

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Fantasy World

Quick tips to making the right moves with a fantasy football team

By John Lowery
THE BATTALION

Like those annoying Christmas commercials that start during Thanksgiving weekend, painfully reminding us that Santa's arrival is still a long month away, the NFL preseason kicks off tonight, reminding the passionate NFL enthusiast that real football is still 11 days away. Watching a starter break his leg and with it the playoff hopes of his team, and third string players who will soon be on a plane back to NFL Europe is enough to demoralize any good football fan. Fortunately, however, something important and beneficial to the National Football League and its fans begins around the same time as the preseason: fantasy football drafts.

The draft is unquestionably the most important day in the life of a fantasy football team. Although owners are not limited to a losing season after a bad draft day, what they do on this day will greatly determine whether someone can boast championship to friends, or wet the bed every night with guilt for choosing Az-Zahir Hakim as the number one wide-out on a team. Chronic bed-wetter or not, no one wants to have to depend solely on the Texas A&M football team as their only shot at a championship.

That said, here are common mistakes the average person makes that inevitably cost him or her a winning season:

1) Letting Actual Allegiance Determine Fantasy Allegiance

A close friend who is an A&M student, inevitably drafts Robert Ferguson before the end of the third round every draft year simply because Ferguson was a former Aggie standout. Just as inevitably, his team, the "Ferocious Fergusons," tank every

year. A similar scenario would involve a person picking David Carr, Domanick Davis and Andre Johnson because he or she absolutely loves the Houston Texans. A good fantasy owner always separates collegiate and professional team allegiance from fantasy allegiance; avoid choosing players on draft day simply because you love the team they play or played for.

2) Not Picking the Best Talent on the Board

Don't be one of those people who is hopelessly caught up in filling each starting position if better talent still exists in a position already drafted. If an owner drafted LaDainian Tomlinson in the first round and Priest Holmes

is still available the second round, that owner shouldn't take Todd Heap just because there's a blank tight end spot on the roster. Even if one ends up stockpiling a position, know that a trade for a player of equal ability in that position that is lacking is always a possibility.

3) Choosing a Kicker or Defense Before the Last Two Rounds

I don't care how good the Pittsburgh Steelers defense was last year, or how many field goals Mike Vanderjagt kicked, do not choose a kicker or defense early in the draft. Once people fill all of their normal starting positions, they usually look to fill the defense and kicker positions; I can't over-emphasize the foolishness of this. How many people picked Dallas last year in their drafts to carry them through the season? Or Atlanta the year before? Few did, and both would have been serviceable enough throughout the year.

It's always easy to pick up a decent defense during the course of the season, and unless the league's scoring system heavily favors these positions, one should let them slide until the last two picks. Let the opponents waste picks on these unpredictable positions while you get first grabs on that sleeper who carries your team to a championship.

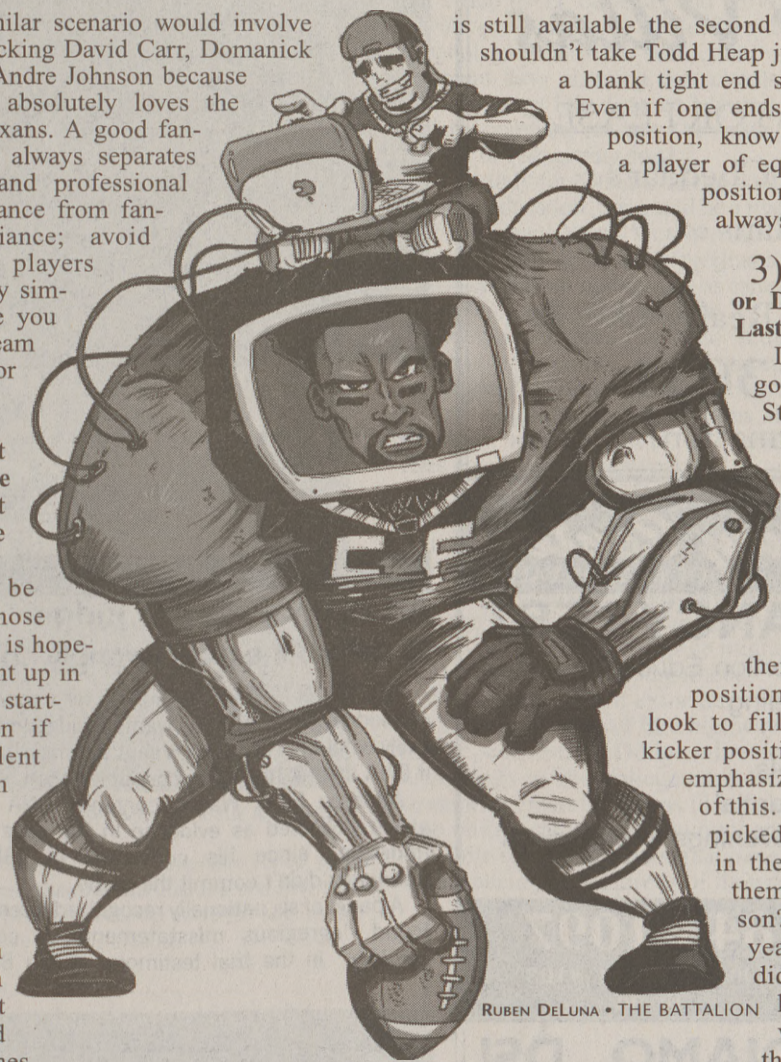
4) Not Knowing the Scoring System

If you're like me, you've never read an instruction manual in your entire life. That's forgivable, especially if you're unmarried and can spend three days putting together that Ninja Turtle cookie baking oven your mom got you for Christmas. Unfortunately, not knowing the details in fantasy football could paralyze a team before the league even gets started. If a league rewards rushing touchdowns more than passing touchdowns or gives points for receptions and completions, know how to adjust and who the best players are because of that scoring system.

5) Ignoring the Waiver Wire and Your Team

Again, this one may seem obvious, but countless losing teams are not vigilant in studying the waiver wire and subbing for players with bye weeks. Don't be the person who drafts a team and abandons it after three games because you're losing. Persistence and getting those players with high potential off the waiver wire are keys to succeeding.

Becoming that fantasy football playoff juggernaut is precisely what you're on your way to doing if you take heed to these five fantasy football rules to success. Good luck with your teams; you'll especially need it if you already drafted and used your first pick on Ricky Williams.



RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Aggie swimmer earns gold medal

A squad of 15 men and women Texas A&M swimmers competed in the ConocoPhillips Summer National Championships last weekend, with one Aggie taking home a gold medal.

Junior All-American Danielle Townsend won the gold in the 200-meter individual medley with a time of 2:15:75 to claim her first national title. Townsend also won a bronze medal in the 50-meter freestyle event.

Junior All-American Alfredo Jacobo missed winning a bronze medal by less than a second, with a time of 1:03:46 in the 100-meter breaststroke, putting him in fourth place. Junior David Friggel finished in fifth place behind Jacobo in the same event with a time of 1:04:99.

Both of the A&M men's and women's 400-meter medley relay teams finished in fifth place in the championship of the event.

As a combined team, the Aggies finished second in the overall standings of the 150-team competition, right behind the Texas Longhorn Aquatics team.

Orioles pummel Rogers, Rangers for 11 runs

By David Ginsburg
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The same fans that jeered Sidney Ponson during the first half of the season gave the right-hander a standing ovation as he walked off the mound.

If he and the Orioles keep performing as they did Sunday, then Baltimore fans will have plenty more to cheer about the rest of the season.

Melvin Mora went 3-for-5 with a homer and four RBIs to back a strong pitching performance by a rejuvenated Ponson, and the Orioles beat Kenny Rogers and the Texas Rangers 11-5 for their season-high sixth straight victory.

Turning back the clock to a happier era, the Orioles donned the uniforms they wore in 1983, the last time they won the World Series. The Orioles (52-57) haven't had a winning season since 1997 and are still five games under .500, but their recent run has them thinking they can't be beat.

"Right now, every time somebody takes the mound, we believe we can win," shortstop Miguel Tejada said. "We believe we can beat anybody."

Ponson allowed three runs and five hits in 7 2/3 innings, striking out four and walking four, to improve to 7-1 lifetime against Texas. He's 4-0 in his last five starts after losing nine straight.

Asked how he felt to receive a prolonged ovation from the crowd of 32,842, Ponson replied, "I have a bad game next time, they'll boo me again."

"We haven't been hitting that well lately, but today wasn't about our hitting, it was more about my pitching and their hitting," Rogers said. "No matter what I was throwing they knew where it was going and went after it accordingly."

Finally playing the way they envisioned coming out of spring training, the Orioles moved within eight games of AL wild-card leaders Texas and Boston.

"Getting to .500 is our immediate goal," manager Lee Mazzilli said. "We want to get there quick, then move from there."

Texas came to town in first place in the AL West, but has fallen behind Oakland after being outscored 23-7 in the first three games of the four-game series.

"We don't dwell on things like that. We'll see what tomorrow brings," Rangers manager Buck Showalter said.

Brian Jordan homered and drove in three runs for the Rangers, who made three errors for the second time in three games.

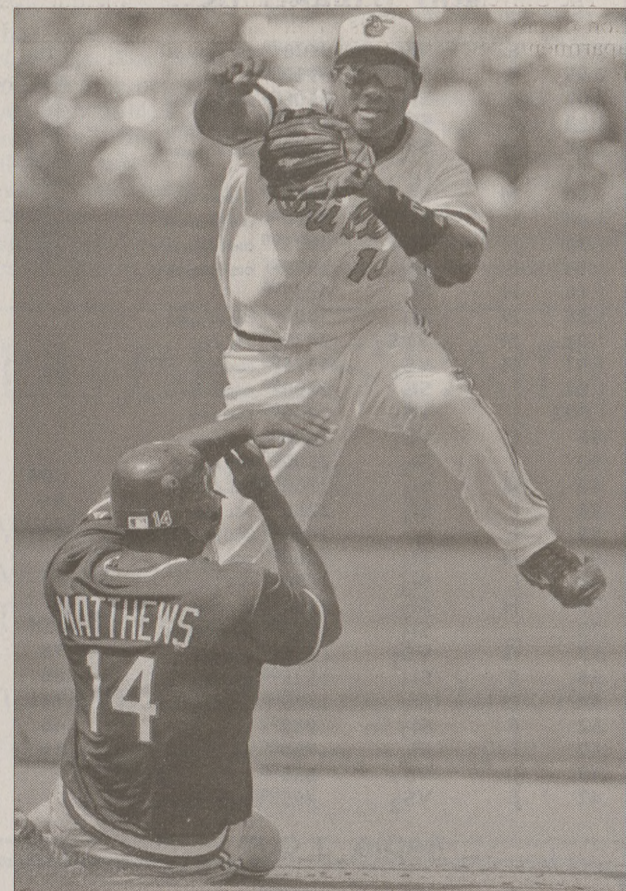
Up 4-1, Baltimore chased Rogers during a five-run fifth. Jerry Hairston singled in a run, and B.J. Surhoff hit a two-run double before Larry Bigbie greeted Rosman Garcia with an RBI double. Mora capped the big inning by singling in a run.

Rogers (13-5) gave up eight runs and eight hits in four-plus innings, dropping a second straight decision for the first time this season. The eight runs he allowed tied a season high, and his five walks were as many as he yielded in July.

Rogers described his performance by using an expletive. "Use your own words if you want but that's a pretty good one," he said. "I don't think anybody could assess it any differently."

Brian Roberts hit a sacrifice fly to make it 10-1 in the sixth, and a two-run double by Jordan capped a four-run eighth for Texas.

Mora put the Orioles up 2-0 in the first, hitting a two-run drive into the left-field seats on a 1-2 pitch. It was his 18th homer, one short of his career high, set in 2002.



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Orioles shortstop Miguel Tejada completes a double play in the fifth inning against the Texas Rangers on Sunday.

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