

Vianney High grad brings home the gold (medal)



Home town olympian Scott Touzinsky '00 hold his niece Isabelle Touzinsky,4, as he and his wife Angel watch a video documentary highlighting his volleyball career during a ceremony honoring him as a member of the Olympic gold medal-winning U.S. men's volleyball

team Monday morning at Vianney High School. Vianney retired Touzinsky's No. 7 jersey as part of an all-school assembly. (Laurie Skrivan/P-D)

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KIRKWOOD — For an hour, Scott Touzinsky was surrounded by a ceaseless wide-eyed glut of fans.

They wanted to see his Olympic gold medal for volleyball, get an autograph, snap a photo, even just touch the 2000 Vianney grad.

But Touzinsky didn't mind. It was his idea.

At the end of an assembly Wednesday morning at Vianney High School in which Touzinsky's school jersey was retired, he invited a fieldhouse full of students and faculty to come check out the medal he had helped the U.S. men's volleyball team win in Beijing.

"There are not a lot of these running around St. Louis," said Touzinsky, an Oakville native. He then described the goddess on one side, the white jade on the other and "the Olympic little dude" in the middle.

"It's a pretty sweet thing," he said.

As was, he later said, his return to Vianney.

"The only other thing that was almost as crazy or more meaningful was after we won the gold medal," Touzinsky said. "To get this kind of reception and for Vianney to do this for me, not in my wildest dreams did I think this would happen. It's like winning the gold medal: You always want to win one, but you never think it's going to happen."

His medal around his neck, Touzinsky was welcomed with a standing ovation.

Dave Hall, a practical arts teacher at the high school, then told of how Touzinsky was the third alumnus to have his jersey retired. The others are Super Bowl champion Trent Green and World Series champion pitcher Cliff Politte.

Touzinsky, 26, is the school's only gold medal-winning Olympian.

The lanky athlete was lauded for more than his prowess on the volleyball court, though ample note was made of the four consecutive state championships he had helped Vianney win.

Among the themes most evident during the assembly was Touzinsky's dedication to and love for his family, which was visible in attention paid to and from his niece. Four-year-old Isabelle Touzinsky at various moments sat on her doting godfather-uncle's lap, held on to his leg and happily clutched his hand.

His parents, Anne and Charles Touzinsky, attended, and one of the speakers was the Olympian's older brother Chip. He described his brother as giving, humble and unassuming.

"He loves coming home when he can, and if you saw him walking down the street, you'd never know he was an Olympian," he said.

Except for that gold medal, of course.

Student after student ran their fingers across Touzinsky's medal, snapped photos of it and congratulated the alumnus for winning it.

"The medal is just unreal," said 5-foot-2 freshman Connor Sparrow, who noted

that 6-foot-6 Touzinsky had to bend down to be in a picture with him.

Said sophomore Tommy Pilla: "It's freakin' sweet. It's cool just to be able to look at it and touch it and say, 'Wow, I touched actual Olympic gold.'"

Touzinsky and his wife, Angel, live in California. They are returning there today and will soon go to Istanbul, Turkey, where he plays professional volleyball.

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