



## **SPORTS IN LAS VEGAS**

Historically known as the Entertainment Capital of the World, in recent years Las Vegas has cemented its status as the Greatest Arena on Earth™. The destination is now home to a thrilling roster of major league professional teams, high-profile sports special events and world-class venues. Sports are integral in promoting travel to Las Vegas, whether potential visitors are visiting specifically to attend a game or sporting event, extending a trip to add an event to their itinerary or enjoying events on screen at one of the destination's over-the-top watch parties.

One of the biggest assets sports teams and special events have contributed to Las Vegas is infrastructure. Allegiant Stadium, T-Mobile Arena and Las Vegas Ballpark have provided Las Vegas the opportunity to bring world-class special events to the destination including college football championships, MLS games, the NFL Draft, NFL Pro Bowl and even Super Bowl LVIII, which will be held in Las Vegas in 2024.

### **Professional Sports Calling Las Vegas Home**

- Las Vegas Raiders (NFL)
- Vegas Golden Knights (NHL)
- Las Vegas Aces (WNBA)
- Las Vegas Aviators (MiLB)
- Las Vegas Lights FC (USL)
- Henderson Silver Knights (AHL)
- Las Vegas Knight Hawks (IFL)
- Las Vegas Desert Dogs (NLL)
- Ignite (NBA G-League)
- Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC)
- Vegas Vipers (XFL)
- NASCAR
- National Finals Rodeo (NFR)
- Shriners Children's Open at TPC Summerlin
- NBA Summer League
- Boxing

### **Las Vegas Sports History**

While Las Vegas has a long sports history, until recently special events dominated the sports calendar, rather than the many major and minor league professional teams that now call the destination home.

**1950s** – Las Vegas starts to become known for boxing and hosting famous bouts

**1959** – The Las Vegas Convention Center makes its debut with the World Congress of Flight. The venue would soon become home to local sports teams, tournaments, graduations and more.

Fast-forward 25 years and town leaders were once again looking for a plan to stimulate the Las Vegas economy. They turned to sports.

**1980** – Boxing legends Muhammad Ali and Larry Holmes fight at Caesars Palace in front of almost 25,000 spectators.

**1983**

- The Las Vegas Stars relocate from Spokane, Washington to Las Vegas as the minor league affiliate of the San Diego Padres. Nearly 40 seasons later they are now the Las Vegas Aviators and the Triple-A affiliate of the Oakland Athletics.
- The inaugural Panasonic Las Vegas Pro Celebrity Classic is held with a record-breaking purse of \$750,000. Fuzzy Zoeller would emerge victorious. Today that tournament is the Shriners Hospitals for Children Open.

**1985** – Las Vegas officials lure the National Finals Rodeo away from Oklahoma City and 140,000 spectators attend the event's inaugural year.

**1986** – The United States Bowling Congress Open Championships roll into Las Vegas, later returning in 1999, and 2017 marked the first year of a 10-year agreement with the USBC to host events in the destination.

**1992** – Initially the replacement of the California Raisin Bowl, the Las Vegas Bowl arrives in the destination to drive tourism over winter need times. 2022 marks the 29th anniversary of the Las Vegas Bowl.

**1994** – Professional Bull Riders hosts its inaugural PBR World Finals in Las Vegas at the MGM Grand Garden Arena.

**1997**- Evander Holyfield vs. Mike Tyson at MGM Grand

**1998** – The inaugural NASCAR Las Vegas 400 debuts at Las Vegas Motor Speedway, before a capacity crowd of 107,000 spectators.

**2000** – The Mountain West Conference hosts its basketball conference tournament at UNLV's Thomas & Mack Center. The conference tourney would move to Denver from 2004 to 2006, only to ultimately return to Las Vegas in 2007, where the event remains today.

**2004** – The NBA Summer League makes Las Vegas its home with six teams playing. In 2019, all 30 NBA teams competed.

**2007** - The NBA All-Star Game was played on February 18. It was the 56th edition of the NBA All-Star Game and was played at Thomas & Mack Center. The Western Conference defeated the Eastern Conference, 153–132. Kobe Bryant was named the All-Star Game MVP.

**2013** – The Pac-12 hosts the men's basketball conference tournament for the first time in Las Vegas.

**2017** – Vegas Golden Knights become the first major league professional sports team to call Las Vegas home and make it to the Stanley Cup Finals in a legendary first season.

## **2018**

- Las Vegas Aces move to Las Vegas, bringing the first WNBA team to the destination and inaugural season takes place.
- Las Vegas Lights FC debuts as the city's American professional soccer team that plays in the USL Championship.

**2019** – Las Vegas Ballpark debuts at Downtown Summerlin in the Las Vegas Valley. It is the home field for the Las Vegas Aviators of the MiLB Pacific Coast League. The stadium is owned by the Howard Hughes Corporation.

## **2020**

- Allegiant Stadium is built. Allegiant Stadium is the 1.8 million-square-foot world-class home of the Raiders and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) college football team. The 65,000-seat facility includes a retractable natural turf field for the NFL, an artificial turf playing surface for UNLV, retractable lanai doors that open to spectacular views of the Las Vegas Strip, a translucent roof and a variety of premium spaces throughout all levels.
- The NFL's Raiders left Oakland again and moved to Las Vegas. For the first time since the team's debut in 1960, the Raiders called a city outside of California home. After 12 seasons in Southern California, the team moved back to their original city.
- Foley Entertainment (owners of the Vegas Golden Knights) purchase an American Hockey League (AHL) team and move them to southern Nevada as the Henderson Silver Knights. The minor league professional ice hockey team is based in Henderson, Nevada, and began play in the 2020–21 AHL season. The team plays its home games at the Dollar Loan Center in Henderson, Nevada.
- Las Vegas received major prizes when the NCAA awarded the city its first events at T-Mobile Arena with a 2023 Division I men's basketball regional and the 2026 Division I men's hockey Frozen Four.

## **2021**

- Las Vegas is awarded Super Bowl LVIII, set for Feb. 11, 2024 at Allegiant Stadium.
- June 21, 2021, the NHL awarded an expansion franchise to Las Vegas and co-owners Joseph Tsai, Wayne Gretzky, Steve Nash and Dustin Johnson. The team will begin play in the 2022–2023 season at Michelob Ultra Arena.

## **2022**

- Las Vegas simultaneously hosts both the NFL Pro Bowl and the NHL All-Star Weekend, marking the first time a city has hosted both events at the same time.
- Formula 1 and Las Vegas announce the debut of the Las Vegas Grand Prix, a first-of-its kind, nighttime race along a street track that will include a section of the Las Vegas Strip set for Nov. 18, 2023.

- The Vegas Knight Hawks come to Las Vegas - a professional indoor football team and member of the Indoor Football League (IFL), the Knight Hawks began play in 2022 at Dollar Loan Center.
- The NFL Draft takes place for the first time in Las Vegas at CAESARS FORUM. With the No. 1 overall pick, the Jacksonville Jaguars selected DE Travon Walker from Georgia.
- WNBA's Las Vegas Aces won their first World Championship and brought Las Vegas its first professional sports championship title.

## 2023

- The rebranded XFL, under Dwayne Johnson's leadership, welcomes the Vegas Vipers to its 2023 season. The new team's first game takes place on Feb. 25, 2023 at Cashman Field.

## Coming Soon

- **NFL Pro Bowl Games** – Now dubbed the “Pro Bowl Games,” the NFL will host the 2023 Pro Bowl at Allegiant Stadium in February 2023.
- **Formula 1** – The Las Vegas Grand Prix will debut Nov. 18, 2023. The event is already confirmed to take place in November 2024 and 2025, and organizers hope to make it a permanent annual event.
- **Super Bowl** – In December 2021 Las Vegas was awarded Super Bowl LVIII, which will take place at Allegiant Stadium on Feb. 11, 2024.
- **NCAA Final Four** – The NCAA has announced Las Vegas as the host destination for the 2023 Final Four, which will take place at Allegiant Stadium.

For more information about sports in Las Vegas, visit <https://www.vegas.com/las-vegas-events/sports-in-las-vegas/>.