

Pro baseball: Remembering three-time batting champ, former ORU standout Adam Casillas

By BARRY LEWIS World Sports Writer | Posted: Tuesday, February 2, 2016 12:00 am

A memorial service for former Oral Roberts University baseball standout and three-time minor league batting champion Adam Casillas is set for 11 a.m. Wednesday at Redeemer Covenant Church.

Casillas, 50, died on Friday. On Tuesday, a viewing is set from 1 to 5 p.m. and visitation from 5 to 7 p.m. at Bixby Funeral Service.

During the past 35 years, he was one of the best hitters that I've ever seen who never got a major league shot -- even though he had a .324 batting average and a .413 on-base percentage in 1,036 pro games over nine seasons. He struck out only 190 times in 4,109 plate appearances.

Casillas, a left-handed first baseman-outfielder, was a line-drive machine, but wasn't a speedster and didn't have a lot of home-run power -- and that's what kept him from the majors.

Casillas, a native of Stockton, California, was a four-year starter for ORU from 1984-87 and had a career batting average of .366 as he helped the Titans win three conference titles. He also pitched and had a 15-2 career record. In '84, he picked up his first pitching win when he hit an 11th-inning homer against Evansville. In '87, he batted .397 with five homers and 56 RBIs in 62 games for ORU, which lost in a regional final at College World Series champion Stanford.

Casillas is ORU's all-time hits leader (304) and is tied with Eric Vandeventer for the career doubles lead with 66. Casillas ranks high in several other ORU career hitting categories, including second in walks (160) and runs (219).

Although he wasn't selected in the '87 major league amateur draft, that didn't keep him from having a memorable pro career.

Casillas spent the summer of '87 with the Salt Lake City Trappers, an independent team in affiliated baseball. The Trappers captured the attention of baseball fans nationally with a minor league record 29-game winning streak in the rookie-level Pioneer League. Casillas was a big part of Salt Lake's success as he batted .385 with 44 RBIs in 60 games.

That caught the attention of the Cincinnati Reds, who signed Casillas and he played four years in their system. In '89, he won the Midwest League batting title with a .321 average at Cedar Rapids. In '90, he

won the Double-A Southern League batting title with a .336 average at Chattanooga, beating out Hall-of-Famer Frank Thomas. Casillas spent the next two seasons in the Kansas City Royals organization.

Casillas spent all or parts of three seasons in Triple-A. He batted .307 in 89 games at Triple-A Omaha in 1992. In his final affiliated season, he batted .304 in 126 games at Double-A Memphis in '93.

He spent his last two seasons in the Mexican League and won a batting title there in '94, hitting .367 for Monterrey.

Casillas also made 14 pitching appearances in his U.S. pro career and picked up a win with two shutout innings for Memphis in '92.