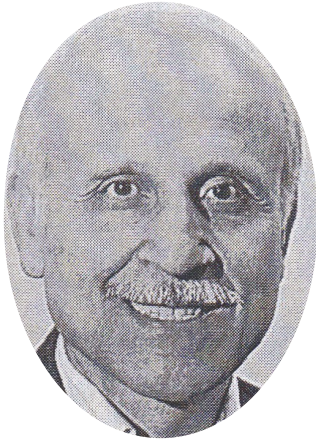


Phil Kydes



Back in the 1960s and well into the '70s, Norwalk's Phil Kydes defined greatness on the soccer field.

In fact, there are many who feel Kydes is the greatest soccer player the city of Norwalk has ever produced.

It is certainly hard to argue with the kind of numbers he put up, especially during a brilliant three-year career at Brien McMahon High School. His 78 career goals are still an all-time city high school record, but what's even more amazing is he did it in just three years.

Not only that, but back then the McMahon and Staples soccer programs were so far ahead of most of the teams in the FCIAC (they played in the first nine league championship games), there were many games where the Seantors were comfortably ahead by five or six goals at halftime and coach Ralph King sat Kydes the entire second half.

Born in a small village in Greece, Kydes and his family came to the United States in 1956 and he was only five years-old when he received his first soccer ball. But he didn't begin playing the sport seriously until he was 12, and by age 13 he was playing semi-pro soccer in a Connecticut premiere league. At the time, he was the youngest player to ever compete at that level, admitting years later he lied about his age so he could play.

But local soccer fans really began to take notice of Kydes when he was in ninth grade at Benjamin Franklin Junior High School and scored 16 goals in just seven games. Turns out that was just an indication of things to come in high school.

He entered Brien McMahon the following year, in the fall of 1965, and as a sophomore scored an FCIAC record 23 goals to go with 17 assists as he led the Senators to the state championship. It was also the first state title in any sport for McMahon, which had opened just five years earlier. Six months later, the McMahon baseball team, led by fellow 2006 Norwalk Old Timers honoree Terry Blitz, won the school's second state crown.

But Kydes was just warming up. As a junior, he broke his own FCIAC scoring mark with 24 goals as he led McMahon to the FCIAC championship. Then as a senior in the fall of 1967, Kydes set a new state and New England scoring record with 31 goals as he led the Senators to another FCIAC title and back to the state finals for the second time in three years.

Kydes ended his career in grand fashion, too, as he scored five of McMahon's six goals in the state tournament that year, almost single-handedly carrying the Senators on his back and to the championship game, where they lost to Staples.

The talented Kydes finished his astonishing three-year scholastic career with a remarkable 78 goals, an average of 3.3 goals per game, and was named All-FCIAC and All-State all three years.

Kydes was hardly done dazzling crowds on the soccer field, however. Following his graduation from McMahon, he moved onto Harvard University. Under NCAA rules back then, freshmen weren't allowed to play varsity, so Kydes was named captain of the Harvard freshmen team and scored 14 goals as he led the Crimson to an undefeated season.

He moved up to the varsity as a sophomore and wasted no time making an impact as he scored 13 goals in 15 games to earn All-Ivy League honors and lead Harvard to a 14-1 season and the 1969 NCAA East Region championship. That also gave the Crimson a first-ever berth in the Final Four, where they lost to St. Louis 2-1 in the national semifinals.

As a junior the following year, Kydes scored 11 more goals as he led Harvard back to the NCAA tournament and a berth in the national quarterfinals. Then as a senior, the versatile Kydes had to adjust to a new position as the coaching staff wanted to better utilize his skills, endurance and speed. In his new role, he scored seven goals that season as he helped Harvard win a second East Region championship and return to the Final Four, where it once again lost in the national semifinals, this time to Howard 1-0 at the Orange Bowl. Kydes' sophomore and senior seasons are still Harvard's only two appearances in the Final Four.

And despite having to change his style of play and sacrifice goal scoring, Kydes was still named All-Ivy League for the second time in three years and his all-around play earned him a spot All-America second team.

Harvard compiled a glossy record of 39-4 during his three years on the varsity, including a 20-1 mark and two championships in the Ivy League.

A professional career awaited Kydes and Montreal made him the first player selected in the second round of the North American Soccer League Draft (the last player drafted in the first round right before him was the well-known Kyle Rote Jr.).

The money in those early years of the NASL, however, wasn't great, and Kydes decided to return to Norwalk and work at his family's business. Both the Rochester and Boston franchises tried to lure back on the field, but Kydes didn't accept their offer and instead decided to play for Vasco de Gamma, a top semi-pro team out of Bridgeport.

Kydes graduated from Harvard in 1972 with a degree in Economics and made the Dean's List three of the four years he was there. Still a local resident, Kydes currently owns and operates three local businesses in Norwalk, and is the proud father of three children, Efstathios (Stathi), Anastasia (Anasta), and Kiriaki (Kiki).