

= Albert Pujols =

José Alberto Pujols Alcántara ( born January 16 , 1980 ) , better known as Albert Pujols ( Spanish pronunciation : [ ʔalʔert puʔxols ] ) , is a Dominican American professional baseball first baseman for the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim of Major League Baseball ( MLB ) . He previously played for the St. Louis Cardinals , where he received three National League ( NL ) MVP awards ( 2005 , 2008 , 2009 ) and was a nine @-@ time MLB All @-@ Star ( 2001 , 2003 , 2004 , 2005 , 2006 , 2007 , 2008 , 2009 , 2010 ) . He was also an All @-@ Star with the Angels in 2015 .

Pujols was born in the Dominican Republic and moved to the United States in 1996 . After one season of college baseball , he was selected by the Cardinals in the 13th round of the 1999 MLB draft . As a rookie for the Cardinals in 2001 , he was unanimously voted the NL Rookie of the Year . Pujols played for the Cardinals for 11 seasons , contributing to two World Series championships in 2006 and 2011 . After the 2011 season , Pujols became a free agent and later signed a 10 @-@ year contract with the Angels .

Pujols is a highly regarded hitter who has shown a " combination of contact hitting ability , patience , and raw power " . He is a six @-@ time Silver Slugger who has twice led the NL in home runs , and he has also led the NL once each in batting average , doubles and RBI . He is significantly above @-@ average in career regular season batting average ( .312 ) , walk rate ( 12 @. @ 1 percent ) , and Isolated Power ( .217 ) . Pujols is considered a strong future candidate for the Hall of Fame .

= = Early life and career = =

Born on January 16 , 1980 , Pujols was raised in Santo Domingo , Dominican Republic , mostly by his grandmother America Pujols and 10 of his uncles and aunts . He was an only child . His father , Bienvenido Pujols , was a softball pitcher , but he was also an alcoholic . Albert often had to take his father home when his father got drunk following the games . Growing up , Pujols practiced baseball using limes for balls and a milk carton for a glove . Pujols , his father , and his grandmother immigrated to New York City in 1996 , where Albert witnessed a shooting at a grocery store . Partly because of the shooting , they moved to Independence , Missouri , two months later to join some relatives .

Pujols played baseball at Fort Osage High School in Independence and was named an All @-@ State athlete twice . As a senior , he was walked 55 times in protest because opposing coaches believed he was older than 18 , but he still hit eight home runs in 33 at bats . One of his home runs travelled 450 feet . After graduating from high school a semester early in December 1998 , he was given a baseball scholarship to Maple Woods Community College . Pujols hit a grand slam and turned an unassisted triple play in the first game of his only college season . Playing shortstop , he batted .461 with 22 home runs as a freshman before deciding to enter the Major League Baseball ( MLB ) draft .

= = Professional baseball career = =

= = = Minor league career = = =

Few teams were interested in Pujols because of uncertainty about his age , which position he would play , and his build . Tampa Bay Rays scout Fernando Arango recommended that his team sign Pujols , and quit his job when Tampa Bay failed to do so . Pujols was not drafted until the 13th round of the 1999 Major League Baseball ( MLB ) Draft , when the St. Louis Cardinals selected him with the 402nd overall pick . Pujols initially turned down a \$ 10 @, @ 000 bonus and spent the summer playing for the Hays Larks of the Jayhawk Collegiate League ( a summer league in the National Baseball Congress ) ; his total of 48 runs batted in ( RBIs ) with the team was tied for ninth with Tyler Wasserman in Larks ' history . When the Cardinals increased their bonus offer to \$ 60 @, @ 000 , he signed .

Pujols began his minor league career in 2000 playing third base with the Peoria Chiefs of the single @-@ A Midwest League . He batted .324 with 128 hits , 32 doubles , six triples , 17 home runs , and 84 RBIs in 109 games . He finished second in the league in batting ( behind Ryan Gripp ) , tied for ninth in doubles ( with Andrew Beattie and Justin Leone ) , tied for fourth in triples ( with six other players ) , tied for sixth in home runs ( with Shawn McCorkle and Lance Burkhart ) , and sixth in RBIs . He was voted the league 's Most Valuable Player and named to the All @-@ Star team . Pujols also played 21 games with the Potomac Cannons in the high @-@ A Carolina League that year , batting .284 with 23 hits , eight doubles , one triple , two home runs , and 10 RBIs . He finished the season with the Memphis Redbirds in the AAA Pacific Coast League ( PCL ) , and after appearing in three regular season games with them , he batted .367 in the playoffs and was named the postseason Most Valuable Player ( MVP ) as the Redbirds won their first PCL title .

= = = St. Louis Cardinals ( 2001 ? 2011 ) = = =

= = = Early career ( 2001 ? 2003 ) = = =

During spring training in 2001 , Mark McGwire told Cardinals manager Tony La Russa that if he did not put Pujols on the roster , " it might be one of the worst moves you make in your career . " La Russa later recounted the " myth " that Pujols only made the Opening Day roster in 2001 because Bobby Bonilla was injured . According to La Russa , he and the rest of Cardinals management were impressed enough by Pujols that they decided to promote him to the big league club even before Bonilla 's injury . Although the team did not need Pujols to fill any particular position , the Cardinals put him on their Opening Day roster , and he started all season at either third base , right field , left field , or first base . On Opening Day against the Colorado Rockies on April 2 , he got his first career hit , a single against pitcher Mike Hampton in an 8 ? 0 loss . Four days later , he had three hits and three RBIs ? including his first home run ? against the Arizona Diamondbacks ' Armando Reynoso in a 12 ? 9 win . Through 2015 , he was one of three players to hit 20 or more home runs in their rookie year before July , along with Wally Berger ( 1930 ) and Joc Pederson .

At midseason , Pujols became the first Cardinals ' rookie since Luis Arroyo in 1955 to make the All @-@ Star Game . He finished the season batting .329 ( sixth in the league ) with 194 hits ( fifth in the league ) , 47 doubles ( fifth in the league ) , 37 home runs , and 112 runs . His 37 home runs led the Cardinals , topping Jim Edmonds 's 30 and McGwire 's 29 . He was named the National League ( NL ) Silver Slugger Award winner for the third base position , and he finished fourth in NL Most Valuable Player ( MVP ) voting , behind Barry Bonds , Sammy Sosa , and Luis Gonzalez . He was unanimously named the NL Rookie of the Year after setting an NL rookie record with 130 RBIs ( fifth in the league ) and becoming the fourth MLB rookie to hit .300 with 30 home runs , 100 runs , and 100 RBIs .

The Cardinals finished the 2001 season with a 93 ? 61 record and advanced to the playoffs as a wild card team . The team won the NL wild card round and advanced to the NL Division Series ( NLDS ) . In Game 2 on October 10 , Pujols hit a game @-@ winning two @-@ run home run against Diamondbacks pitcher Randy Johnson in a 4 ? 1 victory . The Cardinals , however , were eliminated in five games , and Pujols had just two hits in 18 at @-@ bats .

After playing several positions in 2001 , Pujols spent most of 2002 in left field . He began the season batting cleanup but was moved in May to the third spot in the lineup , where he remained for the rest of his Cardinals career . Pujols hit his 30th home run and got his 100th RBI of the season in a 5 ? 4 loss to the Cincinnati Reds in August , making him the sixth Cardinal to have back @-@ to @-@ back 30 @-@ home @-@ run seasons and the second Cardinal ( the other was Ray Jablonski ) to start his career with back @-@ to @-@ back 100 @-@ RBI seasons . The following month , Pujols hit a game @-@ winning two @-@ run single against Pete Munro in a 9 ? 3 victory over the Houston Astros that gave the Cardinals the NL Central title . Pujols finished the year batting .314 ( seventh in the NL ) with 185 hits ( tied for fourth in the NL ) , 40 doubles ( eighth in the NL ) , 34 home runs ( 10th in the NL ) , 118 runs scored ( second in the NL to Sosa 's 122 ) , and 127 RBIs

( second in the NL ) . He became the first player in major league history to hit over .300 with at least 30 home runs , 100 runs scored , and 100 RBIs in his first two seasons . Pujols finished second in MVP voting to Bonds , becoming the first Cardinal since Stan Musial to finish in the top four in MVP voting for consecutive seasons . At the end of the 2002 season , Chris Haft of MLB.com called him " an outstanding hitter . "

Pujols 's contributions helped the Cardinals finish third in home runs and second in batting average and RBI ; the Cardinals ' pitching staff also finished fourth in ERA . The Cardinals again reached the playoffs , and Pujols had three hits and three RBIs in a three @-@ game sweep of the Diamondbacks in the 2002 NLDS . The team advanced to the 2002 NL Championship Series ( NLCS ) , but lost in five games to the San Francisco Giants . Pujols had five hits , one home run , and two RBIs in the series .

Five Cardinals were named to the All @-@ Star Game in 2003 , but Pujols led the NL in votes . It was the first of eight straight seasons that Pujols would reach the All @-@ Star Game . From July 12 to August 16 , Pujols had a 30 @-@ game hitting streak , tied for the second @-@ longest in Cardinals ' history with Musial and behind only Rogers Hornsby 's 33 @-@ game streak . On July 20 , Pujols hit his 100th career home run , a game @-@ winner in a 10 ? 7 victory over the Dodgers . He became the fourth major leaguer to hit his 100th home run in his third season ( along with Ralph Kiner , Eddie Mathews , and Joe DiMaggio ) . Pujols hit his 114th home run on September 20 in a game against the Astros , which tied him with Kiner for most home runs by a player in his first three seasons . In 157 games , Pujols hit 43 home runs ( fourth in the league , behind Jim Thome , Richie Sexson , and Bonds ) and had 124 RBIs ( tied with Sexson for fourth and behind Preston Wilson , Gary Sheffield , and Thome ) . He became the youngest player since Tommy Davis in 1962 to win the NL batting title after batting .359 , and he led the league in runs ( 137 ) , hits ( 212 ) , and doubles ( 51 ) . Pujols joined Rogers Hornsby as the only players in Cardinals ' history to record more than 40 homers and 200 hits in the same season . Though his stellar play had Cardinals ' fans chanting " M @-@ V @-@ P ! " during home games as early as June , Pujols again finished second to Bonds in MVP voting . He won his second Silver Slugger Award in 2003 . He also won the Sporting News Player of the Year Award . Pujols 's contributions helped the Cardinals rank second in batting average and third in home runs in the NL ; however , the pitching staff posted a 4 @. @ 60 ERA , which was below the league average , and the Cardinals missed the playoffs .

= = = = New contract ( 2004 ? 2005 ) = = = =

After receiving many awards in his first three seasons , Pujols was rewarded monetarily for his accomplishments on February 20 , 2004 , when he signed a seven @-@ year , \$ 100 million contract extension with a \$ 16 million club option for 2011 with no @-@ trade provisions . He was moved to first base in 2004 after the Cardinals traded Tino Martinez in the offseason . On June 16 , he hit a walk @-@ off home run against Reds pitcher Mike Matthews in the 10th inning of a 4 ? 3 victory .

Pujols 's highlights later in the season included a July game in which he hit five RBIs and three home runs and another in which he broke up a no @-@ hitter by Giants pitcher Dustin Hermanson . During a September game against the Rockies , he earned his 500th RBI , joining DiMaggio and Ted Williams as the only players to have 500 RBIs in their first four seasons . He said he was confident there was going to be " a lot more " . Although Pujols was diagnosed with plantar fasciitis during the second half of the season , he finished the season with a .331 average ( fifth in the league ) , 196 hits ( fifth ) , 51 doubles ( second to Lyle Overbay 's 53 ) , 46 home runs ( tied with Adam Dunn for second behind Adrián Beltré 's 48 ) and 123 RBIs ( third , behind Vinny Castilla 's 131 and Scott Rolen 's 124 ) in 154 games . He also led the league in runs scored , with 133 . He finished third in MVP voting ( behind Bonds and Beltré ) , joining Musial as the only Cardinals to finish in the top five in voting for at least four years in a row . He won the Silver Slugger Award at first base , the third position he won the award at . Pujols , along with teammates Edmonds and Rolen , earned the nickname " MV3 " for their phenomenal seasons ; Pujols led the three in home runs and batting average .

The Cardinals won the NL Central , aided by the MV3 and pitcher Chris Carpenter , who won 15 games and had a 3 @.@ 46 ERA his first season with the team . In Game 4 of the NLDS against the Dodgers , Pujols hit a three @-@ run home run against Wilson Álvarez and had four RBIs as the Cardinals won 6 ? 2 and took the series three games to one . In Game 6 of the NLCS , Pujols had three hits , scored three runs ( including the winning run ) , and hit a two @-@ run home run off Munro in a 12 @-@ inning , 6 ? 4 victory . The Cardinals won the series in seven games , advancing to the World Series for the first time since 1987 . Pujols was named the NLCS MVP after batting .500 with four home runs and nine RBIs . He was one of three Cardinals to bat over .250 in the series against the Boston Red Sox ( after batting .333 ) as the Cardinals were swept by Boston in four games .

By 2005 , many baseball fans thought that Pujols was the best Cardinal since Musial . Pujols picked up his 100th RBI of the season on August 31 , joining Williams , DiMaggio , and Al Simmons as the only players with 100 RBIs in their first five seasons . Pujols hit his 200th career home run in a game against the Reds on September 30 , making him the third @-@ youngest major league player to reach that milestone ( behind Mel Ott and Eddie Mathews ) and the second @-@ fastest to reach it ( behind Kiner ) . In 161 games , Pujols batted .330 ( second to Derrek Lee 's .335 average ) with 195 hits ( fourth behind Lee , Miguel Cabrera , and Jimmy Rollins ) , 38 doubles , 41 home runs ( third , behind Andruw Jones 's 51 and Lee 's 46 ) , 117 RBIs ( tied with Burrell for second behind Jones 's 128 ) , and 129 runs scored ( first in the league ) . For the first time in his career , he won the NL MVP award as Bonds was limited to 14 games due to an injury .

Pujols returned to the playoffs as the Cardinals won the NL Central for the second year in a row . He had five hits in nine at @-@ bats with four runs scored and two RBIs in the NLDS as the Cardinals swept the Padres . In Game 5 of the NLCS against the Astros , with the Cardinals trailing by two runs and only one out from elimination in the ninth inning , Pujols hit a game @-@ winning three @-@ run home run against Brad Lidge that landed on the train tracks in the back of Minute Maid Park . The Cardinals won 5 ? 4 . MLB.com writer Matthew Leach later called it " one of the most famous playoff home runs in recent years . " Nevertheless , the Cardinals were eliminated in Game 6 by the Astros . Pujols batted .304 with two home runs and six RBIs in the series .

= = = Continued success and first World Series ( 2006 ? 2008 ) = = =

Over two games in April 2006 , Pujols hit home runs in four consecutive plate appearances , making him the 20th player to accomplish the feat . Pujols maintained after the game that he was more concerned with winning than the numbers : " I don 't look at numbers " , he said . " I don 't know . I didn 't know anything about [ the record ] until you guys brought it up . Because that 's not me . I don 't get locked in on numbers . I don 't get locked in on anything like that . I get locked in on seeing the ball and helping my team out to win and hopefully doing some damage out there . "

Pujols had three hits and four RBIs , including his 1,000th career hit ( a home run against Jerome Williams ) , as the Cardinals beat the Cubs 9 ? 3 on April 21 , 2006 . On June 4 , he was placed on the disabled list ( DL ) for the first time in his career with a strained right oblique that kept him out for three weeks .

On August 22 , Pujols hit a three @-@ run home run and a grand slam against John Maine in an 8 ? 7 loss to the Mets . On September 28 , with the Cardinals trailing 2 ? 1 to the Padres in the eighth inning , he hit a game @-@ winning three @-@ run home run against Cla Meredith , helping the Cardinals win 4 ? 2 and end a seven @-@ game losing streak . The win preserved the Cardinals ' 1 @.@ 5 game division lead ; La Russa said afterward that it was " the most huge of the huge ones he 's hit . "

Pujols finished the season with a .331 average ( third to Freddy Sanchez 's .344 and Cabrera 's .339 ) , 177 hits , 33 doubles , 49 home runs ( second to Ryan Howard 's 58 ) , 137 RBIs ( second to Howard 's 149 ) , and 119 runs scored ( tied with Matt Holliday , Hanley Ramírez , and Alfonso Soriano for fifth ) . Of his 49 home runs , 20 accounted for a game @-@ winning RBI , breaking Willie Mays ' single @-@ season record set in 1962 . He finished second to Howard in MVP voting and won the NL Gold Glove Award for first base . He won his first of four consecutive Fielding Bible

Awards for the first base position .

Led by Pujols and Carpenter , the Cardinals won the NL Central and reached the playoffs for the third year in a row . In Game 1 of the NLDS against the Padres , he hit a game @-@ winning two @-@ run home run against Jake Peavy as the Cardinals won 5 ? 1 . He had a game @-@ winning RBI against David Wells and had three hits in Game 2 as the Cardinals won 2 ? 0 . He batted .333 with a home run and an RBI in the series as the Cardinals defeated the Padres in four games . In Game 2 of the NLCS against the Mets , Pujols scored three runs as the Cardinals won 9 ? 6 . He batted .318 with one home run and one RBI in the series as the Cardinals defeated the Mets in seven games .

In Game 1 of the World Series against the Detroit Tigers , he hit a game @-@ winning two @-@ run home run against Justin Verlander as the Cardinals won 4 ? 2 . In Game 5 , he made a sprawling , flip @-@ from @-@ his @-@ back play to rob Plácido Polanco of a hit as the Cardinals clinched the series giving Pujols his first career World Series ring .

Near the beginning of the 2007 season in an April 22 game against the Cubs , Pujols hit a game @-@ winning three @-@ run home run against Ryan Dempster in the 10th inning of a 12 ? 9 victory , tying Ken Boyer for second all @-@ time on the Cardinals ' home run list with his 255th . Pujols finished the season with 185 hits , 38 doubles and 103 RBIs ( a career @-@ low ) . He was among the league leaders in batting average ( .327 , sixth ) and home runs ( 32 , tied with Carlos Lee and Chris Young ) for tenth . He scored 99 runs , ending his streak of seasons with at least 30 home runs , a .300 average , 100 runs scored , and 100 RBIs at six . He finished ninth in MVP voting , the first year he had finished outside the top five in his career .

Pujols began 2008 by reaching base in 42 straight games , the longest streak to open a season since Derek Jeter reached base in the first 53 games of 1999 . On June 11 , he was placed on the DL with a strained left calf muscle . Although he was expected to miss three weeks , he was activated from the DL on June 26 . Pujols hit his 300th home run against Bob Howry on July 4 in a 2 ? 1 loss to the Cubs . He said after the game that to him it was " just another homer that goes out of the park . I 'm happy to do it in front of our fans ? they were waiting for it . "

On September 11 , in a 3 ? 2 loss to the Cubs , Pujols hit his 100th RBI of the season against Rich Harden , making him the third player in major league history to start his career with eight seasons of at least 100 RBIs ( along with Simmons and Williams ) . He regretted that the milestone came in a loss , saying , " I wish it would have come with a great win . It would have been more special . " In 148 games in 2008 , Pujols batted .357 ( second to Chipper Jones 's .364 average ) with 187 hits ( third , behind Reyes 's 204 and David Wright 's 189 ) , 44 doubles ( tied with Stephen Drew and Aramis Ramírez for fourth in the league behind Berkman and Nate McLouth 's 46 and Corey Hart 's 45 ) , 37 home runs ( tied with Ryan Braun and Ryan Ludwick for fourth in the league behind Howard 's 48 , Dunn 's 40 , and Delgado 's 38 ) , 116 RBIs ( fourth , behind Howard 's 146 , Wrights 124 , and Adrian Gonzalez 's 119 ) , and 100 runs scored . Pujols won his second NL MVP Award , and he won the Silver Slugger Award for the fourth time in his career . He was named The Sporting News Player of the Year for the second time in his career . For his work off the field , he was named the 2008 winner of the Roberto Clemente Award . He considered having Tommy John surgery after the season but underwent nerve transposition surgery on his right elbow instead to ease discomfort .

= = = = Later career and second World Series ( 2009 ? 2011 ) = = = =

On April 25 , 2009 , Pujols picked up his 1,000th career RBI with a 441 @-@ foot grand slam against David Patton in an 8 ? 2 victory over the Cubs . " I hit that ball as good as I can hit a ball " , he said after the game . On July 3 , he hit his 10th career grand slam against Weathers in a 7 ? 4 victory over the Reds , breaking Musial 's record for most grand slams by a Cardinal . The grand slam was also his 350th career home run , making him the third @-@ fastest player to reach 350 home runs ( behind Alex Rodriguez and Ken Griffey , Jr . ) . He received the highest number of votes in NL history for the All @-@ Star Game that year .

Pujols had four hits , three runs scored , and five RBIs on August 4 , including a grand slam against

Sean Green which tied the NL record for most grand slams in a season ( five ) , in a 10 @-@ inning , 12 ? 7 victory over the Mets . In 160 games , Pujols batted .327 ( third , behind Ramírez 's .342 and Pablo Sandoval 's .330 ) with 186 hits ( sixth ) , 45 doubles ( second to Miguel Tejada 's 46 ) , 47 home runs ( first ) , 135 RBIs ( third behind Fielder and Howard 's 141 ) , and 124 runs scored ( first ) . He was unanimously named the NL MVP for the third time , tying Musial as the Cardinals ' leader in that category . For the fifth time in his career , he won the Silver Slugger Award . He won the Sporting News MLB Player of the Year award for the second consecutive year , joining Williams and Joe Morgan as the only players to win it in back @-@ to @-@ back years . For the fourth year in a row , he won the Fielding Bible Award for first base .

Aided by the midseason acquisition of Matt Holliday ( who replaced Ryan Ludwick as the cleanup hitter ) and the emergence of Adam Wainwright ( who led the NL in wins ) , the Cardinals returned to the playoffs after a two @-@ year hiatus . In the NLDS against the Dodgers , Pujols batted .300 with one RBI as the Cardinals were swept in three games . Following the postseason , Pujols had surgery to remove five bone spurs from his right elbow . The Cardinals called the surgery a " success " , and Dr. James Andrews decided that Pujols did not need Tommy John surgery at that time .

On June 29 , 2010 , in an 8 ? 0 victory over the Diamondbacks , Pujols had five RBIs and hit two home runs against Dontrelle Willis for his 37th career multihomer game , which tied Musial 's franchise record for multihomer games . " It 's pretty special " , he said of tying Musial . " I 'm blessed to have the opportunity to be compared sometimes with him . "

On August 26 , he hit his 400th career home run against Jordan Zimmermann in a 13 @-@ inning , 11 ? 10 loss to the Nationals . He became the third @-@ youngest player to reach the milestone ( behind Griffey , Jr. and Rodriguez ) , and he became the fourth @-@ quickest player by at bats to reach the milestone ( behind McGwire , Babe Ruth , Harmon Killebrew , and Thome ) . On September 11 , in a 12 @-@ inning 6 ? 3 loss to Atlanta , Pujols had three RBIs and reached 100 RBIs for the 10th consecutive year with a two @-@ run double against Tommy Hanson . Only Simmons has a longer streak of 100 RBI seasons at the beginning of a career , with 11 . Pujols joined Jimmie Foxx , Lou Gehrig , and Rodriguez in having 10 consecutive seasons of 100 or more RBIs at any time in their career . Foxx and Rodriguez are the only two players besides Pujols to have 10 consecutive years of 30 home runs and 100 RBIs . The next day , in a 7 ? 3 victory over the Braves , he passed Musial to be the all @-@ time Cardinals ' leader in multi @-@ home run games when he hit two home runs against Tim Hudson for the 38th time in a game .

In 159 games , Pujols batted .312 ( sixth ) with 183 hits ( fifth ) and 39 doubles ( tied for eighth with Marlon Byrd ) ; he led the league in runs scored ( 115 ) , home runs ( 42 ) , and RBIs ( 118 ) . He won his second Gold Glove Award for first base , and he won the NL First Base Silver Slugger Award for the sixth time . He finished second in the NL MVP voting to Joey Votto , who said he was " shocked " that Pujols only got one first @-@ place vote .

Pujols and the Cardinals set a deadline for the start of 2011 spring training for contract extension negotiations but failed to agree on an extension . After Pujols struggled in his first 30 games of the season ( batting .231 ) , he batted .316 with 30 home runs in his final 117 games . Against the Cubs , he hit consecutive extra @-@ inning walk @-@ off home runs on June 4 and 5 for the first time since Albert Belle in 1995 . Carpenter noted after the game that Pujols 's slump earlier in the year was over : " He continues to do great things , there 's no doubt about it " , he said . " The things that he 's done the last few days have been just like the old Albert . "

On June 19 against the Royals , Wilson Betemit collided with Pujols , causing a small fracture in Pujols ' left wrist which kept Pujols inactive until July 5 . On July 30 , in a 9 ? 2 victory over the Cubs , he got his 2,000th career hit against Carlos Mármol . He became the fifth Cardinal to reach 2 @,@ 000 hits and 12th quickest major leaguer by games to get to the milestone . In the Cardinals ' final game of the season , against the Astros on September 28 , he had the game @-@ winning RBI against Brett Myers in the 8 ? 0 victory , helping the Cardinals overcome a 10 @.@ 5 game deficit to Atlanta to win the Wild Card . Pujols finished the season with 173 hits ( tied for ninth with Aramis Ramírez ) , 29 doubles ( a career @-@ low ) , and 105 runs scored ( tied for third with Justin Upton behind Ryan Braun 's 109 and Matt Kemp 's 115 ) . He saw his streak of seasons batting at least

.300 with 30 home runs and 100 RBIs snapped when he hit 37 home runs ( third , behind Fielder 's 38 and Kemp 's 39 ) but batted .299 with 99 RBIs ( seventh ) ; however , only three other players in the major leagues matched him in those categories ( José Bautista , Fielder , and Kemp ) , causing Tyler Kepner of The New York Times to write , " Even when Pujols struggles , he excels . " He was fifth in MVP voting .

In Game 2 of the NLDS against the Phillies on October 2 , Pujols had a game @-@ winning RBI single against Cliff Lee in the 5 ? 4 victory . He batted .350 with one RBI in the series as the Cardinals defeated the Phillies in 5 games . In Game 2 of the NLCS against the Brewers , he had four hits , three runs scored , one home run , and five RBIs in a 12 ? 3 victory . He batted .478 with two home runs and nine RBIs in the series as the Cardinals defeated the Brewers in six games .

On October 22 , in Game 3 of the World Series , Pujols became the first player to get at least four hits , two home runs , and five RBIs in a World Series game in a 16 ? 7 victory over the Rangers . Pujols had five hits , three home runs , four runs scored , and six RBIs in the game . He joined Babe Ruth and Reggie Jackson as the only players in baseball history to hit three home runs in a World Series game ( Pablo Sandoval would also accomplish the feat the following year ) , became the first player in series history to have hits in four consecutive innings , and tied records for most hits and most RBIs in a World Series game . He had one hit and no RBIs the other six games of the series but became a World Series champion for the second time as the Cardinals defeated the Rangers in seven games . After the season , he became a free agent for the first time in his career .

= = = Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim ( 2012 ? present ) = = =

= = = = Contract signing = = = =

Three teams were reported to be interested in Pujols during the offseason : the Cardinals , the Miami Marlins , and the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim . The Cardinals offered Pujols a 10 @-@ year , \$ 210 million deal ( with \$ 30 million deferred ) , but Pujols rejected it . His wife explained on a radio talk show that they were " insulted " and " confused " that the Cardinals had initially offered Pujols a five @-@ year deal . The Marlins reportedly offered Pujols a 10 @-@ year contract too , but on December 8 he signed a 10 @-@ year deal with the Angels worth around \$ 254 million . The contract offered by the Marlins was reportedly around the value as that offered by the Angels . However , the Marlins ( who have a history of fire sales ) refused to include a no trade clause in the contract .

= = = = 2012 season = = = =

Pujols did not perform very well to begin the 2012 season , batting .217 with no home runs and four RBIs in the month of April . Soon after the Angels called up top prospect Mike Trout and fired hitting coach Mickey Hatcher , Pujols 's numbers began to rise , as he batted .323 with 13 home runs from May 15 through the All @-@ Star Break . On July 31 , he hit two home runs against Derek Holland in a 6 ? 2 victory over the Rangers . After the game , Holland observed that Pujols had ended his early @-@ season struggles : " He 's definitely turned it around , no doubt about it " , he said . " He is what he is . He had a slow start , but he 's picked it up . He 's a great hitter . He and Trout are doing a great job picking [ the Angels ] up . " On August 14 , Pujols had four RBI , including a game @-@ winning three @-@ run home run against Ubaldo Jiménez in a 9 ? 6 victory over the Cleveland Indians . In 153 games , Pujols batted .285 with 173 hits , 50 doubles ( second to Alex Gordon 's 51 ) , 30 home runs , 105 RBI ( 7th in AL ) , and 85 runs scored .

= = = = 2013 season = = = =

On August 18 , 2013 , Pujols was ruled out for the remainder of the 2013 season after suffering a knee injury . Pujols had by far the worst season of his career in 2013 , failing to play at least 100

games for the first time in his career . Pujols also posted career worsts in hits , runs scored , doubles , home runs , RBI , walks , batting average , on base percentage , slugging percentage , and OPS . Overall in 99 games , Pujols batted .258 with 101 hits , 19 doubles , 17 home runs , 64 RBI , and 49 runs scored .

In August 2013 , former Cardinals player Jack Clark accused Pujols of using performance @-@ enhancing drugs on his radio show on WGNU in St. Louis . Clark served as the Cardinals ' hitting coach during the early part of Pujols ' tenure in St. Louis . On the morning of August 9 , Pujols issued a statement adamantly denying that he had ever taken PEDs . He denounced Clark 's allegations as " irresponsible and reckless " and threatened to sue Clark and WGNU over the allegations . Partly due to legal threats from Pujols , InsideSTL Enterprises , which owns WGNU 's weekday airtime under a time brokerage agreement , cut ties with Clark . On October 4 , 2013 , Pujols filed a defamation lawsuit against Clark . In response on October 14 , Clark challenged Pujols to both take polygraph tests to resolve who is telling the truth . However , on February 10 , 2014 , Clark apologized and retracted his accusations against Pujols , saying he had " no knowledge whatsoever " that Pujols ever used PEDs . " During a heated discussion on air , I misspoke " , Clark said . In return , Pujols dropped the suit .

= = = = 2014 season = = = =

On April 22 , 2014 , Pujols hit his 499th and 500th home run of his career off of Taylor Jordan in a game versus the Washington Nationals at Nationals Park . Pujols became the 26th player ever to reach the 500 home run mark , as well as the third youngest to reach it . He also became the first player to hit career home runs 499 and 500 in the same game . Nationals Park is the same ballpark where he hit his 400th career home run in the 2010 season . Participating in the longest game of the year in MLB , and the longest in the history of Angel Stadium , Pujols ended a 19 @-@ inning , 6 : 31 contest against the Red Sox with a solo home run for a 5 ? 4 final score . It was also his first walk @-@ off home run as an Angel and first since June 2011 . On September 6 , 2014 against the Minnesota Twins , Pujols collected his 2,500th career hit , a two @-@ run go @-@ ahead double off of Jared Burton in the 9th inning . He also passed the 1 @,@ 500 run mark in the same game . In the process , he became the fifth player in major league history with 2 @,@ 500 hits and 500 home runs while maintaining a .310 lifetime batting average ( the others are Babe Ruth , Jimmie Foxx , Ted Williams and Manny Ramirez ) . Pujols leads all active players in doubles , with 561 .

After the season , Pujols traveled to Japan to join a team of MLB All @-@ Stars playing against All @-@ Stars of Nippon Professional Baseball in the 2014 Major League Baseball Japan All @-@ Star Series .

= = = = 2015 season = = = =

Before the 2015 season , Pujols was enjoying his first offseason in which he was not injured or recovering from injury while with the Angels . However , his offensive production was slow through the first month of the season . By the end of April , Pujols was batting .208 with 3 homers and nine RBIs in 86 plate appearances . While it was suggested that this was because of older age , or his recent poor health while with the Angels , it seemed to be simply due to bad luck . By May 2015 , Pujols offensive production had started to come around . Between May 28 , 2015 and June 22 , 2015 , Pujols batted .356 with 15 homers , 30 RBI 's and posted a 1 @.@ 326 OPS . At this time , Pujols was leading the American League in home runs with 23 , and was on pace to hit more than 50 . On July 6 , it was announced that Pujols was selected to the 2015 All Star Game , as a reserve for the American League , but due to an injury just days back with Tigers slugger Miguel Cabrera , he would instead start at first base . It was his 10th selection to the midsummer classic , and first as a member of the Angels .

On September 22 , 2015 , Pujols hit his 556th career home run to pass Ramirez for sole possession of 14th place on the all @-@ time career home run leaderboard . On October 4 , 2015 , in the last game of the season , Pujols hit his 40th home run of the season , the seventh time he hit 40 home



runs in a season throughout his career . This was the most times any active MLB player had reached the mark in as many times , only trailing Alex Rodriguez , who has done it eight times .

== 2016 season ==

On April 25 , 2016 , Pujols hit his 564th career home run , passing Reggie Jackson for 13th on the all time list . On April 30 , Pujols became the 85th player to make 10 000 career plate appearances . On May 2 , Pujols became the 20th player all time to amass 5 000 career total bases . On May 27 , Pujols hit his 570th career home run , passing Rafael Palmeiro for 12th on the all time list . On June 25 , Pujols hit his 574th career home run , passing Harmon Killebrew for 11th all time .

== Playing style ==

Pujols 's swing has been praised for its consistency . " It 's the same swing every time " , former teammate Lance Berkman once said . " He has the ability to repeat his swing over and over and over , which leads to him being very consistent " , Cardinals ' video coordinator Chad Blair said . Sports Illustrated writer Daniel G. Habib described the swing as " quick " and " quiet . " Pujols uses a 32 5 ounce bat against right handed pitchers , but he uses a 33 ounce bat against left handers to avoid trying to pull the ball when he swings . Defensively , Pujols has won two Gold Glove Awards since moving to first base in 2004 . He has credited his hitting ability partly to guessing what pitchers will do :

== Personal life ==

Pujols married his wife , Deidre , on January 1 , 2000 . They have five children : Isabella ( Deidre 's daughter from a previous relationship ) , Albert , Jr . , Sophia , Ezra , and Esther Grace . During the offseason , they live in St. Louis . Albert and his wife are supporters of people with Down syndrome , a condition Isabella was born with . In 2007 , Pujols became a U.S. citizen , scoring a perfect 100 on his citizenship test .

Pujols is close friends with third baseman Plácido Polanco , a former teammate with the Cardinals . Polanco has called Pujols his " closest friend in baseball " , and Pujols is the godfather to Polanco 's son , Ishmael . Pujols is also friends with Robinson Canó , who selected Mark Trumbo for the 2012 Home Run Derby after Pujols asked him to .

In 2009 , Pujols donated money to the Mike Coolbaugh Memorial Tournament , allowing the event to occur after a sponsor backed out . On August 28 , 2010 , Pujols and La Russa attended Glenn Beck 's Restoring Honor rally in Washington , D.C. , after being assured by Beck that the rally was not political . During the rally , Pujols was presented with a medal for his off the field efforts .

== Business ventures ==

In 2006 , Pujols and the Hanon family opened Pujols 5 Westport Grill , a restaurant located in Westport Plaza of Maryland Heights , Missouri . A 10 foot , 1 100 lb. statue of Pujols was dedicated on November 2 , 2011 , outside the restaurant . An anonymous donor commissioned sculptor Harry Weber to create the statue , which belongs to the Pujols Family Foundation . After Pujols signed with the Angels , the restaurant was renamed the St. Louis Sports Hall of Fame Grill .

In 2008 , Pujols teamed up with St. Louis Soccer United , a group looking to bring a Major League Soccer ( MLS ) franchise to the St. Louis area . However , the group 's bid for a franchise was unsuccessful , and a minor league soccer team was created instead .

== Christianity ==

Pujols and his wife are Christians . He became a Christian on November 13 , 1998 , influenced in part by Deidre and his grandmother . One of his writings on his family 's foundation 's website states , " In the Pujols family , God is first . Everything else is a distant second . " He writes , " My life 's goal is to bring glory to Jesus . My life is not mostly dedicated to the Lord , it is 100 % committed to Jesus Christ and His will . God has given me the ability to succeed in the game of baseball . But baseball is not the end ; baseball is the means by which my wife , Dee Dee , and I glorify God . Baseball is simply my platform to elevate Jesus Christ , my Lord and Savior . "

During his tenure with the Cardinals , Pujols and his family attended West County Community Church , a Southern Baptist church in Wildwood , Missouri .

= = = Pujols Family Foundation = = =

In 2005 , Albert and Deidre Pujols launched the Pujols Family Foundation , a 501 ( c ) ( 3 ) non @-@ profit dedicated to their " commitment to faith , family and others . " The organization promotes awareness of Down syndrome and works to support those who have it and their families , aids the poor in the Dominican Republic , and supports people with disabilities and / or life @-@ threatening illnesses . Among other activities , the foundation hosts events for people with Down syndrome . The foundation gave the Down Syndrome Association of Greater St. Louis the resources to open an office and hire staff . In 2009 , the Albert Pujols Wellness Center for Adults with Down Syndrome opened in Chesterfield , Missouri ; Pujols was present at the opening on November 18 .

Pujols has taken several trips to the Dominican Republic , by taking supplies as well as a team of doctors and dentists to the poor who need medical care . The Pujols Family Foundation also holds an annual golf tournament to raise money to send dentists to the Dominican Republic .

= = Accomplishments = =

Through 2012 , Pujols ranked in the top 10 players in major league history in three statistical categories : slugging percentage ( fifth ) , on @-@ base plus slugging ( OPS ; sixth ) , and OPS + ( tied for ninth with Ty Cobb ) . At the end of the 2012 season , he led all active players in batting average ( .325 ) , slugging percentage ( .608 ) , and OPS ( 1 @.@ 022 ) . Through 2012 , he ranked among the top 10 active players in doubles ( ninth ) , home runs ( fourth , behind Rodriguez , Thome , and Manny Ramirez ) , RBIs ( sixth ) , and runs scored ( ninth ) . Pujols has a .994 fielding percentage at first base ( through 2012 ) , and he set the major league single @-@ season record for assists with 185 in 2009 .

Pujols is in the top 10 in several Cardinals ' statistics . He is second to Musial in doubles ( 455 ) , home runs ( 445 ) , and RBIs ( 1 @,@ 329 ) . He is seventh in games ( 1 @,@ 705 ) , seventh in batting average ( .328 ) , third in runs scored ( 1 @,@ 291 , behind Musial and Lou Brock ) , and fourth in hits ( 2 @,@ 073 , behind Musial , Brock and Hornsby ) . He also is in the top 10 in several single @-@ season Cardinals ' records . His 137 runs scored in 2003 are tied for seventh with Tommy McCarthy , his 51 doubles in 2003 and 2004 are tied with Musial for sixth , he holds five of the top 10 Cardinals ' home run totals , and his 137 RBIs in 2006 are tied for seventh with Jim Bottomley , Johnny Mize , and Joe Torre .

Pujols has earned praise from many of his fellow players and coaches . In 2008 , he was named the most feared hitter in baseball in a poll of all 30 MLB managers . La Russa has called him " the best player I 've ever managed . " Votto referred to him as " one of the greatest hitters of all time . " Larry Walker called him " a great hitter , " and Brendan Ryan said , " He 's the best there is . " Fernando Viña said , while Pujols was with the Cardinals , " He 's the face of the Cardinals . "

Pujols has said he does not play solely for the numbers . " I don 't play for numbers . I play first of all to glorify God and to accomplish in this game what everybody wants to accomplish , which is getting to the World Series and coming up with a win at the end . Those are the things that I really try to focus on and try to make sure that I do every day for the rest of my career . "

== Awards and honors ==