

## 2022 West Salem High School Alumni Hall of Fame Inductee - Damian Miller

Damian Miller is a 1987 graduate of West Salem High School. Damian started his athletic career as a varsity letter winner in football, basketball, and baseball at West Salem High School. After graduation, he attended Viterbo University where he played catcher for the V-Hawks, a member of the NAIA. During his junior year he was named the NAIA District 14 Player of the Year and helped lead his team to the NAIA Semifinals.

After his junior year, he was drafted in the 20th round of the Major League Baseball draft by the Minnesota Twins and decided to pursue his dream of playing professional baseball. He worked his way up through the minor leagues, playing in Elizabethton, TN, Kenosha, WI, Fort Myers, FL, Nashville, TN, and finally, Salt Lake City, UT before making his Major League debut with the Minnesota Twins on August 10, 1997. This was the start of an impressive 11 year career in Major League Baseball. In addition to the Twins, he also played for the Arizona Diamondbacks (1998-2002), the Chicago Cubs (2003), the Oakland Athletics (2004), and the Milwaukee Brewers (2005-2007).

During his professional career he accumulated some impressive achievements. He helped to win a World Series title with the Arizona Diamondbacks in 2001 after defeating the New York Yankees. The following season he was selected as the starting National League catcher for the 2002 MLB All-Star Game that was played in Milwaukee. In May 2000, he hit the first walk-off home run in the history of Chase Field and the Diamondbacks against the Los Angeles Dodgers. He hit a second walk-off home run while playing for the Brewers in 2007 against the Houston Astros on "La Crosse Area Day" at Miller Park. At his next game, he continued his impressive performance, recording a franchise tying seven runs batted in, including a grand slam homer and a two run home run. Following the 2007 season, several teams were interested in signing Damian, but he declined, telling them the Brewers were the only team he wanted to play for. His career batting average was .262 and he also ranks eighth all-time among catchers in Major League history with a career fielding percentage of .995.

During his retirement, Damian has assisted the Brewers during spring training camps and also attended baseball fantasy camps. He has coached basketball for ten years and baseball for five years at Coulee Region Christian School in West Salem. He has also spent time assisting with the West Salem High School and American Legion baseball teams. A classmate of Damian's said, "Damian is a modest man of admirable character and he proved that to all of us in West Salem with both his life on and off the field. We were always proud of him." Even though he could have chosen to live anywhere in the country, he and his wife, Jeanne, also a West Salem graduate, always made West Salem their home.

-Written by John Hetland, 1974 West Salem graduate and member of the Alumni Hall of Fame Committee

