

= Carlos Ruiz (baseball) =

Carlos Joaquín Ruiz (born January 22 , 1979) is a Panamanian professional baseball catcher for the Philadelphia Phillies of Major League Baseball (MLB) . His nicknames include Chooch , Bad Dude and Señor Octubre . He grew up in David , Chiriquí , Panama , and resolved to play Major League Baseball after his father and grandmother both died within two weeks of each other when he was seven years old . He made his way through the Phillies ' farm system from 1998 until 2006 , playing at each level of Minor League Baseball , until finally making his debut with the Phillies in 2006 , fulfilling his childhood dream . He battled adversity in his progression through the system , including feeling homesick , a position change and the language barrier (he spoke Spanish , while most teammates and team officials spoke English) .

He spent his first full season in the major leagues in 2007 and has remained there since . In 2008 , for his strong postseason performance , including a walk @-@ off hit , during the Phillies playoff run that concluded with victory in the 2008 World Series , he earned the nickname " Señor Octubre " (Mr. October) . Despite being one of the quietest players on the team , he was subsequently called the " heart and soul " of the Phillies ; he serves as a constant source of encouragement and rebuke alike to his teammates . Over the following seasons , he was a part of the core group of players that led the Phillies to five consecutive playoff appearances from 2007 until 2011 . He had his best season in 2012 , holding a batting average of over .300 , earning his first appearance in the Major League Baseball All @-@ Star Game , and finishing in the top 30 of the National League Most Valuable Player voting . In 2013 , he began the season with a 25 @-@ game suspension for using Adderall , and subsequently spent time on the disabled list , ultimately playing in fewer than 100 games for the first time in his MLB career .

Ruiz is the only player in the National League to catch four no @-@ hitters , and one of only two catchers in Major League Baseball , the other being Jason Varitek .

= = Early life = =

Ruiz grew up in David , Panama , and was the oldest of three sons . His father was a police officer and his mother was an elementary school teacher . When he was seven years old , his father Joaquin was patrolling in his police jeep when a tire blew out , causing the vehicle to flip , throwing Joaquin into a ditch , and then crushing him when it fell on top of him . Just weeks before , his grandmother died of cancer . As a result , Ruiz became " the new father " , starting work shortly thereafter as a laborer on a coffee farm to supplement the family income , and by age 10 was earning about US \$ 3 per day . He also promised his widowed mother that he would make it to Major League Baseball to support the family . Subsequently , he began attending college to earn a degree in physical education , but dropped out shortly after he began to attend the Phillies baseball academy .

Ruiz 's upbringing contributed to his approach to the game . His mother insisted that he excel academically , and would not allow him to play baseball unless he did well in school . Baseball was his first love , and he was responsible for organizing the community 's games :

" Ruiz 's natural leadership skills flourished . As a boy , Ruiz , who had chosen to play with baseballs instead of toy cars even as a toddler , was always the one in his neighborhood to organize pickup baseball games . It was he who brought the balls and bats , and it was he who picked the teams and ordered everyone to their positions . He had an acute understanding of the game . Ruiz was made to lead , and playing catcher eventually suited him perfectly . "

= = Professional career = =

= = = Minor leagues = = =

In 1998 , Ruiz followed his dream of playing professional baseball first by attending the Phillies

Baseball Academy in La Vega , Dominican Republic , where he played catcher for the first time , moving from his initial position of second base . Though he was ready to quit because " he looked and felt like a 10 @-@ year @-@ old among the tall , athletic prospects surrounding him " , his uncle convinced him in a phone conversation to stick with it . The Phillies signed him as an amateur free agent on December 4 , 1998 for US \$ 8 @,@ 000 , and he made his professional debut in 1999 with the Dominican Summer League (DSL) team DSL Phillies , with whom he compiled a .305 batting average , 4 home runs , and 35 runs batted in (RBIs) in 60 games . Prior to the 2000 season , Ruiz met Mick Billmeyer , the Phillies ' minor league catching coordinator , who served as his mentor . Billmeyer sought to learn Spanish while Ruiz sought to learn English , and the two bonded as Billmeyer helped mold Ruiz into an eventual top prospect and ultimately a starting catcher . In 2000 , he came to America , progressing to play in the Gulf Coast League (GCL) for the GCL Phillies , and hitting .277 in 38 games . He earned another promotion in 2001 , playing for the Lakewood BlueClaws of Class A Minor League Baseball . In 2001 , his performance was similar in quality to his first two seasons , and he was promoted to the Clearwater Threshers of Class A @-@ Advanced , with whom he played over parts of the next two seasons . He struggled at the plate in 2002 , compiling just a .213 batting average in 92 games , but hit .315 in 15 games in 2003 , and that year earned another promotion .

In 2004 , Ruiz spent the entire season with the Double @-@ A Reading Phillies , posting a .284 batting average and hitting 17 home runs , the latter of which was second among catchers in the Eastern League . In addition to his strong offensive numbers , he threw out 25 of 76 attempted base stealers (32 @.@ 9 %) . Off the field , it was in 2004 that Ruiz first gained the original form of his nickname " Chooch " . Though a quiet individual , Ruiz frequently muttered " chucha " (a word equivalent to the f @-@ bomb in Panama) under his breath , and teammate Anderson Machado thus began to address Ruiz as " chucha " , which was later shortened to " Chooch " , and the nickname 's usage snowballed from there . His strong performance earned him another promotion in 2005 when he played for the Triple @-@ A Scranton / Wilkes @-@ Barre Red Barons , and posted a better batting average but fewer home runs than in Reading : .300 , 4 home runs , 40 RBIs in 100 games . Before the 2006 season , he played for his native Panama in the first World Baseball Classic . His final season in the minor leagues was 2006 . During 100 games , he hit .307 with 16 home runs and 69 RBIs , earning International League all @-@ star accolades . He moved back and forth between Triple @-@ A and the major league Phillies all year long , making his MLB debut on May 6 , 2006 .

= = = Philadelphia Phillies (2006 ? present) = = =

= = = = 2006 = = = =

Ruiz was first brought up to the major league level when Phillies ' starting catcher Mike Lieberthal went on the disabled list (DL) in May 2006 , and Ruiz debuted on May 6 . When Lieberthal returned , Ruiz was sent back to the minors . When Lieberthal went once again on the DL in June , the Phillies used Sal Fasano and Chris Coste rather than recalling Ruiz . He was recalled on July 4 , when he hit his first major league home run off San Diego Padres ' pitcher Clay Hensley . He was optioned back to the minor leagues once more before his recall on August 31 ? essentially a September callup . Overall , with the big league club , he hit .261 with 3 home runs and 10 RBIs .

= = = = 2007 = = = =

Ruiz permanently joined the Phillies ' roster on opening day 2007 , after eight seasons in the minor leagues . He ultimately " grabbed hold of the top job [as starting catcher] and never let go " . The Phillies signed Rod Barajas before the season because of concerns about Ruiz 's ability to catch , hit , and generally hold up over a full season at the major league level , as seasons there are longer than in the minor leagues . During the season , he honed his confidence and earned the trust of the

Phillies ' pitching staff , including veteran Jamie Moyer , who commented , " I see a real assuredness to his body language . He 's not cocky or brash . He just seems very confident in what 's going on . " On June 26 , Ruiz stole home on the front end of a double steal in an 11 ? 4 home win over the Cincinnati Reds , becoming the first Phillie to steal home since Scott Rolen in 1997 . He eventually played 115 games over the season , and from then on was the Phillies ' regular starting catcher . Statistically , he committed only two errors , which tied for second @-@ best among MLB catchers with at least 100 games played . He had 27 multi @-@ hit games , hit 6 home runs and 51 RBIs with a .259 batting average . At the conclusion of the season , he was named to the Topps All @-@ Star Rookie Team .

= = = = 2008 = = = =

Ruiz entered the 2008 season focused predominantly on defense , specifically helping the pitcher : " ... Ruiz invests himself in the pitcher 's performance . He and the pitcher succeed or fail together ... Everything starts with pitching . ' Hitting is nice , but working with the pitcher is my No. 1 job I want to feel like we are one person . ' "

Ruiz struggled to hit consistently throughout the season , specifically in the first half ; from the beginning of the year until July 11 , he hit .206 with 2 home runs and 20 RBIs . Nevertheless , due to his rapport with the pitching staff (pitchers ' ERA when throwing to him (catcher 's ERA) was 3 @.@ 56 , the best for any catcher in the National League (NL)) , and a vote of confidence from manager Charlie Manuel , he was secure in his position . In late July , he had a multi @-@ hit game against the New York Mets , which may have helped him break out of his slump . Ultimately , during the regular season , he hit .219 with 4 home runs and 31 RBIs .

Despite his struggles at the plate during the regular season , Ruiz was an integral part of the Phillies ' postseason success . After the Phillies clinched the 2008 National League Championship Series , he commented that the glory of winning a crucial baseball game that clinched the series , which he had witnessed while growing up in Panama on television , " happened to me " , noting the aura of the moment , and that it culminated and validated the hard work he had put in over the years . Subsequently , in game 3 of the 2008 World Series , Ruiz tapped a ground ball up the third @-@ base line for a walk @-@ off infield single , the first in MLB history . Ruiz noted , " I heard them cheering . And that 's when I knew , ' Okay it 's over ' ... I 'll take a win . " The Phillies eventually won the World Series for the first time since 1980 , doing so in five games , the last of which began on October 27 and ended on October 29 after it was suspended part @-@ way through due to rain . For his performance in the playoffs , he earned the nickname " Señor Octubre " (Mr. October in Spanish) .

= = = = 2009 = = = =

Initially , Ruiz elected not to play in the 2009 World Baseball Classic , but after receiving a call from Martín Torrijos , the President of Panama , he agreed to play for the Panamanian team . Early in the season , he suffered a muscle strain in his right oblique , which lost him playing time while on the disabled list . Also early in the season , there was debate as to who should be the Phillies starting catcher , Ruiz or Chris Coste . Rob Neyer summarized the debate and ultimately endorsed Ruiz when he wrote ,

" It 's Ruiz who has established himself as the superior hitter , almost solely because we expect him to draw more walks than Coste . Yes , Coste does have superior stats as a major leaguer ... But he is 36 , and with a couple of exceptions he 's not fared all that well in the high minors . Meanwhile , Ruis [sic] is six years younger and he 's been relatively impressive in the high minors . "

Ultimately , Ruiz was the regular starter . He finished the season on a hot streak ; over the last 24 games , he hit .355 with 9 doubles , 1 home run , 11 RBIs , and .446 on @-@ base percentage (OBP) . In late September , he missed a week of games with inflammation in his left wrist . Despite his missed time , he started 100 games and set career highs in home runs (9) and base on balls (47) , as well as posting a .255 batting average and 43 RBIs . Moreover , he walked more times than

he struck out , a rare feat among modern major league hitters . In the postseason , he led the team with a .341 batting average , and recorded a .491 OBP , having reached base in each of the Phillies ' 15 games , which perpetuated the usage of his nickname " Señor Octubre " . Marcus Hayes of The Philadelphia Daily News wrote that Ruiz is " ... the Phillies ' Senor Octubre , a No. 8 hitter who hits like John Buck in the regular season , then turns into Johnny Bench come autumn . "

===== 2010 =====

In 2010 , Ruiz had a season filled with " indelible moments " . He was catcher for Roy Halladay 's perfect game on May 29 , 2010 against the Florida Marlins and Halladay 's no @-@ hitter against the Cincinnati Reds in the first game of the National League Divisional Series on October 6 , 2010 , the first time a catcher had caught two no @-@ hitters in one season since 1972 . On May 4 , he hit a walk @-@ off home run , the second of his career , to lead the Phillies over the St. Louis Cardinals . Ruiz spent time on the DL in late June and early July with a concussion , but according to manager Charlie Manuel returned with a more efficient swing that allowed him to hit better against power pitchers . He led the team with a .302 batting average and a .400 on @-@ base percentage . Both statistics also led National League catchers , and he even received a few votes for NL most valuable player . During the 2010 postseason , he did not perform as well as in past years ? in nine games , he hit .192 with two home runs and four RBIs . Fans voted Ruiz the " X @-@ Factor Player of the Year " in MLB 's This Year in Baseball Awards . He also received the Pride of Philadelphia Award from the Philadelphia Sports Hall of Fame . Halladay called Ruiz a " rock " behind the plate , and presented him with a replica of his Cy Young Award .

===== 2011 =====

Ruiz returned for the Phillies ' 2011 season as their everyday starting catcher , and started 113 games , of which the Phillies won 70 (.619 winning percentage) . In May , he spent time on the DL with inflammation in his lower back . Over the Phillies ' final 36 games , he posted a .342 batting average . Overall , he finished with the best catcher 's ERA in the major leagues (3 @.@ 06) , a .283 batting average , 6 home runs , and 40 RBIs . His batting average was second on the team trailing only Hunter Pence .

===== 2012 =====

Ruiz began the 2012 season strongly , and throughout the season was a bright spot on an otherwise disappointing team . Through June 27 , he led the Major Leagues with a .364 average . This contributed to a stellar first half of the season earned him his first placement on the National League All @-@ Star team . He was a reserve , though some analysts , including ESPN 's John Kruk , felt his numbers warranted a starting nod , which ultimately went to the San Francisco Giants ' Buster Posey through the fan voting . Shortly after the announcement that he was an all @-@ star , a piece in The Philadelphia Daily News entitled " The evolution of Carlos Ruiz " summarized his career : " Ruiz , though , was never a major prospect . He was a reserve catcher before he was a starting catcher . He was a bottom @-@ of @-@ the @-@ order hitter before he was a middle @-@ of @-@ the @-@ order hitter . And now , for the first time in his career , Carlos Ruiz is an All @-@ Star . " After the all @-@ star break , he spent over a month on the disabled list with plantar fasciitis , hindering his statistical totals , which at the time of his injury were among the best in the National League . He led all NL catchers in doubles , en route to posting a .325 batting average with 16 home runs and 68 RBIs , all of which were career highs . He finished 28th in MVP voting , the third consecutive season he had received votes .

===== 2013 =====

On November 27 , 2012 , Ruiz was suspended for 25 games without pay by the MLB for testing

positive for an amphetamine called Adderall . The suspension of Ruiz was effective at the start of the 2013 season . Adderall is a drug prescribed for treating ADHD , described as a " central nervous system stimulant used to increase the attention span and decrease distractibility . " He made his 2013 season debut on April 28 against the New York Mets at Citi Field . On May 20 , he was placed on the DL with a Grade 2 strained hamstring . He came back with a four @-@ hit game , which tied his career high , against the Los Angeles Dodgers on August 18 , and hit .288 over the final two months of the season , commensurate with his past performance .

In the 2013 season , Ruiz compiled a .268 batting average , five home runs , and 37 RBIs in 92 games , his lowest major league total since 2006 . After the season , Ruiz became a free agent . He re @-@ signed on November 21 , 2013 to a three @-@ year contract worth US \$ 26 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 plus a club option for a fourth season , giving the Phillies have an option to bring Ruiz back for a fourth season , at their discretion . Though one writer suggested his 2013 year might just have been an " aberration " , most thought the Phillies overpaid to keep Ruiz , who turned 35 during the subsequent offseason .

== == 2014 == ==

Before the 2014 season , he received an exemption from MLB to use Adderall , an exemption given to nine percent of MLB players despite only four percent of the American population diagnosed with the condition . After a slow start , Ruiz earned NL player of the week accolades in late April after he hit .500 during a Phillies ' road trip . He sustained a concussion on June 26 that forced him to go on the disabled list ; he began a rehabilitation assignment on July 17 with the Clearwater Threshers . On September 1 , Ruiz was behind the plate for the combined no @-@ hitter thrown by Cole Hamels , Jake Diekman , Ken Giles , and Jonathan Papelbon in a 7 @-@ 0 victory over the Atlanta Braves . It was the third no @-@ hitter caught by Ruiz in his career , which ties him for second in Major League history behind Jason Varitek , who caught four . In 2014 , Ruiz played 110 games batting .252 with six home runs and 31 RBI , and overall , had " a fine season ... [that] shouldn ' t get lost amid the many negatives . " On October 1 , 2014 , Ruiz underwent a minor arthroscopic shoulder surgery .

== == 2015 == ==

Cognizant of his increasing age and the wear catching places on one 's body , the Phillies reduced Ruiz 's workload during spring training , hoping to keep him fresh throughout the regular season . Regardless , he insisted upon catching pitchers ' bullpen sessions so he could develop a feel and rapport with each pitcher . On July 25 , Ruiz became the first catcher in the National League , and the second catcher in Major League Baseball history , to catch four no @-@ hitters when teammate Cole Hamels no @-@ hit the Chicago Cubs . Overall , Ruiz lost his starting job to Cameron Rupp , and had significant declines in many aspects of his game , particularly those at which he previously excelled , including framing pitches ? in 2015 , Baseball Prospectus ranked him worst in the league at doing so ? and the mental aspect of the game , as he made several uncharacteristic errors .

== Player profile ==

== Batting ==

Offensively , Ruiz developed from a " bottom @-@ of @-@ the @-@ order hitter " , to a patient hitter inclined to work the count , and finally to a hitter with solid gap @-@ to @-@ gap power . Ruiz has strong plate discipline that helps him draw walks and avoid strikeouts ; he has almost as many walks as strikeouts over the course of his career , a rarity in the modern era of baseball . However , as his career progressed and he hit more towards the middle of the lineup , he has taken a more aggressive approach at the plate , and consequently he has struck out more often , but his home

run totals have also increased . In 2014 , his versatility and production at the plate encouraged his manager , Ryne Sandberg , to utilize him in various spots ranging from second through seventh in the batting order . At the prime of his career , he was among the best hitting catchers in MLB . Entering 2014 , Ruiz had stolen only 16 bases over his first eight seasons ; he had never been particularly fast , which initially caused his conversion from infielder to catcher , but because of his " hustle " on the basepaths , he won the Major League Baseball Players Alumni Association Heart and Hustle Award in 2012 .

= = = Catching = = =

When catching , Ruiz seeks to become " one " with the day 's pitcher ; he takes their successes and failures personally , refusing to blame pitchers , and accepts equal responsibility . Phillies pitchers trust Ruiz and his ability to call games , and this ability 's improvement has coincided with his increased proficiency in English . Cole Hamels attributes Ruiz 's prowess in calling games to astute preparation , commenting ,

" I think he 's very aware of what the hitter is trying to do in each count . He gives you a good target . It 's almost like he understands what you 're thinking and he 's speaking to you without saying anything If a catcher can help you , it makes your job so much easier and he can do that so well . "

Ruiz realizes the importance of his role with the Phillies , opining , " It 's the catcher 's job to bring energy and happiness to the game . " Ruiz has a good throwing arm that has improved over the years ; over the course of his career he has thrown out 29 % of attempted base stealers , which is exactly the average percentage of hitters thrown out by catchers .

= = = Playing style = = =

A Sports Illustrated piece featuring Ruiz published in July 2011 encapsulated Ruiz 's role as " heart and soul " of the team :

The most silent and timid Phillie might even become ? by consensus of teammates and in the words of closer Brad Lidge ? " the heart and soul of this team . " The player who was the runaway winner in a team poll asking Phillies whom ? if they were Batman ? they 'd choose as their Robin , proving that his effect extends far beyond his superhero pitching staff . The player who circulated in the clubhouse asking them how their families were doing , and how their hearts and minds and bodies felt . The man who went to each player in the dugout as each game was about to start to exchange a new touch : knuckles yesterday , low @-@ fives today , fist pounds to their hearts tomorrow , so hard that they 'd yearn for his chest protector . The one who tore into them when they were lax and verbalized what team leaders Chase Utley and Halladay kept tight under wraps . The one taking charge as if he has been here forever and yet still asking questions as if he has just been called up . The most endearing player to the sold @-@ out crowds at Citizens Bank Park every night , even when his average dips to .255 , as it has this season , crossing a cultural moat that Hispanic players often can 't ? the Phillie whom bartender Tubby Kushner impersonates every game he attends , from uniform down to the shin guards , chest protector , mask and , yes , even cup ? because fans feel like he 's their little secret , their little golden nugget .

He is a favorite among Phillies fans , and crossed " a cultural moat that Hispanic players often can 't " to endear himself to not only the fan base , but also his teammates . Before games , he humorously imitates teammates to help keep the team loose and relaxed , furthering his role as a leader . Overall , Ruiz " is a man who refuses to conceal his emotions " , positive or negative , and serves as a constant source of encouragement and rebuke alike to his teammates .