

Ivan Rodríguez
All-Star and Gold Glove Catcher

Ivan “Pudge” Rodríguez has become known as one of the greatest catchers to ever play the game of baseball. His lightning-like quickness and powerful arm behind home plate has earned him the reputation as one of the most feared catchers in baseball.

Hailing from Vega Baja, Puerto Rico, Rodríguez began playing baseball at a very young age. His talent and incredible arm strength were immediately recognized. In Little League, his father and coach had to ban him from pitching because the other players in the league were afraid of Ivan’s hard-throwing abilities, moving him to catcher. On his hometown baseball diamond he met future Texas Rangers star and teammate Juan Gonzalez, with whom he competed heavily throughout their early careers.

Nicknamed “Pudge” because of his stocky stature early in his career, Rodríguez made his Major League debut in 1991 and was the youngest player in the league that year. It was one of the only times in Major League Baseball history that the youngest player in the league and the oldest player in the league (Nolan Ryan) made up the pitcher-catcher battery. He found immediate success in the MLB, quickly earning a reputation as one of the best defensive players in the league and was named the Rangers Rookie of the Year in 1991.

In just his fourth season with the Rangers, he had a breakout year, leading the team in batting average with a .303 mark, 221 total bases, and 32 doubles, and was named the Rangers Most Valuable Player. In 1999, he became the first catcher to hit more than 30 home runs, drive in 100 runs, and score 100 runs in a single season. That same year, he became the first catcher to steal more than 20 bases on his way to the American League MVP Award. He also had eight seasons with a batting average above .300. Rodríguez is also a 14-time All-Star selection, 13-time Gold Glove award winner, and a seven-time Silver Slugger winner. With 2,842 career hits, Rodríguez is widely expected to be the next player to reach the 3,000-hit milestone.

After leaving the Rangers in 2002, Rodríguez played for the Florida Marlins, Detroit Tigers, New York Yankees and in 2009, he returned to Texas for a brief mid-season stint. He has played the last two seasons as a part-time catcher and first basemen for the Washington Nationals. As a member of the Florida Marlins in 2003, he was named the National League Championship Series Most Valuable Player as the Marlins went on to defeat the favored Yankees in six games.

In 2006 and 2009, Rodríguez represented Puerto Rico in the World Baseball Classic. He was named to the All-Tournament Team in 2009 along with fellow MLB shortstop Jimmy Rollins.

Rodríguez has been a fan-favorite and community hero in both the cities in which he plays and his hometown in Puerto Rico. In 1993 while a member of the Rangers, he founded the Ivan “Pudge” Rodríguez Foundation to benefit underprivileged families and children with cancer and other life threatening diseases around the Dallas-Fort Worth area and in Puerto Rico. He is a strong supporter of the Make-a-Wish Foundation, and was a fundraiser and activist for families displaced by Hurricanes George and Katrina. His generosity has not gone unnoticed, as he was named the 1998 and 2001 True Value Robert Clemente Man of the Year and the 2001 Jim

Sundberg Community Achievement Award winner. He has also started building a baseball school and sports complex in Bayamon, Puerto Rico.

In 2011, the Minnesota Twins took a chance on Rodríguez's oldest son, Ivan Derrek, in the sixth round of the MLB Amateur Draft. Ivan Derrek is a highly talented outfielder, and the father-son duo is hoping that one day they may be able to play in the MLB together.

Rodríguez also has two daughters, Amanda and Ivanna.