



Las Vegas Starts Association With A's

By Dave Lukow

The Las Vegas Aviators are taking flight with the Oakland Athletics.

Known as the 51s last season, when it was the top farm club of the New York Mets, Las Vegas has a new affiliation and a new name for 2019. The Aviators are also moving into a new home, the 10,000-seat Las Vegas Ballpark, this spring.

From 1983-2018, Las Vegas, which plays in the Pacific Coast League (PCL), played home games at Cashman Field.

The Aviators will be managed by Fran Riordan, who led the PCL's Nashville Sounds to a 72-68 overall record last year. Employed by Oakland the last four seasons, Riordan guided Midland to the Texas League title in 2017. He managed Beloit, of the Midwest League, in 2015 and 2016.

Although he never reached MLB as a player, Riordan spent seven seasons playing in the Frontier League. In 501 games, he hit .281 with 95 doubles, 11 triples, 55 home runs and 349 RBI. The first baseman and outfielder was an All-Star three times. While playing for Richmond (2002), he batted .314 with 81 RBI.

Riordan played collegiately at Allegheny College before turning pro.

Eric Martins will serve as hitting coach for Las Vegas. Drafted by Oakland in the 17th round of the June 1994 First-Year Player Draft, Martins played professionally for 11 seasons. He finished his career with 125 doubles, 22 triples, 21 homers and 262 RBI. He hit .276 in 661 games. Martins was hitting coach for Nashville from 2016-18. He was a scout for the A's from 2007-14.

The pitching coach for the Aviators is Rick Rodriguez, who was picked by Oakland in the second round of the June 1981 First-Year Player Draft. An Oakland native, Rodriguez was pitching coach for Nashville from 2015-18. He was bullpen coach for the A's from 2011-12.

In parts of four seasons in MLB, he went 3-4 with a 5.73 ERA. Rodriguez was named to the Castro Valley Sports Hall of Fame in 2011.

Brad LaRosa is athletic trainer for the Aviators, while Henry Torres is strength and conditioning coach.

