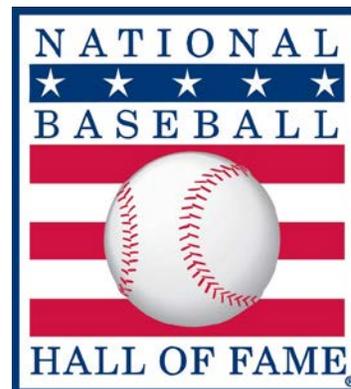


July 30, 2017



**2017 NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME
INDUCTION OF IVAN "PUDGE" RODRIGUEZ**

JANE FORBES CLARK: Commissioner, if you would join me again for our next presentation, and again, I'd like to call your attention to the video monitor for a presentation about our fourth 2017 inductee, Ivan "Pudge" Rodriguez.

(Video shown.)

As chairman of the national Baseball Hall of Fame, it is my pleasure to welcome you into the Hall of Fame and to ask Commissioner Manfred to read the inscription on your plaque.

ROB MANFRED: Ivan Rodriguez Torres, Pudge. Texas, AL, 1991-2002, 2009. Florida, NL, 2003. Detroit, AL, 2004-2008. New York, AL, 2008. Houston, NL, 2009. Washington, NL, 2010-2011. A rugged, do-it-all catcher whose powerful arm and consistent bat produced records at the plate and behind it. Hit .296 over 21 seasons, amassing more hits, doubles, and total bases than any other backstop. Caught 2,427 Major League games, most in history, and earned an unmatched 13 Gold Glove awards at the position. Renowned for his ability to nab would be base stealers, leading the league a record nine times. Selected to 14 All-Star games and named 1999 AL Most Valuable Player with the Rangers. Led Marlins to 2003 World Series title after winning the NLCS MVP.

JANE FORBES CLARK: Ladies and gentlemen, Pudge Rodriguez.

IVÁN RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you. I just want to start to always, every time I do a speech, I just always want to thank to the Lord Jesus Christ for all of us to be here today on this beautiful day and for giving us this beautiful day just to be here. It's an honor just to be here.

I also wanted to thank very much especially to the Lord Jesus Christ, I just say it. My deepest thanks to Hall of Fame chairman Jane Forbes, Jeff Idelson, thank you very much. And Commissioner Rob Manfred, thank you for

everything that you've done for me, and especially to let me do half of this speech in Spanish and English.

This is such an incredible honor for me to be here in this place to play the game. Growing up in Puerto Rico, there was no greater joy to watching the Game of the Week. My favorite team was the Cincinnati Reds because the catcher was my hero, and the hero is here today with me, the great Johnny Bench.

I wanted to thank also all the writers and voters to select me and select Bud, John, Tim, and Jeff, to select us to be in the 2017 Hall of Fame this year, so I wanted to thank all of them very much for letting us be here on this beautiful day and in this beautiful town called Cooperstown, New York.

Never let anyone take your dream from you. Don't let anyone say your dream cannot be accomplished. Tell them about a short kid who was hanging from the rope when I was a little kid, dangling there, trying to stretch himself and hoping to become as tall as the other boys. And when I step on the side and look at my size, I can say I'm a very tall 5'9". But I got a cool nickname out of it: Pudge. The little kid from Puerto Rico with a big dream. Yeah, with a big dream.

Also on this stage is a very good friend of mine that I played three years with him, his final three years with him. He's a very good friend of mine, and I've had the privilege to catch him for three years: My good friend Nolan Ryan.

The first time that I caught Nolan Ryan in '91, we sit down in the coaches' room, and when we talked to Tom House, he come in the first time, and we met. I haven't speak the language, I don't speak English or anything, and Nolan came in, and I saw Nolan, and I was very impressed to see him, and the one thing that he told me was, Kid, you don't have to do too much.

And I said, Okay.

He told me, Kid, you know, what you got to



visit our archives at asapsports.com

07.30.17 - I. Rodriguez

do is just put fingers down, I've got fast ball, curveball, changeup, and the only thing you've got to do is just put the fingers down and I'll throw the baseball to you. He ended up winning the game. We pitched five innings, six innings, win the ballgame, and a little later on, he almost threw his eighth no-hitter later on, when cruising along with the Angels when Hall of Famer Dave Winfield who is here today singled to lead off the eighth inning.

After the game, the reporter asked me, What was the pitch that you threw?

And I said to the reporter, Nolan shake me off. Sorry, Nolan.

He knows from the reporters and the only answer back to reporters, Looks like he learned to speak English pretty quickly.

I said I wouldn't do my whole speech in Spanish, but I would like to speak directly to my friends and family from Puerto Rico.

(Speaking in Spanish.)

I want to repeat this last subject in English so everybody here can understand what I just said. To the youngsters, because I always love to talk to the youngsters and wish them all the best and share all my experience and all the best for the kids. May this moment remind you that destiny is in your hands. Don't be afraid to succeed. You have the right to dream. Everything in life is possible, and life's victories are realized through effort and dedication.

I speak from experience, and I stand here among these legends from the world's most beautiful game of baseball.

I have the honor and admiration for everything I spent time with in my career. I'm going to start with the Florida Marlins. The Marlins allowed me to show that I was not on the downside of my career. We were able to shock everyone by winning the World Series. Like I will always now be a Hall of Famer, we too will always be champs, thanks to people like Jack McKeon, the Cigar Man, and the whole entire team that I played in 2003. I wish I could mention all the guys, but I'm sure they're watching and they all know who they are. It was a privilege and a pleasure to play for all of you and win the world championship in 2003.

To the Tigers, the famous English D, gave me the chance to help turn around the proud franchise and the opportunity to play for Jim Leyland and to return to the World Series in 2006. The honor was all mine playing in Detroit for Mr. Mike Ilitch. May he rest in peace, and Mike, I know you're watching and I know you're watching me,

and you're a great man, and everything that you did for the city of Detroit and for sports, they all appreciate it. And everything you did for me and for my family, I appreciate it very much for the rest of my life. And I know that Mrs. Ilitch is here and the family and Chris, they're all here today, and I wanted to thank them very much for being here today. Thank you. For me, Jim is the best manager I ever played, and I think he will be joining us on this stage very soon.

I enjoyed so many great memories. I played for the Yankees, the Astros, Nationals, the Marlins, the Tigers, and of course the Texas Rangers. The wonderful scouts, Sandy Johnson, Manny Batista, Louis Rosa, Omar Minaya, discovered me at the age of 16 and I spent 15 years of my professional life with them. I grew up there, and I'm proud to wear the cap forever in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

The Rangers treated me first class, and I did everything within my power to return the favor. I hope the team and fans believe I have accomplished that. I wanted to thank all the fans of the Rangers for all their support day in and day out for my whole career and support of the team day in and day out on the field. I did it for you guys. I did my best every single day to put a good show for all of you on the field. That's where you will see always this passion that I have, this happiness that I always played the game, and I always respect the game and play the game hard. And I did it for all of you, because you guys are the best, baseball fans are the best, and part of the reason that I'm here is because you guys. So thank you very much.

I wanted to thank some of my teammates. There's some here. José Guzman is here, Geno Petralli is here, Benji Gil is here, Ruben Sierra is here, Julio Franco, Rafael Palmeiro, Kenny Rogers, and my closest friend on the team, who is from my hometown, and he's my brother, and I know he's not here, but probably he's watching, I consider him like a third brother of mine, my good friend and brother Juan Gonzales.

I would like to thank Bobby Valentine and Tom Green for believing that a 19-year-old kid could be a starting catcher in the Big Leagues. Rudy Jaramillo, Jeff just said it earlier, best hitting coach I ever had. He worked with me day in and day out, telling me the things that I've got to do in a good way, in a tough way, but he found something on me, because he knows that I could be better

every single time. So thank you, Rudy, for everything you've done for me. Love you.

My longtime longer Johnny Oates. May he also rest in peace. He passed away. And all the fantastic people like all the great owners and clubhouse guys and general managers, but I'm just going to mention some of the owners like George W. Bush, Tom Schieffer, Dusty Rose, Tom Hicks, Bob Simpson, Ray Davis, and my good friend Neil Leibman and his family.

I would also like to thank John Blake and Donny Taylor and the whole entire Rangers staff that do so much for me over the years. Thank you, John, and thank you, Donny.

This is going to be the hard part for me, when I'm talking about my parents. I have to say it in Spanish so they can understand me very good.

(Speaking Spanish.)

My three children, Ivan Derek, Amanda, and Ivanna, have brought me so much happiness. The lowest I ever was during my baseball career was when they weren't around me. I needed to see them every day. And no matter how my team did that night, their smile made for me every time I'd come home to see you guys. Ivanna, I love you very much. Amanda, love you, too. Thank you for everything. Thank you for all the support. And son, you know what you've got to do, man. You're a baseball player. Look at me. You're doing good. You're already in Double-A. Keep doing what you're doing. Keep pitching inside and keep working hard. Love you. All the best for you, son.

To my other three kids that I have in the family, that I got them a little later, (speaking Spanish).

I always want to take this moment to apologize to a very good friend of mine, Ken Griffey. When my two-year-old son, which is 25 today, in one of the All-Star games, Ken Griffey grabbed my son and put him on his arm, and my son threw some water in his uniform. Well, he peed on his uniform. Sorry about that. Junior, sorry, he was so excited just to be held by such a great player.

My brother Tito, wow. There are many nights just like when we were kids, just me and him playing our own version of baseball with sandals and some rolled up d. Not only that, it's what he did with me, what he did for me. He was my coach. He called me pretty much every day, talked about baseball, talked about my hitting, talked about my defense. Not too many people knows my brother, but he's right here, and now he's a

manager in high school, St. Brendan High School in Miami, and he's one of the best, and a lot of kids work with him because of what he knows from hitting, from offense, from every aspect of the game, and he did it for me the whole entire career. Not only a few years, the whole entire career. We had that communication day in and day out to make me a better player. Love you, man. This is yours, too.

To my beautiful wife Patricia, man, I'm lucky. Who has been my rock, my support, my everything. In the days leading up to the Hall of Fame, I was stressed out, couldn't sleep. I was a mess, and she was there for me, just like she was the last seven years of my career. She prays with me and tells me there is a plan, to trust the process, and she's almost always right. She has shown me so much about respect and humility, and more importantly than anything, she made me a better man. I love you, Patricia, very much. You're my rock. Thank you for everything you did for me. Love you.

Catalina, my wonderful assistant, thank you for everything, all the hard work, the long hours, the patience.

To my good friend, my trainer, Edgar Diaz, my trainer for 19 years, worked with me day in and day out to keep me in great shape to play for so many years, Edgar, thank you so much for everything.

And for Placido DeJesus, thank you for all the great food you prepared at home. The rice and beans and beef stew and chicken stew that he prepared, wow, I miss that. Come home again.

And Ray Ramirez, longtime trainer, now he's a trainer for the New York Mets, a good friend of mine, thank you for everything you done for me in preparing me to play every day.

And finally, to the fans, thank you. Don't feel intimidated to ask me for an autograph or a picture. You are not putting me out. It's my honor. Tell me your favorite Pudge story. Chances are it's going to put a smile on my face, and you know how much this Hall of Famer loves to smile. Why wouldn't I be smiling? My earliest childhood memories involved baseball. My entire life has been about baseball. When the teacher asked us what we wanted to be when we grew up, my answer was always the same: Play baseball. And I was able to play at the highest level for 21 years. I am pretty happy about it.

What makes you happy? The kids out

there playing baseball, you should be happy. You should have passion, enjoy the game, respect the game, and most importantly, love this great game of ours. Dream big, and I know that those dreams do sometimes come true. Well, look at me. The kid hanging from that rope, the kid they called Pudge, I am here on this stage in this special place, this baseball heaven called Cooperstown, and my dream has become a reality.

Thank you all so very much. God bless you all, and God bless baseball.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports