

# HILL COUNTRY NEWS

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## **Guzman continues to climb in Rangers organization**

Ronald Guzman doesn't let outside pressure get to him. In fact, any pressure he even recognizes is self-imposed.

The first baseman signed with the Rangers as a 16-year old in 2011 and has been climbing the ranks ever since and started this year with the Round Rock Express and on the Texas 40-man roster for the first time in his young career.

"I want to be better every single day and I don't want to be left behind," Guzman said. "I don't just want to be another guy on the field, I want to be different. I use the pressure to get better and as a motivation to keep working hard."

Guzman graduated from high school and became a millionaire in a span of 24 hours.

The Rangers signed him and outfielder Nomar Mazara to international free agent contracts on July 2, 2011. His first contract came with a signing bonus of \$3.5 million and he made his professional debut in 2012.

He's climbed the organizational ladder ever since and started the year in Round Rock this season, where he is hitting a stellar .304 with a team-high 70 hits, 30 RBIs, and 34 runs scored in 60 games.

"I think there are some higher expectations put on his shoulders," Express manager Jason Wood said. "The organization has a spot for him and I know where I'm supposed to play him and hit him. In the first part of the season, he's done well."

His mother, father and four brothers in the Dominican Republic have always supported them no matter if he was on the baseball field or in a jail cell.

In November 2014, he was involved in a fatal traffic accident when a motorcycle hit a car he was driving. The cyclist was killed and Guzman spent time in jail in the Dominican but was eventually cleared of any fault in the accident.

Guzman wasn't yet a teenager the first time he came to the United States and he's used to be away from the Dominican Republic for long periods of time. When he was nine, he traveled to Venezuela for a tournament. With the Rangers now, he doesn't get to see his family for six or seven months at a time.

One of the first things he wanted to do when he came to the United States was learn English. According to the Society for American Baseball Research, 29.5 percent of players that appeared in the majors in 2016 were of latin or asian decent.

When players don't speak English or need a translator to come to the mound along with the pitching coach, people notice. Red Sox announcer Jerry Remy and Phillies legend Mike Schmidt have been criticized in the past few weeks for making controversial comments about MLB players not speaking the language.

"It was one of the main things I wanted to do when I got here," Guzman said. "I didn't want to have the other guys order food for me or we go somewhere and buy something. I like to go somewhere and take care of myself."

Even though he was drafted as an outfielder like Mazara, Guzman has been able to field position extremely well, earning the Rangers' Minor League Defensive Player of the Year award in 2016. He's averaging one error every 15 games with Round Rock this season.

Guzman's bat has been outstanding ever since joining the Texas organization as well. His average has been above .300 for most of his six seasons, with the only outliers being a .266 after a 25-game cameo with the Express last year and .283 average with the Hickory Crawdads the year after tearing his meniscus and breaking his wrist.

"He's not a strictly pull hitter," Wood said. "They will play the shift on him, but with two strikes, he will use his hands and pull the ball to the opposite field. At his age and with his size and stature, to use the whole field with power impresses me."

Off the field, Guzman is a regular 22-year old guy. He likes music and watching music videos on YouTube and watching the Walking Dead on horror movies on Netflix. He admits he'll laugh at Kevin Hart no matter how many times he's listened to his specials.

In the past, the No. 7 prospect in the Rangers' system according to Baseball America has started the season strong and slumped as the season trudged on. This year is no different. He hit a blazing .348 in April and dropped nearly 100 points in May.

He's watching more video and trying to keep his hands in a more consistent place during his swing so the valleys aren't as drastic this time around. Then his dream of playing in the majors might happen sooner than later.

"I try to keep it simple every time," Guzman said. "I just want to take care of the little things and controlling what I can control. I'm trying to do my best every single day and the rest will make care of itself."