

Title:

Love Fantasy Football? Learn How It All Started

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Summary:

The history of fantasy football actually began several years before the first fantasy team was selected. Although the exact details seem to differ according to who is telling the story, there is no doubt that it was one Wilfred Winkenbach that first had the idea of a fantasy sport.

Keywords:

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Article Body:

The history of fantasy football actually began several years before the first fantasy team was selected. Although the exact details seem to differ according to who is telling the story, there is no doubt that it was one Wilfred Winkenbach that first had the idea of a fantasy sport, wherein participants would formulate their own teams and determine the success or otherwise of these teams by means of the statistics of the individual team members.

-Golf Came First!

In fact, it was not football but golf that was the first sport to be played under fantasy rules. Wilfred Winkenbach devised fantasy golf in the latter part of the 1950s, in which each player selected a team of professional golfers and the person with the lowest combined total of strokes at the end of the tournament would win. Golf is a simple fantasy game to administer and keep tabs on, since you are concerned only with the scores of your team members without anything else to complicate it.

As with many breakthrough ideas, the concept was simple and it was extended to baseball before Winkenbach had the idea of fantasy football. This was not surprising, since he was part owner of Oakland Raiders at the time - in fact, what WAS surprising was that he developed fantasy golf and baseball before fantasy football! The football idea came to him on a wet October evening in 1962, when he discussed his idea with the Oakland Raiders PR man Bill Tunnell and the Oakland Tribune sports journalist, Scotty Stirling.

-Early Scoring System

They were actually spending the night in a Manhattan hotel during a Raiders tour. The original idea was formulated into a football league comprising eight teams, and they also formulated a points scoring system somewhat different to the norm whereby 25 points were awarded for a field goal, a passing touchdown or a touchdown reception. Ten points were given for an extra point, and a massive 200 points for a kick-off, punt or pick-six. The scoring system has changed over the years, and various leagues now have their own scoring systems which offer fewer points than the above.

Once they returned to Oakland the three of them pitched their idea to George Ross, then sports editor of the Tribune. They decided that they would have to formulate a set of rules, and came up with the GOPPPL. This strange-sounding code, which was adopted in 1963, actually stood for the Greater Oakland Professional Pigskin Prognosticators League. A prognosticator is one who makes a prediction, or foretells results, which describes their activity precisely.

-GOPPPL Rules!

Among the GOPPPL rules were the three prerequisites that participants had to meet in order to take part in the league:

Have an administrative affiliation with an AFL professional team.
Be directly related to professional football through journalism.
Have either purchased or sold at least ten tickets for Oakland Raider's 1963 season.

The next significant advance was the opening of the Kings X sports bar in Oakland in 1968 that held annual fantasy football drafts. This was done by one Andrew Mousalimas, and provided a kick to the league that continued to enjoy a steady growth through the 1970s and beyond. While its rate of spread did not exactly set the country alight, it was unexpected and the increasing following held promise of spectacular things to come.

The way it works is that participants in the fantasy league buy a team of American football players by auction or draft. The players are chosen according to their particular skills or attributes and you score points that depend upon the way that your players perform in the actual games. The performance is generally determined by statistical analysis, and points can be awarded as previously indicated. The players themselves are real football players, playing for their own teams. It is only the team and the league that is fantasy.

Some fantasy leagues are run just like real leagues, with drafts, play-offs,

salary caps and so on. Players can be given a value and you can only register players up to certain overall value for your team. This prevents everybody selecting only the very best players for their team, and the possibility of hundreds of teams with exactly the same personnel.

-Fantasy Football Now

Fantasy football simmered for a few years, although never kicked off completely until the personal computer and the internet made the gathering of statistics unbelievably simple. Prior to that, the idea was a good one, but it was not easy to carry out in practice. Teams and scores were difficult to update because you would have had to find all the statistics for each player in your team, how many rushes were made and yards gained. Not easy to do manually, but now real-time scoring is very accessible.

The internet has now made this simple, and the popularity of fantasy football has risen exponentially to the extent that it is popular throughout the entire world, and is participated in by around 20 million Americans, each with their own virtual team, and competition can be either league based, or head-to-head where you play against a specific opponent.