
HOW TO WIN AT FANTASY FOOTBALL

Secrets of Gridiron Greatness



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Introduction

It's estimated that approximately 30 million people play fantasy football. If the average league size is 12 teams, that means there are approximately 27.5 million people who don't win the championship each year. Sometimes it's just bad luck. Sometimes it's bad preparation. The Roman Stoic and philosopher Seneca the Younger said "Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity," and while I seriously doubt he had fantasy football in mind when he said that sometime in the first century—it rings true.

Maybe they had "Fantasy Gladiators" back then; but I digress.

In fantasy football, bad preparation is likely to net you bad luck while good preparation puts you in the best position for good luck. It is the purpose of this book to help provide the groundwork for good preparation when it comes to fantasy football. In the first four chapters, I cover what the novice fantasy owner needs to know in order to set him or herself up for success. I cover everything from how to create a league, to what types of typical scoring options there are, how to create positional cheat sheets and use them with specific round by round instructions for leagues using standard scoring systems. The instructions do not guarantee success, but they should help you cut down on the mistakes many first time fantasy owners make during their drafts, and help you lay the foundation for having a competitive team to start the season.

There are also three chapters devoted to explaining in greater detail some of the finer points even the experienced fantasy owner may not understand. Chapter 6 is all about Tiering, Average Value Theory, and Value Based Drafting. I do not know for sure who originally came up with these three staples for fantasy football drafting, but I credit William Del Pilar of KFFL.com for introducing me to Tiering, Joe Bryant of FootballGuys.com for Value Based Drafting, and Wade Iuele (affiliation unknown; but it was from a guest article on FFToday.com) for Average Value Theory. Chapter 7 covers the Auction Draft style of leagues as an alternative to standard serpentine drafts. Chapter 8 explains the Fantasy Points allowed per Game formula for calculating matchups.

The last three chapters are devoted to explaining what it usually takes to win a fantasy championship, including early season advice and understanding something I call the Fantasy Football Law of Averages. These should be helpful to both the novice and the experienced fantasy owner.



Much of this book is a re-write and/or combination of many articles and blog entries I have posted on FantasyFootballStarters.com since 2005. Again, for 2014, I have updated any out-dated material and tried to make it easier to read. One thing that you won't find much of: laughs. I have tried to present the information in a straight- forward style rather than go for upbeat entertainment.

One last note. Something I have said since the first day I went on the air with my fantasy football radio show in 1997: Fantasy football is about having FUN. It's about both: building friendships with other people you don't know who share in the enjoyment of watching professional football and strengthening the bonds of friendship with the people you do know. Building camaraderie and having a good time are what's most important. Sometimes there will be some stinging smack talk between owners, but as long as it is good-natured it can add to the fun. Don't take things too seriously.

That said it's even more FUN when you win. Here's hoping I can help both the novice and experienced fantasy owner attain a league championship.



Chapter 1

How to Create and Setup Your Own Fantasy Football League

The very first thing required for the creation of a fantasy league is owners. You need to have a group of friends, relatives, and/or co-workers who want to play fantasy football with you. League sizes can be of any size from as few as four teams (which is ridiculously small in my opinion) to thirty-two teams (which usually means there are two conferences, each with sixteen teams, and each conference has its own totally separate draft from the other conference). But the typical league is anywhere from eight to sixteen teams with ten or twelve being the norm. Once you know how many people (“owners”) are going to be in the league, you have your league size and can move on to creating a league.

Experienced fantasy football veterans know how to set up and create their own leagues. But those who are new to fantasy football have to start somewhere. Gone are the days of keeping track of everything with pencil and paper. Now everything is simpler by using specific league management websites, most of which allow you to customize your league in terms of number of teams, scoring system, and lineup requirements. I’ll be going over those a little further in this chapter but for now, take advantage of technology and make it easy on yourself: use a website that hosts fantasy football leagues. They make creating a league very easy. Practically all of the big sports websites offer this, and if you want more options, use a search engine and search for “fantasy football league management” and you’ll get plenty of options.

Some of the sites charge a fee, and some are free. Usually, those that are free have fewer options in customizing your league settings, but they’re free, which is always good. Look over what type of options each of the free sites offer and if you find one that is to your liking, don’t waste your money. If you notice that none of them really offer what you would like in terms of scoring system customization, roster size, and starting lineup options, check out the pay sites. They usually have the ability to customize your league in any way you want. Once you’ve know how many teams are going to be in your league and have selected your league management site, the next thing to determine is your scoring system. Some leagues keep it very simple only giving points for touchdowns, field goals, and extra points; some like to give points for practically every statistic imaginable. I like to keep it simple, but I also like having more than just TDs, FGs, and PATs. That system, known as “TD only” was exposed as being



flawed in the 1990s by having guys like Tommy Vardell of the Detroit Lions finishing a season with more fantasy points than his teammate Barry Sanders. Or Zack Crockett of the Oakland Raiders who, in the four seasons from 2000 to 2003, scored 28 rushing touchdowns, but never rushed for more than 145 yards in any of those seasons. Let's go over some of the different types of scoring systems.

Basic Scoring

In a typical league, the basic scoring is based on both yards and touchdowns. Usually, you get:

- 1 point for every 10 rushing yards,
- 1 point for every 10 receiving yards,
- 1 point for every 25 passing yards,
- 4 points for a passing TD,
- 6 points for any rushing or receiving TD,
- 3 points for any successful FG;
- 1 point for a successfully kicked PAT; and
- 2 points for every successful 2-point PAT conversion pass/rush/receive.

Your typical league also uses a Team Defense/Special Teams. The basic point scoring for a Team D/ST is:

- 1 point for every sack;
- 2 points for every interception;
- 2 points for every fumble recovery;
- 6 points for any interception, fumble recovery, kick-off return, or punt return that goes for a touchdown.

PPR Scoring

“PPR” stands for “points per reception” and means that there is a bonus point awarded to every reception a player has in a game. Typical is one point for every reception. A basic PPR scoring system is exactly the same as the Basic scoring system, but you get this additional one point for every reception a player has.

Basic Variations

You may be wondering why a passing touchdown is worth only 4 points while a rushing or receiving touchdown is worth 6 points. The answer is that since quarterbacks (QB) almost always throw for a lot more touchdowns than any running back (RB) or wide receiver (WR) ever catches, it helps even out the scoring differential between the quarterbacks and the other positions. But there's nothing to say your league can't give 6 points for every passing TD. There are plenty of leagues that do that. There are some that give only 3 points for a passing TD. You can change the yardage bonus to 1 point for every 20 yards passing, or to 1 point for every 30 yards passing. There are all sorts of variations in the scoring system. I, myself, prefer to keep it simple and basic, but it's up to you how you want to set up your league's scoring.



Decimal Point Scoring

One of my favorite variations is decimal point scoring. It works just like a basic scoring system, only instead of a player having to reach 10 yards rushing or receiving to get 1 point, every rushing/receiving yard is worth 0.1 points. In a basic scoring system, a RB who has 67 rushing yards and 19 receiving yards would get 7 points (67 divided by 10 yards = 6 points; 19 divided by 10 yards = 1 point; 6 + 1 = 7 total points). In decimal point scoring it becomes 6.7 points and 1.9 points meaning the player actually scores a total of 8.6 fantasy points ($6.7 + 1.9 = 8.6$).

For passing yards, it is either set up as 0.05 points for every passing yard (which would equal 1 point for every 20 passing yards) or 0.04 points for every passing yard (which would equal 1 point for every 25 passing yards). In a basic non-decimal scoring system of 1 point for every 25 passing yards, a QB who has 245 passing yards scores 9 fantasy points. In decimal point scoring 0.04 points per pass yard that QB would get 9.8 fantasy points.

It also works with kickers and their field goal attempts. In basic scoring, it doesn't matter if a FG is from 20 yards or from 55 yards, it counts as 3 points. In decimal point scoring, every yard for the length of the FG is worth 0.1 points. This means a successful 25-yard FG would be worth 2.5 fantasy points. A successful FG from 37 yards would be 3.7 fantasy points, and a 56-yard, successfully made FG would be worth 5.6 fantasy points.

I personally really like decimal point scoring and the hardest thing to adjust to is that instead of having scores with a nice rounded number (92 for example), you have scores like 92.65. It's a small hurdle the typical football fan sometimes has to adjust to.

Defensive Scoring: Points and Yards Allowed

In addition to the basic scoring for Team Defenses, many leagues give bonus points for holding an opponent under a certain amount of points scored in their NFL game. Typically, these are:

- 10 points for a shutout,
- 7 points for 3 points or fewer,
- 4 points for 7 points or fewer,
- 2 points for 10 points or fewer.

These are just typical awards, though, and can vary. Some leagues even subtract points from a Team Defense for allowing a lot of points to their NFL opponent that week. Maybe:

- 2 fantasy points for allowing 25-29 points,
- 4 fantasy points for 30-34 points,
- 7 fantasy points for allowing 35-41,
- 10 fantasy points for allowing 42 or more.



Again this varies and the subtraction of fantasy points from a Team Defense is less common than the addition of fantasy points for holding the NFL opponent to under a certain point total.

Another variation is the addition (or subtraction) of fantasy points to a Team Defense for holding their NFL opponent to under a certain amount of yards. This can be broken up between rushing yards allowed and passing yards allowed, or can be combined. In one league I play in, we award 5 bonus fantasy points to a Team Defense that has allowed 50 rushing yards or fewer in their NFL game that week. We give 5 bonus fantasy points if they hold their NFL opponent that week to 100 passing yards or fewer. Some leagues subtract fantasy points from the Team Defense for allowing too many yards to their NFL opponent. For simplicity, I prefer not to use these bonuses, especially the subtraction of fantasy points, unless the bonus structure is simple to follow and not complex.

Other Scoring Variations

Some fantasy football leagues like to give even more bonuses to their players for things like the yardage length of each touchdown, or bonuses for punt and/or kickoff return yards, reaching certain performance yardage totals, etc. And here's a breakdown of what these mean, how they work, and what I personally think of them.

Length of TD Bonuses

In basic scoring every rush/receive TD scored is worth 6 points. Some leagues like to give additional bonuses based on how far away the TD was scored. Maybe a TD rush/receive from 1 to 9 yards is worth 6 points, but if scored from 10 to 19 yards out it's worth 7 points. 20 to 29 is worth 8 points. 30 to 39 is worth 9 points, etc.

I have a problem with this extra bonus. Since every 10 yards is worth 1 point to begin with, a rushing or receiving TD a player has from any distance greater than 9 yards is already getting a yardage bonus and therefore doesn't need, or deserve an additional bonus on top of it.

For example:

A WR catches a 62 yard TD pass. For this one play, he has scored 6 points for the TD, and another 6 points for the 62 yards, making the total value of this one play worth 12 fantasy points in a basic scoring system. Why should he get an additional bonus for it being between 60 and 69 yards? It's already worth 6 more points than a 7-yard TD reception with the basic yardage points added in. Why should be it worth 3 times more than the 7-yard TD? That's just giving more points for the sake of having more components in a scoring system and getting higher scores. "More" does NOT mean "better" in my opinion.

Performance Based Bonuses

Typically, these are extra bonuses given to players for reaching certain yardage totals. Usually, these are set at 100 rushing or receiving yards, and 300 passing yards. Some leagues keep it



low giving 3 extra bonus points for reaching these, some leagues give 5 extra points; and some give as many as 10 extra points. What this means, using 5 extra points as an example, is a RB who gains 102 rushing yards would get 10 points for his standard yardage points, and an additional 5 points for having over 100 rushing yards, making his total fantasy points scored: 15. My problem here is what about the RB who gained 99 yards just one yard short of reaching that bonus? He rushed for only 3 fewer yards than the RB who ran for 102, but the difference in fantasy points is 6 instead of 1. Again, my question is “why?” It keeps coming back to the giving of more points for the sake of having more components in a scoring system and getting higher scores. Let me repeat: “more” does NOT mean “better” (in my opinion).

I understand the desire to add value for reaching these yardage totals, as we, football fans, hear it from announcers all the time that a player had over 100 rushing yards, or over 300 passing yards. Therefore we hear a golden harp or something like that in our minds that makes that number seem magical and deserving of higher consideration, but again, players are already getting points based on their yardage totals in the basic scoring system.

Kickoff/Punt Returns Yardage Bonuses

Unlike the last two variations I talked about, this one has some merit. But I prefer it only in leagues of larger sizes (14 or more teams). In leagues with a lot of teams, the well of players with value is reduced. In a 16-team league, if every team has 4 RBs, there are 64 RBs who get drafted. That’s not to say there are 64 RBs worth having who will provide fantasy points. In a 12 team league, if each team has 5 RBs, that adds up to only 60 RB being drafted. Quality depth and potential starting options in bigger leagues is harder to come by in larger leagues and therefore the inclusion of special teams yardage can help add to the talent pool of players with fantasy value. Most primary kickoff return and punt return specialists don’t play prominent offensive roles and therefore don’t produce many fantasy points in basic scoring systems.



With the changes in the NFL’s kickoff rules in 2011, there was a 28.1% decrease in kickoff return yardage. Whereas in 2010 there were 16 kickoff return specialists who had over 1,000 kickoff return yards, in 2011 there were only 4 return men who reached that mark. Of those 4, only New Orleans’ Darren Sproles was enough of an offensive weapon to merit consideration as a regular fantasy starter. If a

player gets 1 fantasy point for every 20 return yards, this would add only 3 guys to the talent pool who would score at least 50 fantasy points in a season and be worth considering on a weekly basis as a possible bye week filler or injury replacement.

I have three problems with this inclusion though. The first: it means having to pay more attention to statistical categories instead of just keeping it simple. The main purpose of playing fantasy football is to have fun and find enjoyment in games we otherwise wouldn't care that much about. I do not find it "fun" to have to do more research on players and look up additional stat categories.

Second: the use of Special Teams touchdowns for individual players creates a duplication of points scored. If a player returns a kickoff or a punt for a touchdown, both that player, and the Team Defense/Special Teams get fantasy points added to their totals. Some may wonder how that differs from a QB and a WR each getting points for a single TD pass/reception, but my answer is that in the case of a QB and a WR, it is two separate players. One scoring a TD does not automatically mean the other gets credit for it. A WR doesn't get credit for TD passes thrown to other WRs, or TEs, or RBs his QB throws to. And neither does every TD thrown to a WR always come from the same QB. Maybe a backup QB was inserted and threw the WR a TD. Maybe it was a RB or another WR who threw a TD pass to that WR. But in the case of individual player returns scoring and Team Defense/Special Teams, that D/ST will ALWAYS get that players TD. Thus, a duplication of points.

The third problem I have: unlike at specific offensive positions like WR and RB, kick and punt return specialists are sometimes DBs. Most teams use a backup WR or RB for their return specialist position, but some use a defensive player (usually a CB or S) and unless you're going to use individual defensive players (commonly known as "IDP's") you are not providing for the inclusion of all return specialists into your league's talent pool.

While I can see the merit of including special teams' yardage and touchdowns for individual players as an inclusion into scoring systems, it again takes me back to my premise of simplicity and that "more" does not mean "better" when it comes to fantasy football.

Team Defense vs. Individual Defensive Players (IDP's)

As stated previously, most leagues use what is called a "Team Defense." This usually includes all the special teams' stats as well (except FGs and PATs). With a team defense you accumulate all the stats for that team's entire defensive stats. Those usually include all sacks, interceptions, forced fumbles, fumble recoveries, and any defensive touchdowns. But some leagues use the specific defensive players instead. This is becoming more popular. This type of league is called an IDP (Individual Defensive Players) league. In IDP leagues, in addition to drafting offensive skill position players you also draft defensive players instead of an over team defense. You get points based on that defensive player's stats in a game. These include any sacks, interceptions, forced fumbles, fumble recoveries, and touchdowns, along with tackles, assisted tackles, tack-



le for a Safety, and sometimes passes defended. Typically, you draft 1 to 3 players at each of the 3 primary defensive positions: Defensive Line, Linebackers, Defensive Backs (DL, LB, DB).

The plus side of IDP's is that it's more inclusive and really challenges a fantasy owner's knowledge of both sides of the ball. The downside is that, for the more casual fan, it means having to pay even more attention to another group of players and keeping track of more stats.

In a typical IDP scoring system a player gets:

- 1 point for a tackle,
- 0.5 for an assisted tackle,
- 4 points for a sack,
- 2 points for half a sack,
- 4 points for an interception,
- 3 points for a forced fumble,
- 3 points for a fumble recovery,
- 6 points for a touchdown,
- 2 points for a tackle for a Safety, and
- 1 point for a pass defended.

This is a generic scoring system for IDPs and it will vary from league to league.

In IDP leagues, tackles are the primary stat since they will happen every game. You don't always have an interception, or a sack, or a fumble, or a Safety, or a touchdown. But in every game you have tackles (and for those that include passes defended, you'll have those as well in every game), and therefore I call tackles the "bread and butter" stat for IDPs. Usually, this means that LBs are the highest scoring players since they make the most tackles. Passes defended is a relatively newer stat that was included to balance out the wide difference in tackles between a Cornerback and a Safety amongst the Defensive Backs. CBs tend to make far fewer tackles than Safeties, but they tend to have more passes defended.

IDP leagues can be fun if you're really into a lot of stats and like having to strategize even more during your drafts. But for the more casual fantasy football fan, I recommend keeping it simple and going with a team defense. I personally have noticed no increased enjoyment playing in IDP leagues than those that just use a Team Defense.



Chapter 2

How to Prepare Positional Cheat Sheets

Now that you have your league all set up by determining your scoring system, total number of players for each team, and what the starting requirements are, etc., the next step is to prepare for your fantasy draft.

The first thing you have to do is rank the players at each position on separate lists. These lists are commonly referred to as “cheat sheets” and are valuable tools for executing a successful draft. Creating them is easy. You simply list the players at each position and then rank them in order from the best player to the worst. Then, when it’s your turn to draft a player you decide which position you are going to take a player from and select the highest ranked player still available at that position. As everyone drafts a player, you cross out the name on the cheat sheet so you know that player is no longer available. These lists will ensure you don’t forget about a player when your turn comes to draft someone each round.

If you’ve prepared your cheat sheets a few days (or even weeks) in advance of your draft, make sure the last thing you do before your draft begins is check for any latest news that could make you consider changes to your rankings. In August and September, injuries and depth chart changes can occur daily. This is why magazines are a poor source for developing the final cheat sheets and rankings at each position; magazine rankings were created months before your draft and, therefore, are very likely to be out of date, and potentially more harmful than useful.



Arian Foster, Jaquars at Texans

For example, in 2010, many magazines had Houston Texans, rookie RB Ben Tate ranked as a top 25 to 30 RB while second year, projected backup RB Arian Foster was barely in the top 60. In the first preseason game, Tate suffered a season ending ankle injury. Those who didn't pay attention to the news, or relied solely on the magazine rankings went to their fantasy drafts after that and selected Tate instead of Foster (which probably brought about a round laughter from astute owners who had paid attention and updated their own rankings to reflect the changes the ankle injury made to both players).

It's also important to note that if you play in more than one fantasy league, you are likely to have differences in the scoring system. These differences in scoring systems will affect the rankings of players, sometimes dramatically, and therefore it's likely that the cheat sheets created for one league will rank players differently from the cheat sheets for another.

Cheat Sheets: How Many Players to Rank?

Commonly, you should list more players at each position than are going to be drafted. That avoids running out of potential names and having to scramble to remember someone you didn't list. You do not want to run out of names available to you at a position at your fantasy draft. The amount of names you include at each position is determined by the position, the amount of teams in your league, and how many rounds your draft is.

For example, if your league has 12 teams and your draft is 16 rounds, you know that there will be a total of 192 players selected ($12 \times 16 = 192$). It's fairly certain that every team is going to carry at least 2 QBs, 1 TE, 1 K, and 1 Team Defense. For 12 teams carrying this minimum amount, you know that there are 60 of the 192 selections right there and that will leave a maximum of 132 combined RBs and WRs that can be taken. It could be fewer depending on whether some teams choose to select more than this minimum, but you can safely plan on at least 60 selections going to those positions.

For quarterbacks, you'll want to list every NFL team's starter. Since there are usually 4 to 6 teams that have unstable QB situations and won't know for sure who their starter will be, it's a good idea to include all QBs from that team who have a legitimate chance to be the starter. This means you may have as many as 40 QBs on your cheat sheet. And a good rule of thumb is to rank those QBs from teams where a clear starter hasn't been determined by the time of your fantasy draft at, or near, the bottom of the cheat sheet.

For Running Backs and Wide Receivers, you'll want to have at least 70 players ranked at both positions individually. To determine if you need to have more than 70 players ranked on your cheat sheet at each position, multiply the number of teams in your league by 6. If the sum is greater than 70, list that sum instead of 70. For example, if you play in an 8-team league, you'd get 48 ($8 \times 6 = 48$) but would still list 70 RBs and 70 WRs. If you play in a 12-team league ($12 \times 6 = 72$) you'd list 72 RBs and 72 WRs. The reason for using the multiple of 6 is because it's not uncommon for every team to have 5 RBs and 5 WRs, but it's less likely that every team



will carry 6 or more at both positions unless you have a really long draft in terms of amount of rounds.

For Tight Ends, rank at least 30, or 3 times as many as there are teams in your league; whichever is greater. If you play in an 8-team league you would list 30 ($8 \times 3 = 24$; 30 is the greater number). In a 12-team league, you'd list 36 ($12 \times 3 = 36$; 36 is the greater number).

For Kickers, rank the 32 starting kickers. As with the QB position, there are usually a few teams that haven't determined who their starting kicker will be by the time you have your fantasy draft. List both kickers for that team involved in the competition and, again, be wary of ranking any kicker in that situation too high on the cheat sheet.

For Team Defenses, rank all 32 NFL teams' defense.

Note the Bye Weeks

One very helpful thing to do when you create your cheat sheets is to make sure you've noted the bye week for each player next to his name. By doing this you reduce the chance you accidentally draft backups who have the same bye week as your starters.

Note: If you're a FantasyFootballStarters.com subscriber, you'll notice we've already included every player's bye week on the Tier sheets our Draft Analyzer creates.

For example, let's say you have selected Tom Brady as your starting QB. Several rounds later you decide it's time to take a backup QB. If Tom Brady's bye week is week 7, you have to make sure the backup you take has a different bye week. If you select a QB with the same bye week as Brady, you won't have a QB to start that week and that does you no good. It could be that the highest ranked QB still available on your cheat sheet has the same bye week as Brady so you can't select him. This is one of the exceptions to taking the highest ranked player. Instead, take the highest ranked QB who does not have the same bye as Brady.

The same holds true at the other positions, especially the TE, K, and Team Defense. While I usually recommend not carrying a backup at all three of these positions, if your league requires you to have more than one at each, be sure the backup you select at TE, K, and D has a different bye week than your starter at each.

Since you usually start two or more RBs and WRs, in addition to making sure the backups you select have different bye weeks than the starters, I advise making sure your primary starters at each of these two positions don't share the same bye weeks. For example, if you start two RBs, and both of your top guys are on bye week 5, there's a good chance you're going to lose your fantasy match-up that week. Most teams can still win when one of their starters from a position is on bye, but it's much harder when you have two off from the same position.



That said, a strategy I have seen become more popular in recent years is to load up your starters all on the same bye week instead of ensuring your starters don't share many bye weeks. The thinking here is that it's better to just count on one week where you aren't going to win, but then not have to worry about bye weeks the rest of the season. This makes some sense in the-



Tom Brady, Jets at Patriots

ory, but more often than not, you're not going to be able to populate your entire starting roster with players all on the same bye. It also assumes that every starter you've chosen at your draft is going to play up to expectations. So you should be able to give up the one loss when everyone's on bye and not suffer too many other weeks with a loss. Fantasy football production is an educated guess, and not an exact science. It's very unlikely

that every player you've selected is going to produce what you expect him to. Therefore I prefer diversity in the bye weeks for my players at each position so I can always have options and be planning to start a strong team each week regardless of injuries or unexpectedly poor performances. This is better than limiting my options and planning on starting my perceived strongest starting lineup every week except one.

Now that you've prepared your cheat sheets, and have noted the bye weeks, you're ready for your fantasy draft.

Chapter 3

General Guidelines for the Novice Fantasy Drafter

Now that we've talked about how to set up a league, and how to create your positional cheat sheets, it's time to look at executing your fantasy football draft. Every draft is different, and every league is different. Owners place their own values on players and what rounds to be taking certain players or positions in.

One thing I HIGHLY recommend to those who are new to fantasy football is not to get involved in certain types of leagues the first year or two of playing fantasy football. The more complex the scoring system, and the more complex the starting requirements for each position means a greater chance you could be taken advantage of in a league.

Do yourself a huge favor: start with a simple type of league with a general scoring system and no super funky starting requirements. Don't get right into a league that requires starting 2 QBs each week, or a league where you start one RB, one WR, and flex three others. Don't get involved with a league that gives different bonus points based on position.

Some leagues give various points per reception based on the position (i.e. RBs get 0.5 PPR (points per reception); WRs get 1 PPR; and TEs get 1.5 PPR; etc), or have different yardage bonuses to hit based on position: RBs get 1 point for every 10 receiving yards, WRs get 1 point for every 15 receiving yards, TEs get 1 point for every 5 receiving yards; etc. Keep the league you're in simple to start with and get a feel for how things work in a typical fantasy league.

A simple, standard league is 10 to 12 (sometimes 14) teams with a 16-round draft. Each week of the season you start 1 QB, 2 to 3 RBs, 2 to 3 WRs, 1 TE, 1 K, and 1 Defense/Special teams (the 2 to 3 on RBs and WRs assumes either starting a definite 2 or 3 at each position or a flex option of starting either a 3rd RB or a 3rd WR each week). The standard scoring is:

- 1 point for every 10 to 20 rushing or receiving yards,
- 6 points for every rushing or receiving TD,
- 1 point for every 20 to 50 passing yards; 4-6 points for every passing TD,
- 1 point for every interception thrown,



- 1 point per reception optional,
- 3 points for every successful FG,
- 1 point for every successful kicked PAT,
- 2 points for any 2 point extra points passed, ran, or received,
- 1 point for every team defense sack,
- 2 points for every team defense interception or fumble recovery,
- 6 points for every team defense or special teams TD.

Start with a league like this (or very similar to it) and work your way up to the more complex leagues with greater options. By the time you've mastered the standard leagues, you'll be much better prepared for making the step up into more sophisticated leagues, with many more bells and whistles involving starting requirements and scoring specialty options.

General Rules for Drafting in 2014

- Don't draft a backup Kicker or Defense unless your league rules force you to. Only draft a second TE if you're getting that second TE after Round 12 and he is one the top 16 TEs. If he's not one of the top 16, don't draft a second TE at all unless your rules require you to draft a backup TE.
- Kickers should not be taken before the last 3 rounds.
- Defenses should not be taken before the last 5 rounds.
- Be sure your backup QB's bye week is different from your starting QB.



- If at all possible, make sure the TE, Kicker, and Defense you have drafted all have different bye weeks. This ensures that you'll only have to drop one player from your roster to cover the bye in any given week. After whichever of these positions has the bye week first, you can simply drop the bye week replacement to get your bye week replacement for whichever of these 3 positions has the next bye week. For example you drafted a TE who has the bye week 5, a Kicker with a bye in Week 7, and a Defense with the bye Week 8; drop a backup WR or RB to get a TE to cover bye Week 5, then drop that replacement TE for a bye week replacement at K Week 7; and then drop the replacement kicker to pick up a bye week filler Defense. After all 3 positions have had their bye week, drop the replacement and get a free agent for one of your other positions.

These rules apply to the round by round drafting instructions I give in the next chapter.



Chapter 4

Round by Round Instructions for the Novice Fantasy Drafter

The following instructions are to be used in conjunction only with standard types of leagues as described in the previous chapter and for leagues with ten, twelve, or fourteen teams. I provide these instructions mainly for those who really don't know how to go about drafting a team that is competitive. Even in standard leagues, many experienced fantasy owners go about executing their drafts differently than what I am about to lay out in detail. Following these instructions may not result in the "best" team possible that could have been drafted, but it should prevent any fundamental mistakes by waiting too long to draft at a certain position or providing quality depth at the most important positions.

These instructions were created based on how many players at each position have been drafted by the end of each round for a 16 round draft in each of ten, twelve, and fourteen team league sizes. Knowing, on average, approximately how many players at each position are being selected each round allows you to compare the player rankings at each position and see where the probable best value pick lies. In the next chapter, I will detail each of the league sizes and how many players at each position are selected in rounds 1 through 16.

Notes on Terminology

“Handcuff RB”: The handcuff RB is the actual NFL team’s backup RB to the fantasy RBs you drafted. If the stud RB for a NFL team gets injured, this backup is likely to come in and be the primary RB for that NFL team for however long the starter is out. Examples of current expected handcuff RBs for the 2014 season would be:

Seahawks stud/handcuff: Marshawn Lynch/Christine Michael
Eagles stud/handcuff: LeSean McCoy/Darren Sproles/Chris Polk
Chiefs stud/handcuff: Jamaal Charles/Knile Davis
Ravens stud/handcuff: Ray Rice/Bernard Pierce
Browns stud/handcuff: Ben Tate/Terrance West
Bills stud/handcuff: CJ Spiller/Bryce Brown
Cowboys stud/handcuff: DeMarco Murray/Lance Ball



These are just a few examples of handcuff RBs. And, not every starting NFL RB's backup is worth handcuffing, and in some cases, the handcuff is worth owning all by himself in some leagues, as a flex-like fantasy player. An example would be Eagles RB Darren Sproles, or Ravens RB Bernard Pierce.

"Sleeper RB/WR": Sleepers are players who are generally regarded as having a chance to either break out in a season, or at least be a lot more valuable for fantasy purposes than is generally regarded. They are players who haven't had their break out season yet, but stand a good chance to. In 2014, examples of fantasy sleepers at RB would be: Andre Ellington (RB/AZ), Lamar Miller (RB/MIA), Jeremy Hill (RB/CIN), Terrance West (RB/CLE), Khiry Robinson (RB/NO), and Devonta Freeman (RB/ATL). Toby Gerhart (RB/JAC) is a player that should breakout in 2014, but his draft value has climbed so high as of late, he is an example of a breakout candidate that really isn't a sleeper any longer..

Andre Ellington has the most home run potential of that group above, as he has a late 3rd-round or early 4th-round average draft position, yet he has the kind of talent and skill set that can have him producing top 5-10RB numbers in 2014 (if all goes well)..

Examples at WR for 2014 would be the following players: Keenan Allen (WR/SD), Cordarrelle Patterson (WR/MIN), Kendall Wright (WR/TEN), Emmanuel Sanders (WR/DEN), Kenny Britt (WR/STL), Brandin Cooks (WR/NO), Jordan Matthews (WR/PHI), DeAndre Hopkins (WR/HOU), Riley Cooper (WR/PHI)..

Keenan Allen (3.10-4.02 ADP) and Cordarrelle Patterson (4.08-4.12 ADP) both have elite skill sets, and both could be top 6-14 WRs in 2014 and beyond. Both are seeing recent increases in average draft position, but they can still crush those average draft positions (that I just mentioned above), which makes them huge, huge difference-makers for your roster. It's all about grabbing players that can extremely outplay the draft slots that you grabbed them.

"Handcuff QB": Handcuff QBs are the actual NFL team's backup to one of the fantasy QBs on your roster. You should only consider a handcuff QB IF one of the QBs you selected is an injury risk. Let's say you draft Washington Redskins QB Robert Griffin III, who has still not yet returned to form from his semi-recent knee injury. Using one of your last two picks on RG3's backup, Kirk Cousins, could prove to be a smart move. Another handcuff, in deep leagues at least, that makes sense: Brian Hoyer/Johnny Manziel. There aren't a lot of QB-Handcuff options that make a lot of sense, unless you play in a very, very large league, or you are in a 2QB league.



Specific Draft Instructions Round by Round for 2014:

Round 1

- 1) If any of the top 5 RBs are available, take the highest ranked one.
- 2) If the top 5 RBs are gone, take the highest ranked of WRs ranked #1-4.
- 3) If the top 5 RBs and top 4 WRs are gone, take the highest ranked RB available.

Round 2

- 1) If any of the top 7 RBs are still available, take him
- 2) If those top 7 RBs are gone, take any of the top 6 WRs.
- 3) If those are all gone, take any QB ranked 1-3.
- 4) If those are all gone, take any of RBs ranked 8-12.
- 5) If those are all gone, take the highest ranked available WR.

Round 3

- 1) If you have 2 RBs, take any of the top 3 QBs; if they are all gone, take the highest ranked available WR.
- 2) If you have either 2 WRs or 1 RB and 1 WR, take one of the top 3 QBs. If they are all gone, take the highest ranked available RB.
- 3) If you have 1 RB and 1 QB, take one of the WRs ranked 1-16. If none are available, take a RB.
- 4) If you took 1 WR and 1 QB in Rounds 1 and 2, take one of RBs ranked 1-18. If they are all gone, take a WR.

Round 4

- 1) If you have 0-1 RB on your team thru the first 3 Rounds, take the highest ranked RB no matter what.
- 2) If you have 2 RBs and 1 QB, take the highest ranked WR no matter what.
- 3) If you have 2 RBs and 1 WR, take one of WRs ranked 1-16. If they are gone, take one of TEs ranked 1-3. If none are available, take a RB.

By the end of Round 4, you'll have either:

- 1 QB, 1 RB, 2 WRs
- 1 QB, 2 RBs, 1 WR
- 2 RBs, 2 WRs
- 2 RBs, 1 WR, 1 TE
- 3 RBs, 1 WR



Round 5

- 1) If you only have 1 RB, take another RB no matter what.
- 2) If you only have 1 WR, take a WR no matter what.
- 3) If you have 2 RBs and 2 WRs, Take one of TEs ranked 1-5. If none are available, take one of RBs ranked 1-23. If none are available, take a WR.

By the end of Round 5 you'll have either:

- 1 QB, 2 RBs, 2 WRs
- 2 RBs, 2 WRs, 1 TE
- 3 RBs, 2 WRs
- 2 RBs, 3 WRs

Round 6

- 1) If you haven't taken a QB yet, take a QB no matter what.
- 2) If you have 1 QB, 2 RBs, and 2 WRs, take a TE ranked 1-6. If none are available, take the highest ranked RB.

By the end of Round 6 you will have either:

- 1 QB, 2 RBs, 2 WRs 1 TE
- 1 QB, 3 RBs, 2 WRs
- 1 QB, 2 RBs, 3 WRs

Round 7

- 1) If you haven't taken a TE, take any of TEs ranked 1-6. If none are available and you have only 2 RBs, take a RB. If you have 3 RBs, take a WR.
- 2) If you have a TE already, take a RB no matter what.

By the end of round 7, you should have either:

- 1 QB, 3 RBs, 3 WRs
- 1 QB, 3 RBs, 2 WRs, 1 TE
- 1 QB, 2 RBs, 3 WRs, 1 TE



Round 8

- 1) If you don't have a TE yet, take the highest ranked available TE no matter what.
- 2) If you have a TE, and only 2 RBs, take a RB. If you have a TE and 3 RBs, take a WR.

By the end of Round 8 you will have:

1 QB, 3 RBs, 3 WRs, 1 TE.

Round 9

- 1) Take the highest ranked available RB. Period.

By the end of round 9 you should have:

1 QB, 4 RBs, 3 WRs, 1 TE

Round 10

- 1) If any of WRs ranked 1-36 is available, take a WR.
- 2) If none are available, and any of the top 12 QBs is available, take a QB.
- 3) If none of those are available, take the next highest ranked WR.

By the end of Round 10 you should have either:

1 QB, 4 RBs, 4 WRs, 1 TE, or
2 QBs, 4 RBs, 3 WRs, 1 TE.

Round 11

- 1) If you haven't taken a backup QB yet, take your backup QB now.
- 2) If you have 2 QBs and any of WRs ranked 1-45 are available, take a WR.
- 3) If you have 2 QBs and no WRs ranked 1-45 are available, take a RB

By the end of Round 11 your roster should look like either:

2 QBs, 4 RBs, 4 WRs, and 1 TE, or
2 QBs, 5 RBs, 3 WRs, and 1 TE



Round 12

- 1) If you have only 3 WRs, take the highest ranked remaining WR no matter what.
- 2) If you have 4 WRs and any of defenses ranked 1-4 are available, take a defense.
- 3) If you have 4 WRs and no defenses ranked 1-4 are available, take a RB

By the end of Round 12, you should have either:

- 2 QBs, 5 RBs, 4 WRs, 1 TE
- 2 QBs, 4 RBs, 4 WRs, 1 TE, 1 D

Round 13

- 1) If you didn't take a defense in Round 12, take your Defense now.
- 2) If you took a defense in Round 12, take a RB.

By the end of round 13 your team should have:

- 2 QBs, 5 RBs, 4 WRs, 1 TE, and 1 Defense

Round 14

Consider one of the top 5 kickers if available or fill out more depth with handcuff RB, or sleeper RB/WR or backup TE if one of the top 16 TEs is still available.

Round 15

If you didn't take your Kicker in round 14, take the highest available one here. Most every team will be taking their Kicker in the last round anyway so you should still be able to get a good sleeper RB/WR, second TE, or handcuff RB.

Round 16

*-Handcuff RB, sleeper RB/WR, second TE, or even a 3rd QB if your starter is an injury risk.



Conclusion

As I stated earlier in the chapter, following these instructions to the letter may not yield the "best" possible draft an owner could have, but it should reduce the chances of making critical mistakes. And it can still provide a solid, competitive team that at least starts the season as a contender.

A good 16-round draft should leave your team looking like:

2 to 3 QBs
5 to 7 RBs
4 to 6 WRs
1 to 2 TEs
1 K and 1 D



Chapter 5

Positional Averages by Round and Average Draft Position (ADP)

In the last chapter we went over the specific round by round instructions. There's a reason for how those instructions were created. In tracking the trends of fantasy drafts for ten, twelve, and fourteen team league sizes with standard scoring systems and starting requirements, there are definite trends regarding what round certain positions are being selected most often, on average. Knowing this helps you find the value pick of a player at a position that may have slipped thru the cracks.

The breakdown for 2014 by League Size, Round, and Position is as follows:

10 Team League, 16 Round Draft

Round	QB's	RB's	WR's	TE's	K's	Defenses	# of Picks
1	1	6	2	1	0	0	10
2	2	11	6	1	0	0	20
3	3	15	10	2	0	0	30
4	3	19	15	3	0	0	40
5	4	22	21	3	0	0	50
6	5	26	24	5	0	0	60
7	8	29	27	6	0	0	70
8	9	33	31	7	0	0	80
9	11	35	35	8	0	1	90
10	13	37	39	9	0	2	100
11	14	41	42	10	0	3	110
12	15	45	45	11	0	4	120
13	16	47	48	12	1	6	130
14	18	48	50	15	2	7	140
15	20	51	53	16	3	7	150
16	20	51	53	16	10	10	160



12 Team League, 16 Round Draft

Round	QB's	RB's	WR's	TE's	K's	Defenses	# of Picks		
1	1	7	3	1	0	0	12		
2	3	13	7	1	0	0	24		
3	3	18	12	3	0	0	36		
4	4	22	19	3	0	0	48		
5	5	26	24	5	0	0	60		
6	8	30	28	6	0	0	72		
7	10	34	33	7	0	0	84		
8	12	37	37	9	0	1	96		
9	13	42	41	10	0	2	108		
10	15	45	46	11	0	3	120		
11	17	47	50	13	0	5	132		
12	18	50	55	14	0	7	144		
13	20	54	57	15	2	8	156		
14	21	56	60	17	4	10	168		
15	24	59	62	18	5	12	180		
16	24	60	63	18	12	15	192		

14 Team League, 16 Round Draft

Round	QB's	RB's	WR's	TE's	K's	Defenses	# of Picks		
1	1	8	4	1	0	0	14		
2	3	14	10	1	0	0	28		
3	3	20	16	3	0	0	42		
4	5	26	22	3	0	0	56		
5	8	29	28	5	0	0	70		
6	10	34	33	7	0	0	84		
7	12	38	37	10	0	1	98		
8	14	43	43	11	0	1	112		
9	15	46	49	13	0	3	126		
10	17	50	53	14	0	6	140		
11	20	54	58	15	0	7	154		
12	22	57	60	17	2	10	168		
13	23	60	65	18	4	12	182		
14	25	65	67	20	6	13	196		
15	28	67	70	21	8	16	210		
16	28	69	71	23	14	19	224		

In each league size, every team has drafted the minimum of 1 K. This is typical. There will be some owners who will draft backups at the position. But on average, the experienced fantasy owner doesn't draft backups at the K position, (and shouldn't draft a backup Defense either; but there are almost always a couple of owners who do) preferring to load up with depth at the RB and WR positions where there are fewer quality options available via free agency and waivers.



If a majority of the other owners in your league choose to draft back-up kickers or defenses, don't worry about it. There will always be at least a few quality options available at those two positions on the free agent wire for you to pick up as filler when you need to cover bye weeks later in the season. Having the quality depth at RB and WR is more important than having a backup at the K and D positions.

Practically every owner will rank players differently and have their own way of executing their draft. That could lead to higher ranked players on your cheat sheets falling through the cracks and being available to you when not expected.

For example, while after round 9 in 12 team leagues there have been on average 41 WRs selected, they may not all be the top 41 on your cheat sheet. It may be that only 35 of your top 41 have been selected. Be happy when owners take players you have ranked lower as it means a higher ranked player on your sheet is still available. That's why I state in Round 10's instructions:

"If you any of WRs ranked 1-36 are available, take a WR."

Usually by the end of Round 10 in 12 team league sizes, 46 WRs have been selected, but it may be that one, or more, of your top 36 WRs is available. That makes one of them a great value pick there. It's an even better value in the 14-team league size.

The majority of Kickers are almost always selected in the last 2 rounds regardless of league size, but in some leagues, there are almost always a few owners who jump the gun on them before then. In the round by round instructions in Chapter 4, I say to "consider one of the top 5 kickers" in Round 14, but by no means does that mean you should definitely take one there. Because of the variety of ways a draft plays out, several kickers may have been selected by then and maybe one of the top 5 is still available. Maybe no kickers have been taken. If none or only 1 has been taken by the time it's your turn to draft in Round 14, wait until round 15 to grab a kicker.



Average Draft Position

Many league management sites offer the ability to see where, on average, every player is being selected in both mock drafts and actual drafts completed on their sites. Some even allow you to sort by league size and scoring system. Typically, they also show you what was the highest and the lowest draft slot for each player as well. It's called Average Draft Position (ADP) and it is an excellent tool allowing you to see where the players ranked on your cheat sheets are being selected and therefore in which round you can estimate they'll be drafted.

The advantage of this is knowing when a player who is ranked higher on your cheat sheets may be selected in a later round than where you have him ranked. It also works in reverse: knowing that a player who is ranked lower on your cheat sheets is going higher than he should. Here is a practical example for 2014 that illustrates both sides:

Currently, as of this writing, according to one of the prominent ADP providers, in a standard scoring 12 team league, Falcons projected starting RB Steven Jackson is coming off the board on average towards the end of the 6th round as the 30th ranked RB. His projected backup, Davonta Freeman, is coming off the boards on average in round 10 as the 44th RB selected. According to our draft sheets here at FFS, in a standard style scoring system, we actually project Freeman to be the far superior fantasy option to Jackson as Freeman as our 30th ranked RB, while Jackson is our 43rd. Knowing that on average Jackson is being selected ahead of Freeman means you know you can probably watch Jackson get drafted long before we think he should be, and get the better player in Freeman a few rounds later.

Having that type of knowledge of the ADP for these two players means you get to watch someone else not only make the mistake of drafting Jackson ahead Freeman, but knowing you get Freeman a couple of rounds later. That's the power of ADP knowledge. Freeman may be our 30th ranked RB, but you don't need to draft him there. You can probably safely wait until 37 RBs have come off the board before jumping on him.

Now, all this said about average draft position, for the inexperienced owner I recommend following the cheat sheets and not paying too much attention to the average draft position. The reason for this is that you never know when a new high or low draft slot for a player may happen. It could well be the draft you're in. Don't try to get too far ahead of yourself. Using ADP comes with risk and is usually best for more experienced owners who have had time to develop a knowledge of how the other owners in the league rank players and execute their own fantasy drafts.



Chapter 6

Tiering and Value Based Drafting

Every year, I'm asked about the two most popular (and successful) ways to approach a fantasy football draft. The two types are Tiering and Value Based Drafting (VBD). Which is best? And if you're new to fantasy football you're probably asking yourself: "What are Tiers and what is Value Based Drafting?" I'll try to explain both here and keep it as simple as possible as it can get a bit complicated, especially VBD. Even if you're a 20-year fantasy veteran, the explanation of how Value Based Drafting is set up and works, can be a nice tool to add to your fantasy football draft arsenal.

Tiering

Tiering is a draft strategy in which you lump your cheat sheet list of players at each position into "Tiers." These Tiers represent the amount of fantasy points you expect these players to score. All players within each Tier are guys you believe will likely finish the regular season with about the same amount of fantasy points. The essence of Tiering is that the names of the players are insignificant; it's the point production of the Tier group that matters.

For example, you've ranked your RBs and think there are three who are clearly above all the others. You think that each of them stands a good chance of being the Number 1 fantasy RB for the season and that all three will likely finish with the same amount of fantasy points. They would be your Tier 1 RBs.

You then create the next tier using the names of the RBs you feel are just behind the first Tier. These are guys who you think will score great fantasy points, and all about the same amount of fantasy points, but they are not on the same level as the "elite" RBs you put in Tier 1. When you've identified them, you group them in Tier 2 and move onto the group of RBs who become Tier 3. And you keep grouping players into these tiers of projected fantasy points until you've exhausted all the names on your RB cheat sheet. Then you do it at every other position.

Now tiers are used the same way cheat sheets are used. You take them to your draft and cross off or highlight the names as they get picked. The object of Tiering positions is to make sure you take players from the highest Tier when you go to draft someone at that position. It is also important to recognize when a tier group is about to "close" (when all the names in that tier



are going to be crossed off). Let's say you're in a 12 team league and drafting 10th. You've selected 2 RBs and 2 WRs in the first 4 rounds and it's now the 5th round of a serpentine style draft. You know that there will be 4 picks after yours (the two selections each for the teams at the 11th and 12th draft positions) before you pick again in Round 6. You haven't drafted your starting QB yet, but you also could use a decent 3rd RB. You look at your tiers for those two positions and notice that the highest ranked players left at QB are in Tier 3 with two players left in it. On the RB list, the highest players left are in Tier 5 and there are two players left in it as well. One of the teams picking after you already has drafted a QB. It's logical to assume that team isn't going to take a second QB with either of their picks this soon. That means only one QB (if any) is likely to be selected, and therefore you're still going to be able to get one of the two left in QB Tier 3 with your next pick in Round 6. Having deduced this you know the smarter move is to take one of the 2 RBs from Tier 5 in round 5.

Which one you take is totally up to you. When choosing from multiple players in a tier group take other factors into consideration. What are their bye weeks? Are you taking a RB from the same team as one of the WRs you took previously? Who has the more favorable schedule the weeks of your league's playoffs? When you've answered those questions, you should have a clear idea of which one of the two players to select. Even if the name is listed lower in that tier, you've still projected that you'll get about the same amount of points from either one so where a name is in a tier doesn't matter.

Now, the Tiers at each position do not correspond to the Tiers at other positions. Meaning that Tier 1 for RBs is not the same as Tier 1 for TEs, or QBs, or kickers, etc. There is no definitive point where the top Tier of one position becomes more valuable than a lower Tier at another position. The Tiers for each position are independent from each other and it is up to you to decide whether the second Tier of QBs is more important than the fourth Tier of RBs, or the third Tier of WRs.

Also, Tier groups have NOTHING to do with which round you should be taking someone. You can easily go through every name in RB Tiers 1, 2, 3, before the first round is completed. You probably won't see a Kicker or Defense drafted until at least the middle rounds of your draft at the earliest. Remember, the number of a Tier group does not correspond to a draft round value.

There are also no limits to how many names (or how few) can be in a Tier at any position. You can have a Tier with only one name in it, or there can be 20 names in it. Just be realistic when creating them. If historically, there are 6 to 8 WRs who score about 150 points in your league, you'll only want 6 to 8 names in that tier. Usually, there are fewer names in the higher tiers than in the lower tiers. This is reflective of the fact there are only so many Stud and high quality players who score a lot of fantasy points, but a bunch of players who finish the season with roughly the same amount of mediocre fantasy points.

One of the strengths of Tiering is that it can be used in conjunction with many draft tactics.



You can use tiers to execute a RB Heavy draft. You can use tiers to execute the Stud WR draft tactic. Another strength is that tier lists are easy to create, especially if you're working from a pre-existing rank of players. The weakness of Tiering is that despite calculating that you're getting about the same amount of points from players in a tier, that little anticipated point differential can be the difference in winning and losing close games during the season. After all, who hasn't lost a game by a single point? And while Tiering doesn't mesh with the idea of Value Based Drafting, the Tiers you've created can be based on the root principal of Value Based Drafting, which is Average Value Theory.

Average Value Theory

Average Value Theory (AVT) is a concept that uses the average number of fantasy points scored at each rank within a position and is the cornerstone to Value Based Drafting. These assigned point totals are derived from the average total points scored by the player who finished in that ranking spot over the past three years. For example, let's say last year the top scoring QB using your league's scoring system (and the name of the QB who produced those stats is irrelevant, it's simply the QB who finished #1 in fantasy points scored last year in your league) produced 472 total fantasy points. The year before, the top scoring QB (and again, the name doesn't matter, it's the point total that matters, as likely it wasn't the same QB) produced 463 fantasy points. The year before that, the top scoring QB produced 457 points. You simply add the three totals together ($472+463+457=1392$) and then divide that number by three. When you divide 1,392 by 3, you get an "average" number of 464 fantasy points scored by the top QB. And that's what you can roughly expect from the top scoring QB again for the upcoming season.

Sample QB Tier Sheet for Fantasy Team		
Tier	Position	Fantasy Score
1	QB1	402
1	QB 2	397
1	QB 3	388
2	QB 4	375
3	QB 5	347
3	QB 6	345
3	QB 7	343
3	QB 8	342
3	QB 9	337
4	QB 10	322

You then do this for all players at every position to get the AVT # for every rank spot within each position. I know this sounds like a very time-consuming process, and it is the first time you do it. But it gets easier in subsequent years as you already have 2 of the 3 years' numbers figured out.

Note: there are variations using more complex percentages to get the AVT number, like taking last year's total points scored and using 50% of that, 35% from two years ago, and 15% from three years ago, but for this example, I'm keeping it simple as the difference usually isn't very much. Applying the 50/35/15 percentages to the above example would yield a total of 466.6 fantasy points for the top scoring QB, or a difference of 2.6 points between the results, which translates into a variance of less than 0.56%

After you've created the AVT # for each rank within a position, you then start inserting the names of the players in each rank spot. Using AVT can help make your Tier Rankings more accurate than simply ranking the players and then guessing how many players are in each Tier. The AVT # gives you a completely accurate historical look at what you can realistically expect to get in terms of fantasy points. When using AVT in conjunction with Tiering, you set a "breakpoint" that separates each Tier. This will be the difference in AVT points projections between the highest amount of fantasy points scored within a Tier, and the lowest amount of fantasy points to still qualify for that Tier. A typical breakpoint is 16 points. 16 is used because it represents an average of 1 fantasy point per game between players. Using the above QB example where the highest scoring QB will have an AVT number of 464 fantasy points, the breakpoint for the Tier 1 QBs would be at an AVT # of 448. So any QB who is projected to score 448 fantasy points or more would be a Tier 1 QB. If the next highest scoring QB below 448 points is projected to score 439, the second Tier for QBs would consist of all QBs who have an AVT # between 423-439. And so on, and so on.

Value Based Drafting

Value Based Drafting (VBD) is a draft strategy that uses the AVT point system to ensure you always are taking the player with the most value every round. Value Based Drafting uses the AVT number to create a new VBD number. VBD point assignments will always be most accurately projected using Average Value Theory. I say "most accurately" because there are a lot of places that seem to assign any old numbers they like to fill out a player's projections.

Did you know that in an average year about 15 to 17 RBs will reach 1,000 yards rushing or more, and that only about 9 to 12 RBs will score 10 or more combined (rushing and receiving added together) TDs? This isn't my opinion, this is statistical fact. In 2007 there were 17 RBs who rushed for over 100 yards and 9 who scored 10 or more TDs. In 2008 there were 16 RBs who rushed for over 1,000 yards and (here is the one anomaly) 17 RBs who scored 10 or more TDs. In 2009 it was 15 and 12. In 2010, it was 17 and 9. In 2011 it was 15 and 11. In 2012 it was 16 and 9.

Why do I bring this up? I do it because many of the magazines and Internet sites out there will



project many more players than this average to have 1,000 rushing yards or more, or score 10 or more total touchdowns. Every year almost every magazine and Internet site that shows projected stats for the players will list at least 23 RBs who they project to rush for over 1,000 yards and at least 15 who are projected for 10 or more touchdowns. Check it out yourself.

My point is that to be accurate in assigning Value Based Draft rankings, you have to come up with them by using Average Value Theory. It doesn't work any other way as the numbers will be wrong. And if the projections going into figuring out the VBD assignments are wrong going in, they will most definitely be wrong coming out, and will lead to a disaster on draft day. So always use AVT and their numbers to set up Value Based Drafting.

For VBD, after you have achieved the AVT numbers for all ranks within a position, you then set up a "benchmark" (sometimes called "baseline") number at each of the positions. This is usually derived by taking the amount of teams in your league and multiplying that number by the number of players at each position you're required to start every week. Again, there can be variations to the formula if you want to place greater importance on having depth at a position like RB, but for simplicity's sake, we'll stick with the basic number of teams multiplied by the number of starters at each position formula.

Example

Let's say you play in a 12 team league, and you're required to start 1 QB, 2 RBs, 3 WRs, 1 TE, 1 K, and 1 Defense. You would multiply each position's number of starters by 12 to achieve where to set the benchmark. At QB, it would be at the QB ranked 12th. At RB, it would be the RB ranked 24th, at WR 36th, etc. You then take that position rank's AVT number and subtract it from every other rank's AVT # within that same position. If the QB ranked 12th has an AVT number of 298. You subtract 298 from all other QBs to attain a Value Based Drafting number (or VBD number). That 12th ranked QB will have a VBD number of 0 (as $298 - 298 = 0$). A top ranked QB with an AVT number of 464 would have a VBD number of 166 ($464 - 298 = 166$). QBs ranked 1-11 will have positive VBD numbers, while QBs ranked 13th and lower will have negative VBD numbers.

After you've done that at every position, you then assign your rankings of players to each rank at that position.

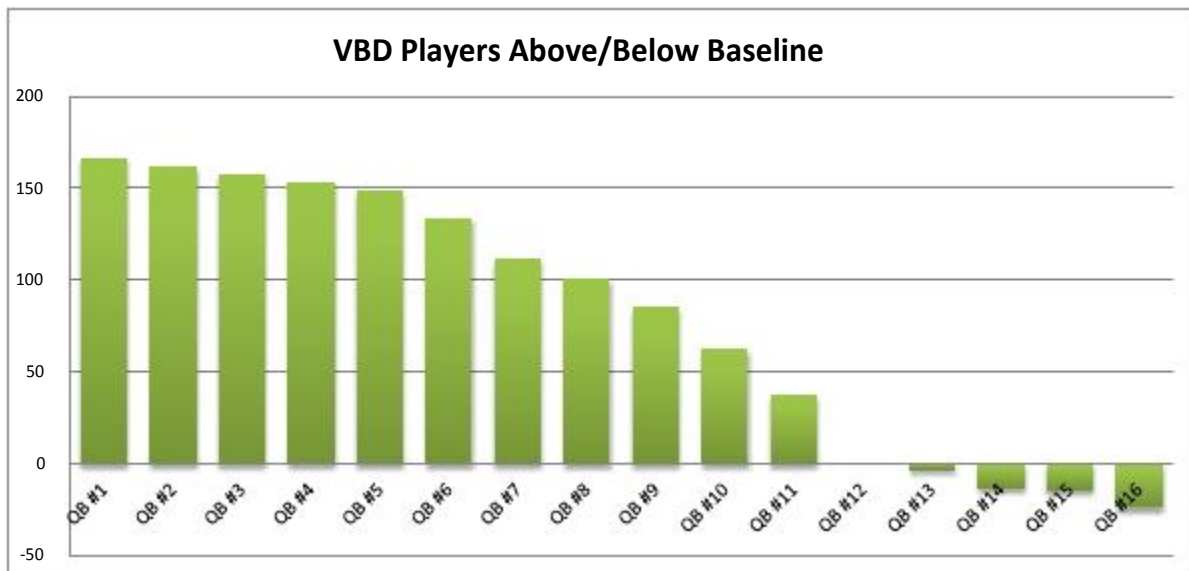
Let's say for the 2012 season (and this just an example, not the actual AVT #'s of any specific scoring system) the top 5 QB AVT numbers are 464, 459, 455, 451, and 446 and you have decided to rank them:



Aaron Rodgers, Super Bowl XLV

- 1) Aaron Rodgers (AVT # 464)
- 2) Drew Brees (AVT # 459)
- 3) Cam Newton (AVT # 455)
- 4) Peyton Manning (AVT # 451)
- 5) Tom Brady (AVT # 446)

Rodgers would have a VBD # of 166. Brees' VBD # would be 161. Newton would have a VBD # of 157. Manning's 153. Brady's would be 148. You do that for all players, and eventually you'll have VBD cheat sheets for your draft. By having figured out the VBD numbers, you then use these sheets to make sure you're acquiring the best value player with every draft pick.



The most popular way to execute a Value-Based Draft is to not just take the player with the highest VBD number regardless of position, but rather cross compare positions to determine where the better value is when it's your turn to draft. For example, let's say it's round 5 and you've got the 10th pick in that 12- team league we used as an example earlier. You've already drafted 2 RBs, and 2 WRs. You're thinking about either your third starting WR or your starting QB. You look at your VBD sheets and see that the highest rated QB has a VBD # of 88. Your highest rated WR has a VBD # of 99. One of the team's picking after you has yet to take a QB either, so you can assume he might pull the trigger on one. The most WRs that will get drafted is a total of 4, but you're assuming that probably no more than three will be taken before you pick again the next round. You consult your VBD cheat sheet and see that the next highest rated QB on your list after the guy with a VBD # of 88 has a VBD # of 79 (a difference of 9 points). The next 3 highest rated WRs after the guy with 99 have VBD #'s of 98, 96, and 93 (a difference of 6 points from highest to lowest). This version of Value Based Drafting dictates

that you should select the QB in round 5 as the drop-off between him and the next guy at the position (88 to 79) is greater than the drop-off between the 4 WRs (99 to 93).

Your worst case scenario by taking the QB in round 5 and the WR in round 6 is VBD #'s of 88 and 93 (a total of 181 fantasy points). If you take the WR in round 5, and then the QB with a VBD # of 88 gets selected before you pick in Round 6, your best case scenario is VBD #'s of 99 and 79 (or a total of 178 fantasy points).

There are other ways to execute a Value-Based Draft. You can go strictly by the point totals regardless of position, thus always acquiring the most total points. This is usually done by creating a Top 100 list of players ranked by their VBD number regardless of position. Some people will draft the highest ranked player from such a Top 100 list in each round regardless of position or team needs. The downfall of that is that you might be acquiring an exceptionally strong overall team with a great bench, but because you took two high ranked QBs early, you possibly skipped over a better starter at another position than a player at that position you drafted later.

You can also execute the "Get Your Starters First" strategy of drafting by using VBD to fill out your starting roster before drafting any backups. The problem with this is that you may have great starters, but the quality of depth behind them is weak. You could use a modified version of Starters First by including the drafting of one backup RB and WR before going strictly by the VBD numbers the rest of the way. This prevents you from blindly following the Starter's First theory at the sacrifice of at least one quality bench player at those two positions but again, there's an excellent chance of your depth still being weak (just not as weak). I have always held the belief that it's better to get quality depth at RB and WR before ever taking a kicker or defense.

It takes a lot of work to create VBD lists. And you have to be sharp on your math skills so you can quickly analyze each pick and where the value lies before your next pick. And if you play in multiple leagues with different scoring systems, you will have to calculate AVT's differently and set up separate VBD cheat sheets for each league.

The strength of Value-Based Drafting is that, when used in conjunction with AVT it's based on historical point totals and is therefore very accurate at predicting the amount of fantasy points each rank within a position will score. The weaknesses lie in how time consuming the process is unless you're some sort of math wizard, MIT grad, or a FantasyFootballStarters.com subscriber. Another weakness lies in how VBD gets misused, in my opinion, by going with the Top 100 or Starters Only First mentality previously described. The final weakness is that VBD also dictates that you had better be correct when assigning players a ranking within their position. Since the essence of VBD is to draft the most points possible at each position, and at the right time, if your player rankings are off, you not only missed out on the true value in a round, but missed out on a player at a different position who would have been both a



better value pick and a pick at a different position. This can cause a negative domino effect throughout your draft.

In Summary: Which Works Best?

Both systems can help you execute a successful fantasy draft. I've won championships using both systems, but I've found that I much prefer Tiering. The biggest downfall I find in Value Based Drafting is that it is just impossible for any system to be completely accurate on the projections for the majority of the players down to their exact fantasy points scored and therefore it can be wrong when it dictates that this one player is definitely the better choice than this other player. And that's what VBD does. It's a bit more rigid in dictating you shouldn't go off on your personal hunch about a group of players. And I like having my personal hunches and biases. I feel that Tiering allows me to be flexible in my decisions each round and doesn't try to convince me to make a selection I'm unsure about. It's also an added bonus that Tiering your fantasy football cheat sheets is much easier than producing the VBD sheets.



Chapter 7

Auctions

What are Auctions?

A very popular alternative to the standard serpentine style draft for many leagues is to go to the Auction format. In the Auction format for fantasy drafts, instead of everyone picking a player in a predetermined draft order, each team's owner (or ownership group) is given a certain amount of fantasy dollars to spend to fill out their team's roster. It starts with one team throwing out the name of a player and a fantasy dollar bid for that player. Any other owner that wants that player can then call out an increase in the bid amount for that player. All owners then get to bid on that player until there is only one bid remaining. The team with the highest bid gets that player, and then a new name is thrown out for bidding. This continues until all teams have fulfilled their roster requirements.

Briefly, to set up an Auction, you should have a person who is not involved in the bidding process keeping track of every team, the players each team has acquired, and what was paid for those players. This will allow there to be an instant policing process which prevents a team from accidentally going over the amount of money they are allotted to spend to fill their mandatory roster requirement.

Most leagues set up a minimum bid for any player, so each team must keep at least enough money to fulfill their roster requirements. For example, if you play in a league where you start with \$200 fictional fantasy dollars to fill out your team with and the minimum bid allowed is \$1, you need to make sure you have at least the same amount of fantasy dollars as you have roster spots to fill. In other words, if you have 7 roster spots left to fill on your team, and only \$20 remaining to bid on players, the maximum you can spend on one player is \$14 (as this would leave you with \$6 remaining and 6 roster spots to fill).

Auctions and the FantasyFootballStarters.com Draft Analyzer

The Draft Analyzer isn't set up to give you dollar amount values for players. This is because of the great variance in the amount of fictional fantasy dollars each Auction league sets up for each of their teams to spend. Some leagues use \$100, some use \$200, some \$500, some in the thousands, and there are some that place it in the millions. This makes it impossible to assign specific dollar amounts to players. Also, because player bids trend dramatically downward to-



wards the end of an Auction, there is no “correct” formula for assigning dollar values to players. However, that doesn’t mean you can’t use it to help assess the values you should assign to players. Since the Draft Analyzer easily breaks players into Tier groups, you can keep track of what each player within a Tier is costing at your Auction. I recommend copying the Draft Analyzer Tier rankings from each position into an Excel file and have a blank column next to each player’s name so you can write down what the winning bids were for each player. Simply print up the position rankings you’ve saved in the Excel file and you’ve got instant ranking sheets to take to your Auction. Auction values will usually start setting themselves fairly early in an Auction, and you’ll be able to see them on your sheets.

Managing Your Auction Dollars

There are a few different strategies when it comes to Auction finances. Some players like to spend a bunch of money on a couple of elite/top level talents and then fill out the rest of their team with guys who won’t cost much. Others like to spend a well-rounded amount assembling a team that possibly doesn’t have any elite guys, but is more well-balanced. This is one of the great things about Auctions: not only do you have the ability to get ANY player, but the choice is yours as to how you build your team, and at what positions you are willing to spend the most money.

A simple guideline to follow in Auctions is to be ready to spend up to about 2/3 (a rough estimate and it varies from league to league) of your total fantasy dollars on two or three players. This will usually net you at least one elite player, and one or two near elite players. Figure the elite RBs will usually cost about 35- 40% of the total dollars to spend. The elite QBs and WRs will cost about 25- 30%. It will vary depending on scoring system, but I’ve found this to be a good baseline when prepping for an Auction-style fantasy football draft. Unless you get out-bid for the studs at the QB, RB, and WR positions and find yourself with the money to spend on an elite TE, don’t plan on spending a lot on TEs. The top 2 to 3 TEs usually are overpriced and I think there’s more value in spending about half (sometimes less than half) of what it would cost for the top 2 to 3 TEs to get 2nd tier TEs.

A mistake I see often are owners who spend the money for an elite QB, and then spend more than minimum or near minimum for a backup QB. Using the \$200 total fantasy dollars example, if you get one of the elite QBs for \$50, don’t spend \$20 on his backup. When you have a stud QB, don’t carelessly waste your Auction dollars on a backup who will likely only start 1 game for you. Spend \$1 to \$5 on a backup QB as you’ll likely need that extra \$14 to \$19 to spend on other good players to put around your stud QB. It’s different if you spent \$25 on a good, but not great, starting QB and then spend \$15 for a high quality backup. But if you paid for a stud you’re going to start every week, don’t spend too much for his backup.

Usually towards the end of an Auction there is a huge drop-off in how much it costs to snag good players who fell through the cracks. When there are only a couple of teams left, or all remaining teams can only spend \$1 to 2 on a player because they spent their money elsewhere,



you'll be amazed at the quality of player you can get for cheap. And because of this, I go into my Auctions expecting to spend the minimum on at least 4 to 6 players.

By figuring that I'm going to spend the minimum on 4 to 6 players I then figure out how much I have left to spend on average for the rest of the players on my roster. For example, if I have 18 roster spots to fill with \$200 fictional fantasy bucks, and I'm planning on spending \$1 each for 6 players, I know I'll have \$194 to spend on the remaining 12 roster spots. That makes the average cost per player for those remaining 12 spots about \$16. The positions/players you should only spend the minimum on are kicker, defense, any backup kicker, defense, or tight end, two or three depth WRs, handcuff RB to one or more of your top RBs, and/or the backup QB to your starting QB if he is injury risk.

Auction Strategies and Tactics

I go into an Auction with the strategy of making others spend more money on the players they covet than they originally wanted to. If you can read people and are willing to gamble, you can bid up a player you really don't want just to make someone else pay extra for him. Let's say you know there's an owner who covets Cam Newton. The bidding war takes place and you know he'll spend a little more on him than he should. Take part in the bidding war to make sure that guy spends the extra dollars to get him. This will further deplete the amount of fantasy money he has left to bid on other players. Just know when to stop and let him have the player though as you run the risk of this tactic backfiring on you. This is why it's important to be able to read people. Everyone has a point where they will stop bidding on a player and if you run up the bid too high, you could end up spending more of your own money on a player you didn't expect to.

A tactic I use early in Auctions when it's my turn to make an initial bid on a player is to throw out the names of players I wouldn't mind having for a bargain price, but am not willing to overpay for. For example, you think Frank Gore is ready to start declining in his production or is too much of an injury risk to pay a lot of money for. But you wouldn't mind having him on your roster if you got him fairly cheap. Throw out his name with a low-ball bid and see if anyone bids him up. Either they will, and they end up starting a bidding war and spending more of their own fantasy dollars, or they won't, and you get a decent player for much less than he should go for. Making other owners spend more than they should, or spend money on guys you don't want only increases the chances of you getting the guys you do want.

Another good strategy is to be one of the last owners to finish filling up all of your roster spots. Near the end of the Auction, when many teams have filled up their rosters, there are going to be a few quality guys for you to bid on still. It happens at every Auction. By waiting until many teams aren't bidding any more, you will usually get some great value players for the minimum.

Auctions are a lot of fun and just like with serpentine style drafts; there is no one correct way to approach them. And rest assured that your first year taking part in an Auction, you're likely to make a few mistakes. But you'll be much better the following season, as you'll then know exactly how it works.



Chapter 8

Fantasy Points Allowed Per Game (FP/PG)

Determining which of your players have the best matchups each week is critical for fantasy success. It helps you decide which player you should start when choosing between players for your starting lineup each week. But since official NFL rankings vs. the run and pass are determined entirely based off yards allowed per game, they aren't a good indicator for fantasy purposes. Yards are important, but they don't tell the whole story. In practically every fantasy league, you are also awarded points for scoring touchdowns. So in 2004, I came up with a ranking system incorporating both yards allowed, and touchdowns allowed to determine the weekly matchups for QBs, RBs, and WRs/TEs against the NFL defense they were facing. It's called Fantasy Points Allowed per Game (hereafter referred to as "FP/PG") and it has caught on in recent years in the fantasy industry.

Before going further, let me explain the flaw in using the NFL's passing yards allowed per game statistics for fantasy purposes. You see, the NFL's passing yards allowed formula includes all sack yardage a defense gets back on a sack and subtracts those yards from the actual amount of yards a QB throws for in a game. In other words, if a quarterback throws for 250 yards against a defense, and gets sacked 3 times for -22 yards, the NFL says that defense allowed 228 passing yards. Since I know of no fantasy leagues that subtract out the yards lost in sacks from a quarterbacks passing yards this official "passing yards allowed" stat is inaccurate for fantasy purposes. What you need to be using is something the NFL calls "receiving yards allowed". This stat is the actual amount of passing yards a defense gave up without the sack yardage figured in. You can find both rushing yards allowed and receiving yards allowed on the team stats page at NFL.com. These categories will also show things like amount of receptions allowed, and rushing attempts against each defense so leagues that give bonuses for receptions and rushing attempts can tailor make FP/PG sheets as well. With that explained, let's get into how we determine the defensive fantasy points allowed per game vs. both the run and the pass.

The formula for rushing/receiving FP/PG

Total rushing/receiving yards allowed divided by whatever benchmark you get 1 fantasy point for (if 10 yards, divide by 10; if 20 yards, divide by 20; etc). This is Yardage Points Allowed.



Total rushing/receiving touchdowns allowed multiplied by however many points you get for a standard touchdown rush/receive. This is Touchdown Points Allowed.

Add the Yardage and Touchdown Points Allowed together and divide it by the number of games the defense has played so far that season. This yields the amount of Rush/Receive Fantasy Points Allowed per Game.

If your league gives you a point per reception, you can also add in the total amount of receptions a defense has allowed to the formula for receiving yards allowed before dividing it by the amount of games played. The same can be done for rushing attempts too if that's included in your scoring system.



Packers Defense, Super Bowl XLV

For Quarterbacks, it's the same formula only before you divide by games played, subtract out however many points your QB loses when he throws an interception and multiply it by the amount of interceptions a defense has accumulated on the season. If he loses points for being sacked, subtract out however many points those sacks cost him and multiply it by the amount of sacks a defense has gotten to date. Then you divide the total by the amount of games the defense has played to get Passing Fantasy Points Allowed per Game.

Examples

In the typical scoring system, RBs and WRs get 1 point for every 10 rushing and receiving yards and 6 points for all rushing and receiving touchdowns. Using that as guideline, you take the total amount of rushing yards each defense has allowed so far in the season and divide it by ten (this represents the 1 point for every 10 yards). You then take the amount of rushing touchdowns allowed for the season to date and multiply it by 6. Then you add the two numbers together and divide it by the number of games played. This yields a true reckoning of the amount of rushing fantasy points allowed per game on average for each defense. You do the same thing with the receiving yards allowed to get the amount of receiving fantasy points allowed per game. By doing this, you'll be amazed at how it changes your perception of what is a good matchup and what isn't. Just by looking at the final defensive rushing stats for the 2010 season, you'll get a good idea of what I'm talking about.

The chart below shows the finished product after I calculated and rearranged the final rushing stats from the 2010 season into an Excel document and applied a generic formula of 1 point



for every 10 rushing yards allowed and 6 points for every rushing touchdown allowed by every defense.

FP/PG-Rk	Ya rd -Rk	Tea m	Yds	TD	FP/PG	G	Yds /G
1	1	Pi tts burgh Steel ers	1004	5	8.15	16	62.8
2	5	Ba l ti more Ra vens	1503	5	11.268	16	93.9
3	7	Mi a mi Dol phi ns	1601	8	13.006	16	100.1
4	6	Sa n Fra nci s co 49ers	1547	9	13.043	16	96.7
5	3	New York Jets	1454	11	13.212	16	90.9
6	18	Green Ba y Pa ckers	1838	6	13.725	16	114.9
7	17	St. Loui s Ra ms	1810	7	13.937	16	113.1
8	10	Atl a nta Fa l cons	1694	9	13.962	16	105.9
9	9	Mi nnes ota Vi ki ngs	1635	10	13.968	16	102.2
10	20	Tennes s ee Ti ta ns	1851	7	14.193	16	115.7
11	8	New York Gi a nts	1620	11	14.25	16	101.2
12	2	Chi ca go Bea rs	1441	14	14.256	16	90.1
13	11	New Engl a nd Pa tri ots	1728	10	14.55	16	108
14	4	Sa n Di ego Cha rgers	1500	14	14.625	16	93.8
15	12	Da l l a s Cowboys	1734	11	14.962	16	108.4
16	14	Ka ns a s Ci ty Chi efs	1764	11	15.15	16	110.2
17	15	Phi l a del phi a Ea gl es	1766	12	15.537	16	110.4
18	27	Cl evel a nd Browns	2070	7	15.562	16	129.4
19	16	New Orl ea ns Sa i nts	1797	13	16.106	16	112.3
20	21	Sea ttl e Sea ha wks	1903	13	16.768	16	118.9
21	13	Hous ton Texa ns	1751	16	16.943	16	109.4
22	19	Ci nci nna ti Benga l s	1843	15	17.143	16	115.2
23	28	Ta mpa Ba y Bucca neers	2107	12	17.668	16	131.7
24	25	Indi a na pol i s Col ts	2032	14	17.95	16	127
25	26	Wa s hi ngton Reds ki ns	2041	15	18.381	16	127.6
26	29	Oa kl a nd Ra i ders	2138	14	18.612	16	133.6
27	24	Detroi t Li ons	1999	18	19.243	16	124.9
28	22	Ja cks onvi l l e Ja gua rs	1945	19	19.281	16	121.6
29	23	Ca rol i na Pa nthers	1981	20	19.881	16	123.8
30	30	Ari zona Ca rdi na l s	2323	19	21.643	16	145.2
31	32	Buffa l o Bi l l s	2714	18	23.712	16	169.6
32	31	Denver Broncos	2473	26	25.206	16	154.6

By looking at this, you can see that in 2010, despite the Chicago Bears finishing the season, allowing the second fewest rushing yards allowed per game (90.1), they ranked 12th in rushing fantasy points allowed per game because of the 14 rushing touchdowns they allowed. Conversely, the Green Bay Packers ranked 18th in rushing yards allowed, but because they gave up only 6 rushing touchdowns all season, they allowed the 6th fewest rushing fantasy points per game of all teams in the NFL.



To show how the formula was applied using the Bears as an example:

1,441 rushing yards allowed divided by 10 = 144.1

14 rushing touchdowns allowed multiplied by 6 = 84

144.1 + 84 = 228.1

228.1 divided by 16 games played = 14.256 (or 14.26 if you prefer to round after the second decimal) rushing FP/PG.

So even though the Bears were ranked 2nd in rushing yards, and the Packers ranked 18th, the Packers actually allowed fewer fantasy points per game and were a tougher matchup for opposing fantasy RBs.

To get the receiving FP/PG for each defense you do the same thing but use the NFL's receiving yards allowed statistical category to get the relevant stats.

For ease and convenience on my radio show I use the receiving FP/PG to also give me a quick general guide for QB matchups. But if you want to make it specific for the QBs, it's simple enough. Just take the receiving yards allowed and divide that number by however many yards it takes to get a point passing (if you get 1 point every 20 yards passing you would divide by 20; if it takes 25 yards to get a passing point, you would divide by 25; etc) and multiply the touchdowns by however many points you get for a passing TD (if passing TDs are worth 4 points; multiply the number of TDs allowed by 4; if each passing TD is worth 6 points, multiply by 6; etc) and add the totals together. Before dividing by the amount of games played, you then subtract out any points for every interception the defense has made. If your QB loses points for being sacked (which is becoming more popular in leagues) subtract those out, too. You'll find the numbers for the amount of interceptions and sacks a defense has gotten on the "passing yards allowed" stat category at NFL.com. Just remember to use the "receiving yards allowed" for actual quarterback passing yards allowed by the defense. Take the totals after that and divide it by the amount of games played, and you'll get defensive FP/PG allowed specifically to opposing QBs.

For example, let's say your scoring system gives 1 point for every 20 passing yards and 6 points for a passing TD. It also subtracts 2 points for every interception thrown and subtracts 1 point for every sack your QB takes. Using the final stats from 2010, the Buffalo Bills gave up a total of 3,253 receiving yards and allowed 28 receiving TDs. They also had 11 interceptions and sacked opposing QBs 27 times.

Applying the formula would look like:

3,253 yards divided by 20 = 162.65

28 TDs multiplied by 6 = 168

162.65 + 168 = 330.65



11 interceptions multiplied by 2 = 22

27 sacks multiplied by 1 = 27

$330.65 - 22 - 27 = 281.65$

281.65 divided by 16 games = 17.603 fantasy points allowed per game by Buffalo to opposing QBs.

If the scoring system for QBs was 1 point for every 25 passing yards and 4 points for every passing TD, and QBs got docked 1 point for every interception and lost nothing for sacks, it would look like:

3,253 divided by 25 = 130.12

28 multiplied by 4 = 112

$130.12 + 112 = 242.12$

11 multiplied by 1 = 11

$242.12 - 11 = 231.12$

231.12 divided by 16 games = 14.445 FP/PG allowed to opposing QBs.

The process looks time consuming, but once you grasp the formula and have run the calculations a few times, it becomes pretty easy and you'll discover that fantasy points allowed per game is a far superior way of determining the matchups for all of the players on your fantasy roster than just yards. Remember, FP/PG works off the averages from all games played. Therefore, you should wait until each team has played a couple of games before starting to calculate the results. Any team can be victimized into allowing a lot of fantasy points the first game or two because of schedule. A team that played the New England Patriots in Week One and the Indianapolis Colts in Week Two is likely to have allowed a lot of passing and receiving fantasy points. Another team may have faced two weak passing offenses and therefore the amount of passing and receiving fantasy points they have allowed may be much less than you would expect. I usually wait until there are at least 3 games played in a season before putting together my positional FP/PG spreadsheets. And each week of the season, I recalculate the stats with the updated totals.

Use FP/PG to Help You Win a Championship!

By week 7 or 8 there have been enough games played for the FP/PG formula to really help you in determining which teams (and subsequently their players) have the best matchups during your fantasy playoffs. This is a great time to start coming up with trade ideas to acquire good players from teams facing fantasy defenses that allow a lot of points to their position during your league's fantasy playoffs. It also shows you how strong the matchups are for your own players. You may have a WR who has been putting up great numbers but has a string of games during your fantasy playoffs against tough receiving defenses. You know another team in your league has a WR that has some great matchups during those playoff weeks. Maybe this other WR has had some down games due to tough matchups in recent weeks. Analyze both players and see if it would be a good idea to offer up a trade.



You can also use FP/PG to help determine whether a free agent pickup could turn out to be gold for you the weeks of your fantasy playoffs. Most fantasy benches have some dead weight (players who just aren't producing any significant fantasy points) and it may be that there is a guy available on the free agent wire that hasn't produced much better, but has much more favorable matchups. You're hoping that you don't need to start him, but if injuries caused you to have to play one of these two, which would you rather on your bench available to you? You'd want the guy with the much better matchup. Stocking your bench with players who have great matchups is better than having players with poor matchups. This does not mean you trade away a stud player for an inferior one just because of a disparity in matchups. But it does mean it's a good idea to trade a good player with poor matchups during your fantasy playoffs for a good player with better matchups.

The benefits of what knowing the FP/PG is for every defense is well worth the time investment.



Chapter 9

Three Point Plan for How to Win at Fantasy Football

What does it takes to be a consistent winner in fantasy football? That's a question I've been asked often over the years. And I'm a firm believer that winning in fantasy football is a combination of preparation and luck. Good preparation puts you in the best position to win each week of the fantasy season, but good luck will trump it every time. They say luck is when preparation meets opportunity. But the prepared fantasy owner can increase his chances of getting lucky.

Just look at 2010. Good preparation helped you to know that the Houston Texans were looking for a RB to step up and be the feature ball carrier to complement their prolific passing attack. The Texans drafted a RB in Round 2 of the 2010 NFL draft (Ben Tate) and he was the favorite to win the job. Preparation told you Tate was the guy to watch during the off-season during workouts, training camp, and preseason. Preparation also told you that the Texans had a RB named Arian Foster who was right behind Tate. Foster had finished the 2009 season as the Texans top RB and had performed really well the last 2 games. By knowing who to look for in Houston, you knew that the handcuff RB to Tate in early drafts before Tate's injury in mid August was Foster. Tate was someone you drafted in the middle rounds usually and Foster someone you took late just in case Tate (an unproven rookie) either got injured or didn't live up to expectations.

So what happened? When Tate suffered a severe ankle injury during a preseason game, Foster took over as the top RB. Because of preparation, you knew to remove Tate from your fantasy football cheat sheets and bump up Foster. As Foster continued to show well in the remaining preseason games, he shot way up the fantasy RB rankings. Those who were prepared drafted Foster, while those who weren't prepared, didn't. The truly unprepared, or those who relied only on fantasy magazine rankings (which are published months before the preseason starts) drafted Tate, not realizing the monumental mistake they were making. Good preparation led to good luck for everyone who knew that Foster was in a great situation to surprise the fantasy landscape in 2010.

But that's just an example of how good preparation can lead to good luck. And it's the first part of a 3-step plan I subscribe to in how you win in fantasy football.



The 3-step plan on how to win in fantasy football:

- 1) Draft the right players.
- 2) Start the right players.
- 3) Acquire the right players through trades and free agency.

Step 1: Draft the Right Players

Whether it's a serpentine style draft or an auction, it all starts with the draft. Knowing whom to draft is the first step in winning in fantasy football. More often than not, the person who wins is the person with the best players. That should come as no surprise. It doesn't take a genius to know about and draft the big name studs like Adrian Peterson, Arian Foster, Ray Rice, Drew Brees, Aaron Rodgers, Calvin Johnson, A.J. Green, Julio Jones, etc. But in 2012 did you know to draft guys like Mike Williams and Randall Cobb in the middle rounds? Anyone can identify the big name players, and you usually don't get a chance to draft more than one or two of them. It's identifying the lesser name players who are primed for big seasons, or are in situations that give them a better than average chance to succeed - players that you can acquire one after the other in the middle rounds of your draft - that separates the winners from the losers in every fantasy league.

Step 2: Start the Right Players

Of course, winning isn't solely based on a successful draft. After drafting the right players, you have to know who to start every week. Again, it doesn't take a genius to know to start the "studs" every week. But no team is flooded with studs at every position, and therefore decisions must be made. When is it better to start Rashard Mendenhall over Reggie Bush? Or Anquan Boldin over Reggie Wayne? Is this the week Alex Smith makes the better play than Joe Flacco?

Making the right choice is the difference between winning and losing. And there are many factors that go into determining which player is the right one each week. Is that player on a hot streak? Are there any injuries he or another player on his team may have that could affect his performance? How good is the defense that player is facing that week? If it's a wide receiver, how good is that opposing secondary he'll be facing? Or is his opponent's stud cornerback injured? What about the defensive linemen? These are all things that must be factored in when making a starting line-up decision.

A good way to start is by figuring out the Fantasy Points allowed on the ground or thru the air by each player's opponent that week. Many times, a tough decision about who to start and who to keep on the bench becomes easier when you compare the matchups.



Step 3: Acquiring the Right Players through Trades or Free Agency

The final thing that separates a winning fantasy football team from a losing team is making the right acquisitions through trades and free agency each week for your team. Making the smart move in these two areas is the key in being a winner.

Let's start with trades. When making a trade, it's always best to follow the stock market strategy of buying low and selling high. How does this translate to fantasy football?

"Buying low" is when you try to acquire a quality player from another team after a couple of weeks where that player has underperformed. His statistical output has been way below what he should be averaging. In many fantasy leagues, there are owners who do not think long term about a player and realize each player will have highs and lows throughout the course of an entire season. These owners get frustrated with a player who isn't producing the expected amount



Dwayne Bowe, Titans at Chiefs

of fantasy points and usually are willing to trade him away for less value than that player is actually worth. Recognize this. Find those owners with quality players who aren't performing and make them an offer.

In 2010, a classic example of this was Kansas City Chiefs WR Dwayne Bowe. In fantasy drafts, Bowe was usually ranked at about the 20th WR overall and was being drafted as a solid second starting WR. Through the

first five weeks of 2010, Bowe was awful. His production was way below expectation. In many leagues, Bowe was simply released because of his pitiful output. But the smart fantasy owner knew that Bowe had proven to be a good fantasy WR in the past and was in no danger of not being the Chiefs #1 WR. It stood to reason that while he wasn't performing at that time, he would likely have some rebound games with solid production. Offering the Bowe owner a trade while his value was down meant you didn't have to give up as much in return for him as you would have had to before he started off slow. And those who acquired Bowe got a WR who in Week 6 went on a fantasy points scoring tear that saw him finish the season with more TD receptions than any other WR and 7th overall in receiving yards.

Knowing when to buy low on a quality player increases your chances of winning.

It works in reverse. "Selling high" means you should look to trade away a player when his value is highest because in recent games he's performed at a level above what can be realis-

tically expected of him the rest of the season. It is usually best to do this with a player you drafted to a backup on your fantasy roster. Let's say you have a mediocre or "good" player who is just ripping it up early in the season. If his history dictates he probably isn't going to keep producing big numbers every week, you should try to trade him. Things to consider are: Will that player continue his surprising production? What are the reasons for it? Is he finally reaching his potential and this jump up in production over what was expected something he has a good chance of continuing? Or have his numbers been inflated due to good match-ups? Is he about to hit a string of games against tough opponents that will likely bring him back down to reality? When you've determined if the recent success is a fluke, or something you can realistically expect to continue, you'll know whether you should sell high on him and seek to trade him away. Start by contacting other owners who have a need at that player's position and see what they'll offer in return for that player in a trade. Look at the offers and answer some questions to yourself. Are you getting great value? Is the deal beneficial to you? Will this trade make your team better? If not, you don't make the deal; but there's almost always an owner looking at nothing more than just what a player has done lately and you should be able to capitalize on that.

A great strategy is to combine the selling high on a player with the buying low on one from another team.

Trades aren't the only way to make changes to your roster for the better. Most leagues allow for free agency and/or have a waiver wire for all players that aren't currently owned by a fantasy team. Acquiring the right players from the free agent pool helps boost your chances of winning tremendously.

Let's look at two great examples from 2010.

Right before the season began, the Cleveland Browns lost their rookie RB Montario Hardesty to a season ending injury. It was widely assumed that the Browns would turn to Jerome Harrison to be their top RB and, before the season began, Harrison was a free agent pickup by many. After the first game of the season, it was apparent the Browns were going for a split between Harrison and converted FB (and a virtually fantasy unknown) Peyton Hillis. Because RB is always such a hard position to find quality depth, smart owners went out and acquired the lesser-known Hillis from the free agent wire just in case he turned into something.

And turn into something he did. The Browns quickly turned to Hillis to be their feature RB and traded away Harrison. Hillis went on to finish the 2010 season as one of the top 5 fantasy RBs. Not bad for a guy who went undrafted in almost every league and was available on the free agent wire after Week 1.

Another player who made a great acquisition in the middle of the season was Tampa Bay Buccaneers QB Josh Freeman. Freeman was lightly regarded at fantasy drafts, seen as a potential



mediocre backup QB in 2010. A bunch of unproven talent at WR and an offense not historically known for throwing the football effectively made him a guy who was often found on free agent wires into the middle part of the season. His stats through the first several weeks were okay, but not the big numbers that made him worth more than many other available QBs. But when we got to the mid-point of the season, a look at the matchups Freeman had during weeks 14 to 16 (fantasy playoff weeks for many leagues) revealed 3 matchups against bad pass defenses. The smart owner acquired Freeman for his upside those weeks as a backup in case his stud starting QB got injured, or as a potential starter those weeks because his own current corps of QBs weren't that great and/or had poor matchups. Sure enough, in those three weeks combined Freeman threw for 754 yards and 8 TDs.

Acquiring the right players trades or free agency is the third key for winning in fantasy football.



Chapter 10

Lineup Advice for the First Weeks of the Season

Fantasy drafts are over and the first week of the season is upon you. You have drafted a strong team and have your clear-cut studs, great players and bench players. You think you know exactly who to start the first week and then it happens: you look at the matchups that first week and see you have a stud player in a poor matchup. You look at your bench and see an inferior player who has a terrific matchup. You agonize thinking that maybe you should consider sitting your stud and playing the matchup. What do you do? Here's some advice I've found works more often than not.

1) Start Your Studs!

With kickoff to the NFL weekend there are going to be some owners who are very tempted to be scared of a matchup and sit a player they drafted early to start someone on their bench who has a better perceived matchup. I say “perceived” matchup because that is EXACTLY what it is: it is a perceived bias we as fantasy owners have for gauging this year's defensive expectations by looking at last year's stats. I know we have nothing else to go on, but unlike offensive players where everything is gauged on one individual, defenses are a collection of individuals. When players are added or subtracted, or coaching staffs and their philosophies change, it can make a big difference in how a defense performs from one season to the next. So early in the season, I recommend that for the first week or two you play your best players at each position regardless of who their opponent is. Don't sit your studs and best players just because they have a “perceived” bad matchup in Weeks 1 or 2. For example, you drafted RB Chris Johnson in Round 2 and the first two weeks of the 2013 season he faced two very tough run defenses. You also had Chris Ivory just sitting on your bench and his opponents week 1 and 2 were both weak versus the run in 2012. Don't be tempted to start Ivory over Johnson because of the matchup.



Chris Johnson, Titans at Cowboys

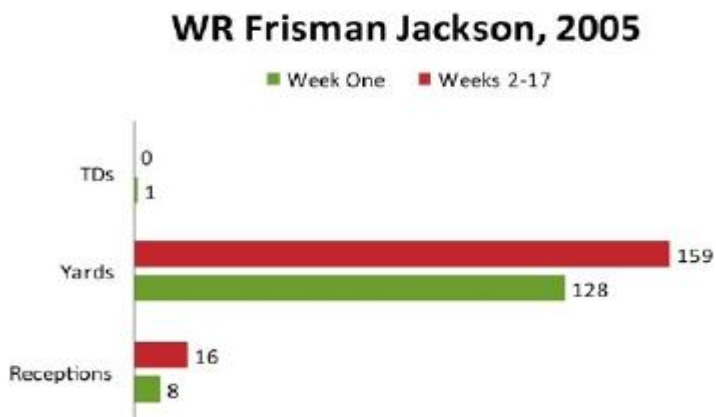
We don't know whether Ivory is going to be the same RB in the regular season that he might have looked like in preseason. Ivory could turn out to be a stud, or be a dud when the games start to mean something. Meanwhile Chris Johnson has proven that he can be a dominant top fantasy RB. Inconsistent, but a proven commodity. You give your studs and best players the benefit of the doubt early on in the season because they have historically proven that they can produce on any given week. And that goes across every position. Don't sit your studs and best players in the first 2-3 weeks of a new season.

2) Don't Panic If the Stud Is a Dud the First Week or Two

Now, every year there are players who are predicted to do very well for the season that come out the first week or two and underperform. They basically lay an egg in the box score, and it's likely you have someone else on your roster who produced much better fantasy points in Week 1. Many owners will panic after one or two bad games and start second-guessing themselves as to whether they should be starting another player on their roster. Or they'll even think about trading the under-achieving player too soon. Don't panic if your stud is a dud for the first week or two. Fantasy football player stats follow a law of averages (and we'll get much more in depth on that in the next chapter) that dictates when a stud player has bad games, he will most likely have some awesome games that soon will make up for it in coming weeks. Extremely rare are the players who put up huge numbers week after week and every player has down weeks. Sometimes, those down weeks are early in the year. The bottom line is don't panic if your stud is a dud early in the year. More often than not, he will bounce back and start producing as you had expected him to.

3) Beware The One-Week Wonder!

Every season there is a guy who was either undrafted in fantasy leagues or was a late round selection that comes out in Week 1 and has an unexpectedly great game. This usually leads to fantasy owners making a mad dash to the free agent list to see if they can acquire him. Some names of past first week wonders include Cleveland Browns WR Frisman Jackson in 2005 (8 receptions, 128 yards, 1 TD in week 1; finished the 2005 season with 24 receptions for 287 yards and 1 TD).



Does everyone remember Dallas WR Kevin Ogletree in the first week of the 2012 season? His 8 receptions for 114 yards and 2 TD's the first game of the season were completely unexpected. He was available in over 99% of fantasy leagues going into that week as he wasn't even a blip on the fantasy football radar landscape. People made the mad dash to grab him as he looked like he was at least primed for a much better than expected season.

Truth was he finished the 2012 season with a 32-436-4 stat line. The 8 catches in week 1 represented 25% of his total for the entire season. His 114 yards were **over** 25% of his total receiving yards for the season. And his 2 TD catches were 50% of his output for the entire season. Ogletree was a classic example of a one week wonder.

In 2007 it was then Washington Redskins WR Antwaan Randle El. Randle El had always been a perpetual fantasy tease during his first stint with the Steelers but he had never lived up to the hype many optimistic fantasy prognosticators lumped on him earlier in his career. In Week 1 in 2007, Randle El caught 5 passes for 162 yards and barely missed out on a TD. Pandemonium ensued in many fantasy leagues as Randle El was searched for and acquired by teams thinking 2007 was finally going to be his breakout year. I said it then that he was the one-week wonder and that I would bet he didn't finish the season with more than 800 yards tops, and finish with 5 TDs or fewer. I was spotting him 162 yards after 1 game and declared he wouldn't get another 638 yards in 15 games (less than 43 yards per game average). Sure enough, Randle El finished the year with 728 yards and 1 touchdown.

Carolina Panthers TE Dante Rosario in 2008 started the season Week 1 by catching 7 passes for 96 yards and 1 TD. He finished 2008 with 18 receptions for 209 yards and 1 TD. In 2009, there were those who paid no attention to how a stat happened and made the mad dash to the waiver wire to acquire Denver Broncos WR Brandon Stokley after his 87 yard TD catch to beat the Bengals Week 1 (which was his only catch of the game and was off a deflection that sent the ball way up in the air). That one fluky catch represented about 25% of Stokley's total yards and TDs for the entire 2009 season. In the cases of Jackson and Rosario it was over 33% of their total stats for those seasons. Every year this happens.

There is a guy who was undrafted who comes out and looks great in Week 1. He causes a fury of excitement in leagues, and then he's a dud the rest of the season. Let someone else make the mistake of not identifying the one-week wonder. If you want to pick him up with the intention of immediately trading him to someone else who can't recognize the one-week wonder phenomenon, that's fine. It's always a good idea to try and capitalize on others who will make such mistakes. But if you don't get any takers, be ready to dump the one-week wonder.

Remember, a fantasy season is a marathon, not a sprint. Just as winning the first 2 weeks doesn't guarantee you a playoff spot, losing the first 2 weeks doesn't mean you can't win the championship. There is a difference between being the owner who panics and starts making bad lineup and roster decisions, and the owner who stays patient and realizes there are always bumps in the road. Sometimes a calculated trade or change in starting lineup is the right move; but don't do it out of panic and don't undervalue players who don't live up to expectations the first few weeks.



Chapter 11

The Fantasy Football Law of Averages

It happens every year. There are players taken with high draft picks who start off the season with dud performances, probably causing their owners to lose fantasy matchups the first week or two. Should you give up on these players?

Conversely, there are players taken with low expectations who put up unexpectedly great numbers the first few weeks. Are these players' guys you just misjudged their value and need to be starting every week?

The answer lies in the Fantasy Football Law of Averages.

The Fantasy Football Law of Averages is a theory I came up with many years ago. It dictates you need to recognize the fact that every player will have “spikes” (commonly referred to as peaks and valleys) in his fantasy production from week to week throughout the course of an entire season. Barring injury, there will be a common average a player will usually hover around in terms of the amount of fantasy points he should score each week. If a player is failing to meet his average production, it stands to reason that if his projections were realistic in the first place, the player will have to have weeks where he exceeds his average to even the discrepancy out.

It also applies in reverse to players who are exceeding their average; they'll have to have weeks where they fall short of their projected average. It's hardly an extreme idea and if you recognize it, it can help you ensure you're smart in your fantasy football management skills. Understanding the Fantasy Football Law of Averages will allow you to optimize your fantasy football trades by knowing who has underperformed, but probably will have more spikes in

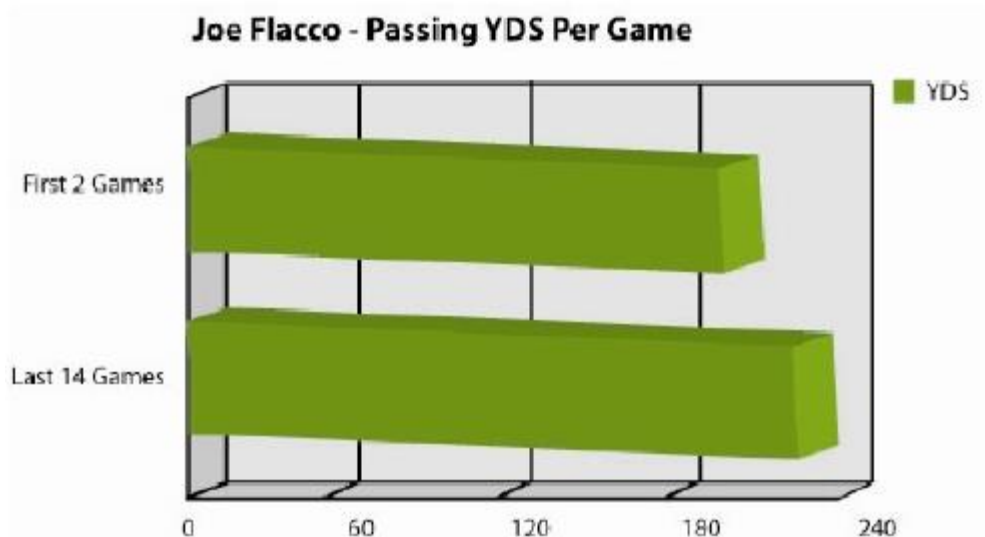


Joe Flacco, Ravens at Chiefs

his production going forward. And also knowing who you should think about trading away while his stats are higher on average right now than what he'll probably finish the season with. And his value in a trade is therefore higher now than what it probably will be down the road in a few weeks.

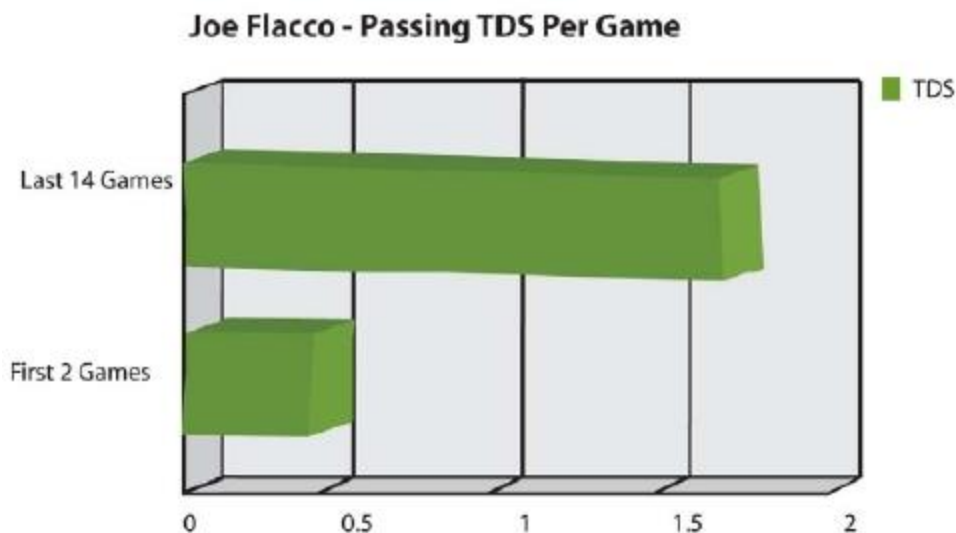
The Fantasy Law of Averages at Work in 2010

Baltimore Ravens QB Joe Flacco started the season cold. Through the first 2 games he had thrown for 402 yards, 1 touchdown and 5 interceptions. He completed 37 of 77 pass attempts for a completion percentage of 48.1. Hardly the numbers anyone was expecting. My 2010 pre-season stat projection for Flacco was 3,843 yards and 23 touchdowns. After two games, if we subtracted out his actual stats from my projections, we'd had 3,441 yards and 22 touchdowns left to be get in 14 games. That would be an average of 245.8 yards and 1.57 TDs. And since I pegged his completion percentage to be 62.1 for the year, he'd need to start making a lot more completions on fewer attempts. What happened Week 3? Flacco went 22-31, no interceptions, 262 yards, and 3 touchdowns. A much higher completion percentage, much more yards, and the touchdowns finally came without any interceptions.



If you take my original projection for 16 games, you get an average of 240.2 yards, 0.81 interceptions, and 1.44 TDs per game. After two weeks, it wasn't looking good, but the fantasy law of averages told me that he must play above his average to make up for those bad games. Where were we after three games? Flacco had completed 54.6% of his passes, thrown for 664 yards (an average of 221.3), and completed 4 touchdowns (1.33), and 5 interceptions (1.67). What did the law of averages dictate after three weeks? It dictated that Flacco should have more good games coming since he hadn't hit his average on yards or TDs, and his interceptions should come down. He simply was not going to average 1.67 interceptions per game the rest of the season as that would set him up for a ridiculously high 27 interceptions for the year, or more than Jay Cutler threw in 2009.

How did Flacco finish the 2010 season? He completed 62.5% of his passes, throwing for a total of 3,622 yards, 25 touchdowns, and only 10 interceptions. After his abysmal first two games of the year, Flacco went on to throw for 3,220 yards, 24 touchdowns, and only 5 more interceptions in the last 14 games.



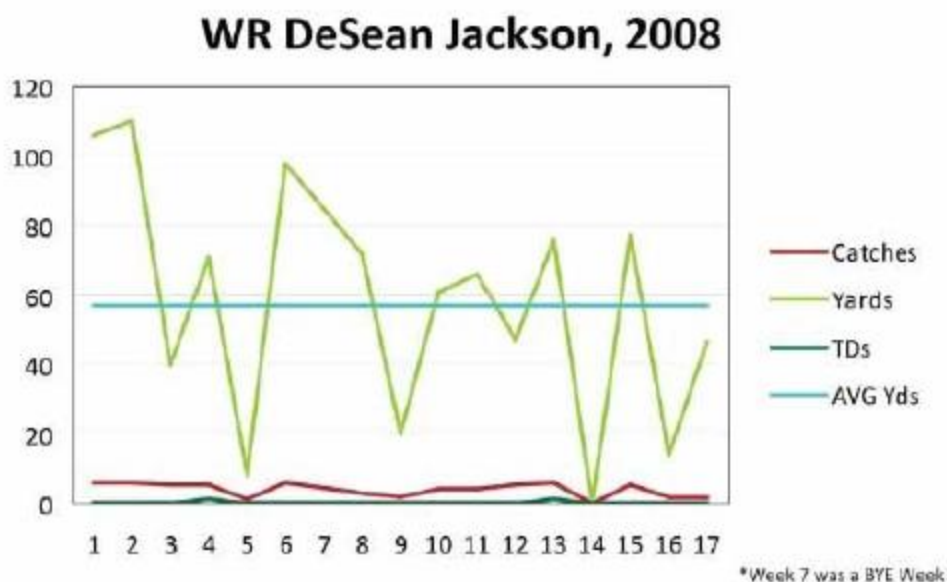
Next, let's look at Dallas Cowboys WR Miles Austin. In the first two games Austin had a ridiculously obscene 20 receptions for 288 yards and 1 touchdown. The history of great WR stats told us that he was not going to finish the year at that pace (160 catches for 2,304 yards). Nobody finishes a season with those stats. My original projection for Austin was 79 receptions for 1,232 yards and 10 touchdowns. After just two games it was looking as though I was going to be on the low side of the receptions and yards. But look what happened to Austin in Week 3 against the Houston Texans: 2 catches, for 20 yards. Nobody saw that coming. I knew the Fantasy Football Law of Averages was against Austin going into the game, but I figured it would hit him on weeks where he faced tougher opponents against the pass. But still, the law of averages caught up to Austin Week 3. Some will say that Tony Romo getting injured caused Austin to finish the year with only 69 receptions, 1,041 yards, and 7 touchdowns, but Romo didn't get injured until Week 7, and in Week 6, Austin, with Romo at QB, had only 2 catches for 12 yards.

Now for someone whom I predicted the law of averages would catch up to: Houston Texans WR Kevin Walter. In 2010 through the first three games, Walter had 16 receptions for 207 yards and 3 touchdowns. If you averaged that out for a full 16 games, you'd get 85 receptions for 1,104 yards and 16 touchdowns. Walter was an early season free agent acquisition in almost every league as he went undrafted in most leagues. Now Walter in 2010 was an 8-year NFL veteran and had been a starter for the Texans since 2007. The most receptions he ever had in a season was in 2007 when he had 65. His best yardage and touchdown season was in 2008 when he had 899 yards and 8 touchdowns. In 2009 he disappointed with only 53 catches for

611 yards and 2 TDs. So we had a track record to go on with Walter. He had been in the same position with Houston the past 3 seasons and the best he had done doesn't come near what those first three weeks numbers averaged out to. The Fantasy Football Law of Averages said Walter had to have some stinker games coming his way. Sure enough, Walter finished 2010 with 51 receptions, 621 yards, and 5 touchdowns. That was good for him to finish the season about the 50th highest scoring fantasy WR. So in the first three games, he accumulated about one-third of his receptions and yards and over half his total touchdowns for the entire season.

Think 2010 was an anomaly? Think again!

In 2008, Philadelphia Eagles WR DeSean Jackson became the first player in nearly 70 years to record two 100+ receiving yards games in his first two NFL games. It was quite an accomplishment and Jackson (who was drafted in about 50% of fantasy leagues at that time) was a hot free agent pickup and trade acquisition for many. However, it was unrealistic to think Jackson was going to have 100 yards every week as a rookie WR. Sure enough, Jackson didn't have another 100+ yards receiving in a single game the rest of the 2008 season and finished with only 912 yards and 2 touchdowns. But there was a mad dash in fantasy football leagues to get Jackson after his first two games. I certainly hope you were one of those who sold high on Jackson while his value was at its highest instead of being one of those who bought high on him.



In 2007, New Orleans Saints QB Drew Brees was coming off a 2006 campaign that saw him throw for 4,418 yards, 26 touchdowns, and only 11 interceptions. But in 2007 he started the season miserably. In the first 4 games of 2007, Brees had only thrown for 929 yards, had only one touchdown, and threw an outrageous nine interceptions. Teams that had drafted Brees as their starting QB (and he was widely ranked as one of the top 5 QBs) were trading him away



for whatever they could get. How did he finish? In the last 12 games, he threw for 3,494 yards, 27 touchdowns, and only 9 more interceptions for a final stat line of 4423-28-18. That was good enough for Brees to finish the season as the top 5 QB he was originally projected to be. Smart owners knew to be on the buying end of a Brees trade while his value was low.

In 2005, Peyton Manning was certainly disappointing fantasy owners with 604 yards, 2 touchdowns, and 2 interceptions thru the first three games. This was coming just a year after he had set a (then) NFL record 49 touchdown passes in 2004. In many leagues, Manning was drafted in the first round, and through three games he was being outperformed by nearly every other QB in the NFL! In the next 11 games, Manning threw for a combined 3,022 yards, 26 touchdowns, and 8 interceptions. His final stat line for the season would have been more impressive but he barely played the last two games of 2005 as the Colts had locked up the top seed in the AFC for the playoffs after Week 15.

In Conclusion

These are just a few examples of the Fantasy Football Law of Averages and I name them only because I wrote specific articles and blog entries about these players (and others) for those years. But it applies every year. Knowing that the Fantasy Football Law of Averages catches up to players each season is a powerful piece of information. It allows you to know which of your players you need to be patient with and not trade away. Also, which players you should think about trading away while his value is higher than what it's likely to be soon, which players to try to trade for from panicky owners in your league, and which players to not overpay for in a trade.



Epilogue

And there you have it! Hopefully both those who are brand-new to fantasy football and those who are experienced veterans will find the information here helpful. One thing that everyone needs to know is that no matter who you are, or how good your ability to judge players, have a successful draft, make the right starting lineup decisions, acquire the right players throughout the season, understand the matchups, be patient with your underperforming studs early in the season, and understand the fantasy football law of averages, you will have some seasons where you don't win. It happens to everyone. Every fantasy football expert has his seasons where he loses.

Like I said in the introduction, approximately 30 million fantasy owners every year will not win their championship. It's a simple fact of the numbers. And some years, your team won't win many games, let alone make the playoffs or play for the championship. And while I have enjoyed great success in my fantasy leagues, I have also had some real stinker seasons. Don't get discouraged if that happens to you. It happens to all of us. Remember, fantasy football is supposed to be fun, and you need to be able to laugh when it's your turn to have a miserable season.

However, I am confident that the information laid out in this book will help minimize the chances of having a bad season. I am hoping to guide you in the right direction to be competitive. And if you're competitive, and make your league playoffs, you always have a chance to win your fantasy championship. It's a lot like the NFL itself where all you have to do is make your playoffs, regardless of whether you are the top seeded team, or the last seeded team. The Green Bay Packers were the lowest seed in the NFC in 2010, but they went on to win the Super Bowl. Why? Because they went on their run at the right time. It happens in fantasy football, too.

So I wish the best of luck to everyone in their fantasy football leagues. I sincerely hope that I help you have a successful and fun season.

In conclusion, I'd like to thank all of my partners at FantasyFootball- Starters.com, especially Brady Chatfield and Jeff Coruccini for keeping me motivated to complete this book. I'd also like to thank my wife, Anne, for her many seasons of love, patience, understanding, and support as I strived to make a career as a fantasy football analyst. Trust me, it's many years as a labor of love without much reward, but it is one of the best jobs you could ever want.



About the Author

Russ Bliss is recognized as one of the leading fantasy football analysts in the world. He has been with FantasyFootballStarters.com since 2004 and currently serves in the capacity as lead Fantasy Football/NFL Analyst and Operations Manager. Since 1997 Russ has also hosted one of the longest continuous running fantasy football radio shows called “The Red Zone” in Phoenix, Arizona. In addition to his current radio show in Phoenix, he has also hosted fantasy football radio shows on the Sports Byline USA radio network and WBGG in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His fantasy football blog, Tips from the Red Zone has been featured in The Wall Author Russ Bliss with a few of his many Fantasy Football trophies. Street Journal.



Editor’s NOTE: Russ is a very humble guy and it took about six weeks of repeated requests to get this photo. Longtime fans know that, while Russ is hugely opinionated, he does not have an ego to match. – B.C.

Glossary

Abbreviations used in this book

*... See Definitions

ADP Average Draft Position*
AVT Average Value Theory*
DB Defensive Back
FG Field Goal
FP/PG . . . Fantasy Points Allowed Per Game
IDP Individual Defensive Player*
NFL National Football League
PAT Point After Touchdown*
PPR Points Per Reception*
QB Quarterback
RB Running Back
TE Tight End
TD Touchdown
WR Wide Receiver

Definitions

Auction Draft: a format for fantasy drafts, in which each team's owner (or ownership group) is given a certain amount of fantasy dollars to spend to fill out their team's roster.

Average Draft Position: tool allowing you to see where players ranked on your cheat sheets are being selected and in which round you can estimate they'll be drafted.

Average Value Theory: a concept that uses the average number of fantasy points scored at each rank within a position and is the cornerstone to Value-Based Drafting.

Bye Week: any week during the regular season in which a team does not play a game.

Decimal Point Scoring: instead of a player having to reach 10 yards rushing or receiving to get 1 point, every rushing/receiving yard is worth 0.1 points.



Fantasy Football: a game played by football fans in which participants draft their own team and compete with teams built by others.

Fantasy Football Law of Averages: a common average a player will usually hover around in terms of the amount of fantasy points he should score each week.

Fantasy League: a group of fantasy football teams competing against each other for a league championship.

Fantasy Points Allowed Per Game: a system by which real NFL defensive stats (i.e. rushing yards allowed per game, passing yards allowed per game) are converted to fantasy stats, including touchdowns allowed per game, so it's easier to determine weekly fantasy matchups for QBs, RBs, and WRs/TEs vs. an NFL team defense.

Field Goal: scoring play worth three points in which a placekicker kicks the ball through the goalposts in the opponent's end zone from anywhere on the field.

Fumble Recovery: for fantasy purposes, this is a fumble recovered by the defense. In some scoring systems causes negative points for the offensive player who fumbled the ball.

Handcuff Quarterbacks: the actual NFL team's backup to one of the fantasy quarterbacks on your roster.

Handcuff Running Back: the actual NFL team's backup Running Back to the fantasy Running Backs you drafted.

Individual Defensive Player: A fantasy scoring system or league wherein individual defensive players, rather than a single team defense, are used for drafting and scoring purposes. For example, an IDP league may include defensive positions such as Defensive Line, Linebackers, and Defensive Backs in its lineup, giving points for tackles, assisted tackles, and so on, not simply sacks or interceptions.

Interception: a pass caught by a defensive player, giving his team possession of the ball.

Kickers: players who attempt to kick a field goal, extra point, or kickoff.

Kick-Off: a free kick putting the ball into play at the start of the first and third periods and after every touchdown and field goal.

Kick-off Return: the receiving team is entitled to advance the ball towards the kicking team's end zone.



National Football League: largest professional football league in the world.

One Week Wonder: a player who looks great in Week 1, but then he's a dud the rest of the season.

Point After Touchdown: After a touchdown, the scoring team is can add another point by kicking the football through the goalpost.

Performance Based Bonuses: extra bonuses given to players for reaching certain yardage totals.

Point After Touchdown: after a touchdown the scoring team can add another point by kicking the football through the goalpost.

Points Per Reception: a bonus point awarded to every reception a player has in a game.

Punt: kick made when the player drops the ball and kicks it as it falls toward the ground.

Punt Return: running the ball back toward the punting team after it's been punted.

Reception: receiving.

Sack: any tackle of the quarterback behind the line of scrimmage.

Serpentine Drafts: a draft in which whoever has the last pick in the first round has the first pick in the second and whoever has the first pick in the first round has the last in the second round.

Shutout: a game in which one team prevents the opposing team from scoring.

Stat: a piece of statistical data.

Stud Running Back: a quality player who is a rare commodity.

Sleeper Running Back/Wide Receiver: players generally regarded as not having a great value and are usually placed lower on fantasy rankings and cheat sheets than average players.

Touchdown: when the ball in the possession of a player crosses the opponent's goal line.

Touchdown Points Allowed: the total rushing/receiving touchdowns allowed, multiplied by however many points you get for a standard touchdown rush/receive.



Tight End: offensive player who serves as a receiver and also a blocker.

Team Defense/Special Teams: the group of players on the field during kicks and punts.

Tiering: a draft strategy in which you lump your cheat sheet list of players at each position into a series of levels.

Value-Based Drafting: a draft strategy that uses the Average Value Theory point system to ensure you take the player with the most value every round.

Wide Receiver: an offensive player who catches passes from the quarterback.

