

The Fantasy Football Ready

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It's that time of year again, when you break out your statistical books, and binders full of information. And no, I'm not talking about math class. I'm referring to fantasy football.

Preseason football is halfway through, and football fanatics are ready for the start of the year. Not only for the excitement to watch their favorite teams play, but to hold their yearly fantasy football drafts and call for bragging rights against all of your most near and dear friends. But, forewarning, drafting is addicting.

Fantasy football is so addicting that over 27 million

people play it. These people also spend nine hours on average, playing and molding their roster for their upcoming matches against random league players or former best friends.

If you're new to the "sport," then it's not too late to sign-up on any league and get started on crafting your dominating roster of the best that the NFL has to offer.

How did fantasy football get its start? Surprisingly, fantasy football originated in 1962. Bob Winkenbach, a former limited partner of the Oakland Raiders, passed along the idea to several beat writers and editors. From here, it's all history.

Since the late 1990's, fantasy football has seen its greatest increase in popularity. This is mostly due to the rise of the internet and growth of the PC, or personal computer.

There are two main types of competition formats: Head-to-Head, with weekly games played against specific opponents and Total Points, in which cumulative points during the NFL season determine your leagues' winner.

If you want to compete in a private league, then you can easily invite friends and play with as little as four members. Or, if you want a challenge, then you can play with up to 20 participants of friend's or random people. Always keep your eye out for paid and free leagues. For the serious players out there, you will want to join a "pay to play league," where customization of league rules and drafts are endless.

As for drafting a team, many leagues utilize the "serpentine" draft system. If you draft first in your league full of 10 players, then you will draft last, or tenth in the second round. This continues for the whole draft. It rotates back and forth.

You can also draft in "standard" manners. Meaning, if you draft first in round one, then you will draft first in the beginning of every new round. Of course, that first drafter has a large advantage.

The last drafting system, is the "auction method." This drafting system incorporates a budget or salary cap. However, these leagues allow for any player to be bid on at any time.

In recent years, salary cap leagues, and "pay-to-play leagues" have seen an upsurge in participants. This is mainly due to the fact that money is given to the winner and runner-up's of the league and that these leagues play out in a way that is realistic to that of a real general manager of a NFL team. Who doesn't want that added realism?

There continues to be new, and innovative ways to play fantasy football. The introduction of "survivor pool leagues," and "knock-out leagues" have redefined fantasy football. It is not uncommon for many to strictly stick to playing in a standard fantasy league.

Think your ready to earn your bragging rights against friends? Then go out there, create your team, and don't forget that Ben Roethlisberger is suspended, this is key.

BUILD THE BEST FANTASY TEAM

1. Prepare ahead of time.
 2. Bring your drafting equipment.
 3. Encourage the commissioner to be innovative.
 4. Keep your eyes peeled (and your mouth shut).
 5. Be careful about bye weeks.
 6. Draft the best player available (don't fill your roster in order).
 7. Keep your cheat sheet to yourself.
 8. Consider trading.
 9. Finishing up. Your last few draft picks should be on some long shots.
 10. Double check everything.
 11. Have fun!
- Too often we over-analyze our hobby and drain the fun out of it. Remember that the whole reason we play fantasy football is for fun. Good luck!

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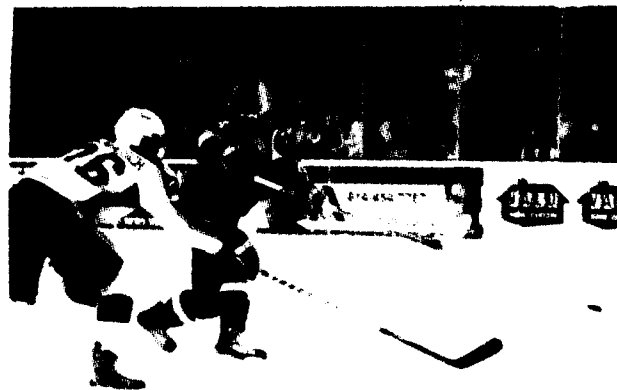
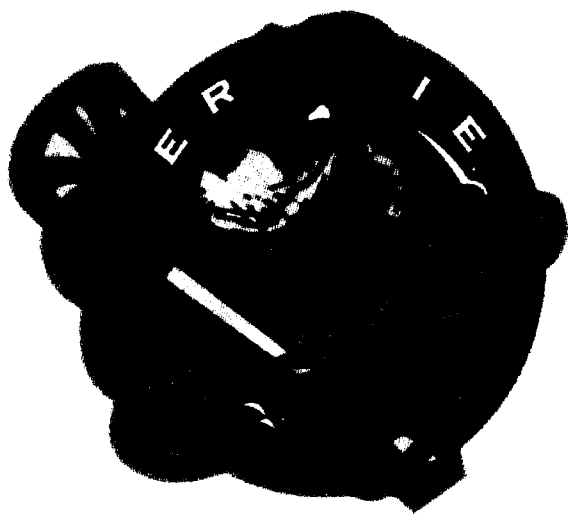
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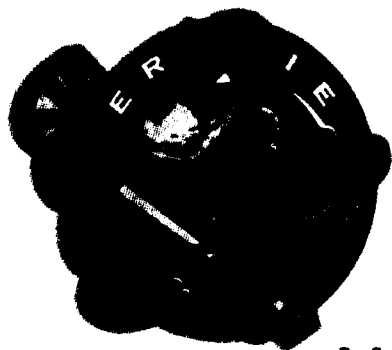
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