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MLB ANNOUNCES UMPIRES FOR 2026 ARIZONA FALL LEAGUE SEASON

27 of 28 MLB Division Series Umpires Are Arizona Fall League Alum

PHOENIX — Major League Baseball announced the umpires for the 2026 Arizona Fall League (AFL) season. The three Arizona Fall League crews will be led by crew chiefs Charlie Welling, Tom Fornarola and Evin Johnson.

Charlie Welling enters the AFL after spending this past season in Triple-A. In 2025, Welling was the home plate umpire for the All-Star Futures Game in Philadelphia. In 2026, he umpired his first Major League Spring Training and was named the crew chief of the International League Championship Series and continued on to the Triple-A National Championship game.



Tom Fornarola returns for his second season in the Fall League. Fornarola started umpiring Minor League Baseball in 2017, working his way up to Triple-A. In 2026, he worked his first Major League Spring Training and was selected to umpire the Triple-A Pacific Coast League Championship and the Triple-A National Championship game.

Evin Johnson started umpiring Minor League Baseball in 2017. Johnson is a Triple-A umpire and was selected to umpire the World Baseball Classic Qualifier in Taiwan in 2025. In 2026, he umpired the Triple-A Pacific Coast League Championship and the Triple-A National Championship game.

Welling will lead his crew, which includes Denver Dangerfield, Sean Sparling, and Trevor Mathews. Matt Blackborow, Elliott Melton, and Dereck Pacheco will be led by Fornarola. Johnson's crew includes Stevens Rios, Joe McCarthy, and Kellen Martin.

Full 2026 Arizona Fall League Crews

Crew A	Crew B	Crew C
Charlie Welling (CC) Denver Dangerfield Sean Sparling Trevor Mathews	Tom Fornarola (CC) Matt Blackborow Elliott Melton Dereck Pacheco	Evin Johnson (CC) Steven Rios Joe McCarthy Kellen Martin

The Arizona Fall League has been a proving ground for future Major League umpires. Since its inaugural season in 1992, over 150 AFL umpires have graduated and made it to MLB, including 27 of the 28 umpires and replay officials in the 2026 Division Series presented by Booking.com. In 2025, six out of seven World Series umpires were AFL alum: Alan Porter (2008-'09), Adam Hamari (2011), Jordan Baker (2011-'12), Adrian Johnson (2004-'05,'07), Will Little (2012) and John Tumpane (2008-'09).

Regarded as the premier league for baseball's top prospects, the Arizona Fall League continues to develop top-caliber talent across all 30 MLB Clubs. AFL games will be held primarily at six Cactus League ballparks throughout the 2026 season - Camelback Ranch-Glendale, Peoria Sports Complex, Salt River Fields at Talking Stick, Sloan Park, Scottsdale Stadium, and Surprise Stadium - with select games at Kino Sports Complex and Goodyear Ballpark. Opening Day of the 2026 AFL season is set for Saturday, Oct. 3rd, with all six teams set to be in action. The 20th annual **Fall Stars Game** (Sunday, Nov. 8th) will be played at Salt River Fields, and the **AFL Championship Game** (Saturday, Nov. 14th) will be at Peoria Sports Complex, both being televised on MLB Network. The full 2026 Arizona Fall League Schedule and online tickets can be found at the Arizona Fall League website at MLBFallBall.com.

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