

= Iván Rodríguez =

Iván Rodríguez Torres (born November 27 , 1971) , nicknamed " Pudge " or " I @-@ Rod " is a retired Major League Baseball catcher . In his career , he played for the Texas Rangers (on two different tours , comprising the majority of his career) , Florida Marlins , Detroit Tigers , New York Yankees , Houston Astros and Washington Nationals .

Rodríguez was awarded the AL MVP award in 1999 . He is widely regarded as one of the best defensive catchers of all time .

Rodríguez won the World Series with the Marlins in 2003 , and also played in the 2006 World Series while with the Tigers . On June 17 , 2009 , Rodríguez set an MLB record by catching his 2,227th game , passing Carlton Fisk . During his career , he had the best caught stealing percentage of any major league catcher , at 45 @. @ 68 % .

= = Early years = =

Rodríguez was born and raised in Vega Baja . His father , Juan , worked for a U.S.-based construction company , and his mother , Eva Torres , was an elementary school teacher . Iván 's first job involved delivering flyers in the shopping malls in Puerto Rico .

He learned baseball at an early age , his biggest rival being Juan González , who he often played against in his youth . As a Little League player , he moved from pitcher to catcher because his father , who was also his coach , thought he was throwing too hard and scaring opposing players with his pitches . Rodríguez attended Lino Padron Rivera High School , where he was discovered by scout Luis Rosa . Rosa reported that " He showed leadership at 16 that I 'd seen in few kids . He knew where he was going . " Rodríguez signed a contract with the Texas Rangers in July 1988 , at the age of 16 , and began his professional baseball career .

= = Playing career = =

= = = Minor leagues = = =

Rodríguez made his professional debut in 1989 at the age of 17 as catcher for the Gastonia Rangers of the South Atlantic League . In his first game , he had three hits in three at @-@ bats (3 @-@ for @-@ 3) against Spartanburg . Playing in the Florida State League in 1990 , Rodríguez was selected the best catcher in the league and named to the All @-@ Star team . He placed 15th in the league in batting at .287 , and led his team in runs batted in , with 55 . He also played in the Puerto Rican Professional Baseball League (LBPPR) over the offseason .

At the beginning of the 1991 season , Rodriguez played 50 games with the Tulsa Drillers , a AA team , where he batted .274 in 175 at @-@ bats . He was considered the number one prospect of the Texas League . Before the middle of the season , he was called up to the Texas Rangers , thus bypassing AAA .

= = = Texas Rangers = = =

Making his debut with the Texas Rangers on June 20 , 1991 , he became the youngest player to catch in a major league game that season at 19 years of age . He immediately established himself as an excellent hitter who was also proficient in throwing out would @-@ be base @-@ stealers . No other catcher in the past 35 years has been as successful at this aspect of the game , with Rodríguez throwing out 48 % of attempted basestealers through May 2006 . He started many of the Rangers games at the end of the season , including 81 of the last 102 . Rodríguez became the youngest player in the history of the Texas Rangers to hit a home run , on August 30 , 1991 , facing the Kansas City Royals and right @-@ hander Storm Davis . He was named to the Major League Baseball (MLB) Rookie All @-@ Star team by both Topps and Baseball America and finished in

fourth place in the AL Rookie of the Year voting . He also placed first in throwing out runners , catching 48 @. @ 6 percent of runners attempting to steal .

In 1992 , Rodríguez started 112 games behind the plate and was the youngest player in the major leagues for the second year in a row . Playing in the Puerto Rico Winter League , he had a .262 batting average playing in 17 games for Mayagüez . In the 1993 season , Rodríguez batted .273 , had 66 runs batted in and hit 10 home runs , ranking fourth , fifth , and fifth on his team respectively . He had a stretch of eight straight hits over two games facing the Kansas City Royals on July 26 and July 28 . He played the final month of the regular season in the Puerto Rican Winter league , where he had a .425 batting average and 14 runs batted in for Mayagüez . Rodríguez was named to the Puerto Rican Winter League all @-@ star team and was also the league Most Valuable Player (MVP) .

In 1994 , Rodríguez led the American League in batting average among catchers , at .298 . He placed high on his team in many statistics , placing second in batting average (.298) , tied for third in doubles (19) , and fourth in hits , total bases , runs , home runs , walks , games , and at bats . He also caught Kenny Rogers ' perfect game on 1994 @-@ 07 @-@ 28 . Rodríguez played in the Puerto Rican Winter League over the winter , but he suffered a severe knee injury which kept him from playing for the rest of the season .

Playing for the Rangers during the 1995 season , Rodríguez led his team in batting , total bases , and doubles , at .303 , 221 , and 32 respectively . He was named the Texas Rangers ' player of the year . Rodríguez also had his first multi @-@ home run game while playing the Boston Red Sox on July 13 , hitting both off All @-@ Star pitcher Roger Clemens . He also played for Caguas in the Puerto Rican Winter League during the offseason .

In 1996 , Rodríguez set an MLB record for most doubles by a catcher , amassing 44 over the course of the season . This broke the previous mark of 42 , set by Mickey Cochrane in 1930 . He also set the major league record for at @-@ bats by a catcher in a single season , with 639 , which surpassed Johnny Bench 's record of 621 in 1970 . He led the Texas Rangers in doubles , at bats , hits , and runs scored . He was selected to the Major League Baseball All @-@ Star team that played a series in Japan against the Japanese all @-@ stars after the season was over . He again played in the Puerto Rican Winter League this season . In the 1997 season , Rodríguez also placed first among catchers in many categories in Major League Baseball . These categories were hits , runs , runs batted in , and doubles . He placed second in home runs among catchers , below only Sandy Alomar , Jr. of the Cleveland Indians , who had 20 home runs . He appeared on the cover of Sports Illustrated on the week of August 4 . This marked the fourth time a player from the Texas Rangers had been on the cover of Sports Illustrated . Rodríguez played in the Puerto Rican Winter League yet again , where he had a .285 batting average , 4 home runs , and 18 runs batted in over the course of 32 games playing for Caguas .

In the 1998 season , Rodríguez led the Texas Rangers in batting average at .325 , which placed eighth in the American League . He also had 75 multi @-@ hit games and 186 hits , finishing seventh and ninth in MLB respectively . He finished second on the Rangers in hits , total bases , triples , and slugging percentage . Rodríguez was third on the team in doubles , home runs , and stolen bases , and fourth in runs batted in . He had his 1000th hit in a game facing the Cleveland Indians on May 10 of that season . Rodríguez also became the first catcher in the history of Major League Baseball to have two or more seasons with 40 or more doubles . He was selected to the American League All @-@ Star Team again , and he was also named to all @-@ star teams by the Associated Press , The Sporting News , and Baseball America .

In 1999 , Rodríguez was selected as the American League MVP . He set a new American League record for home runs in a single season among catchers with 35 . Rodríguez was also the first catcher to have more than 30 home runs , 100 runs batted in , and 100 runs scored in the history of Major League Baseball . In addition , he holds the distinction of being the first catcher in the history of the league to amass more than 20 home runs and 20 stolen bases . From May 8 , 1999 to June 1 , 1999 , Rodríguez had a career high 20 game hitting streak . He had 25 stolen bases , which was fifth most among catchers in the history of the league . He led the league in times grounded into a double play , with 31 . Rodríguez was only the ninth catcher in the history of Major League Baseball

to win the Most Valuable Player award , and he was the first to win it since Thurman Munson in 1976 . He was named on all of the ballots , getting seven first place votes and six second place votes . Rodríguez was the sixth Puerto Rican to win the award , and the fourth player from the Texas Rangers to win it . He also won the Silver Slugger Award for the sixth time in a row and was selected Most Valuable Player by Baseball Digest . He was again named to all @-@ star teams by the Associated Press , The Sporting News , and Baseball America . While he was hitting home runs , he wasn 't taking many walks . He is one of only six players active in 2009 who have had at least 30 home runs in a season in which they had more homers than walks (34 HR , 24 BB in 1999) . The others are Alfonso Soriano (39 ? 23 in 2002 , 36 ? 33 in 2005 , 33 ? 31 in 2007) , Garret Anderson (35 ? 24 in 2000) , Ryan Braun (34 ? 29 in 2007) , Joe Crede (30 ? 28 in 2006) , and José Guillén (31 ? 24 in 2003) .

In 2000 , Rodríguez suffered a season @-@ ending injury in a game against the Anaheim Angels . While trying to make a throw to second base , his thumb made contact with the swing of Mo Vaughn 's bat . He fractured his right thumb and underwent surgery the next day . This injury caused him to miss the rest of the season . Rodríguez appeared in just 91 games , which was the fewest that he appeared in since his first season in the league , 1991 . His nine home runs in April matched a team record that was shared (through 2008) with Alex Rodriguez (2002) , Carl Everett (2003) , and Ian Kinsler (2007) . Even though he was injured , he was still named to the second @-@ team of Baseball America 's Major League Baseball All @-@ Star Team .

Rodríguez returned to full action in 2001 and had another all @-@ star season . He was selected to his ninth straight MLB All @-@ Star Game , which tied the all @-@ time record set by Johnny Bench . He also tied Bench 's record of ten straight Rawlings Gold Glove Awards in a row . He batted .308 , making 2001 his seventh straight season with a batting average of over .300 . He had 25 home runs , 136 hits , and 65 runs batted in .

Rodríguez 's final year with the Texas Rangers came in 2002 . His .314 batting average was seventh best among American League players . This was his eighth season in a row with batting average of .300 or above . He also had 32 doubles , 2 triples , and 60 runs batted in while playing in 108 games for the Rangers . Rodríguez was placed on the disabled list on April 23 after suffering a herniated disk on April 15 . The injury did not require surgery , and he rehabilitated while playing for Class @-@ A Charlotte . He later returned to the Rangers and played there for the remainder of the season . After the 2002 season his contract with Texas ran out and he became a free agent .

= = = Florida Marlins = = =

Before the 2003 season Rodríguez signed with the Florida Marlins . By then a major @-@ league veteran of over a decade , he helped lead the young team to victory in the World Series . During the 2003 regular season , he set many Marlins single season records for a catcher , such as batting average , at .297 , and runs batted in , at 85 . On March 31 , Rodríguez became the tenth Marlins player ever to hit a home run in the team 's first game of the season . On April 8 , he set a Marlins single game record by drawing five walks in a game against the New York Mets . He had a nine @-@ game hitting streak from June 24 to July 2 , during which he batted .500 with seven doubles , two triples , and four home runs . From June 24 to July 1 , he drove in a run in eight consecutive games , another single season record for the Florida Marlins . In the post @-@ season , he was named National League Championship Series Most Valuable Player for the first time in his career . He also closed out the National League Division Series by holding onto the ball during a dramatic game @-@ ending collision at the plate with J. T. Snow in Game Four . He chose not to return to the Marlins following the 2003 season .

= = = Detroit Tigers = = =

Before the 2004 season Rodríguez signed a 4 @-@ year , \$ 40 million contract with the Detroit Tigers . In 2004 , he was selected to the MLB All @-@ Star Game for the 11th time in his career and for his 10th time as a starting player , joining Johnny Bench and Mike Piazza as the only Major

League Baseball catchers to start an All @-@ Star game 10 times or more in their career . During the month of June , he batted .500 and was named the American League Player of the Month . He also won his 11th consecutive Rawlings Gold Glove Award , making him the first player on the Detroit Tigers to win the award since Gary Pettis won it in 1989 . He won his seventh career Silver Slugger Award , tied with Víctor Martínez of the Cleveland Indians . He was fourth in the American League in batting average and fourth among all Major League Baseball catchers . On October 1 , he recorded his 1,000th career RBI in a game against the Tampa Bay Devil Rays .

Prior to the 2005 season , Jose Canseco , in his controversial book Juiced , claimed to have personally injected Rodríguez with anabolic steroids during their time as teammates on the Texas Rangers . Rodríguez denied the allegations and said he was " in shock " over Canseco claims . Asked by a reporter four years later whether his name is on the list of 104 players who tested positive for steroids during baseball 's 2003 survey testing , Rodríguez responded , " Only God knows . "

Despite the off @-@ season controversy , the 2005 season turned out to be another All @-@ Star year for Rodríguez . He was selected to the Major League Baseball All @-@ Star Game for the twelfth time in his career , and he participated in the Century 21 Home Run Derby on the day before the All @-@ Star game , finishing second to Bobby Abreu of the Philadelphia Phillies in his home stadium of Comerica Park . By the end of the season , he batted .276 with 14 home runs and 50 runs batted in . On October 26 , 2005 , Major League Baseball named him the catcher on their Latino Legends Team .

In 2006 , Rodríguez returned to throwing out runners attempting to steal a base at a very high percentage , as he did in his earlier career ; he was first in the league in this category , throwing out 45 @. @ 7 percent of all runners attempting to steal a base . On May 9 , 2006 , Rodríguez played first base for the Tigers . That game , a 7 ? 6 loss to the Baltimore Orioles , was the first time that he played a position other than catcher in his 1 @, @ 914 Major League games . On August 15 , 2006 , he also made his first Major League appearance at second base after regular second baseman Plácido Polanco was injured in a game in Boston . Rodríguez was honored with a Fielding Bible Award as the best fielding catcher in MLB in 2006 . Rodríguez would help the Tigers upset the Yankees in the 2006 ALDS and the A 's in the 2006 ALCS to help Detroit win the pennant .

On April 16 , 2007 , he batted in 6 runs on the way to a 12 ? 5 victory over the Kansas City Royals . On June 12 he caught Justin Verlander 's first no @-@ hitter , the second no @-@ hitter he caught in his career . In 2007 , Rodríguez walked in only 1 @. @ 8 percent of his plate appearances , the lowest percentage in the major leagues . On October 9 , the Tigers announced that they were picking up the fifth @-@ year , 13 @-@ million @-@ dollar option on Rodríguez 's contract , keeping him on the Tigers team through at least the 2008 season . The team could have bought out the option for three million dollars and allowed him to become a free agent .

In spring training in 2008 he led the major leagues with eight home runs . On April 10 against Boston , he got his 2,500th hit .

= = = New York Yankees = = =

On July 30 , 2008 , Rodríguez was traded to the New York Yankees for relief pitcher Kyle Farnsworth after starting Yankee catcher Jorge Posada had season @-@ ending surgery . While Rodríguez wanted to leave Detroit due to Tigers manager Jim Leyland 's decision to use rotating catchers , he wound up sharing catching duties with back @-@ up Yankee catcher José Molina , starting only 26 of the remaining 55 games of the 2008 season . With his customary number 7 having been retired by the Yankees for Mickey Mantle , Rodríguez changed his jersey number to 12 . He finished the year with a .278 batting average with his time on the Yankees being his worst part of the season .

= = = Return to Puerto Rican League = = =

In preparation for the 2009 World Baseball Classic , Rodríguez returned to the Puerto Rico Baseball

League (formerly LBPPR) during the offseason , following ten years of absence . Playing for the Criollos de Caguas , he gathered a batting average of .370 with three runs batted in and one home run in six games during the regular season . Upon leaving the team on vacation , Rodríguez noted that his intention was to return to action if the Criollos advanced to the playoffs . He returned to action in a " sudden death " game for the final postseason space , but the team lost and was eliminated . On January 8 , 2008 , the Leones de Ponce reclaimed Rodríguez in the last turn of a special post @-@ season draft , where players from eliminated teams were selected to reinforce those that qualified . In the first week of December 2009 , Rodríguez re @-@ joined the Criollos de Caguas in the PRBL .

= = = Houston Astros = = =

On March 20 , 2009 , Rodríguez signed a one @-@ year deal worth \$ 1 @. @ 5 million with the Houston Astros . Rodríguez was given the opportunity to make an additional \$ 1 @. @ 5 million in performance bonuses . In a situation similar to his tenure with the Yankees , his customary number 7 had been retired by the Astros in honor of Craig Biggio , so Rodríguez initially wore jersey number 12 , then later changed to number 77 mid @-@ season .

On May 17 , 2009 , Rodríguez hit his 300th career home run off of Chicago Cubs pitcher Rich Harden at Wrigley Field . On June 17 , 2009 , Rodríguez passed Carlton Fisk for the most games caught in a career ; the game was against his former team (the Rangers) at Rangers Ballpark in Arlington .

= = = Second stint with Rangers = = =

On August 18 , 2009 , Rodríguez was traded to the Texas Rangers for minor league reliever Matt Nevarez and two PTBNL . Teammate David Murphy switched his uniform number to # 14 so Rodríguez could wear the # 7 he previously wore with the Rangers . In his first game with the Rangers , Rodríguez went 3 @-@ for @-@ 4 with an RBI double and two singles . He hit his first home run with the Rangers since 2002 on August 29 , a solo shot against Minnesota Twins reliever José Mijares .

He finished the 2009 season ranked first in major league history with 13 @, @ 910 putouts as a catcher , ahead of Brad Ausmus (12 @, @ 671) .

= = = Washington Nationals = = =

Following the 2009 season , Rodríguez filed for free agency , declining the Rangers ' offer of salary arbitration . On December 11 , 2009 , Rodríguez signed a 2 @-@ year , \$ 6 million contract with the Washington Nationals .

Rodríguez hit his first home run as a member of the Nationals on May 6 against Tim Hudson of the Atlanta Braves . Facing the New York Mets at Citi Field four days later , he went 4 @-@ for @-@ 4 and drove in the eventual game @-@ winning RBI . On May 24 , Rodríguez was hitting .325 , but was placed on the 15 @-@ day disabled list due to a back sprain .

On June 8 , 2010 , Rodríguez returned from the DL in time to catch for Stephen Strasburg 's Major League debut . In this debut , Strasburg struck out 14 batters and walked none over seven complete innings . This game has already been dubbed as one of the greatest major league pitching debuts of all time . In a postgame interview , Pudge reacted that " [e] verybody [was] impressed with what this kid did . "

Rodríguez platooned at the catching duties for the Nationals with Wilson Ramos .

= = World Baseball Classic = =

Rodríguez represented Puerto Rico in the 2006 World Baseball Classic . Rodríguez was one of several Major League Baseball players that committed to represent their birthplaces before the

organization of the tournament . He also played for Puerto Rico in the 2009 World Baseball Classic and was named to the classic 's All @-@ Tournament Team .

= = Retirement = =

Rodríguez announced his retirement on April 18 , 2012 . He signed a one @-@ day contract with the Rangers on April 23 , retiring as a member of the team . Rodriguez also threw out the ceremonial first pitch during the Rangers home game against the New York Yankees . Instead of throwing out the ceremonial first pitch from the mound , he went to his usual position behind the plate and threw from behind home plate to second base to Michael Young . Rodriguez was inducted into the Texas Sports Hall of Fame on February 27 , 2014 . He also joined FOX Sports Southwest in 2014 as an analyst for pre and postgame television coverage .

In 2017 Rodríguez will become eligible for induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame . Richard Justice of MLB.com has argued that he is " unquestionably " a Hall of Fame @-@ caliber player , writing on mlb.com in 2012 that he batted better than .290 with more than 2 @,@ 500 hits , 550 doubles , 300 home runs and 1 @,@ 300 RBI , an accomplishment equaled only by four all @-@ time greats : Hank Aaron , George Brett , Babe Ruth and Barry Bonds . (This statement was incorrect , as Stan Musial also met and far surpassed all of those numbers . Incidentally , in 2013 , the year following Justice 's publication of this article , Todd Helton had met all five of these criteria as well , and among active players , Albert Pujols joined this club in 2015 upon hitting his 550th double .) However , Justice acknowledges that like Bonds , Rodríguez may have difficulty winning election to the Hall of Fame due to suspicion that he used steroids during his career .

= = Personal life = =

Rodríguez has three children : Iván Derrek (b . 06 @-@ 05 @-@ 1992) , who was picked in the 6th round of the 2011 MLB draft by the Minnesota Twins , Amanda Christine (b . 06 @-@ 21 @-@ 1995) and Ivanna Sofia (b . 01 @-@ 12 @-@ 2000) . The family divided their time between Colleyville , Texas , Miami , Florida and Puerto Rico . In 1993 , Rodríguez and his wife founded the Ivan " Pudge " Rodríguez Foundation , whose purpose is to help families in Puerto Rico , Dallas and Fort Worth , Texas . Rodríguez has also stated that the Make @-@ a @-@ Wish Foundation is one of his charities of choice . Their fifteen @-@ year marriage ended in 2006 . Rodríguez remarried in 2007 . Rodríguez 's appreciation of recording artist Yanni was pointed out during the 2003 World Series and the 2004 All @-@ Star Game by Fox Sports .