

# Duane Ward



Duane Ward owns a gleaming pair of World Series rings, but he says he couldn't have won them without first having a golden ambition.

"You've got to have a dream," Ward says, "before you can achieve it."

Having stood atop his profession, Ward remains remarkably unaffected. He lives in the San Juan Basin, not far from the baseball fields in Farmington where he first discovered he could throw harder than almost anyone. He talks about his life as a baseball star – a time that earned him election to the Albuquerque/New Mexico Sports Hall of Fame – with pride but no ego; happiness but no arrogance.

For Ward, baseball didn't end when his pro career with the Toronto Blue Jays concluded. It just kept going.

Ward continues to coach players in the Four Corners area, helping youngsters with a dream try to explore the contours of their talent.

"I feel like if you don't learn something new every day when you go to the park, you're missing out," he says. "That's the way I felt about it: I went with the intent of learning something new. That's what kept me so involved when I was playing."

And Ward could play. Picked out of Farmington High School in the first round of the 1982 amateur draft by the Atlanta Braves, he was considered one of the top natural talents in the early '80s. Ward was athletic enough to lead Farmington High to an undefeated state basketball championship season in the spring of '82, then change uniforms a few days later and throw mid-90 mph BB's at bewildered New Mexico hitters.

Traded to the Blue Jays in 1986, Ward's career flourished in Canada. He helped the Blue Jays to a World Series in 1992 and by '93 was among the top relief pitchers in baseball. He led Toronto to a '93 series title with 45 saves.

Ward's career was cut short by injuries – he's had eight surgeries – but he says he has no regrets.

"I loved the game of baseball," he says. "I try to talk it with kids. I put on baseball clinics in the Four Corners and in Canada. I just want kids to love it as much as I do. I love seeing kids' eyes light up."

It's a phone conversation, so there's no way to prove this, but you can bet Duane Ward's eyes are twinkling as he says this. As long as kids play baseball, his dream is still alive.