K12 Big Data Team Wins Baltimore Orioles Hackathon

October 18, 2016

Trio Beats Out Teams From Other Top East Coast Organizations by Solving Slugger José Bautista

HERNDON, Va.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Oct. 18, 2016-- The big data team from K12 Inc. solved a problem that most Major League Baseball teams have struggled with for the past seven years – how to get Toronto Blue Jays' slugger José Bautista out.

K12's team – which consisted of senior director of systems and technology Adam Paul, senior director of product management Ben Graff and data scientist Haitao Du – won the 2016 Baseball Analytics Hackathon presented by the Baltimore Orioles and consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton.

K12 is a technology-based education company which utilizes advances in technology to provide children access to high-quality education regardless of their geographic location or socio-economic background. The company offers proprietary curriculum and educational services for students worldwide in kindergarten through 12th grade. K12 delivers its educational content and learning systems to students primarily through virtual public and private academies.

At K12, the big data team focuses on analytics and adaptivity, predicting at-risk students from an engagement and academics perspective and devising differentiated paths for students depending on their proficiency within the curriculum. The team looks for learning patterns and effectiveness of learning solutions to help inform future instruction and curriculum and program development.

"We thought the hackathon would be a great way to see what other folks in the area are capable of and what they do," Paul said. "As a new team, we thought it would be a good bonding experience and would help sharpen our skills and let us know how we were performing against some of the best companies and best universities in the space."

The 21 participating teams were provided with a large data set called PITCHf/x for every pitch that has been thrown in a Major League Baseball game over the last three years. The teams were given an open-ended mission: use the data to solve a problem that is actionable in the game and present it back to the judges in eight hours.

After realizing their original problem was too complex for the time they were given, the K12 team shifted their focus to determining the best sequence of pitches to get a given hitter out. While the trio calculated for every hitter in baseball, their three-minute presentation focused on the Blue Jays' Bautista.

The judging was based on what the teams did with the data and how well they presented the problem and its solution, and the K12 trio won the grand prize – luxury suite tickets to a 2016 Orioles game.

"Essentially what it shows you is the level of competence that we have in this area," said K12's chief technology officer and senior vice president of software product development, Bala Balachander, who oversees the big data team. "We didn't have a big data team three years ago. We knew we had a good team but it is great to get validation from others. Big data analytics is a very strategic area for K12 and I think we are positioned well with this team."

About K12 Inc.

K12 Inc. (NYSE:LRN) is driving innovation and advancing the quality of education by delivering state-of-the-art digital learning platforms and technology to students and school districts across the globe. K12's award-winning curriculum serves over 2,000 schools and school districts and has delivered more than four million courses over the past decade. K12 is a company of educators with the nation's largest network of K-12 online school teachers, providing instruction, academic services and learning solutions to public schools and districts, traditional classrooms, blended school programs and directly to families. The K12 program is offered through K12 partner public schools in approximately two-thirds of the states and the District of Columbia, and through private schools serving students in all 50 states and more than 100 countries. More information can be found at K12.com.

View source version on businesswire.com: http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20161018006730/en/

Source: K12 Inc.

K12 Inc.
Jessica Schuler, 571-405-2211
jschuler@k12.com