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## Wilson keynotes Barrington baseball banquet

By John Leusch

Former Major Leaguer Dan Wilson is coming back home on March 2 to serve as the keynote speaker for the Barrington High School Baseball Booster Club banquet at Concorde Banquets in Kildeer.

You can bet those in attendance will have plenty of memories of the former Barrington High School (Class of 1987) and University of Minnesota baseball standout.

Longtime assistant Barrington softball coach Dennis Sander, whose son Matt was a former standout in the Broncos baseball program, still has many memories watching Wilson carve out his path to the major leagues.

One day Matt, playing shortstop on the Broncos' freshman 'A' team belted a home run that went over the fence and into the adjacent varsity field where Wilson was catching.

"After the game, Stan Wilson (Dan's father) asked me who hit the home run onto our field," Dennis recalled. "I told him my son Matt but I also said he had 2 errors at shortstop. Stan then said, 'Hey there a lot of guys who make errors but a lot don't hit home runs.' "

It turned out Stan's son would end up hitting plenty of home runs on baseball's biggest stage.

Dan Wilson went on to become a Seattle Mariners Hall of Famer, enjoying a 19-year major league career as one of the game's outstanding catchers, including an appearance in the 1996 All-Star Game.

Wilson was 23 years old when he broke into the big leagues on Sept. 7, 1992, with the Cincinnati Reds. He joined the Mariners in 1994 and retired from the Seattle team in 2005.

At Barrington, Wilson was a four-year Barrington varsity player who still holds the school's record for most pitching wins, shutouts and strikeouts.

Wilson played college baseball at Minnesota where he was roommate with former Prospect pitcher Eric Porter. He now helps coach baseball at St. Viator High School, where he is also a substitute teacher.

"He was a really hard worker," said Porter, who pitched in his final high school game against Wilson's Broncos in the 1987 IHSA state tournament. "I always thought he would do big things."

Dennis Sander was always a believer, too.

He remembers watching Wilson's incredible arm when he used to throw the ball to a rectangular target on a brick wall near the gym and wrestling room at Barrington High School.

"Dan would be squatting in the catcher's position and then stand up and release the ball to that target on the wall," said Sander, also the longtime manager for the Barrington American Legion team. "By the time he got to college, his release time to second base was under two seconds."

On March 2, in addition to Wilson's speech, his legendary Barrington High School baseball coach Kirby Smith will receive the inaugural 'Kirby Smith BHS Baseball Award of Excellence' for extraordinary service and commitment to the baseball program.

Smith coached baseball at Barrington for 22 years.

Other honorees receiving Distinguished Service Awards will include former coaches Jim Hawrysko, Ray Piagentini, David Engle, and Jim Larson.

"We are thrilled that Dan Wilson will be returning to BHS to help honor his former head coach Kirby Smith and his pitching coach Dave Engle," said Booster President John Sciacotta. "This should be a memorable evening for all friends and families of the Barrington High School baseball program. Donations and support from the community will help enable us to ensure that Barrington continues to field one of the premier high school programs in the state."

The banquet and silent auction is the major annual fundraiser for the baseball booster group. Proceeds from the event will go toward: upgrades to all fields including fence caps, turf mats, pitching machine; radar gun and baseballs; wind screens for the outfield and to enclose the stadium; refurbishing dugouts; and, renovations to the grandstand.

Banquet trickets are \$35 per person and should be ordered by Feb. 23 for the dinner at 6 p.m. For more information and to order tickets or donate to the silent auction, go to the BHS Baseball Booster Club website at [www.bhsbaseballboosterclub.org](http://www.bhsbaseballboosterclub.org).

### **Sports Notes trivia**

The above-mentioned Dan Wilson is one of three catchers from a Mid-Suburban West school who went on to catch in the major leagues.

Can you name the other two?

Answer at end of column.

### **Men's soccer**

Palatine High School 1978 graduate Craig Long, Tennessee Futbol Club founder and longtime coach and tournament director, has been inducted into the Tennessee Soccer Hall of Fame.

Long has been involved in the game for 22 years with coaching and administration as the sport has taken off in Tennessee. He won three state crowns and was a region finalist with the '88 Franklin Fear/TNFC girls team.

Long was an assistant coach for son Cal Long's state champion Brentwood High girls team last fall.

He was also tournament director for the 2010 Presidents Cup (Division III national tournament) and 2011 Southern Regionals (Division I) in Murfreesboro.

As an administrator, Long changed how the state league and state tournament were run.

Long played varsity basketball, football and track and field at Palatine High School.

He graduated from Western Kentucky University and is presently employed by Rock Tenn Corp. Norcross, Ga., and is a resident of Franklin, Tenn.

### **National Athleadership Grant**

James Pesce (Conant) and Allie Mueller (Hersey) have won a National Athleadership Grant sponsored by NCSA Athletic Recruiting and the NFLPA. Receiving this prestigious award is an honor, one that is only given to a select number of student athletes throughout the country in all sports from football to track.