

JOHN MILLER, Green Bay WI – Sponsor



Wisconsin loves John Miller. More specifically Wisconsin fastball teams, players and fans really love John Miller. His resources, generosity and passion for the sport have made indelible marks on cheese state teams for close to half a century, including the Denmark Dukes, Denmark Circle Tap, and the myriad of “Bar” teams. His support has also been significant for the Circle Tap tournaments for 20 years. The main diamond at Circle Tap, which hosted the 2019 and 2023 ISC World Tournaments, is named John Miller Field in his honour.

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Bob Welby Memorial Award – Recognition of Service



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John was born in Cleveland WI in 1938 and moved to Maribel WI at age 10 where John was first exposed to fast-pitch softball. Maribel played in the Manitowoc County League and it may as well have been the major leagues as far as John was concerned. While there, John's father passed away suddenly and his mother, he, and four brothers moved to Larrabee WI where he began to play fast-pitch on a youth team. It helped that his brother Jim was a pitcher. At age 14 the family relocated to Green Bay WI where John organized a team, managed it, and secured a sponsor to play in a Minor AA League. The high school years were spent playing ball in various city leagues, both baseball and softball.

After graduation, John joined the Navy, serving aboard the USS Des Moines where he became a radio operator. Once home he continued playing ball, met his wife Clare at the 616 Club (home of many of Green Bay's top softball teams), married and started his family (Mark, Jess, Bill, Lora and Kate). John coached football and basketball at St. Philip's Grade School for many years.

John owned and operated a Rahr's beer distributorship, bought Circle Tap in Denmark in 1967, and constructed a ball diamond where leagues played during the week and tournaments were held on weekends. He continued to play while sponsoring several teams. In 1970, Don Kane and John started and co-chaired a Knights of Columbus Tournament (now known as the famous Boys of Summer Tournament) in Denmark WI and John continues to chair or be involved in this tournament. He bought a bar in Green Bay in 1972 (not coming up with a better name it remains "The Bar" to this day). He and his business partner, John Duckett, sponsored as many as 20 fast-pitch men's and women's teams at various levels each season among sponsoring other sports teams. The Bar team won the Classic League Championship at Kimberly and the right to advance to the World Tournament in Sun City AZ.

In the late 1980s a group of young ball-players from the Denmark WI area needed a sponsor and thus the Denmark Dukes were born. This team was comprised of local ball players, predominantly from the Denmark area, and included John's son Bill. The Dukes won many state tournaments and participated in many World Tournaments. To compete with other successful teams in the State and World Tournaments, the management decided to get pitching help from outside the area. John somewhat defrayed these added expenses by winning blackjack tournaments in Las Vegas. With some coaxing by Darren Derricks and son Mark Miller, the Dukes are once again planning to compete in the Midland World Tournament in 2012.

Staying involved in fast-pitch may have simply been a wise business decision in earlier years, but grew into a gratifying and enjoyable hobby. Along the way many lasting friendships were made.

John's resources, generosity and passion for the small diamond sport have made indelible marks on cheese state teams for close to a half century, including the Denmark Dukes, Denmark Circle Tap, and the myriad of squads in the stable of "Bar" teams. His support has also been significant for the Circle Tap tournaments for twenty years as well as thirty years of community involvement for the Knights of Columbus Denmark tournaments.