

2018 HARVEY RED BLUHM CHAMPION SPIRIT AWARD

**PRESENTED BY KEVIN GUY (BLUHM) ANDERSON
TO**

DAN WARD

UNITED SHORE PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL LEAGUE

It's a great honor to be here at the outset of your Championship weekend to present the 2018 Harvey Red Bluhm Champion Spirit Award to Dan Ward. Harvey Red Bluhm and Dan Ward have much in common. They both started on the sandlots around Cleveland. Both had great natural ability recognized early. Both found in baseball a saving route from tough circumstances and daunting disappointments.

More importantly, both have increasingly achieved as they responded to challenges with bravery and character building, rather than excuses or blame. Each man, at crucial moments put family ahead of self, and even career. Both have gained respect of seasoned veterans of the game as they played fair as well as hard.

Most of you here know Dan, his outstanding record, and his inspiring story. But Harvey Red Bluhm may be a new name for you. I am deeply grateful and honored to be one of Red Bluhm's three grandsons. Red was a standout first basemen who achieved a measure of stardom in New Orleans and served a brief season with the Boston Red Sox, learning from and traveling with such colorful baseball legends as Babe Ruth, Sad Sam Jones, Stuffy McInnis and Bullet Joe Bush.

Forty year veteran player, manager and scout, Bob Gilks, who early on spotted the remarkable talents of young Shoeless Joe Jackson and Dave Bancroft, told the press,

“Without question, Red is the best fielding first baseman I have ever laid eyes on.”

In the Southern League, Red set a record in his day of 41 consecutive games at first base without an error. He was the first player to receive a day in his honor in New Orleans’ century long love affair with baseball.

But what earned the respect of so many fans and sportswriters of his day, and even a leading baseball historian years later, was my grandfather’s champion spirit.

Fans loved that he gave everything he had to every play, in every game, in every League he competed in. He did the same as an Industrial League and Civic Team manager, coach and organizer. His devotion to family and community brought him recognition as a great contributor off the field as well as on it. He really wanted to help those who needed it most.

Lee Allen, widely recognized as baseball’s leading historian of his day including his decade long tenure as Baseball’s Hall of Fame Historian in Cooperstown, is quoted as observing, “I care very little for statistics as such. My concern is the players. Who are these men? What are they? What problems have they faced? Where are they now?”

I firmly feel he would see Dan Ward as one of the types of players that had his greatest respect: someone who sees past setbacks and keeps his consistent discipline to bring great raw ability to fruition and compete with other great talent honorably and enthusiastically. It was Mr. Allen who brought my grandfather’s name back into attention more than 10 years after my grandfather’s passing. He wrote from the perch of his first year publishing a weekly column in the Sporting News:

There once was a player named Bluhm
To pitchers he symbolized doom
Record keepers insist
He belongs on the list
But just where did he play and for whom?

Answers came in from many quarters and they each emphasized my grandfather's tremendous humility during his most successful times and his resilience during times of great challenge. The same praise is much deserved by today's 2018 Champion Spirit Award Winner Dan Ward.

Baseball great Roberto Clemente, who set record after record during his extraordinary Major League career, believed that our service to others, helping those coming up, is what's most important. We honor Dan for what he has already achieved and for the inspiring goals he has shared regarding his hopes to serve someday as Coach and mentor for those who might need some guidance from someone who understands.

Congratulations to Dan and to all the remarkable players of your League, each building your special gifts of strength coordination, speed, and agility to thrill fans of all ages every night at this beautiful Stadium. As someone who has always wished I had talent like yours' and my grandfather's, and who has seen a lot of great athletes in travels I've been blessed to have as a Rhodes Scholar, I see you guys as heroes at a time our nation and world desperately need heroes with real hearts and real missions - to improve, to achieve and to make a real difference. I see USPBL as an exciting place where 'Talent Competes, Baseball Rocks, Teams Unite, & Champions Grow!' What a privilege and pleasure to join you tonight!