

= Danny Valencia =

Daniel Paul " Danny " Valencia ( born September 19 , 1984 ) is an American professional baseball third baseman for the Oakland Athletics of Major League Baseball ( MLB ) . He has also played for the Minnesota Twins , Boston Red Sox , Baltimore Orioles , Kansas City Royals , and Toronto Blue Jays .

In high school , Valencia was all @-@ county three times and all @-@ state twice . At the University of North Carolina at Greensboro , he was Southern Conference Freshman of the Year , second @-@ team all @-@ conference , and on his all @-@ regional team . He was drafted while he was a junior at the University of Miami by the Twins in the 19th round of the 2006 Major League Baseball Draft , the 576th player overall .

In the minors , Valencia was an All @-@ Star in the Appalachian League ( 2006 ) , the Midwest League ( 2007 ) , and the Florida State League ( 2008 ) . He entered the 2010 season ranked as the sixth @-@ best prospect of the Twins by Baseball America .

Valencia made his major league debut with the Twins in June 2010 . He was named the third baseman on Baseball America 's 2010 All @-@ Rookie Team , and on the 2010 Topps Major League Rookie All @-@ Star Team . In 2011 , he led the Twins in RBIs , and led all major league third basemen in assists . In 2013 , he batted .371 vs. left @-@ handed pitching , leading the American League , and ranked third in slugging percentage at .639 ( minimum 100 plate appearances ) .

= = Early life = =

Valencia is Jewish , and was born in Miami , Florida . His parents are Mindy Valencia , who is Jewish , and Jewish Cuban immigrant Michael Valencia , who converted to Judaism . He grew up in Boca Raton , Florida . He was raised Jewish , and has said : " People are shocked at first that I ? m Jewish . I get teased in the clubhouse about being Jewish , but we all get teased about something . Going to Hebrew school and being a bar mitzvah ? made my mom really happy . I wished I had been out playing baseball , but looking back at it now , I ? m happy I did it . ? Valencia has a sister , Laura .

In 1996 , Valencia pitched for the Boca Raton Babe Ruth League 12 @-@ and @-@ under all @-@ star baseball team that won the Florida state championship . The next year , he pitched and hit for the Boca Lightning 12 @-@ and @-@ under travel baseball team that went 27 ? 2 and won the South Florida All @-@ Star Travel League championship . His two key hitting coaches growing up were Bob Molinaro , a family friend who is a former major leaguer and Eastern League manager , and his mother Mindy .

= = = High school = = =

Valencia played shortstop for four years for the Spanish River High School Sharks . He earned South Florida Sun @-@ Sentinel All @-@ County honors as a junior , and was named first team All @-@ Palm Beach County three times and second @-@ team All @-@ State twice . As a junior in 2002 he was Offensive Player of the Year after hitting .430 , and as a senior in 2003 he hit .575 .

= = College = =

= = = UNC @-@ Greensboro = = =

Although Valencia had dreamed of playing for the University of Miami , its baseball program did not recruit him , and instead he went to the University of North Carolina at Greensboro , one of two teams that had offered him a full baseball scholarship . In his freshman year , Valencia played third base and batted .338 with a .527 slugging percentage and a team @-@ leading 8 home runs . He

was the 2004 Southern Conference Freshman of the Year , and was voted second @-@ team All @-@ Conference .

= = = University of Miami = = =

Homesick for Florida , Valencia sought to transfer to the University of Miami after his freshman year , even though it only offered him a modest scholarship . UNC @-@ Greensboro initially agreed to release Valencia from his scholarship , but later refused , placing him in jeopardy of losing a year of college eligibility under NCAA Division I rules . He appealed to a university committee which ruled in his favor , allowing him to leave while preserving his eligibility .

During his sophomore year , Valencia played first base for the University of Miami Hurricanes alongside then @-@ third @-@ baseman Ryan Braun . He hit .300 and drove in 63 runs while batting fifth in the lineup , and was named to the All @-@ Regional Team . By his sophomore year of college , he had added 40 pounds . " It 's night and day " from UNC @-@ Greensboro , said Valencia . " It 's awesome . It 's what every Florida kid dreams of . It 's the program ? the winning , the uniforms . Everything from the strength coach to the facilities is completely different . " During the summer of 2005 , he played third base for the Anchorage Glacier Pilots in the Alaska Baseball League .

When Braun left to join the Milwaukee Brewers ' farm system in 2005 , Valencia replaced him at third base for his junior year , batting .324 with a .475 slugging percentage . Valencia hit .312 with 124 runs batted in ( RBIs ) in 122 games over two years with the Hurricanes , and played in the College World Series . Valencia then played seven games for the Orleans Cardinals in the Cape Cod League in the summer of 2006 .

Drafted in the 19th round of the 2006 draft by the Minnesota Twins , the 576th player overall , he skipped his senior year of college to begin his pro career . Valencia was disappointed in his draft position , but said : " realistically , it does not change things for me . My goal has always been to get to the big leagues ... It does not matter where you start , but where you finish . "

= = Minor league career ( 2006 ? 10 ) = =

= = = 2006 ? 08 = = =

In his first professional season , Valencia played first and third base with the Elizabethton Twins . He compiled a .311 batting average ( ninth in the league , and fifth in the Twins ' organization ) and a .505 slugging percentage ( sixth in the league ) , with eight home runs ( fourth in the league ) and 29 RBIs in 48 games . He was also fifth in the league in at @-@ bats @-@ per @-@ home @-@ run . Valencia was named a 2006 Appalachian League Postseason All @-@ Star , and then batted .364 in the playoffs .

Valencia was selected as a Midwest League All Star in 2007 , while playing with the Beloit Snappers , for whom he batted .302 / .374 / .500 . His Beloit teammates nicknamed him " The Franchise " . Manager Jeff Smith lauded him for using the whole field when he batted , and for patience at the plate .

Immediately following the All Star game , he was promoted to the high A Fort Myers Miracle . He earned Florida State League ( FSL ) " Player of the Week " honors , batting .379 ( 11 ? 29 ) with two home runs , three runs scored , and 10 RBIs for the week of July 16 . He hit a combined .297 / .354 / .462 with 17 homers and 66 RBIs at Beloit and Fort Myers .

Again assigned to the Miracle for the first half of 2008 , he batted a league @-@ leading .336 with a league @-@ leading 74 hits , and five home runs and 44 RBIs ( second in the league ) , a .402 on @-@ base percentage , and a .518 slugging percentage . He was named a Florida State League All Star , and helped the Miracle capture the FSL 2008 Western Division first half crown . Jim Rantz , director of minor leagues for the Twins , said that he expected Valencia would hit for both power and average .

Valencia was promoted to the Twins ' Double @-@ A affiliate , the New Britain Rock Cats , for the second half of the season . With the Rock Cats , Valencia batted .289 with 10 home runs and 32 RBIs . Between the two teams , he batted .311 ( sixth in the Twins ' system ) , with 15 home runs and 76 RBIs ( fourth in the Twins ' system ) .

= = = 2009 ? 13 = = =

With the Rock Cats to start 2009 , he was voted the Eastern League Player of the Week Award for the week ending May 24 , after batting .444 with a .778 slugging percentage . Rock Cats manager Tom Nieto said : " Danny 's going to be a special player . He 's got an electric bat . " He hit 38 doubles during the season , tied for the most in the Twins ' organization .

Following the season , he played 31 games of winter ball with the Arizona Fall League 's Phoenix Desert Dogs . He spent spring training with the Twins in 2009 as a non @-@ roster invitee , batting .429 , and was assigned to New Britain following spring training . Baseball America ranked him as the fifth @-@ best prospect in the Twins ' organization .

During the 2009 season , Valencia first played for New Britain and was then promoted to the Triple @-@ A Rochester Red Wings . He batted a combined .285 with 14 home runs and 70 RBIs for the two teams . The Twins management indicated that it felt that Valencia would be one of the top position players of the future . On November 20 , 2009 , he was added to the Twins ' 40 @-@ man roster . Rantz said : " We 're still trying to fill the third @-@ base hole . Eventually ... we 're all hoping that [ Valencia will ] be that guy . "

He then played for the Indios de Mayagüez in the Puerto Rico winter league , and as a foreign @-@ born player ( of Cuban heritage ) for Team Puerto Rico in the Caribbean Series . Twins general manager Bill Smith said in December : " I give Danny Valencia credit . He 's down in Puerto Rico right now playing winter ball , and trying to get better .... You always want an underdog guy , somebody to step up when presented with an opportunity . " Hector Otero , the Twins scout who signed Valencia and who was the general manager of the Mayagüez club , said : " I think he is a talented player . He definitely can throw . He worked on his defense ? worked extra before games ? and everyone knows he can swing the bat . "

Valencia entered the 2010 season ranked as the Twins ' sixth @-@ best prospect by Baseball America . Valencia began 2010 playing third base for Rochester , and was batting .292 in 48 games when he was called up by the parent club .

In 2013 , Valencia batted .286 with 14 home runs and 51 RBIs in 262 at bats with Triple @-@ A Norfolk , and a .531 slugging percentage that would have ranked second in the International League if he had reached the minimum number of at bats .

= = Major League career ( 2010 ? present ) = =

= = = Minnesota Twins ( 2010 ? 12 ) = = =

Assessing Valencia 's hitting during 2010 spring training , Twins manager Ron Gardenhire said : ? I guarantee you one thing , he can hit a fastball ; and if he sits on a breaking ball , he can hit that , too . ? On June 3 , Valencia was called up to replace Michael Cuddyer , who had been placed on the bereavement list following the death of his father @-@ in @-@ law . In his debut that day , he went 1 for 3 .

On July 26 , Valencia hit a grand slam off reigning AL Cy Young winner Zack Greinke to record his first big league homer . The feat marked the first time in the 49 years of Twins franchise history that a player 's first Major League home run was a grand slam . The game was also his first four @-@ hit performance . The next day , Valencia became the first Twins rookie to have back @-@ to @-@ back games with four hits apiece .

In 2010 , Valencia hit .394 with runners in scoring position . That was best in the AL ( ahead of Josh Hamilton ) , among those with at least 75 plate appearances in that situation . On defense , he had

the fifth @-@ best fielding percentage among AL third basemen ( .973 ) .

For the season , his .311 batting average ( the best by a Twins rookie in 46 years ) , .448 slugging percentage , and .799 OPS were the highest among AL rookies with 300 or more plate appearances . He came in 3rd among AL rookies in hits ( 93 ) and total bases ( 134 ) . In 65 games after the All Star break , he led AL rookies in batting ( .311 ) , RBIs ( 37 ) , and doubles ( 16 ) .

Valencia was named the third baseman on Baseball America 's 2010 All @-@ Rookie Team , and the third baseman on the 2010 Topps Major League Rookie All @-@ Star Team . He was also named the Twins ' Most Outstanding Rookie ( the Bill Boni Award ) . He came in third in the voting for 2010 AL Rookie of the Year , with one second @-@ place vote and nine third @-@ place votes .

In 2011 , Valencia batted .246 , with 15 home runs and a team @-@ leading 72 RBIs . He also led the team in games played and at bats , and led the AL in games played at third base . On defense , he led the all major league third basemen in assists , with 260 .

In 2012 , Valencia was replaced by Trevor Plouffe as the team 's everyday third baseman after mediocre play during the season . After Plouffe was placed on the DL , Valencia made his return to the Twins roster on July 27 .

= = = Boston Red Sox ( 2012 ) = = =

Valencia was hitting .205 with two home runs with the Twins when he was traded to the Boston Red Sox on August 5 . Minnesota received minor league outfielder Jeremias Pineda in return . The Red Sox immediately optioned Valencia to their Triple @-@ A affiliate Pawtucket Red Sox . He was recalled from Pawtucket on August 11 when Will Middlebrooks was placed on the disabled list with a broken right wrist expected to end his season . Valencia was sent back to Pawtucket on August 21 , before being recalled again on September 25 . He remained with the major league club for the rest of the season , while appearing in six games . On November 20 , Valencia was designated for assignment along with four other Red Sox players .

= = = Baltimore Orioles ( 2013 ) = = =

Valencia was traded to the Baltimore Orioles for cash considerations eight days later , on November 28 , 2012 .

Valencia was recalled from the Triple @-@ A Norfolk Tides on August 19 , 2013 .

He batted .304 for the season , with a .553 slugging percentage . He batted .371 vs. left @-@ handed pitching , leading the American League , and ranked third in slugging percentage at .639 ( minimum 100 plate appearances ) .

He was eligible for arbitration after the season . Valencia was traded to the Kansas City Royals for OF David Lough on December 18 , 2013 .

= = = Kansas City Royals ( 2014 ) = = =

On May 22 , 2014 , Valencia was given the starting third baseman job by the Royals , after hitting .308 in his first 16 games . He batted .282 in 110 at bats , before being traded .

= = = Toronto Blue Jays ( 2014 ? 2015 ) = = =

On July 28 , 2014 , Valencia was traded to the Toronto Blue Jays for pitcher Liam Hendriks and catcher Erik Kratz . In the offseason , Valencia won his salary arbitration case against the Blue Jays , and was awarded a one @-@ year contract worth \$ 1 @.@ 675 million . On August 1 , 2015 , Valencia was designated for assignment .

= = = Oakland Athletics ( 2015 ? present ) = = =

The Oakland Athletics claimed Valencia off waivers on August 3 . He debuted with the team on August 5 , starting at third base .

= = Awards = =