

= Ricardo Rodríguez (footballer) =

Ricardo Iván Rodríguez Araya (born 25 August 1992) is a Swiss professional footballer who plays as a left back for VfL Wolfsburg in the Bundesliga .

Born to a Spanish father and a Chilean mother , Rodríguez began his professional career at local club FC Zürich in 2010 , having spent eight years in the youth setup . After breaking through into the first team at Zürich , Rodríguez was sold to VfL Wolfsburg in January 2012 for £ 7 @. @ 5 million . He has been described as an accomplished defender and is noted for his strong heading ability , and ability to deliver pinpoint crosses . Rodríguez is also noted for his speciality in dead @-@ ball situations and for penalty @-@ taking abilities , emerging as Wolfsburg 's first @-@ choice penalty taker .

Rodríguez has earned caps at every level of the Swiss national team setup , winning the FIFA U17 World Cup in 2009 . A full international for Switzerland since 2011 , Rodríguez has earned over 40 caps for the country . He was part of the Swiss team at the 2014 FIFA World Cup and later that year was voted Swiss Footballer of the Year .

= = Club career = =

= = = FC Zürich = = =

Rodríguez began playing football at the highly regarded youth club FC Schwamendingen in 2001 before joining the youth setup of FC Zürich as an 11 @-@ year @-@ old in 2002 . He was promoted to the senior squad in 2009 at age 16 , making the bench for Zürich 's 2 ? 3 defeat to NK Maribor in the first leg of their third qualifying round Champions League tie on 29 July 2009 .

He made his Zürich debut as a 17 @-@ year @-@ old in the 25th round of the Swiss Super League on 21 March 2010 , replacing the injured Hannu Tihinen in the first @-@ half of the 2 ? 0 win over Bellinzona . His full debut came in the Zürich Derby against Grasshoppers on 5 April , playing the entire 3 ? 2 win for the hosts .

He made only his second start in the first match of the Swiss Super League season on 20 July 2010 , playing the full 90 minutes in a 2 ? 3 defeat to rivals FC Basel . On 28 April 2011 , he scored his first professional goal for the club , opening the scoring for the hosts as they ran out 3 ? 0 winners over Neuchâtel Xamax at the Letzigrund .

Rodríguez made his European debut in the first @-@ leg of their third qualifying round tie against Standard Liège on 27 July 2011 . He played the entire match and provided the cross for fellow Zürich youth team graduate Admir Mehmedi as the Swiss secured a 1 ? 1 draw at the Stade Maurice Dufrasne in Belgium . In the second leg , Rodríguez missed from an open goal from close range but Zürich won 1 ? 0 to earn a spot in the play @-@ off round against Bayern Munich . He played the entirety of both play @-@ off matches against Bayern , but the Swiss side fell 0 ? 3 on aggregate and dropped into the Europa League .

On 26 October 2011 , Rodríguez scored his second goal for the club , netting his side 's second from the penalty spot , in a 2 ? 0 win over FC Thun . The club 's final Super League match before the winter break on 10 December 2011 , turned out to be Rodríguez 's last in a Zürich shirt , playing the entire 1 ? 1 draw with FC Sion . On 11 January 2012 , Zürich officials announced that the club had accepted a bid for Rodríguez by German side Wolfsburg and that he was on the verge of completing the transfer , subject to a medical . Despite being sold mid @-@ way through the season , Rodríguez was voted as the Fans ' Player of the Season on 4 June 2012 , ahead of Oliver Buff and Pedro Henrique .

= = = VfL Wolfsburg = = =

= = = = Early career = = = =

VfL Wolfsburg purchased Rodríguez as a 19 year old on 13 January 2012 for £ 7 million with the player signing a four and a half year deal . He quickly asserted himself into the first team lineup , making his Bundesliga debut the next day against 1 . FC Köln , a 1 ? 0 victory for the Wolves . Rodríguez went on to play every game of the season from that point on without being substituted , becoming a favorite on the left of the defense for manager Felix Magath .

Through the first ten league games of the following campaign , Rodríguez was once again an ever present in the squad , featuring in all the outings , starting eight . But Magath was sacked after a poor run of form in the league and when Lorenz Günther Köstner was installed as interim manager , the more experienced Marcel Schäfer was preferred at left back . Once Dieter Hecking was appointed manager though , Rodríguez won his place back in the first team .

=== 2013 ? 14 season ===

On 9 November 2013 , he scored his first goal for Wolfsburg , from a direct free kick in a home Bundesliga match against Borussia Dortmund . The match ended in a 2 ? 1 win for Wolfsburg , although they were losing at half time . His second goal for Wolfsburg came from the penalty spot against Hamburg on 29 November , earning his side a 1 ? 1 draw . He opened the scoring in their Bundesliga match on 14 December , curling the ball past keeper Sven Ulreich , as Wolfsburg won 3 ? 1 .

He finished the 2013 ? 14 season with five league goals , in addition to nine assists . He failed to make it into the Bundesliga Team of the Season , but was included in a list of the Best Defenders for the 2013 ? 14 campaign . Rodríguez 's nine assists also meant that he created more goals than any other full back in Europe . His impressive displays during the season included 2 . 3 key passes per game , the same number as Andrea Pirlo , the two time reigning Serie A Footballer of the Year , and 2 . 6 successful dribbles per game , more than Cristiano Ronaldo , the reigning Ballon d 'Or winner .

=== 2014 ? 15 season ===

He scored his first ever goal in European football for Wolfsburg on 18 September 2014 , netting directly from a free kick after having previously scored an own goal in a 4 ? 1 defeat to English side Everton . Three days later , Rodriguez scored twice more for Wolfsburg , once from the penalty spot and a volley from a Kevin De Bruyne corner , as Wolfsburg defeated Bayer Leverkusen 4 ? 1 . He scored his third league goal of the season against Werder Bremen on 27 September , converting a De Bruyne cross to put Wolfsburg up 1 ? 0 in an eventual 2 ? 1 victory .

In October 2014 , Rodríguez was ruled out for a number of weeks with a troubled patella tendon and thigh . On 31 October , his agent , Roger Wittman , confirmed that Rodríguez and Wolfsburg had opened contract talks to extend his current deal beyond 2016 . Rodríguez scored twice in Wolfsburg 's 3 ? 0 win away to Lille on 11 December , a result which advanced his side into the Europa League knockout stage instead of their opponents . In January 2015 , he signed a new contract up to June 2019 . He scored the only goal of the game from the penalty spot on 7 April , as Wolfsburg defeated SC Freiburg to reach the semi finals of the DFB Pokal , also making a goalline clearance later on . In the final on 30 May , he played the full 90 minutes as Wolfsburg won their first cup , defeating Borussia Dortmund 3 ? 1 .

=== 2015 ? 16 season ===

Rodríguez played the full 90 minutes of Wolfsburg 's victory over Bayern Munich in the 2015 DFL Super Cup on 1 August , scoring their first attempt in the penalty shootout after a 1 ? 1 draw .

On 6 April 2016 , as Wolfsburg hosted Real Madrid in the first leg of the quarter finals of the season 's Champions League , Rodríguez scored a penalty to open a surprise 2 ? 0 victory . By

sending Keylor Navas the wrong way , he was the first player to score against Real 's goalkeeper in the tournament for 738 minutes .

= = International career = =

In 2009 , he was part of the Swiss U17 team who won the 2009 FIFA U @-@ 17 World Cup . His first goal of the tournament came in Switzerland 's second group game against Japan on 27 October 2009 , netting the winning goal as the match ended 4 ? 3 . He opened the scoring for the Swiss in the 35th minute against Germany in the Round of 16 as Switzerland eventually won 4 ? 3 in added extra time . In the semi @-@ finals against Colombia , he scored Switzerland 's final goal of their 4 ? 0 win to reach their first final of a FIFA competition since a 3 ? 0 loss to Uruguay in the 1924 Olympics . He played the entire final against Nigeria on 15 November , helping Switzerland to a 1 ? 0 victory to become just the third European nation to lift the trophy .

Rodríguez made his debut for Switzerland in a Euro 2012 qualifying match against Wales on 7 October 2011 , replacing Xherdan Shaqiri in the second half of the 0 ? 2 loss . In his full debt four days later , Rodríguez played the entire match as the Swiss defeated Montenegro 2 ? 0 to end their qualification campaign on a high , despite missing out on a playoff spot to the Balkan side . In a friendly match against the Netherlands on 11 November , he played the entire match as the Swiss kept a clean sheet in Amsterdam .

He played all three matches for Switzerland at the 2012 Olympics , in which they were eliminated in the group stage .

Rodríguez featured in nine of ten World Cup qualifying matches for the Swiss , totaling 810 minutes , as they qualified for the World Cup with a game to spare , thanks to a 2 ? 1 win over Albania on 11 October 2013 . On 13 May 2014 , Rodríguez was named in Switzerland 's squad for the 2014 FIFA World Cup . In their opening group game against Ecuador on 15 June , he took the corner which was headed by Admir Mehmedi for the equaliser , as well as crossing for Haris Seferović to score the winner in a 2 ? 1 victory . During the tournament finals in Brazil , he averaged 5 tackles and 2 @.@ 5 interceptions per game , earning plaudits for his strong tackling as well as his ability to read the game .

At UEFA Euro 2016 in France , Rodríguez played every minute as Switzerland reached the last 16 . They were eliminated on penalties by Poland in Saint @-@ Étienne , although Rodríguez scored his attempt .

= = Playing style = =

Rodríguez is known for being equally adept at defending as he is going forward . Experts consider him as an accomplished defender and note his strong heading ability . As well as considering him a continual attacking threat and noting his exceptional stamina and pace which allow for his constant , buccaneering runs up the wing . Conversely , he has been criticised for giving too much room to opposition attackers , taking up poor positioning and lacking in defensive discipline , and other analysts have criticised his concentration .

He has become known for his pinpoint crossing and accurate left foot and has been compared to Everton and England left back Leighton Baines . He is also noted for his speciality in dead ball situations and for penalty taking abilities , emerging as Wolfsburg 's first @-@ choice penalty taker during the 2013 ? 14 season . In 2014 , his manager Dieter Hecking praised Rodríguez as " the best left @-@ back in the Bundesliga " .

= = Personal life = =

Rodríguez was born in Zürich to a Spanish father and a Chilean mother . As a result , he is fluent in Spanish and holds Spanish and Chilean nationalities . He is the younger brother of FC St. Gallen midfielder Roberto Rodríguez and the older brother of Switzerland U19 midfielder Francisco Rodríguez , who also plays for VfL Wolfsburg .

= = Career statistics = =

As of match played 25 June 2016 .

= = Honours = =

= = = Club = = =

VfL Wolfsburg

DFB @-@ Pokal : 2014 ? 15

DFL @-@ Supercup : 2015

= = = International = = =

Switzerland

FIFA U @-@ 17 World Cup : 2009

= = = Individual = = =

FC Zürich Fans ' Player of the Season : 2011 ? 12

Swiss Footballer of the Year : 2014