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#4 Pablo Sandoval



Charles Krupa/AP

Pablo Sandoval played first base and catcher early in his career before finding a home at third base.

BY MATT RAWLINGS Of the Keizertimes

Pablo Sandoval, AKA the Kung Fu Panda, comes in at #4 on the Keizertimes list of the 20 greatest Volcanoes players of all time. The switch-hitting third baseman has won three World Series rings over his 13-year Major League Baseball (MLB) career and has been selected to a pair of All-Star Games. He also was the MVP of the 2012 World Series.

Sandoval grew up in Venezuela and was first noticed by scouts as a 16-year old in 2002. As a youngster, Sandoval was a left-handed outfielder, but eventually learned to throw right handed in order to be an infielder like his idol, Omar Vizquel.

Sandoval was signed by the San Francisco Giants in 2004 and began his career in the Arizona Rookie League as a catcher, batting .266 in 47 games.

The following season, Sandoval came to Salem-Keizer and proved to be one of the top players in the Northwest League. He was second in the league in batting average (.330) and RBIs (50) and had an on-base percentage (OBP) of .383.

Sandoval played full-season A-ball with the Augusta GreenJackets in 2006, batting .265 with 49 RBIs as he split time at first and third base. In 2007, Sandoval played advanced Single-A and helped San Jose win the California League title after hitting .287 with 11 homers and 52 RBIs.

Sandoval split time between Single-A and Double-A in 2008 before he got called up by the Giants on Aug 13, 2008. In his first MLB at-bat, Sandoval hit a sacrifice fly. He wound up

getting his first hit the following day against Mike Hampton of the Atlanta Braves.

On Aug. 27, 2008, Sandoval hit his first homer off of Liván Hernández in the Giants 4-1 victory over the Colorado Rockies. In 45 games, Sandoval hit an impressive .345 with three homers and 24 RBIs.

Sandoval was also given the infamous nickname “Kung Fu Panda” by teammate Barry Zito after Sandoval scored a run against the Los Angeles Dodgers by jumping acrobatically over the catcher — Sandoval has been a heavy-set player for his entire career.

Even though it was just his first full year in MLB, Sandoval's best season came in 2009. Sandoval led the Giants in every major batting category, hitting .330 with 25 homers, 90 RBIs and 189 hits, which were all career-highs. Sandoval also had career-highs in slugging percentage (.556) and OBP (.387).

Defensively, Sandoval was the Giants starting third baseman and backup catcher. However, after an elbow injury, the Giants relieved Sandoval of his catching duties.

Sandoval hit his first grand slam on July 6, 2009 off of Sean West in a 5-4 win for San Francisco. His 189 hits on the season were the most ever by a Giants switch-hitter. He had the second highest batting average among National League (NL) hitters and finished seventh in NL MVP voting.

However, Sandoval endured a bit of a sophomore slump, batting .268 with 13 homers and 63 RBIs. He fell to eighth in the batting order and was even benched in

the 2010 NL Championship Series (NLCS). He made just three plate appearances in the 2010 World Series, but the Giants defeated the Texas Rangers in five games and Sandoval got his first championship ring.

Despite spending 41 games on the disabled list, Sandoval had a bounce-back season in 2011. He had a 22-game hit streak that lasted from June 19 to July 14. On July 10, 2011, Sandoval was selected to his first All-Star Game — he hit a ground-rule double in his first all-star at-bat off of Brandon League.

On Sept. 15, 2011, Sandoval hit for the cycle, with all four hits coming off Rockies pitcher Jhoulys Chacín, and earned his first NL Player of the Week Award.

In just 426 at-bats, Sandoval hit .313 with 23 homers and 70 RBIs.

Sandoval began the 2012 season with a 20-game hit streak, which set the Giants record for longest hit streak to begin a season. Despite an injury in May that caused him to miss a month of the season, Sandoval was selected to his second straight All-Star Game.

In the 2012 All-Star Game, Sandoval hit a bases-clearing triple off of reigning American League (AL) Cy Young Award winner Justin Verlander in the first inning.

However, Sandoval headed back to the disabled list from July 28 to Aug. 13 with a left hamstring injury.

On Sept. 20, 2012, Sandoval became the sixth Giants player to ever homer from both sides of the plate in a game. He finished the season batting .283 with 12 homers

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TOP 20
Volcanoes
players
of all time



Aaron Doster/USA Today Sports

In his first full season in the majors, Sandoval finished in the top 10 for the NL MVP award.



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