



PRESS RELEASE

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MLB ANNOUNCES 2025 ARIZONA FALL LEAGUE MANAGERS

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Tickets on sale now at www.mlb.com/Arizona-Fall-League/tickets

Major League Baseball has announced the managers for the 2025 Arizona Fall League (AFL) season. **Jesus Azuaje** (Surprise), **Eric Duncan** (Glendale), **Aaron Leanhardt** (Mesa), **Julio Morillo** (Peoria), **Eric Patterson** (Salt River), and **René Rivera** (Scottsdale) will manage some of the top prospects in baseball.

Known throughout baseball as the finishing school for Major League Baseball's future stars, the AFL returns to the Valley for its 33rd season. Over 30 former AFL managers/coaches have become MLB managers, including current skippers **Kevin Cash** (TB), **Terry Francona** (CIN), **A.J. Hinch** (DET), **Torey Lovullo** (AZ), **Mike Shildt** (SD), and **Ron Washington** (LAA).



Surprise Saguaros: Jesus Azuaje (Kansas City Royals)

Jesus Azuaje brings more than two decades of professional baseball experience as a player, coach, and manager. In 2025, he led the Quad Cities River Bandits, the High-A affiliate of the Kansas City Royals, in the Midwest League. He began his managerial career in 2010 with the AZL Mariners and has since compiled a 148-163 record across four full seasons in the Mariners (2010–2011) and Royals (2023–2024) organizations. His coaching career spans over a decade, highlighted by hitting coach roles at various levels in both the Mariners and Royals systems, as well as serving as the Los Angeles Dodgers' Latin American field coordinator in 2014. He also gained Fall League experience in 2021 as a member of the Surprise Saguaros staff that advanced to the championship game.

Glendale Desert Dogs: Eric Duncan (Toronto Blue Jays)

A former AFL player turned manager is **Eric Duncan**. A part of the 2005 Grand Canyon Rafters, he earned Fall-Star and Joe Black Fall League MVP honors, slashing .362/.423/.734. He returned to the AFL in 2006 with the Peoria Saguaros. Duncan, 40, retired from playing in 2012 and now serves as the Toronto Blue Jays Minor League Field Coordinator. Duncan started as a volunteer coach at Seton Hall in 2012 before returning to professional baseball as the Single-A Staten Island Yankees' hitting coach in 2015. After five seasons in the Yankees organization, the Miami Marlins hired Duncan as their Minor League Hitting Coordinator, eventually ascending to big-league hitting coach under Don Mattingly in 2020 and 2021 before acting as the quality control coach in 2022.

Mesa Solar Sox: Aaron Leanhardt (Miami Marlins)

Aaron Leanhardt is set to manage for the first time in his professional career. Leanhardt, 48, is currently the Major League Field Coordinator for the Miami Marlins, having joined the organization this past offseason. He got his start in baseball in 2017, serving as an assistant coach in the Atlantic Collegiate Baseball League and at Montana's Dawson Community College. He was also a volunteer assistant coach for the Duluth Huskies of the Northwoods League in 2018. After working in various leagues, Leanhardt was hired by the New York Yankees in May of 2018 as a minor league hitting coach before moving up to an Assistant Minor League Hitting Coach Coordinator in 2022.

Leanhardt is also known as the inventor of the “torpedo bat,” a custom-designed baseball bat with a torpedo shape, which has a thicker barrel in the traditional sweet spot and a thinner tip. The bat’s purpose is to help hitters put more weight on the part of the bat where they make the most contact.

Leanhardt graduated from the University of Michigan with a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering (1995-1999). He then moved on to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where he graduated with a PhD in Physics (1999-2003). In college, he participated in a NASA-funded research study in which scientists cooled a sodium gas to the lowest temperature ever recorded. After graduating, he worked as a physics professor at his alma mater in Michigan from 2007-2014.

Peoria Javelinas: Julio Morillo (Cincinnati Reds)

Julio Morillo has built his entire professional baseball career within the Cincinnati Reds organization as a player, coach, and manager. In 2016, Morillo transitioned to coaching with the Reds as a Spanish-language translator and baseball operations assistant, a role he held through 2019 as part of MLB’s league-wide translator initiative. Morillo, 32, began managing in 2022 with the ACL Reds and has compiled a 152-155 record across three seasons as a skipper in the Reds’ Minor League system. Most recently, he spent two years leading the Single-A Dayton Tortugas (2023–2024), guiding the club to a playoff berth in the Florida State League in 2024. In 2025, he joined the Triple-A Louisville Bats as part of their coaching staff, continuing his steady rise through the organization’s player development ranks.

Salt River Rrafters: Eric Patterson (Pittsburgh Pirates)

Eric Patterson returns to the AFL after playing for the Mesa Solar Sox in 2006. Patterson, 42, batted .345 through 28 games and earned a spot on the AFL Rising Stars team. During the 2025 Minor League season, Patterson is the bench coach for the Triple-A Indianapolis Indians, his first season in the Pirates organization. Patterson spent several years coaching in the Chicago Cubs organization, dating back to 2019. He started as a player development trainee before moving to a hitting coach in 2020 for the High-A South Bend Cubs. During the 2021 Arizona Complex League season, he was the hitting coach for the ACL Cubs. In 2023 and 2024, Patterson served as the bench coach for the Triple-A Iowa Cubs.

Scottsdale Scorpions: René Rivera (Detroit Tigers)

René Rivera transitioned to coaching following a 13-year Major League career, serving as the manager this season for the Single-A Lakeland Tigers of the Florida State League. Rivera, 41, played for 10 different organizations from 2004 to 2021, having been selected by the Seattle Mariners in the second round of the 2001 MLB Draft. Rivera participated in the 2017 World Baseball Classic, helping Puerto Rico win a silver medal. After his retirement in February 2023, Rivera managed the Frederick Keys of the MLB Draft League. In 2024, he joined the Detroit Tigers organization as a bench coach in Lakeland.

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 2025 season - Camelback Ranch-Glendale, Peoria Sports Complex, Salt River Fields at Talking Stick, Sloan Park, Scottsdale Stadium, and Surprise Stadium, with select games at Goodyear Ballpark. Opening Day of the 2025 AFL season is set for Monday, Oct. 6, as the Peoria Javelinas take on the Scottsdale Scorpions at Scottsdale Stadium. The 19th annual **Fall Stars Game** (Sunday, Nov. 9th) will be played at Sloan Park, and the AFL **Championship Game** (Saturday, Nov. 15th) will return to Salt River Fields, both being televised on MLB Network. The full 2025 Arizona Fall League Schedule and online tickets can be found at the Arizona Fall League website at MLBFallBall.com.

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