

Fantasy Football 101 – Drafting your Team



Welcome to the Cajachina league! This guide will serve as an introduction to fantasy football, with an emphasis on what's important for drafting in our league. First off, congratulations on your new team. Let's get you some players!

Who is on my team?

You will draft a total of 15 “players”, one of which is a whole team's defense (Fantasy football scores the whole defense together). You can draft people from any position, but you'll want at least a whole **starting lineup**. Each week, you'll need to start:

- **1 Quarterback (QB),**
- **2 Running Backs (RB)**
- **2 wide Receivers (WR)**
- **1 Tight End (TE)**
- **1 FLEX (which can be a RB, WR, or TE)**
- **1 Kicker (K)**
- **1 Defense (D).**

In addition to the starting lineup, you'll have another **6 bench players (BE)**. They are used to sub in for your starting lineup when you think they'll score more points (say, your starters are on a BYE week or injured, or it turns out, they're not as good as they thought you would be). **Players don't score for your team while they're benched, even if they score points in real life.** Before each game (Thursday, Sunday, or Monday depending on the teams playing), you “lock in” your lineup – more on that in a different post. There's also one “IR” spot, where you can stash one of your players if they're injured, in case they get to play again. Our rules for **scoring** are in a separate post, but you can also find them in “League Settings”.

What's this "Draft"?

We'll do what's called a "Live Snake draft". There are no live snakes involved. We all get on our computers at a preset time before the NFL season starts (you can also draft from a smartphone, but a computer is easiest) and we pick our players out one at a time. Before we start, we'll get an assigned order for the draft, which will be random. Then, we each pick a player, starting with the person who got #1, going down to the person who got #10. Then, in the next round, the #10 person gets the first pick, and it goes backwards until you're back at #1. Here's a picture to explain:

ROUND	OWNER1	OWNER2	OWNER3	OWNER4	OWNER5	OWNER6	OWNER7	OWNER8	OWNER9	OWNER10
1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11
3	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
4	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31

See how the blue and red arrows "snake" around?

So let's say Bob gets number one, and Alice gets number 10. Bob is probably going to pick someone like Saquan Barkley, a star RB, and by the time Alice gets to pick, the top 9 players have already been drafted. But to make up for it, Alice gets pick 10, and then she also gets pick 11 too. Whereas Bob got pick 1, but his next pick is at number 20, so while he got a superstar, he missed out on everything in between.

It keeps snaking around like this until everyone has drafted 14 players.

So who should I draft?

There's some basic things you want to keep in mind when you're drafting. You want to pick up players who are going to score a lot of points. But, more importantly, **you want to pick up players that have value that you can't easily replace with someone farther down the list.** For example, quarterbacks (QBs) score a lot of points, but as it turns out, most quarterbacks, even pretty bad ones, score a decent number of points. With 32 teams in the NFL and only 10 of us, not everyone will get a QB like Pat Mahomes, but you can probably find someone who's decent. Whereas with running backs (RBs), you'll see that there are about six or so 'superstar' running backs that start every game and score tons of points, and behind that, the points drop off pretty fast (lots of teams split the work between two running backs, so each scores fewer points, things like that). There's a similar concept for WRs and TEs (think how Odell Beckham or Rob Gronkowski are names you hear a lot, because they're in a world of their own). **Advice: the first several rounds of the draft are almost always for top-tier RBs and WRs. Some people even start putting extra WRs and RBs on their bench before they pick up a QB. Once the good ones have been taken, you can start thinking about the best QBs and TEs.** There's no rule against picking up Pat Mahomes (superstar quarterback of the chiefs) in the first round, but chances are, if you do, you'll miss out on a player that would've been worth more to you in the long run. Also, keep in mind that you need to be able to use players you draft in your lineup – You can only play your **starting lineup (the positions listed up above)** each week, so you don't want to draft five quarterbacks just because they're all good – you can only play one each week no matter how many you have.

That's complicated. How do I know how valuable a player is?

Yahoo helps you out a little bit. There's something called "ADP", which stands for Average Draft Position, that will show up on the draft board. This tells you how other people have been drafting, it's kind of "what the market thinks" a player is worth. You can see how Yahoo's ADP rankings at <https://www.fantasypros.com/nfl/adp/half-point-ppr-overall.php> (you can click 'Yahoo' to rank it by Yahoo's ADP, which is what you'll **automatically have on the draft page**). You'll note that as of 8/28/19, the in the top 50 players (meaning 5 rounds of drafting in 10-team leagues), there's 23 RBs, 19 WRs, 4 TEs, and 4 QBs, so that's consistent with what we were saying above. There's a ton of strategy to drafting, but drafting by ADP is always a decent way to go, especially if you don't know the players. But there is one **WARNING: Yahoo's draft ADP probably won't update to reflect a new injury or suspension. Injured or Suspended players will show up on your draft board with a "Q" or something similar next to their name. Those players are a big risk, although depending on the injury, or the player, sometimes they're worth picking up in a later round.** Yahoo's draft board will let you click their name to see a little more info if you want to consider them. That's the basics.

One more thing: BYE weeks

Next to each player on the draft board, you'll note that there's a number representing which week that player's team won't play. Every team has a BYE week, so it doesn't make a player any more or less valuable. But it's important to keep in mind that **you don't want too many of your players to have the same BYE week**; when one player isn't playing, you'll need to sub in someone from your bench, and if you need to find too many subs in one week, you'll be in a tough situation. Just keep this in mind once you start drafting; the draft board will show you who you have already picked, and what weeks they have BYEs.

Additional Resources

Drafting by ADP is a pretty good way to go, but you can definitely do more research; people who are really serious about fantasy football spend weeks preparing for their draft. I doubt many of us are doing that, but since some people do, there's a whole host of resources out there, websites, blogs, podcasts, software, you name it. During the season, it's the same story – the Yahoo app will tell you the basics about your players, and give you some basic updates when someone gets injured, but there are lots of sources for research out there.

If you really want to know the players, there's a ton of fantasy football analysis being done on hundreds of sites, and in podcasts, and the like. One good site for quickly looking people up is FantasyPros.com, where you can just type someone's name, see news about them, where they went to college, and stuff like that, or use their 'who should I draft' tool to see what a whole pool of experts would pick between two people. They're at <https://www.fantasypros.com/nfl/> and <https://www.fantasypros.com/nfl/draft/>. They try to sell you a lot of their 'Premium' tools, but the free stuff is pretty helpful.

If you really want to geek out on statistics and want to try to optimize things, there are some quick resources you can have up during the draft. Me and my roommate use these. I shouldn't be showing you them, but here they are anyways.

- Beersheets: these are advanced rankings where an algorithm has put together a number that reflects a player's "value" compared to other "startable" players.

<https://footballabsurdity.com/beersheet-request-form/>

For our league:

<https://footballabsurdity.com/wp-content/plugins/BeerSheetRequests/SHEETS/10,0.5,1,2,2,1,1,0,0,0,4,6,6,0.04,0.1,0.1,-1,0,0,0.pdf>

- Boris Chen tiers: These are ways of seeing how players tend to sort out into 'tiers' based on the way lots of analysts think they'll perform. Hint: he makes these every week for help setting your lineup, too.

<http://www.borischen.co/p/half-ppr-draft-tiers.html>