

= Justin De Fratus =

Justin Andrew De Fratus (born October 21 , 1987) is an American professional baseball relief pitcher in the Washington Nationals organization . De Fratus grew up in Oxnard , California and played baseball in high school prior to playing at Ventura College . The Philadelphia Phillies selected him in the 11th round of the 2007 Major League Baseball draft . He methodically moved his way up through the Phillies system , spending about one year at each level from rookie to Class A , and then moving through two levels per season in 2010 and 2011 . In 2011 , De Fratus made his MLB debut and , by 2013 , he was a regular member of the Phillies bullpen after a few years of splitting time between the major leagues and Triple @-@ A. In 2014 , he used his slider to " dominate the league " , and establish himself as a reliable reliever capable of pitching in late @-@ inning situations .

De Fratus has a two @-@ pitch repertoire that consists of a fastball and a slider , the latter of which is his out pitch . He embraces a propensity to work quickly on the mound , and use a lower arm slot . Off the field , De Fratus is a member of the Roman Catholic church , and uses baseball to strengthen his faith . He sees evangelism as a duty of Christians , and would like to go to seminary when he finishes his baseball career .

= = Early life = =

De Fratus attended Rio Mesa High School in Oxnard , California , from which he graduated in 2005 ; he was a fan of the Los Angeles Dodgers . His high school coach , David Soliz , asserted that he could pitch in the major leagues for a long time , saying , " He definitely has the stuff to pitch in the majors . Justin has the stuff , but he also has the confidence . The odds were against him being drafted in the 11th round out of Ventura College . " De Fratus was the first Rio Mesa player to reach the majors during Soliz 's tenure . He went on to attend Ventura College where , like at Rio Mesa , he was a starting pitcher .

= = Professional career = =

= = = Minor leagues = = =

The Phillies selected De Fratus with the 353rd overall pick in the 11th round of the 2007 Major League Baseball draft , and assigned him to the Gulf Coast League Phillies , the Phillies ' rookie level minor league affiliate , with whom he went 2 ? 3 with a 4 @.@ 30 earned run average (ERA) in 10 games (eight starts) . The next season , 2008 , he advanced to the Williamsport Crosscutters , and went 6 ? 5 with a 3 @.@ 67 ERA in 14 starts . He led the New York ? Penn League in innings pitched , pitching at least six in almost 65 % of his starts ; the Phillies named him their minor league player of the week in mid @-@ June . Before the 2009 season , at the decision of Phillies minor league pitching coordinator Gorman Heim Mueller and assistant general manager Chuck LaMar , De Fratus became predominantly a relief pitcher so he was " not sitting down four games out of the week " and could be a more focused pitcher . He took his first crack at relief pitching with the Lakewood Blue Claws , and ultimately began to flourish , earning Phillies minor league player of the week honors , and a spot in the South Atlantic League all @-@ star game . On the season , he posted a 5 ? 6 record with a 3 @.@ 19 ERA in 36 games (though still with 12 starts) . After the season , he participated in the Florida Instructional League . He had a successful 2010 season , splitting time between the High @-@ A Clearwater Threshers and Double @-@ A Reading Phillies , and posting a 1 @.@ 94 ERA with 21 saves in 49 games .

= = = Major leagues = = =

===== Philadelphia Phillies =====

De Fratus began the 2011 season with Double A Reading , and was promoted to Triple A Lehigh Valley on June 16 after much success in Reading . He recorded seven saves with Lehigh Valley , and was named the Phillies minor league player of the week in late August , before making his MLB debut with the Philadelphia Phillies on September 18 , 2011 , after joining the team as a September callup . During his debut , an opposing batter fouled a ball off , and De Fratus 's brother caught the ball . Ultimately , it was a scoreless debut , and he went on to pitch four more big league games that season . At the end of the season , Baseball America rated him the seventh best prospect in the Phillies ' minor league system . Before 2012 , like in 2011 , he was given an opportunity to open the season in the Phillies bullpen , but ended up injuring his shoulder , and missing much of the season . He called the injury a " beat down " both physically and mentally , but he returned and pitched with the big league club in September . At the conclusion of the season , he was mentally exhausted and used golf to help " divert " his attention from baseball , playing over 50 rounds in the offseason ; he credited golf with helping him overcome the mental exhaustion he faced after the season , and entered 2013 in a relaxed frame of mind .

By 2013 , De Fratus was a regular member of the bullpen , pitching in 58 games with the big league club ; he performed well enough to be considered likely to open the 2014 season firmly implanted in the Phillies bullpen . He broke spring training 2014 with the major league team , but after four appearances , he was optioned back to the minor leagues to work on commanding his pitches , notwithstanding the Phillies ' dearth of other right handed relieving options . While at Lehigh Valley , he spent a significant amount of time reviewing film from his outings in 2011 and 2012 , from which he learned that he had a faster pace when pitching , a more aggressive pitching style , and a lower arm slot . Just under a month later , in late May , he was recalled to the major league team , and had much success (11 consecutive scoreless appearances) as part of a Phillies ' bullpen that drastically improved from the beginning of the season , and , statistically , was among the best in the major leagues in early June . De Fratus ' drastically improved command helped him halve his career walk rate ? he walked just 5 % of batters he faced in 2014 , which contributed to a " breakout " season . Although he was overshadowed by the emergence of fellow relief pitcher Ken Giles , De Fratus established himself as a reliable late innings reliever for the future .

===== Seattle Mariners =====

A free agent following the 2015 season , De Fratus signed a one year contract with the Seattle Mariners on December 2 . He was released on March 16 , 2016 , and re signed to a minor league contract the following day .

===== Texas Rangers =====

On June 11 , 2016 , De Fratus was traded to the Texas Rangers .

== Pitching style ==

A fastball and a slider comprise De Fratus 's pitching repertoire ; his fastball averages about 93 miles per hour (150 km / h) , but occasionally touches 95 miles per hour (153 km / h) , while his slider is about 10 miles per hour (16 km / h) slower than that . His slider was able to " dominate the league " in 2014 , and although he does not total as many strikeouts as some relievers , he has established himself as a dependable piece in the Phillies ' bullpen . Early in his career , De Fratus aspired to be a closer , but after realizing that an " all or nothing " mentality was not necessarily conducive to success , he sought to relax more and focus on being a quality setup reliever , projecting confidence on the mound . Especially in the Phillies ' young bullpen , the need for reliable late innings relievers was great , underscoring the importance of De Fratus 's

emergence . He is most successful when he utilizes a lower arm angle , and works quickly on the mound .

= = Personal life = =

De Fratus is a devout Roman Catholic who , though he was raised in a large Catholic family , struggled with his faith after an injury early in his career , but ultimately determined the injury was a gift from God to help him better understand his faith : " I really feel that the setback was God telling me , ? Hey you are not done . You are not done yet figuring out what you need to figure out , and I am going to give you a little more time . ? There is a big reason why that injury happened and I feel that I used it as best as I could have . " He noted that he would like to take classes at a seminary to help proselytize to others . Early in his professional career , he struggled to find fellow Catholics , and noted that most of his teammates were either Protestants or not religious . Moreover , in many small towns that house minor league teams , there are no Catholic churches , so De Fratus found it easy to slide away from leading a Catholic lifestyle . However , upon realizing that there is more to life than material success , he discovered a need for God , and has thus developed his faith . Aside from his faith , he enjoys writing and recording music , and playing the guitar . He has two brothers , the older of whom , Steve , played in the minor leagues , and the younger of whom , Chris , caught a foul ball during De Fratus 's major league debut .

During the offseason preceding the 2015 season , De Fratus became involved in some controversy involving Phillies blogger Bill Baer and the Black Lives Matter campaign when he tweeted , " I 'm sick of this black vs white and men vs women garbage that 's been going on . We 're just people . # AllLivesMatter , " to which Baer responded with a scathing column on Crashburn Alley , a blog affiliated with ESPN , in which he stated that De Fratus is " complicit in perpetuating a system which inflicts violence on those who didn 't have the luxury of being born white and male and straight and in an economically @-@ stable area . " Subsequently , De Fratus penned a retort to Baer via Facebook , in which he commented , " I sincerely hope that you will take the time to talk to me personally next time before you decide to hide behind your computer screen and criticize me , my upbringing and my character based on 140 characters . I do not apologize for anything I have said . I have a platform and I WILL use it for the agenda of love . "