

JERRY BROWNE STREET

Honoring a Virgin Islands Baseball Legend

Good Morning to Senator Avery L. Lewis, members of the 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, distinguished guests, family, friends, baseball players, coaches, and the people of the Virgin Islands.

Today, we gather for a very special occasion—to honor a man whose name has become part of the history of baseball in the Virgin Islands: Jerry Browne.

For me, this moment is personal.

The first time I saw Jerry Browne play baseball was right here on St. Croix at D.C. Canegata Ballpark in Christiansted. He was playing for the Reds.

I watched this young man from the Virgin Islands play the game, but at the time, I could never have imagined where baseball would eventually take him.

The next time I saw Jerry Browne play, the setting was completely different.

I saw him in a Texas Rangers ballpark, wearing a Major League Baseball uniform and competing at the highest level of the game.

In the fall of 1988, I had the opportunity to watch Jerry play in an actual Major League game against Seattle.

To this day, that remains one of the highlights of my baseball life.

Think about what that meant for a young person from the Virgin Islands. Someone we had watched play baseball on St. Croix had made it all the way to Major League Baseball.

Jerry Browne showed us that the distance between St. Croix and the Major Leagues could be traveled.

His accomplishments speak for themselves.

During the 1986–87 Puerto Rico winter league season, Jerry had an outstanding rookie campaign, batting .316 for Santurce and earning Rookie of the Year honors.

In 1987, he established himself with the Texas Rangers, winning the regular second-base job and emerging as one of the organization's top rookies.

Then came 1989, one of the greatest seasons of his Major League career.

After joining Cleveland, Jerry demonstrated the combination of speed, defense, versatility, and consistency that made him such a valuable player.

That season, he led Cleveland in several offensive categories, including 598 at-bats, 83 runs scored, and 179 hits. He also recorded 14 stolen bases, a .370 on-base percentage, and six sacrifice bunts.

His performance earned him recognition as Cleveland's Baseball Man of the Year.

But one statistic tells you something very special about Jerry Browne as a baseball player:

He played seven of the nine positions on a baseball field.

That is versatility.

That is athletic ability.

That is understanding the game of baseball.

Over his Major League career, Jerry accumulated 3,190 at-bats, 866 hits, and a .271 lifetime batting average, while recording approximately 1,500 hits during his professional baseball career.

But Jerry Browne's legacy cannot be measured by statistics alone.

His journey in professional baseball stretched across approximately 24 years, including a decade as a Major League player and another decade of coaching.

And after experiencing professional baseball at its highest level, Jerry did something equally important:

He gave back.

He has helped organize baseball camps, leagues, and clinics for young people throughout St. Croix, St. Thomas, the British Virgin Islands, and St. Martin.

That is why the naming of Jerry Browne Street means so much.

A street is more than concrete and asphalt.

A street connects one place to another.

And in many ways, Jerry Browne has spent his life building roads for young people.

He built a road from the ballfields of St. Croix to professional baseball.

He built a road from being a player to becoming a coach and mentor.

And he continues building a road for another generation of young Virgin Islanders who dream of accomplishing something greater than what they can presently see.

Every young baseball player who passes this street should understand what this name represents.

Jerry Browne Street represents possibility.

It tells a young person from St. Croix:

You can come from a small island and accomplish something great.

You can compete with the best.

You can reach the highest level of your profession.

And when you succeed, you can come back and help somebody else make the journey.

Jerry, we honor you not simply because you made it to Major League Baseball.

We honor you because you never forgot where you came from.

Years from now, children who were not even born when Jerry Browne played Major League Baseball will travel down this street. They will see his name and ask:

“Who was Jerry Browne?”

And we will have the privilege of telling them:

He is one of us.

He is a Virgin Islander.

He was a Major League Baseball player.

He is a coach.

He is a mentor.

He served his community.

And he showed generations of young Virgin Islanders that their dreams did not have to be limited by the size of the island they came from.

Congratulations, Jerry Browne.

May this street forever carry your name, and may your life continue to inspire generations of Virgin Islanders to dream, work, achieve—and then reach back and help someone else.

Long live the legacy of Jerry Browne, and God bless the people of the United States Virgin Islands.

Thank you.

Pastor Dexter Skepple