. I'm not going to lose any sleep over it."

"I was a fan of his production. I was never a fan of his attitude," he added, referring to how Youkilis sometimes reacted with visible anger at calls made by umpires.

Others said they liked his temper and that it was particularly endearing to a city known for its thick skin.

"He was very tough and had a temper. But that's how we are in Boston," said Kelley Jones, 27, of Scarborough, Maine.

Louis Waterbury, 32, of Las Vegas said he was saddened to hear Youkilis had been traded and was upset with the deal itself. "I don't think there's anything good about the trade," said Waterbury. "He's a power player, and Youkilis held the team accountable."

He said he would prefer last season's "beer and chicken issue" to what has happened with the team this



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year.

Youkilis was drafted by the Red Sox in 2001 and made his debut at the Major League level in May 2004, the year the franchise won its first World Series in 86 years. His departure leaves the Sox with one player who played on that championship squad: David Ortiz.

"We don't have many of the originals left anymore," said Kim Harrington, 27, of Boston. "When you think of the Red Sox, you think of Youk and [Jason] Varitek and [Tim] Wakefield and those guys. But they're gone now. It's a big change."

"The team has lost its identity," added Kris Libby, 35, of Barrington, N.H., who sat at a table with Jones and Harrington at the Cask 'n Flagon.

Jones wore a Red Sox T-shirt without any player's name or number on it – something she said she did on purpose.

"I didn't know who will be around anymore," she lamented. "But it's Red Sox Nation. We'll always be fans and we'll support our guys."

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