

= Neifi Pérez =

Neifi Neftali Pérez (/ ?ne?fi / or / ?n?fi / ; Spanish pronunciation : [?neifi] ; born June 2 , 1973 in Villa Mella , Dominican Republic) is a former Major League baseball player . He stands 6 feet (1 @. @ 8 m) tall and weighs 175 pounds (79 kg) . He was a switch hitter who threw right @-@ handed . During his career , he played with the Colorado Rockies , Kansas City Royals , San Francisco Giants , Chicago Cubs , and Detroit Tigers .

Pérez was originally signed by the Colorado Rockies in 1992 . Frequently praised for his defensive skills , Pérez reached the major leagues in 1996 and become the Rockies ' shortstop for good in 1997 . Over the next three years , he scarcely missed a game and won a Gold Glove in 2000 . During 2001 , he was traded to the Kansas City Royals , where he also played in 2002 . The trade proved to be unpopular with both teams , and Pérez joined the San Francisco Giants for 2003 and 2004 . He lost his starting job during the 2004 season and was released during that year . Pérez then signed with the Chicago Cubs , whom he finished the season with and spent most of the next two years with . He was the Cubs ' starting shortstop in 2005 but was used as a reserve player in 2006 before getting traded to the Detroit Tigers during the year . He finished his career in 2007 with the Tigers . As a Tiger , he turned a double play which saved Justin Verlander 's no @-@ hitter , but he also had a series of positive tests for amphetamines which effectively ended his career .

= = Career = =

= = = Colorado Rockies = = =

As a child , Pérez played for Liga Mercedes in the Dominican Republic . The Colorado Rockies signed him as an undrafted free agent in 1992 at the age of 18 . Assigned to the single @-@ A Bend Rockies for the 1993 season , Pérez posted a .260 batting average and stole 19 bases . The Rockies , confident in Pérez 's potential , promoted him to the single @-@ A Central Valley Rockies . Pérez exhibited strong defensive skills , executing the first unassisted triple play in the history of the California League in a game against the Bakersfield Blaze . Pérez batted just .239 on the year but made the California League All @-@ Star game and was considered to be one of the Rockies ' top prospects on the basis of his defense . Rockies player development chief Dick Balderson expressed confidence that Pérez 's hitting would improve : " He 's got all the skills ... He 's just in a rush right now , like most young guys . "

Pérez moved up to the double @-@ AA New Haven Ravens where he batted .253 and improved his fielding percentage to .967 and was considered the Rockies ' top prospect at shortstop . The Rockies promoted Pérez to triple @-@ A Colorado Springs Sky Sox at the end of the 1995 season with the intention of bringing him up to the major leagues the next year . In fact , although Pérez was invited to 1996 spring training , he spent most of year with the Sky Sox and was not called up until the end of August , making his major league debut on August 31 . In his season with the Sky Sox , his batting average had improved to .316 . Commented Rockies manager Don Baylor : " He is the guy who had the year that traditionally earns a call up . I want to see what he can do . " Pérez hit .156 over 17 games and returned to the Sky Sox for the beginning of the 1997 season .

Although invited to 1997 spring training Pérez did not make the 25 @-@ man roster and once again returned to the Sky Sox for the first half of the season , where he batted .363 with a .975 fielding percentage . In mid @-@ June the Rockies summoned him in place of Jason Bates , this time for good . Pérez batted .291 on the year and gradually replaced Walt Weiss as the starting shortstop . Pérez remained Colorado 's primary shortstop for the next three seasons (1998 ? 2000) , appearing in all but five games . His batting average hovered around .280 (.274 , .280 , .287) and he averaged thirty doubles a year . His fielding percentage never dropped below .975 and he won a Gold Glove for the 2000 season . Despite his later reputation for anemic hitting , Pérez managed several offensive feats with the Rockies . On July 25 , 1998 , he hit for the cycle against the St. Louis Cardinals . In 1999 he tied Bobby Abreu and José Offerman for the most triples in Major

League Baseball with 11 . Pérez got off to a strong start in 2001 but there was doubt over his future with Colorado . The Rockies had offered him a 4 @-@ year , \$ 17 million contract which he had rejected ; accepting a 1 @-@ year \$ 3 @.@ 55 million deal via arbitration . In the end the Rockies dealt Pérez to the Kansas City Royals as part of a three @-@ way deal in which the Royals sent Jermaine Dye to the Oakland Athletics who then sent Mario Encarnación , José Ortiz and Todd Belitz to Colorado . Denver Post sportswriter Woody Paige criticized the move , calling Pérez " the best shortstop in the National League " who was " an extraordinary defensive player , a capable offensive player and a classy team player . "

= = = Kansas City Royals = = =

Pérez arrived in Kansas City amid widespread anger over the departure of fan @-@ favorite Dye . Facing off against Dye in one of his first games as a Royal , Pérez took the low @-@ key approach : " I 'm just going to play my game . " Pérez finished out the 2001 season in Kansas City , batting .241 over 49 games . Pérez started at shortstop for the 2002 season but his batting average sank to .236 , leading sportswriters to question whether the rarefied air at Coors Field had inflated Pérez 's numbers . Pérez also may have sealed his fate by refusing to enter a late @-@ season game at the request of manager Tony Peña . At the end of the year the Royals were looking to move Pérez and his \$ 4 @.@ 1 million salary ; he was eventually claimed off waivers by the San Francisco Giants and signed a two @-@ year , \$ 4 @.@ 25 million contract .

= = = San Francisco Giants = = =

At the Giants Pérez hoped for a fresh start ; rumors had swirled in Kansas City about problems in the clubhouse , and it was no secret that the trade had been deeply unpopular in both Denver and Kansas City . Commented Pérez : " I feel happy here . I like the National League . I was happy in Colorado and I am happy here . " Pérez hit .256 over the course of the 2003 season ; an improvement on his previous season but a far cry from the Colorado days . Pérez returned for the 2004 season , but the situation in San Francisco had become uncomfortable . Although signed as a starter at second base , he quickly became backup to José Cruz , Jr . , while he lost out at shortstop to Deivi Cruz . His batting average slumped to .232 . He had a staunch defender in manager Felipe Alou , but in the end he was the " odd man out " and the Giants released him on August 14 , 2004 . Almost immediately the Chicago Cubs signed Pérez to a minor @-@ league contract .

= = = Chicago Cubs = = =

The Cubs assigned Pérez to the triple @-@ A Iowa Cubs , but he played only ten games before being called up to the expanded roster on September 1 . Pérez became a much needed spark plug in the lineup , going 6 for 6 in his first 6 at @-@ bats as a Cub and providing a needed backup to the ailing Nomar Garciaparra . In 23 games with the Cubs he hit .371 . The Cubs re @-@ signed Pérez to a one @-@ year contract worth \$ 1 million , with up to an additional \$ 1 @.@ 5 million in bonuses .

Manager Dusty Baker made Pérez the everyday shortstop in 2005 to replace Garciaparra , mainly on the strength of his defensive skills . His impatience at the plate led to a walk percentage of 3 @.@ 1 % , the worst in the National League . Pérez finished the season batting .274 , and his play at short won rave reviews from Baker : " It 's hard to play better shortstop defensively than Neifi has . " In the off @-@ season the Cubs signed Pérez to a two @-@ year , \$ 5 million contract .

For the 2006 season Pérez lost the starting job at shortstop to Ronny Cedeño , and found himself playing a mixture of second base and short behind Cedeño and Todd Walker . Meanwhile , Pérez 's batting average sagged to .254 , while his on @-@ base percentage , never high , had fallen to .266 . In late August the Cubs traded him to the Detroit Tigers for minor @-@ league catcher Chris Robinson . The Tigers were seeking a replacement for their injured second baseman , Plácido Polanco , who had separated his shoulder .

= = = Detroit Tigers = = =

Pérez arrived in Detroit during the pennant chase which ended with their loss in the 2006 World Series to the St. Louis Cardinals . Pérez faced almost immediate criticism from fans after getting off to a .157 start , and manager Jim Leyland felt obliged to come to his defense : " These guys making a big deal about Neifi Pérez and Omar Infante don 't know what they 're talking about . They got no clue . " Pérez made 21 appearances during the regular season , with a batting average of .200 and an OBP of .235 . He appeared in three games during the playoffs but never reached base .

The Tigers retained Pérez for the 2007 season , although Leyland acknowledged that Pérez would have to improve his play : " I recommended that we trade for him . I take responsibility . I don 't want people to get the wrong impression . I like Neifi Pérez , but he did not perform well . It 's that simple . " Pérez , however , continued to struggle , posting a .172 batting average over the 33 games he played in a Tigers ' uniform . One bright spot came on June 12 , 2007 , when he saved Justin Verlander 's no @-@ hitter against the Milwaukee Brewers by turning a possible base hit into an inning @-@ ending double play .

On July 6 , 2007 , Pérez was suspended 25 games by MLB for a second positive test for amphetamines ; on August 3 he was suspended an additional 80 games for a third positive test . On October 31 , 2007 , Pérez filed for free agency , ending his association with Tigers .

= = = Possible comeback = = =

In February 2008 there was talk of the Colorado Rockies signing Pérez to a minor league contract worth \$ 750 @,@ 000 , which manager Clint Hurdle characterized as a " lifeline . " In the end Colorado backed out , citing younger players competing for the same position .

= = Foreign = =

Pérez has also had a significant foreign career . He participated in the Caribbean Series and was named the Series MVP in 1998 and 1999 . In 2012 , he was inducted into the Caribbean Baseball Hall of Fame . He played in the Dominican Professional Baseball League for Leones del Escogido with personal success , batting over .300 . In 2004 , he helped Escogido score 18 runs in an inning . In 2006 , he played in the Dominican Republic @-@ Puerto Rico All @-@ Star Game .

= = Legacy = =

Pérez 's poor offense after Colorado traded him to the Royals overshadowed his defensive skills . He was widely criticized because of his low on @-@ base percentage (career .297) and lack of power . Nate Silver , a baseball statistician who analyzed Pérez 's statistics (specifically value over replacement player (VORP)) , concluded that Pérez had a negative impact on the teams he played for . Chicago sportswriter Bruce Miles called Pérez " one of the worst offensive players in baseball history . "