

= Stephen Strasburg =

Stephen James Strasburg (/ ˈstrʌzˌbʊrɡ / ; born July 20 , 1988) is an American professional baseball pitcher for the Washington Nationals of Major League Baseball (MLB) . Strasburg was selected by Washington with the first pick in the 2009 MLB Draft , and he made his MLB debut with the Nationals in 2010 .

A talented but unpolished high school baseball player at West Hills High School , Strasburg played college baseball for the San Diego State Aztecs . There , he became one of the best collegiate pitchers in the country . He pitched for the United States national baseball team at the 2008 Summer Olympics , winning the bronze medal . Two years later , Strasburg was called the " most @-@ hyped pick in draft history " by ESPN and the " most hyped and closely watched pitching prospect in the history of baseball " by Sports Illustrated . Strasburg 's major league debut on June 8 , 2010 , produced a franchise @-@ record 14 strikeouts .

Several months into his major league career , Strasburg tore a ligament in his pitching elbow . The injury required Tommy John surgery and a year of rehabilitation . He rejoined the Nationals on September 6 , 2011 , but was only able to pitch 24 innings that year . His 2012 season marked a successful return to form ; Strasburg was selected to play in the 2012 MLB All @-@ Star Game . Strasburg pitches an average fastball of 94 @. @ 7 mph .

= = Amateur career = =

= = = High school = = =

Strasburg attended West Hills High School in Santee , California . At first , he struggled on the school 's baseball team , posting a 1 ? 10 win ? loss record in his junior year . A twelve @-@ strikeout game against El Capitan High School in his senior year , in which Strasburg allowed one hit , drew attention from scouts . He finished his senior year with a 1 @. @ 68 earned run average (ERA) and 74 strikeouts in 62 1 ? 3 innings pitched , with seven complete games . He finished with three varsity letters , set school records in ERA and shutouts , and was named his school 's 2006 Scholar @-@ Athlete of the Year . He was also named second @-@ team all @-@ league and his team 's MVP . Despite these achievements , he was not selected in that year 's Major League Baseball Draft .

= = = College = = =

Strasburg had hoped to attend Stanford University but was not accepted there . Although recruited by a number of schools across the country , he enrolled at San Diego State University , where both of his parents attended school . He played college baseball for the San Diego State Aztecs , coached by the late Baseball Hall of Fame inductee Tony Gwynn . When he first arrived , he was an unlikely candidate to pitch collegiate baseball at all ; he was so overweight and out of shape that his conditioning coach nicknamed him " Slothburg " and encouraged him to quit baseball . He also had a difficult time adjusting to college life , moving out of his dormitory and in with his mother after five days . He acknowledged , " I wasn 't the most mature guy out of high school . ? The dorm was an overload , too much , too soon . " Strasburg responded with an intense workout regimen , losing 30 pounds (14 kg) in the process . He also worked to improve his mental toughness . Coaches tested him by placing him in high @-@ pressure situations and telling him he needed to get strikeouts .

San Diego State used Strasburg as a relief pitcher in his freshman year ; he began the season pitching in middle relief , before becoming the Aztecs ' closer . He held opponents to a .141 batting average against and was named Co @-@ Freshman of the Year for the Mountain West Conference . In the summer of 2007 , Strasburg also played for the Torrington Twisters of the collegiate summer baseball New England Collegiate Baseball League (NECBL) . He was named to the NECBL First Team as a closer , and was also chosen as the Top Pro Prospect and Top Relief Pitcher in the

NECBL .

In 2008 , as a sophomore , Strasburg was converted to a full @-@ time starting pitcher . He went 8 ? 3 with a 1 @.@ 58 ERA and 134 strikeouts in 98 ? innings . Four of his thirteen starts in 2008 were complete games , two of which were shutouts . On April 11 of that year , he struck out a Mountain West Conference record 23 batters in a game versus the University of Utah . He also gained eight miles per hour on his fastball , regularly working in the upper 90s and touching 100 mph .

Strasburg finished his junior year , the 2009 season , 13 ? 1 with a 1 @.@ 32 ERA , 59 hits allowed , 16 earned runs , 19 walks , and 195 strikeouts in 109 innings pitched . In his final home start on May 8 , 2009 , Strasburg threw his first career no @-@ hitter while striking out 17 Air Force Falcons batters . His lone loss came against the Virginia Cavaliers in the NCAA Regionals as Virginia advanced toward the College World Series , but he still struck out 15 in seven innings during the loss . He won the Dick Howser Trophy and the National Pitcher of the Year Award .

= = = International play = = =

Strasburg was named to the United States national baseball team on June 24 , 2008 . In that role he appeared in the 2008 World University Baseball Championship , held in late July . The United States won the gold medal in the competition .

Strasburg was the lone collegiate player selected for the United States national team at the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing . In his first start at the Olympics , Strasburg one @-@ hit the Netherlands over seven innings , striking out five of the first six batters he faced and 11 overall . The lone hit Strasburg allowed was a seventh @-@ inning single to Sharnol Adriana .

With the United States having already secured a spot in the semifinals medal round , manager Davey Johnson held Strasburg from what would have been his second start on August 20 in order to pitch him in the first round of the semifinals against Norge Luis Vera of the Cuban national baseball team , on August 22 . Vera outdueled Strasburg with six innings pitched and only two runs , one earned . Strasburg , meanwhile , lasted only four innings while giving up three runs , two earned . Cuba won the game 10 ? 2 .

Strasburg ended up with a 1 ? 1 record , a 1 @.@ 67 ERA , and a bronze medal for the Olympics , as the United States won its following contest against Japan 8 ? 4 . He won the USA Baseball Richard W. " Dick " Case Player of the Year Award in 2008 .

= = Professional career = =

= = = Draft = = =

On June 9 , 2009 , Strasburg was drafted number one overall in the 2009 Major League Baseball Draft by the Washington Nationals . On August 17 , 2009 , he signed a record @-@ breaking four @-@ year , \$ 15 @.@ 1 million contract with the Nationals , just 77 seconds before the deadline , shattering a dollar @-@ amount record previously held by Mark Prior , who signed for \$ 10 @.@ 5 million in 2001 . Strasburg is represented by agent Scott Boras .

= = = Minor leagues = = =

Strasburg made his professional debut on October 16 , 2009 , starting for the Phoenix Desert Dogs in the Arizona Fall League at Phoenix Municipal Stadium . He was selected to play in the league 's Rising Stars Showcase , but was unable to participate due to a minor neck injury . He also won Pitcher of the Week honors for the week of November 2 , 2009 and led the AFL with four wins . Before the 2010 season started , Baseball America named Strasburg as the top pitching prospect , and the second @-@ best overall prospect behind Jason Heyward .

Strasburg was assigned to the Harrisburg Senators of the Class AA Eastern League for the start of

the 2010 season . There was so much anticipation and hype surrounding Strasburg that there were about 70 credentialed media members in attendance at his April 11 , 2010 debut , and ESPN nationally broadcast portions of the game . He won his Senators debut against the Altoona Curve , allowing four hits and four runs (one earned) , while striking out eight batters in five innings . During his first home start on April 16 , he yielded two hits and an unearned run with three strikeouts in 2 ? innings in a loss to the New Britain Rock Cats , one where his innings were limited due to a rain delay . Harrisburg set an attendance record in Strasburg 's home debut with 7 @, @ 895 fans . He completed his Class AA stint with a 1 @. @ 64 ERA while striking out 27 and walking six in 22 innings .

On May 4 , 2010 , he was promoted to the Syracuse Chiefs of the Class AAA International League . In his first game with the Chiefs , he pitched six scoreless innings , striking out six batters while allowing one hit and one walk . That game drew 13 @, @ 766 fans ? the highest attendance in the 135 @- @ year history of baseball in Syracuse . In his second start , Strasburg was removed after pitching six no @- @ hit innings . He finished his minor league stint with an overall record of 7 ? 2 , an ERA of 1 @. @ 30 , 65 strikeouts and 13 walks in 55 ? innings , and a walks plus hits per inning pitched (WHIP) ratio of 0 @. @ 80 .

= = = Washington Nationals = = =

= = = = Debut = = = =

Strasburg made his major @- @ league debut on June 8 , 2010 , against the Pittsburgh Pirates . A Sports Illustrated columnist termed it " the most hyped pitching debut the game has ever seen . " An ESPN article revealed the colloquial name for Strasburg 's celebrated debut as " Strasmas " . Strasburg picked up the win in his debut , pitching seven innings , allowing two earned runs and no walks and 14 strikeouts , setting a new team strikeout record . Also , he was the first pitcher in history to strike out at least eleven batters without issuing any walks in his pro debut , while falling just one strikeout short of the all @- @ time record for a pitcher 's debut ? Karl Spooner (1954) and J. R. Richard (1971) both struck out 15 , but each took nine innings to do it , and each walked three . (Bob Feller also struck out 15 in his first start , although it wasn 't his big league debut) . He struck out every batter in the Pirates ' lineup at least once and struck out the last seven batters he faced ? also a Nationals record . He threw 34 of his 94 pitches at 98 miles per hour (158 km / h) or faster , including two that reached 100 miles per hour (160 km / h) .

In Strasburg 's second and third major league starts he struck out another eight and ten batters , respectively , setting a major league record for the most strikeouts in a pitcher 's first three starts with 32 . The previous record holder had been Richard , who struck out 29 in his first three starts in 1971 .

Strasburg was also featured in the cover story of Sports Illustrated following his second start . His # 37 jersey was the top @- @ selling jersey in all of baseball for the month of June and became the best @- @ selling Nationals jersey of all time in that span .

= = = = Injuries and rehab = = = =

Strasburg was placed on the disabled list with an inflamed right shoulder in July 2010 . He returned to action on August 10 , but in his third game back , on August 21 , he was removed with an apparent injury . On August 27 , the Nationals announced that Strasburg had a torn ulnar collateral ligament , requiring Tommy John surgery , and about 12 to 18 months of rehabilitation .

In the 2010 season Strasburg pitched in 12 games , all starts , throwing 68 innings , 92 strikeouts and compiling a 2 @. @ 91 ERA . He was named a pitcher on the 2010 Topps Major League Rookie All @- @ Star Team .

Strasburg made his first rehab start on August 7 , 2011 for the Hagerstown Suns . Strasburg made six rehab starts during the 2011 minor league season throwing a total of 20 ? innings , with 29

strikeouts , compiling a 3 @. @ 49 ERA and a 1 ? 1 record . He then made 5 starts during the 2011 major league season , his first coming against the Los Angeles Dodgers on September 6 . That year he threw for 24 innings , struck out 24 , compiled a 1 @. @ 50 ERA and a 1 ? 1 record .

= = = = 2012 season = = = =

In April 2012 , Strasburg accumulated an NL @- @ best 34 strikeouts and second @- @ best 1 @. @ 13 ERA . He totaled 6 walks and did not give up a home run . Consequently , he was named NL Pitcher of the Month . On May 20 , Strasburg went 2 @- @ for @- @ 2 as a hitter in a game against the Baltimore Orioles and hit his first career home run , a solo shot off of Wei @- @ Yin Chen .

In his June 13 start against the Toronto Blue Jays , Strasburg became the first pitcher of the year to strike out 100 batters . On July 1 , Strasburg was elected to his first All @- @ Star Game , alongside teammates Gio Gonzalez , Ian Desmond , and Bryce Harper . Strasburg ended the season 15 ? 6 with a 3 @. @ 16 ERA , 1 @. @ 15 WHIP and 197 strikeouts in 159 ? innings pitched .

Strasburg hit .277 with a home run , 7 RBI , and three walks , earning him a Silver Slugger Award .

= = = = Innings limit and shutdown = = = =

As part of Strasburg 's rehabilitation from his Tommy John surgery , and as a precaution due to his low innings total in 2011 , the Nationals decided to limit the number of innings Strasburg would throw in the 2012 season . Although the number was never official , rumors started that Strasburg 's limit would be between 160 and 180 innings . It was also decided that Strasburg 's shutdown would be final ; he would not pitch in the playoffs . Dr. Lewis Yocum , the surgeon who operated on Strasburg 's elbow , agreed in 2011 that Strasburg 's 2012 innings total should be limited , although he did not consult with Nationals General Manager Mike Rizzo or Strasburg during the season . Teammate Jordan Zimmermann underwent a similar process the year before .

Strasburg 's high profile and the success of the Nationals in the 2012 season made the innings limit a topic of national conversation . In addition to baseball writers , a number of other figures made their views on the topic known , including football broadcasters Troy Aikman and Terry Bradshaw , basketball reporter Stephen A. Smith , and even prominent politicians such as Rudy Giuliani and Mitch McConnell . Rizzo defended the decision to shut down Strasburg and criticized the buzz surrounding it : " It 's a good conversational piece , it 's a good debatable subject . But most of the people that have weighed in on this know probably 10 percent of the information that we know , and that we 've made our opinion based upon . "

The Nationals announced that Strasburg would be scheduled to make his final start on September 12 and would be replaced by John Lannan in the Nationals ' starting rotation . However , after a rough outing on September 8 , Davey Johnson announced that Strasburg was finished for the 2012 season . Strasburg spent the postseason on the physically unable to perform list as the Nationals lost the 2012 NLDS to the St. Louis Cardinals in 5 games .

= = = = 2013 season = = = =

Strasburg pitched Opening Day for the Nationals at Nationals Park in Washington , D.C. , on April 1 , 2013 . He went seven innings , giving up no runs and three hits and recording three strikeouts . Following the first batter of the game , Juan Pierre , he retired nineteen straight batters . Strasburg earned the decision , a win , with a final score of 2 ? 0 .

Strasburg served a brief stint on the disabled list with a mild lateral strain in June and was re @- @ activated on June 16 .

Strasburg achieved milestones in longevity in 2013 . He pitched into the 8th inning for the first time in his big @- @ league career on May 16 , in a win against his hometown San Diego Padres , and in subsequent starts on May 26 and July 24 . On August 11 , 2013 , Strasburg pitched his first career complete game winning , 6 ? 0 over the Philadelphia Phillies .

He was ejected for the first time in his MLB career on August 17 , 2013 by umpire Marvin Hudson

for intentionally pitching at Braves batter Andrelton Simmons in the second inning of a Nationals @-@ Braves game . Prior to the ejection , Hudson warned both teams after Strasburg hit Justin Upton with a first @-@ pitch fastball following a Braves home run .

Strasburg finished the year with a 3 @. @ 00 ERA , 1 @. @ 05 WHIP , 8 Wins , 9 Losses , and 191 strikeouts over 183 innings pitched .

== == 2014 season == ==

Strasburg enjoyed the best season of his career , leading the league in strikeouts and finishing 9th in the Cy Young award balloting . He posted career @-@ bests in innings pitched and strikeouts .

== == 2015 season == ==

2015 was a disappointing year for Strasburg and the Nationals as injuries limited his production to 127 innings , his lowest output since 2011 . In the meantime , the Nationals failed to make it to the playoffs , in part due to Strasburg 's unavailability . Despite the setbacks , he was effective in limited action , winning 11 games , good for third most wins in the Nationals ' pitching staff .

== == 2016 season == ==

On May 9 , 2016 , it was reported that Strasburg had agreed to a 7 @-@ year , \$ 175 million extension to remain with the Nationals . The deal was made official the next day on May 10 . With the extension , Strasburg became the first National to receive an opt @-@ out clause in his contract , which will allow him to elect free agency after the 2019 or 2020 seasons if he desires . On June 26 , 2016 , he was placed on the 15 @-@ day disabled list due to an upper back strain . He returned on July 3 against the Cincinnati Reds , where he took a no @-@ hitter through 6 @. @ 2 innings until being lifted from the game after throwing 109 pitches . The no @-@ hitter was broken up in the 8th inning , but the Nationals still won 12 @-@ 1 . On July 8 , Strasburg became the first pitcher since 1912 to start 12 @-@ 0 .

== Pitching style ==

== Pitch repertoire and approach ==

Strasburg 's repertoire features four pitches : a four @-@ seam fastball , his primary pitch at 95 ? 98 miles per hour (153 ? 158 km / h) which tops out at 100 mph ; a two @-@ seam fastball at 94 ? 97 miles per hour (151 ? 156 km / h) ; a curveball that Strasburg himself refers to as a slurve at 79 ? 82 miles per hour (127 ? 132 km / h) ; and a changeup at 87 ? 90 miles per hour (140 ? 145 km / h) . Strasburg throws a mix of all four pitches to left @-@ handed hitters , but he mostly eliminates the changeup when facing right @-@ handed hitters . He is liable to throw his four @-@ seamer or slurve to right @-@ handers with 2 strikes , and adds the changeup in those counts against lefties .

His velocity was not significantly affected by his Tommy John surgery in 2010 . He had the fastest four @-@ seam fastball among starting pitchers in the 2012 season , averaging 96 @. @ 5 miles per hour (155 km / h) .

Strasburg has a high strikeout rate of 11 @. @ 2 per 9 innings through his first 251 ? MLB innings . This corresponds with high swing @-@ and @-@ miss rates across all of his pitches , including 54 % on his changeup ? the highest whiff rate among all starting pitchers ' changeups since PITCHf / x began tracking pitches . Through the 2012 season , Strasburg 's career strikeout @-@ to @-@ walk ratio of 4 @. @ 67 would rank second all @-@ time if he had enough innings to qualify . Strasburg maintains that his high strikeout rate is not intentional , and in fact is a hindrance to maintaining low pitch counts .

= = = Mechanics = = =

Strasburg 's pitching mechanics have drawn concern over the years from scouts and coaches . The sequence of Strasburg 's delivery places a great deal of stress on his arm , placing him at greater risk of elbow and shoulder injuries . Indeed , " several pitching coaches quietly predicted Strasburg was at risk " before the rupture of his elbow ligament . Independent scout Paul Reddick compared his mechanics unfavorably with those of pitching legend Greg Maddux , saying Strasburg 's motion is inefficient and badly synchronized .

= = Personal life = =

Strasburg was born in San Diego , California , He credits his maternal grandmother with helping him develop his baseball skills as a child . She would frequently play catch and even work on pitching with him . He labels her as one of his biggest inspirations . He was married on January 9 , 2010 , to Rachel Lackey , whom he had met while they were students at San Diego State . On June 24 , 2014 Strasburg stated in an interview that he was going to stop chewing tobacco in the wake of his college coach Tony Gwynn 's death .