



# GUIDE RAIL

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**WORTH THE WORK**  
**COMMITMENT & PREPARATION EARNS**  
**NARVAEZ MAJOR OPPORTUNITY**

# WORTH THE WORK: COMMITMENT & PREPARATION EARNS NARVAEZ MAJOR OPPORTUNITY

*Catcher Carlos Narvaez has risen the ranks in the Yankees' Minor League system with a dedication and desire to improve and exceed expectations.*

*by Emily Messina*

“I work so hard every day so, you know, I feel proud. But at the same time, the work keeps going,” Carlos Narvaez said. “I am very focused right now in every aspect of the game. Working every day to help the team in every way possible.”

Narvaez is a homegrown farmhand in the New York Yankees system. He was originally signed by the organization in July of 2015. Since then, that is the only organization he has played for. In October of 2022, he inked another contract as a Minor League free agent to stay with the team. He is a catcher through and through, but he’s also been working at first base for parts of the last two seasons.



Carlos’s baseball career, however, began long before he was signed by New York. He grew up in Maracay, Venezuela surrounded by a baseball-loving family. His grandmother created a team in his hometown so that he and all of the kids in his family could have a stable place to play. Carlos says he remembers starting when he was just two and a half years old. His dad was his manager as a child. He, along with other family members, played in the Little League World Series representing Latin America. His older cousin, Omar Narvaez, has caught in the Major Leagues for parts of nine seasons. It is a family business.

Carlos has impressed Yankees brass and field staff behind the plate over the last few seasons especially. New York has always emphasized the catching position with an attention on the defensive side. It has always been a point of pride that they have quality backstop depth throughout the affiliates. The Yankees welcomed Narvaez into this core when they added him to their 40-man roster in November.

It was a sign of confidence and conviction that Carlos Narvaez would be a piece of their success. And, it was a special moment for him where he felt like things were coming together. “It felt great when they called me in November,” Narvaez said smiling. “It feels awesome. The journey this past year...it's been tough but it's an unbelievable journey.”

The 25-year-old came into this season ready for the grind. After an impressive first month in Triple-A and an open roster spot in the big leagues, the Yankees finally tabbed Carlos to fill

that role. He was up with the big club from April 29 to May 2 but did not play in a game.

When he returned to the RailRiders, Carlos recounted the experience as one of the most amazing of his career.

“To me, one of my best memories so far was when Shelley [Duncan- the RailRiders manager] called me and said ‘Hey you are going to the show’,” he remembered. “I have been working hard every year and I never got the chance to be there before. To be even in the dugout with that group was amazing.”

Narvaez had spent eight years in the Minors as an active professional baseball player and it was all building up to that moment. It was his Major League introduction, an accumulation of service time and an opportunity like nothing else, but it did not include his debut. And if that was where the story ended, for Carlos he had made it.

“For sure, it counts,” Narvaez said. “For me, definitely it counts, big time. Of course, I want an at-bat, but I think that is coming. But just being there with those superstars in those great moments has been great. Being part of that amazing group means the world to me.”

There was another potential opportunity for Narvaez to slot on the big league roster. But the Yankees went in a different direction in calling up lefty star Ben Rice. In all that time, Carlos never expressed feeling glossed over or left behind. He only had amazing things to say about Rice and you could tell he meant it.

“Ben is the man,” Narvaez pronounced. “Ben is a great hitter, he has been showing his bat the last few years. I think he deserves it. A fresh lefty bat and he has been playing first base a lot. To be honest, for the last two years, he has been super hot. I am super happy for him. He is a great kid, he is a great teammate. He is always trying to work and improve.”

He went on to share how excited he was for Rice and Austin Wells to experience the journey together. He and Wells have spent parts of the last three seasons together. They train together every spring and constantly keep in touch. Narvaez said he is happy to see them helping the team and accomplishing their goals.

“When we play, we pay attention to the other guy,” he said. “We are here for everybody, we play for the guy next to us. Of course, I want to do it too, I want to join them. I think that is coming hopefully.”

In the meantime, Carlos continues to grind with the RailRiders. He went on to hit .284 in May and then .316 in June over 40 total games.

“I have been working every day. Trevor [Amicone] and I try to fix things as quickly as possible,” he explained. “I have a little more confidence at the plate lately.”

He said honing in on the type of hitter that he is has helped him see more success at the plate. Narvaez has especially focused on his approach when the team needs a certain type of at-bat. He does not want to just “ambush” every pitch that he sees but try to get into the count and wait for an offering that he can do damage with. By reading the situation and the pitcher, he has learned to make better in-game adjustments which is a cornerstone of a Major League hitter.



When Jose Trevino went down with an injury right before the All-Star break, Carlos once again got the call. This time, however, was a different situation as he knew he was going to be the number two catcher and would likely get some playing time.

Narvaez said he felt welcomed into the clubhouse immediately. As an active member during Spring Training, he already knew most people, but he felt the team trusted him, especially the pitching staff. Narvaez noticed even “the Cap” Aaron Judge made sure he felt accepted.

“Oh my goodness, it feels amazing,” he said smiling. “The first time I came up, I told you it felt like I made it because of the years and the work along that way that each of us put in every day, just being there is a blessing. This time of course I had the opportunity to play and that was super cool.”

Carlos recalled that the stakes always feel high playing for the New York Yankees and with the pressure of a booming crowd.

“You play to win every day, every game. It feels awesome, I feel blessed, to be honest,” Narvaez vocalized. “All the preparation we have, before the game, before every series, that's why we are the Yankees, you know. That was awesome, every day trying to get better and find a way to win the game. It is easy to say, but when you put the work in you know this is the team. That team is special. I feel so so grateful to be part of it because that is going to be something special this year.”

Narvaez made his own contributions up in the big leagues, including garnering his first professional hit. On July 20, he entered defensively for Wells in the ninth inning. He caught Josh Maciejewski, an arm he has spent countless pitches with in the minors. Then in the bottom half of the frame, Carlos recorded a knock on his first at-bat in Yankee Stadium; a single to right field. Three days later, his name was etched into the starting lineup to catch Luis Gil.

“Okay this is the moment now,” he reminded himself when Aaron Boone gave him a heads

up he would enter the game. “It feels awesome. I got the chance. I got my first hit in my first at-bat. Of course, it’s special if we win the game, you know, but it’s always special. I saw the reaction of the guys in the dugout, even when we were losing by much. After the game, I was crying like ten minutes because we work so hard for this and when you finally get it, I don’t know, it’s just so satisfying. I’m so grateful. And then Trevor called me and Shelley [Duncan] texted me that the guys went crazy in Buffalo. So it was such a special day.”

His teammates made sure to get him the ball from his first hit and he was also gifted the lineup card. Narvaez said he gave that to his dad when he first saw him. His dad has been with him from the very start - as a youngster learning to play catch, as his manager in little league, and now as a fan in the stands supporting him. Carlos said they were emotional knowing that, together, they had made it.

He went on to play in parts of six games with the Yankees, earning two more hits and a pair of walks. He was behind the plate working for starts with Nestor Cortes and Gerrit Cole. His first caught stealing was nabbing the Angels’ Zach Neto. He was even there to see his teammate Will Warren make his Major League debut as well.

Narvaez and Wells were so excited to hear their battery-mate was getting his moment, almost as much as if it were their own debut. He said they called Will on his trip to Philadelphia to congratulate him. Wells caught his first game, but Carlos got to call Will’s second time out.

“It was so special for him. I feel so proud of that guy,” Narvaez said. “He is always working hard. He has such good stuff, his pitches are unbelievable. I caught him against Anaheim. The stuff is there. To me, he is going to be a great pitcher in the big leagues. Just about time and working on a couple of things. Such a special moment for me, him and Wells - we were so so pumped for him.”

Carlos prides himself on having a good relationship with his pitchers and other players. His English is tremendous, a difficult hurdle in the landscape for an international player. One that many forget is an arduous and impressive feat. He is not just bilingual in baseball, but also conversationally and can do full interviews in his second language.

He does research to tailor himself to not just each individual arm or skill set, but also each person. The tandem controls the game and Narvaez works endlessly to make sure his pitcher knows he cares just as much. He says he can tell when the ease and flow are there.

“You’ve got to be so prepared to be on the same page,” he explained. “You as a catcher, you feel and know when you’ve got a good relationship with a pitcher. You are on the same page all the time.”

Narvaez said he feels like there were so many people who helped him along his long journey. But coming from a big family that was so invested in the sport helped set up a foundation for his success. His grandma was at the field for every game and now tunes in on TV to watch when he or his cousin is playing. Carlos knows how special it is to feel the support no matter his performance.

“I feel blessed having that family. My world is completely baseball. This means everything to me.”

*Photo Credits: Tim Dougherty*