

THE WORLD GOLF HALL OF FAME: CHI CHI RODRIGUEZ

By: Rafael Nañez II

“Chi Chi” Rodriguez is one of the great showmen in sports history. This World Golf Hall of Famer’s, career spanned over four decades. “Chi Chi” won 8 times on the PGA Tour and boasts 22 Champions Tour victories. Even though his appearances at Champions Tour events were limited, his colorful performances made him a gallery favorite, while his shotmaking skills earned him the respect of his peers.

“Chi Chi” grew up in the hot, dusty sugar cane fields of Rio Piedras, (a suburb of San Juan) Puerto Rico, where he helped his father tend the fields. “Chi Chi’s” golf expertise began at the age of 12, when he shot a 67. “Chi Chi” became known for his eye-hand coordination and imagination—skills that for more than 40 years have helped him overcome all types of obstacles. He showcased these skills at golf clinics and exhibitions around the country. However, “Chi Chi’s” talents extend beyond what he is able to do with the golf ball. From his matador routine to his good-natured impersonations of fellow competitors, “Chi Chi” is an entertainer at heart.

Nevertheless, what separates “Chi Chi” from everyone else is that he has coupled his success on the golf course with a strong personal desire to make a positive impact. This has manifested itself in the countless hours he spends at The “Chi Chi” Rodriguez Youth Foundation.

“Chi Chi’s” foundation, in Clearwater, Florida, is home to troubled and abused youngsters. “Chi Chi’s” philosophy is simple; he wants kids to have a chance. “I figure kids are the future. If I made it, anybody can do it.

I think I can be a good role model for them because they can look at me and say, “Look, he’s a small guy, he was very poor, and he worked hard and made it. If I can help one kid become successful in life because they want to be the way I was, that’s all I ask for.” It is through examples like this that “Chi Chi” has proven that he is not only a great golf champion, but a champion in life.



The Stats

HEIGHT: 5'7" WEIGHT: 160
BIRTHDATE: October 23, 1935
BIRTHPLACE: Puerto Rico
RESIDENCE: Dorado, Puerto Rico
FAMILY: Wife: Iwalani; Daughter, Donnette
TURNED PROFESSIONAL: 1960
REGULAR TOUR EARNINGS: \$1,037,106
COMBINED CAREER EARNINGS: \$7,660,240

The Victories

REGULAR TOUR VICTORIES: 8

1963 Denver Open; 1964 Lucky International, Western Open; 1967 Texas Open; 1968 Sahara Invitational; 1972 Byron Nelson Classic; 1973 Greater Greensboro Open; and 1979 Tallahassee Open

MONEY & POSITION CHAMPIONS TOUR

1985 - \$7,700 - 71	1991 - \$794,013 - 4	1997 - \$372,359 - 42
1986 - \$399,172 - 2	1992 - \$711,095 - 5	1998 - \$115,684 - 72
1987 - \$509,145 - 1	1993 - \$798,857 - 5	1999 - \$150,407 - 73
1988 - \$313,940 - 10	1994 - \$571,598 - 17	2000 - \$191,170 - 72
1989 - \$275,414 - 17	1995 - \$194,922 - 53	2001 - \$ 65,776 - 96
1990 - \$729,788 - 5	1996 - \$390,900 - 33	2002 - \$ 68,177 - 95

CHAMPIONS TOUR VICTORIES: 22

1986 Senior TPC, Digital Seniors Classic, United Virginia Banks Seniors
1987 PGA Seniors Championship, Vantage at the Dominion, United Hospitals Golf Championship, Silver Pages Classic, Senior Players Reunion Pro-Am, Digital Seniors Classic, GTE Northwest Classic
1988 Doug Sanders Classic, Digital Seniors Classic
1989 Crestar Classic
1990 Las Vegas Senior Classic, Ameritech Senior Open, Sunwest Bank/Charley Pride Senior Golf Classic
1991 GTE West Classic, Vintage Arco Invitational, Las Vegas Senior Classic, Seniors Murata Reunion
1992 Ko Olina Senior Invitational
1993 Senior PGA Tour Burnet Classic

The Achievements



- 1973 Member U.S. Ryder Cup Team
- 1974 Given the Charlie Bartlett Award from Golf Writers Association.
- 1976 Winner-The Pepsi Team Championship with JoAnn Washam.
- 1979 Established The "Chi Chi" Rodriguez Youth Foundation; Winner-The Panama Open.
- 1981 Richardson Award from Golf Writers Association of America; First Ambassador of Golf Award World Series of Golf.
- 1982 The Father of the Year Award, Nat'l Father's Day Committee
- 1986 Card Walker Award for Outstanding Contribution to Jr. Golf; Salvation Army Gold Crest Award; Member Horatio Algier Association; Received 12th Roberto Clemente Cup; Winner of Byron Nelson Award; Hispanic Achievement Recognition Award.
- 1987 Winner Byron Nelson Award; Chosen as Sr. Player of the Year; Won Sr. Arnold Palmer Award; Golden Tee Award given by Metropolitan Golf Writers Association; Male Contributor to Sports Award; National Puerto Rican Coalition Life Achievement Award.
- 1988 Replica Hispanic Man of the Year Award; Winner Sr. Skins Game; Winner Japan Pro Sr. Championship; Fred Raphael Golf Achievement Award.
- 1989 Recipient Old Tom Morris Award; Winner Bobby Jones Award; Sr. Skins Game Winner; Chosen as Classic Traveler of the Year; Awarded CYO Man of the Year; Roberto Clemente Cup Award. Inducted into the Puerto Rico Sports Hall of Fame.
- 1990 Received the "Caring for Kids" Award.
- 1991 Served on President's Council on Health and Physical Fitness; Inducted into Florida's Sport's Hall of Fame; Winner Pathfinder Award (Indiana Youthlinks); Jackie Robinson Humanitarian Award.
- 1992 Inducted in PGA World Golf Hall of Fame; "Good Sport Award" from Sports Illustrated for Kids; Tampa Bay Walk of Fame Inductee.





- 1993 American Association of School Administrators “American Education Award”; Presented with Civilian Meritorious Service Medal (highest ward given by U.S. Department of Defense); Jimmy Demaret Award given by Liberty Mutual & The Legends of Golf; Herb Graffis Award from National Golf Foundation.
- 1994 Inducted into the World Sports Humanitarian Hall of Fame in Boise, Idaho, Received honorary doctor of humane letters degree, Georgetown College in Lexington, Kentucky.
- 1995 Served as Grand Marshal for the 106th Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California.
- 1997 Secretary of State’s Hispanic Achievement Award
- 1997 International Network of Golf award (first “Chi Chi Rodriguez Humanitarian Award)
- 1998 Ford Achievement Award
- 2003 Grand Marshall Puerto Rican Day Parade, NYC
Francis Ouimet Award
Paul Runyan Memorial Recognition Award
- 2008 Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute renamed their annual golf event in Washington, D.C. in honor of “Chi Chi”.Recipient of House Resolution 1029, honoring “Chi Chi” for his charitable work.
- 2010 Recipient of House Resolution 1430, “Chi Chi” for his charitable work for the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Scholarship Program and for his commitment to Latino youth.
- 2011 Florida’s Governor Charlie Crist awarded Chi Chi the Medal for Distinguished Service for his years of dedication to the Chi Chi Rodriguez Youth Foundation in Clearwater, FL.

Appeared in the HBO’s documentary, “The Latino List”.
- 2013 Chi Chi was recognized and honored by the Senate of Puerto Rico for his lifetime achievement’s.
- 2014 The town of Dorado, Puerto Rico, where Chi Chi first started his professional golf career, paid him homage by renaming their main road after him.



Chi Chi will be in San Antonio next September hosting a golf tournament with the National Pan American Golf Association benefiting Junior gong scholarships and the Texas Diabetes Institute