

**2019**

**FANTASY FOOTBALL  
DRAFT KIT**



**Dominate your draft.**

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TEAM	BYE	QUARTERBACK	RUNNING BACK	WIDE RECEIVER	TIGHT END	KICKER	D/ST
Arizona Cardinals	12	2	8	2	13	26	29
Atlanta Falcons	9	10	32	4	26	25	19
Baltimore Ravens	8	5	1	12	5	2	21
Buffalo Bills	6	17	16	15	12	3	26
Carolina Panthers	7	3	10	7	28	30	7
Chicago Bears	6	11	9	11	16	19	28
Cincinnati Bengals	9	31	20	27	14	24	8
Cleveland Browns	7	30	19	20	25	22	22
Dallas Cowboys	8	20	25	6	32	6	12
Denver Broncos	10	27	11	31	10	18	13
Detroit Lions	5	28	12	23	22	8	5
Green Bay Packers	11	25	28	19	15	10	10
Houston Texans	10	14	29	30	4	28	31
Indianapolis Colts	6	4	27	13	3	27	25
Jacksonville Jaguars	10	1	18	1	6	13	32
Kansas City Chiefs	12	32	31	32	8	17	18
Los Angeles Chargers	12	23	26	25	2	12	16
Los Angeles Rams	9	8	21	9	21	31	20
Miami Dolphins	5	24	13	26	27	5	11
Minnesota Vikings	12	13	5	10	18	21	24
New England Patriots	10	18	4	18	17	7	6
New Orleans Saints	9	15	24	16	20	23	3
New York Giants	11	26	17	17	31	14	1
New York Jets	4	22	7	29	7	9	9
Oakland Raiders	6	16	14	24	9	11	30
Philadelphia Eagles	10	29	23	22	30	15	4
Pittsburgh Steelers	7	19	2	21	11	4	14
San Francisco 49ers	4	9	3	3	19	29	27
Seattle Seahawks	11	6	6	8	23	16	17
Tampa Bay Buccaneers	7	7	30	5	24	32	23
Tennessee Titans	11	12	15	28	1	20	15
Washington Redskins	10	21	22	14	29	1	2

\* SOS Rankings are based on fantasy points allowed by each of a team's opponents last season (STD scoring).

Rank #1 = Easiest Schedule for specified position (i.e. the Falcons' running backs have the toughest schedule in 2019, while the Ravens' backs have the easiest schedule)

## Top Breakout Candidates

By FantasyPros Staff

Every year, we see guys who were hardly on the fantasy radar explode and produce epic seasons. Phillip Lindsay and Eric Ebron went undrafted in most leagues last year, while Patrick Mahomes was seen almost exclusively as a high-upside backup fantasy QB. Odds are good that your league's winner probably had at least one of those players.

Figuring out who will set the fantasy landscape on fire each year before it happens is how you win championships. There's no surefire way to find that out though. All you can do is research as much as you can and choose the players with the best odds of breaking out based on their talent and situation. After doing plenty of research themselves, we asked a group of industry pundits to name who their 2019 top breakout candidates are.

### ***Q1. What RB has the best shot of having a breakout year in 2019?***

Rashaad Penny (SEA) | Ronald Jones (TB)

"It's become increasingly difficult to find a running back who's being slept on, but there are a few who have fallen lower than they should due to lackluster rookie campaigns. Both Penny and Jones could be in for breakout years in 2019. While Chris Carson is still there in Seattle, he had some work done on his knee this offseason, and Mike Davis is gone. For a team that runs the ball 30-plus times a game, there's a shot for Penny to explode. Jones touched the ball 30 times as a rookie in an offense that nobody ran well in, yet he's labeled a bust? Tampa Bay didn't draft a running back and Bruce Arians has made less-talented running backs look better in his offense (you didn't forget about Andre Ellington, did you?)."

– Mike Tagliere (FantasyPros)

"With Chris Carson not participating in OTAs while he recovers from surgery and Mike Davis moving on to the Bears, Rashaad Penny has every opportunity to justify Seattle's selection of him in the first round. Things looked promising for him last November when he was able to rip off a couple of 30+ yard runs, but things never panned out enough for him to be fantasy relevant due in large part to a crowded backfield. I have little doubt that Seattle will run the ball a ton in 2019 and a talented Penny will be a large

part of it.”

– Matthew Bowe (Razzball)

Kerryon Johnson (DET)

“Missing the final six games of his rookie campaign, Johnson averaged 5.4 yards per carry and was on pace for more than 1,000 rushing yards and 50 receptions. Before having his season cut short, he was fantasy’s RB15 (RB14 in PPR) through Week 11. Even though the Lions signed C.J. Anderson in free agency, Johnson will be the focal point of a rushing attack for a team that wants to be/stay committed to the run. Assuming good health, the second-year back has the potential for a top-12 campaign.”

– Kevin Hanson (EDSFootball)

Justin Jackson (LAC)

“Let’s skip the rookies, since technically any decent season by a rookie is a “breakout.” The Chargers’ Justin Jackson is an intriguing guy. An injury to either Melvin Gordon or Austin Ekeler — two dudes who’ve been banged up before — gets Jackson a foothold in an offense that could have a heavy run tilt since (1) the Chargers’ defense looks awesome and could create a lot of favorable game scripts, (2) the LAC offensive line is much better at pass blocking than run blocking, and (3) the immobile Philip Rivers benefits from a balanced offense. Jackson is an athletic former college workhorse who cranked out 85 yards from scrimmage and a TD when injuries to Gordon and Ekeler forced him into heavy duty in a Thursday-night game against the Chiefs last December.”

– Pat Fitzmaurice (The Football Girl)

Nick Chubb (CLE)

“Many of us will wonder why we held off putting Chubb among the overall top five in redraft when 2019 gets going. His limited field presence in the early portion of 2018 created an overall stat bias. It was not until Carlos Hyde left the team that Chubb became the true feature running back of the Browns. With added weaponry in the passing game, the door for Chubb to make a leap into the elite of fantasy RBs is wide open.”

– Richard Savill (Fantasy Six Pack)

Dalvin Cook (MIN)

"This shouldn't be ground-breaking news with Cook rising into the top 10 for a lot of people this year, but it doesn't change what he's in for. Cook's main issue has always been health. Now over a year removed from a torn ACL, a more balanced offensive system should bode well for his fantasy prospects."  
– Kevin Roberts (Breaking Football)

***Q2. What WR has the best shot of having a breakout year in 2019?***

Dede Westbrook (JAC)

"The Jaguars really needed an upgrade from Blake Bortles at the quarterback position and they pulled the trigger. I imagine that Westbrook is thrilled to see a competent quarterback under center. He led Jacksonville receivers in targets, catches, yards, and receiving touchdowns last season. He's not just the best receiver on the Jaguars' roster, I believe that he's an excellent overall NFL talent that will make a lot of noise this season."  
– Matthew Bowe (Razzball)

"There is a lot to like in the latter rounds of fantasy drafts this year, particularly at wide receiver. My favorite deep sleeper is Dede Westbrook, though. This guy averaged over 19 yards per catch at Oklahoma, but was never properly utilized with Blake Bortles under center. In comes Nick Foles, who is known for attacking defenses down the field. Add in the departure of Donte Moncrief, and the math equation of talent + role = production."  
– Kevin Roberts (Breaking Football)

Mike Williams (LAC)

"I'm going with Williams here. He's a former top-10 pick who scored 10 touchdowns on 66 targets in what was essentially his rookie year after he was hampered by a back injury in 2017. Tyrell Williams is out of town, clearing the way for more targets. He won't remain as efficient with his touchdowns, but volume will surely help compensate. Did you know there have been just two wide receivers over the last 10 years who've finished as a top-20 fantasy receiver with less than 79 targets? Williams is one of them, and did it on 66 of them. He has legitimate top-12 upside."  
– Mike Tagliere (FantasyPros)

Chris Godwin (TB)

“Productive when given the opportunity, Godwin is poised to take another big step forward with DeSean Jackson now back in Philadelphia. Over the past two seasons, D-Jax has missed six games and Godwin has 98-plus yards in four of those games. Coach Bruce Arians has described the 23-year-old wideout as someone who could be ‘close to a 100-catch guy.’”

– Kevin Hanson (EDSFootball)

Tre’Quan Smith (NO)

“Put at least a small stack of chips down on Smith. He was really streaky last year, with a couple of splash games and a whole lotta duds, but hey, man, he was a 22-year-old rookie. The Saints need a receiver who can land a right cross after repeated jabs from Michael Thomas, and Smith will pack a heavier punch than 34-year-old Ted Ginn this year. Smith produced early and often in his college career at UCF, he ranked fifth among WRs last year in fantasy points per touch, and he’s in a great offensive ecosystem in New Orleans.”

– Pat Fitzmaurice (The Football Girl)

Kenny Golladay (DET)

“Some of us jumped the gun somewhat on a true breakout in 2018 with Golladay. Golden Tate remained at the top of the Detroit pecking order as the season commenced and Marvin Jones also stood prominently as a prime playmaker. Jones remains just as relevant in 2019, but this could turn easily into the Golladay show; giving some Megatron-esque nostalgia to the Lions if his separation has improved in the deeper routes this year.”

– Richard Savill (Fantasy Six Pack)

### ***Q3. What TE has the best shot of having a breakout year in 2019?***

Vance McDonald (PIT)

“With Antonio Brown and Jesse James out of town, there are over 200 targets up for grabs in the Steelers’ offense, though they’re not likely to throw the ball as much in 2019. Still, McDonald was given a vote of confidence when the Steelers didn’t draft a tight end in the first four rounds of what was considered a deep tight end class. Not much slides past me, but did you know McDonald saw 73 targets in 2018? That ranked 12th among tight ends and he finished as the No. 10 fantasy tight end. If McDonald stays

on the field, he's absolutely locked-in for 90-plus targets and a top-eight finish in 2019."

– Mike Tagliere (FantasyPros)

O.J. Howard (TB)

"Injuries have cut each of his first two seasons short, but Howard has averaged exactly 16.6 yards per reception in both of those seasons. Extrapolating last year's production over 16 games, Howard would have posted a 54/904/8 stat line. Howard is the clear-cut next-best option after the top three in my early 2019 fantasy projections as he's projected for more than 20 fantasy points more than the TE5 (Hunter Henry). As Jameis Winston says, the "moon" is the limit for the third-year tight end."

– Kevin Hanson (EDSFootball)

Mike Gesicki (MIA)

"I'm not expecting a George Kittle-like breakout from any tight ends this season, but Gesicki should vastly improve on his blase rookie season. Ryan Fitzpatrick is outplaying Rosen so far in OTAs and he is an upgrade from Ryan Tannehill. Historically, rookie seasons for tight ends tend to be little more than a learning experience, so I can see Gisecki providing a lot more production than the 22 catches for 202 yards in 2018. The freakish athleticism is definitely there, now it's time for the numbers to catch up."

– Matthew Bowe (Razzball)

Darren Waller (OAK)

"Waller served a season-long suspension last year for violating the NFL's substance abuse policy, but now he's projected as the Raiders' starting tight end, and he's reportedly been a standout in OTAs. The 6-6 Waller has the wingspan of a giant condor and blends that red-zone-friendly size with sub-4.5 speed and freakish athleticism. His NFL track record is scant, his sixth-round draft pedigree isn't impressive, and last year's suspension raised red flags, but Waller now has a major opportunity on a team with few quality pass catchers behind Antonio Brown. Raiders head coach Jon Gruden recently called Waller 'one of the best kept secrets in the league.'"

– Pat Fitzmaurice (The Football Girl)

Chris Herndon (NYJ)



“Herndon has an off-field situation to monitor (possible suspension), but that could crush his value and make him an amazing late-round pick or waiver-wire pickup. TEs struggle as rookies and Herndon still posted a solid 39-502-4 line. He’s flashed red-zone chops and, given Sam Darnold’s aggressiveness and Le’Veon Bell drawing the defense’s focus at the goal line, he could be in for more volume and scoring.”

– Kevin Roberts (Breaking Football)

Hunter Henry (LAC)

“Sidelined in 2018 for the most part, Henry fits perfectly in the west-coast offensive style which Antonio Gates held with the Chargers. Philip Rivers remains committed to this offensive scheme, as is his nature, so it means Henry will see no less than five or six targets per game in 2019. This makes him a positive choice for a top-tier TE in 2019.”

– Richard Savill (Fantasy Six Pack)

## Early-Round Picks That Carry the Most Risk

By James Esposito

When drafting in the mid-to-late rounds, owners have to accept at least some risk is associated with each of their picks. Early in the draft, this isn't the case. As offenses are scoring more and more with each passing year there is an inherent increase in the number of players locked into optimal situations. In 2019 it's relatively easy for owners to make it through the first three or four rounds without acquiring any major risk that could ruin their season. There are only a couple names toward the top of the draft who carry question marks surrounding their potential usage. These players could definitely return on their investment, but there are plenty of early options with close to zero risk outside injury. Grab those players and pass on these guys who could have you regretting your draft come September.

Damien Williams (RB – KC): ADP 25

Several FantasyPros writers, including myself, have already warned about the risk of taking Damien Williams in the first couple rounds. We all understand that the RB1 in a Chiefs' offense is an enticing position, but of the top 50 players in fantasy, none of them have a less impressive career track record than Damien Williams. Last season was the first time in his five-year career that he has rushed for both 200 yards and 4.0 YPC. The masses have pretty much accepted the fact that Andy Reid likes to use one go-to running back rather than the committee approach. Is this based on Reid's personal preference or the fact that the last several RBs he's had were legitimate stars in Kareem Hunt, Jamaal Charles, LeSean McCoy, and Brian Westbrook? As an Eagles fan, I remember Andy Reid happily divvying up his carries between the three-headed monster of Brian Westbrook, Correll Buckhalter, and Duce Staley. It took years of all-around great play for Westbrook to earn every-down usage, and even then, fans were often frustrated by games that he would finish with under 10 carries. This was the case for Westbrook, Charles, McCoy, and Hunt.

The Chiefs signed Carlos Hyde this offseason, who has proven to can be a serviceable number one RB and drafted Darwin Thompson in the sixth round. The Chiefs had one of the best RBs in the league last year and they were still twenty-third in carries. Project that number to drop slightly with less talent at the position. It feels like starting Damien Williams next year is going to be a tough proposition that will primarily rely on game scripts and

TD hunting. If you do nab Williams early, it handcuffs you into reaching for Carlos Hyde also. Categorizing Williams' job security as shaky feels like a compliment for how little he has proven thus far. Even if he does hold off Carlos Hyde for the entire season, can he match Hunt's productivity or receiving output? If Reid can finish games giving those all-pro RBs under 10 carries, how often will Williams suffer the same fate?

Nick Chubb (RB – CLE): ADP 19

I've been a supporter of Chubb's talent ever since he was behind Todd Gurley on Georgia's depth chart. There's no question this guy's a dynamic power runner. Once the Browns decided to move on from Carlos Hyde, Chubb took full advantage of his opportunity and ran like a man possessed over the second half of the season. Although he didn't have more than three carries until Week 7, he still finished four yards short of the 1,000-yard club. There's plenty of reasons to fall in love with Nick Chubb, but at his current ADP as the RB 11 and OVR 18, I am absolutely terrified of making him my second-round pick. This hesitation is for one reason, Kareem Hunt. With Chubb's limitations as a receiver, his ceiling is very similar to the players around his ADP. But, with the looming return of one of the game's most talented all-around backs, there's a possibility Chubb's usage drastically drops off when fantasy teams are making their playoff push. Ever since Hunt's debut on TNF as a rookie against the Patriots when he totaled nearly 250 yards from scrimmage and three TDs, he's been in the conversation for best running back in the league. Through 27 career games, Hunt's 16-game pace is nearly 1,800 yards from scrimmage and 15 TDs. For the Browns to feel comfortable letting Chubb run the show after Hunt returns in Week 9, Chubb would have to be among the league leaders in rushing volume and efficiency. Even if he is, it will still be hard to keep a talent like Hunt off the field.

Todd Gurley (RB – LAR): ADP 14

Considering Gurley was an MVP candidate last season and the overall RB 1 in fantasy, it feels like a Colin Cowherd level hot take to suggest that his job isn't secure. Considering Gurley was losing snaps to CJ Anderson in the playoffs and even the Super Bowl, this feels relatively predictable at the same time. Gurley was banged up toward the end of the season, although it's still a bit unclear exactly how healthy he was. He played in all three postseason games but took 16 fewer carries than CJ Anderson. Their

offensive rhythm and chemistry appeared to be completely out of sync for the NFC Championship and the Super Bowl. At the very least, Sean McVay will want to limit Gurley's workload this season to both let him recover and maintain availability for another playoff run. The Rams made this clear when they traded up to draft the uber-productive Memphis back Darrell Henderson in the third round. Henderson rushed for over 1,900 yards at nearly 9.0 YPC last year with an insane 6.16 of those YPC coming after contact. Many would argue that any NFL runner would thrive with the Rams system. It will only take several plays of Henderson reaching the second level of the defense before he wows the league, and more importantly, his head coach.

## 12 Players Who Will Bounce Back in 2019

By FantasyPros Staff

It's draft day, you're getting ready to pick your squad, and by the end of the season, a handful of players you expected to perform have simply underwhelmed. Does that story sound familiar at all? This is the life of a fantasy football player (sometimes). Fast forward to the next year and now you're avoiding the same players because of their recent performance. Don't do this. Players have off years and there are a plethora of reasons why they may have struggled in the past season. Regardless of what that reason is, let other fantasy owners's recency bias drag down the average draft position (ADP) of those players so that you can get a bargain on someone who will come back strong.

We reached out to our group of featured experts to name players at the running back, wide receiver, and quarterback positions they believe will have a strong 2019 campaign after a down year. Don't be afraid on draft day when coming across the names below.

### ***Q1. Name one RB you expect to bounce back strong from a disappointing 2018 campaign***

Leonard Fournette (RB – JAC)

" Fournette missed half the season in 2018, but was ineffective when he was on the field, averaging just 3.3 yards per carry. Jacksonville's offensive line was ravaged by injuries as well, so if the blocking unit is healthier, Fournette will have a chance to rebound. An upgrade at quarterback will help Fournette as well, as defenses will have to respect Nick Foles, contrary to Blake Bortles."

– Walter Cherepinsky (WalterFootball)

Aaron Jones (RB – GB)

"There were definitely highlights in Aaron Jones' 2018 season, but it was considered a disappointment after missing the first two games, then returning to a timeshare with Jamaal Williams. Fortunately, there's a new head coach in town and Jones has apparently been getting into the best shape of his life, preparing to handle a bigger workload. Remember the days Eddie Lacy was a top-six fantasy running back? That was due to him playing alongside Aaron Rodgers. If Jones does indeed get the workhorse role, he's

finishing top-10 and maybe top-five.”

– Mike Tagliere (FantasyPros)

David Johnson (RB – ARI)

“With new coach Kliff Kingsbury and a rookie QB in Kyler Murray, the versatile RB is expected to be the centerpiece of this fast-paced offense. In 2018 he was heavily, almost criminally, underutilized and he still managed to finish as the RB10. Imagine what he can produce when utilized properly. For me, he is a lock as a top-5 running back for 2019.”

– Mauricio Gutierrez (Estadio Fantasy)

Kenyan Drake (RB – MIA)

“Drake’s overall numbers and finish weren’t terrible last year, but his inconsistency led to a generally disappointing season. With Adam Gase, who never trusted Drake as the featured back, and Frank Gore, who ran well last year, both gone from Miami, Drake should see much more of a featured role despite the presence of Kalen Ballage. Brian Flores sounds high on Drake, who generally fares well when given a starter’s workload. There’s risk involved, but I expect Drake to end the season as a strong RB2 in half-PPR formats.”

– Dan Harris (FantasyPros)

***Q2. Name one WR you expect to bounce back strong from a disappointing 2018 campaign***

A.J. Green (WR – CIN)

“I’m not sure why A.J. Green was considered a bust in 2018. The way everyone talks about him is like he’s washed-up. News flash: Green was the No. 6 receiver in fantasy prior to going down with his foot injury. However, recency bias when he missed time with his toe injury has distorted the public perception of his talent level. He’s been stuck with Marvin Lewis in mediocrity for a long time, so you should know there’s upside for more with the new hire of Zac Taylor, as he’s said to be installing the Rams offense, which is extremely receiver-friendly. Green has finished as a top-10 receiver every time he’s played 14-plus games. In the seasons he didn’t, he was top-14 in points per game. When on the field, he’s a stud WR1.”

– Mike Tagliere (FantasyPros)

Sammy Watkins (WR – KC)

“Despite playing in a high-octane offense last year, Sammy Watkins didn’t do much in his first year in Kansas City. However, Watkins will have an entire year to work with Patrick Mahomes. With Tyreek Hill’s status in limbo, Watkins will have every chance to be a key contributor for Kansas City in 2019.”

– Walter Cherepinsky (WalterFootball)

Golden Tate (WR – NYG)

“Everyone is going to remember the terrible campaign he had last year and going to forget how consistent he has been. In the last four seasons, he averaged 93 receptions, 1,056 yards, and 4.75 TDs. Odell Beckham is gone and Tate, playing most of his time in the slot, is going to have enough targets to establish himself as a low-end WR2 option.”

– Mauricio Gutierrez (Estadio Fantasy)

Larry Fitzgerald (WR – ARI)

“Even after he retires, I don’t know if I’ll be able to quit Larry Fitzgerald. Yes, he is coming off a poor season, but that was largely because the Cardinals threw the ball far less than in previous years and Josh Rosen’s accuracy left much to be desired. With Kyler Murray at the helm and Kliff Kingsbury likely to install a more creative and pass-friendly offense, Fitzgerald should be able to bounce back nicely. Even with more mouths to feed with another year from Christian Kirk and new additions Andy Isabella and Hakeem Butler, Fitzgerald still has gas left in the tank, and should have a fine season.”

– Dan Harris (FantasyPros)

***Q3. Name one QB you expect to bounce back strong from a disappointing 2018 campaign***

Aaron Rodgers (QB – GB)

“It’s shocking to see the hate surrounding Aaron Rodgers after a “disappointing” fantasy season where he threw 25 touchdowns and just two interceptions. We should all be so lucky to have that called a disappointment. He posted the lowest touchdown-rate of his career while playing through some leg injuries, but still finished as the No. 5 fantasy quarterback. It was the first time he’d played more than 10 games and not

finished as a top-two quarterback. Expect things to return to normal in 2019. He's my QB1."

– Mike Tagliere (FantasyPros)

Jameis Winston (QB – TB)

"I am all in on Winston this year having him as QB9 in my rankings. The arrival of Bruce Arians is going to convert this offense into a fantasy football bonanza. The weapons around Winston are incredible with Mike Evans, Chris Godwin, and OJ Howard. From Weeks 11 through 17 last year, Winston was the 9th best QB in total fantasy points, averaging 18.5 per game. He is the best QB to target after the 10th round."

– Mauricio Gutierrez (Estadio Fantasy)

Cam Newton (QB – CAR)

"Newton's shoulder is keeping fantasy drafters from selecting him early, at least in mock drafts thus far. However, I'm hearing Newton is looking great in OTAs. He will also have a talented, experienced receiver at his disposal this year in D.J. Moore, which will obviously help. I like Newton to bounce back in his second year in Norv Turner's offense."

– Walter Cherepinsky (WalterFootball)

Carson Wentz (QB – PHI)

"It might be unfair to label Wentz's season a disappointment, since he lost several games to injury, but his touchdown pace regressed significantly from his standout 2017 campaign, largely because his completion rate on deep passes nosedived. A big reason why was because the Eagles lost speed at the wide receiver position from the previous year, losing Mack Hollins to injury and replacing Torrey Smith with Mike Wallace, who was on injured reserve for most of the year. With DeSean Jackson and J.J. Arcega-Whiteside in tow, and with hopefully avoiding the injuries that decimated his offensive line, I expect Wentz to have a monster season and look much more like the 2017 version of himself."

– Dan Harris (FantasyPros)



## 11 Must-Have Players

By FantasyPros Staff

With training camps across the league set to begin later this month, we're approaching our favorite time of year! As we draw nearer to the season, more fantasy football information will become available all over the industry. As more advice gets pumped through the fake football pipeline, it can actually become quite difficult to figure out which guys you should fully strive to select since every expert will have many different players they have high expectations for.

However, if we were to block out the noise and have several experts each plant their flag on one player you have to get this year, who would those athletes be? Luckily for you, we reached out to our pool of pundits to answer that very question! 11 acclaimed experts are here to give you an early look at which player they plan on banging their drum for during the draft season.

***Q. What one player outside the top 30 in the half-PPR expert consensus are you hoping to end up with in all your leagues?***

Josh Jacobs (RB – OAK)

"There is so much greatness to pick from, but I'll double down with my pick and explain why Jacobs being outside the top 30 is absurd. The talk that Jon Gruden doesn't employ a bell cow is a misnomer. He gave Cadillac Williams 290...carries(!!)...as a rookie...in 14 games (all of the exclamation marks). After getting Williams hurt with that work, Gruden gave him another 225 plus 30 receptions in just 14 sophomore games. Gruden had Earnest Graham get 222 carries and 49 receptions in 10 starts, and Tyrone Wheatley had 242 and 232 in back-to-back seasons. Jacobs should near 300 touches and is quite the talented running back, meaning a top-10 finish isn't out of the question."

– Jake Ciely (The Athletic)

"I'm going to keep riding the same position I've held all summer and pick Josh Jacobs. I wasn't JJ's biggest fan leading up to the draft, but the landing spot and potential for opportunity are immense in Oakland. Draft Capital + projection + pedigree + work ethic; they are all adding up for me. My hot take has been he's a top-five RB in 2019, but really I believe top 10 is well within reach. He can be a violent runner, so the line play of the Raiders doesn't intimidate me. The last rookie runner Gruden had was

Cadillac Williams, and he got 290 carries that year — Jacobs can look like a Rolls Royce if he gets anywhere near that volume. Over the last four seasons, a rookie RB has finished in the top five. He's currently 46th overall and is someone I feel will outperform that ranking. Sign me up!"

– Andy Singleton (Expand The Boxscore)

Leonard Fournette (RB – JAC) | Aaron Jones (RB – GB)

"There are two guys who are just outside the top-30 players for me. Both Fournette and Jones are extremely appealing in the third round, and sometimes, the fourth round. Fournette is one of the rare instances where you have a running back who's a virtual lock to receive 20-plus touches per game. That's production you don't ever find in the third round. He doesn't come with a top-five ceiling due to the offense he plays in, but he's an RB1 when on the field. As for Jones, he comes with a tad more risk, but it shouldn't shock anyone if he takes the starting gig in Green Bay and winds up as a top-five running back in 2019."

– Mike Tagliere (FantasyPros)

Latavius Murray (RB – NO)

"It was just two years ago that the Saints had two running backs finish inside the top six – and there's no reason to think that they can't field two RB1s once again in 2019. Sure, Mark Ingram is gone, but New Orleans gave Murray a hefty four-year contract for a reason. Murray should be able to slide into the Ingram role with ease and yield similar upside. In standard leagues, Murray has scored at least 14 points in 53 percent of the games where he has received 15+ carries. Comparatively, he has posted fewer than 7.5 points in just 16 percent of those contests. If he stays healthy, Murray has an RB1 ceiling coupled with a high-end RB3 floor. With an ECR of RB33 and 90th overall, I'll gladly have a 100 percent ownership stake of Murray shares."

– Elisha Twerski (Cheesehead TV)

Kenyan Drake (RB – MIA)

"Drake is someone who is going to end up on the majority of my teams because I'm willing to trust his talent despite the uncertainty with a new regime and the presence of Kalen Ballage. Drastically underutilized by Adam Gase, Drake has the skills to be an every-down back, as he has forced the second-most missed tackles over the last three years. Even last year, when

he was clearly second in line behind Frank Gore, he still managed to finish 18th in half-PPR scoring, making his ranking of 24th running back and 57th overall far too low in my opinion. There's risk, as there is with nearly every player outside of the top 30, but I'm willing to bet on Drake given his ADP and ranking."

– Dan Harris (FantasyPros)

D.J. Moore (WR- CAR)

"There is a plethora of players who I'd like to have on all my squads this year, but I'll choose Moore given the limitations here. Devin Funchess has vacated 79 targets and 34-year-old Greg Olsen can't be consistently trusted (he's played 16 games over the last two years). The main worry is Cam Newton's health and accuracy. If those aren't big issues, look for the sophomore receiver to supplant Christian McCaffrey as Carolina's leading receiver and thrust himself into top 15-20 WR territory."

– Zach Greubel (Gridiron Experts)

Kerryon Johnson (RB – DET)

"Johnson is the guy I want in every league I play in. He is an incredibly talented running back who can catch the ball, pound it up the middle, or get to the edge quicker than defenders. Last season he averaged 5.4 yards per carry and averaged top-15 running back production once he got the chance to start. LeGarrette Blount is gone, the offensive line is improved, and the new offensive coordinator wants to run the ball more than any team in the NFL."

– Jason Moore (The Fantasy Footballers)

James Washington (WR – PIT)

"There are 168 targets up for grabs in Pittsburgh left behind by Antonio Brown, and the only thing the Steelers did to fill the void is bring in the consistently underperforming Donte Moncrief. That's why I'm all in on second-year receiver James Washington. Why will he end up on all my teams? With an ADP of 137, this big time playmaker is essentially FREE and brings enormous upside to any fantasy roster."

– Bill Enright (FFChamps)

Jameis Winston (QB – TB)

“I am going to go way down the list and say Winston for a couple of reasons. First, you are getting a potential top-five QB in the 11th round based on his current ADP. He is going so late that even if for some reason he busts or misses time this year, it won’t kill you — this season, QB is so deep that it’s going to be incredibly easy to stream the position, if needed. Second, taking him so late fits my ideal draft strategy of waiting at QB and loading up on RBs, WRs, and TEs the first 10 rounds.”

– Sean Koerner (The Action Network)

Kyler Murray (QB – ARI)

“Murray has a positional ECR of QB16 and an overall ECR of 107, which would place him late in the ninth round. That’s an irresistible rookie discount on a quarterback with a top-five ceiling. Murray has a terrific arm, he’s coming off one of the most efficient passing seasons in college football history, he’ll be playing in a fast-paced offense, and his sublime running ability provides the Konami Code. He’s my QB8, and I hope to grab him in as many leagues as I can.”

– Pat Fitzmaurice (The Football Girl)

Jimmy Garoppolo (QB – SF)

“I like to wait on quarterbacks as much as the next fantasy football analyst, so let’s go with a passer here. At this time last year, I thought Garoppolo was overrated while being drafted as a top-10 fantasy QB. But at QB22, with some added weapons and a coach who made Nick Mullens look decent? Count me in.”

– John Halpin (RotoWire)

## 12 Early Undervalued Players

By FantasyPros Staff

Often times, as fantasy players, when we see the topic “undervalued”, we immediately think potential sleepers. While it’s not wrong to do so, any player outside of the No. 1 pick could technically be considered undervalued. Don’t believe me? Ask Calvin Johnson if he thinks he should have been the top pick in the 2007 draft over JaMarcus Russell. You could even ask Joe Thomas who went No. 3 that year. The point is, when looking for value, it’s simply a matter of talent and not getting overly caught up on the hype trains that inevitably come through during the preseason.

We reached out to a group of experts who are featured below to name which players at the RB, WR, and QB positions they believe are currently the most undervalued based on Half-PPR ADPs. They used our consensus Average Draft Positions which is comprised of draft data from multiple sites to provide the best well-rounded rankings to base their answers on. See who they picked below.

***Q1. Name the RB you believe is the most undervalued according to our early RB ADP Rankings and tell us why you feel that way.***

Marlon Mack (RB – IND): ADP – RB15

“One guy that I have my eye on at RB is Marlon Mack. He quietly had a very impressive season in 2018, despite getting derailed by injuries once or twice. I think the Colts have fully endorsed Mack as the workhorse heading into 2019. In 2018, Mack actually had the 8th-most rushing attempts per game with 16.25, in front of guys like David Johnson, Melvin Gordon, Christian McCaffrey, and Alvin Kamara. If Mack gets the work that he should, the sky’s the limit.”

– Donald Gibson (Fantasy Fusion)

Leonard Fournette (RB – JAC): ADP – RB14

“Did you know that since 2014, there has been an average of just 12 running backs who’ve hit 250 touches per season? That amounts to just 15.6 touches per game, which highlights just how rare workhorse running backs are. Leonard Fournette has averaged 21.9 touches per game since he entered the league and has performed better than Melvin Gordon has throughout his career (when on the field). Sure, health is a concern, but it’s that way with most workhorse running backs. Fournette is an RB1 being

drafted as an RB2.”

– Mike Tagliere (FantasyPros)

Aaron Jones (RB – GB): ADP – RB16

“If Jones remains this affordable all season, I’m going to win a lot of leagues. I don’t need to go over his stats from the last two years compared against those of Jamaal Williams. The difference speaks for itself. We can’t be totally sure that Matt LaFleur will make Jones a workhorse, but the bet here is that the chasm between Jones and Williams will be obvious for the new coach to see in training camp. A workhorse season from Jones will result in a top-five RB finish.”

– Michael Beller (Sports Illustrated)

David Montgomery (RB – CHI): ADP – RB27

“Jordan Howard was a top-20 fantasy back in 2018 despite the fact Chicago didn’t trust him as a receiver and seemed happy to unload for a late-round pick. David Montgomery has a history of being able to carry the load and is a player his coach (Iowa State’s Matt Campbell) said was his best slot receiver. RB27 puts Montgomery squarely into flex territory when he’s almost certain to be a mid-range RB2 at worst. Grab him at his current price now, because his stock figures to rise to the point where he is coming off the board in the late third or early fourth round in a month or two.”

– Doug Orth (FFToday)

***Q2. Name the WR you believe is the most undervalued according to our early WR ADP Rankings and tell us why you feel that way.***

A.J. Green (WR – CIN): ADP – WR13

“It may not seem like he’s undervalued very much, but it’s rare to find a top-five type wide receiver at the end of the third round, and that’s where A.J. Green currently is. Many consider 2018 as a bust for him, but did you know he was the No. 6 wide receiver prior to hurting his foot? This decade, there are just four wide receivers who have posted WR2 or better numbers in a higher percentage of games than Green. Those players are Odell Beckham Jr., Julio Jones, Antonio Brown, and Michael Thomas.”

– Mike Tagliere (FantasyPros)

Keenan Allen (WR – LAC): ADP – WR11

“Allen finds himself buried behind guys like T.Y. Hilton and Adam Thielen, but I think he should be right behind the elite guys. In 2018, Allen only had one game with less than 10 PPR points (7.4) and eight games above 17 PPR points. He’s a target machine, and he’s always good for one eruption game (last year it was 14 receptions on 19 targets for 148 yards and a TD). I think fantasy managers should be pouncing on the slight discount that Allen has right now.”

– Donald Gibson (Fantasy Fusion)

Tyler Boyd (WR – CIN): ADP – WR30

“How is Tyler Boyd the WR30 by ADP? Do people not understand that he did his best work last year alongside a healthy A.J. Green, not when Green was out? In the nine games Green played, Boyd averaged 6.1 catches, 79.7 yards, and 0.56 touchdowns. That plays to a 16-game pace of 97.6 receptions, 1,275.2 yards, and nine touchdowns. He’s a top-20 receiver at a WR3 price.”

– Michael Beller (Sports Illustrated)

Donte Moncrief (WR – PIT): ADP – WR61

“Of the three players I’ve selected as undervalued, I am – by far – the least sold on Donte Moncrief. With that said, WR61 feels like stealing for a player who may end being the second receiver in an offense that usually puts at least two receivers into the top 30-40 in fantasy at season’s end. The presence of James Washington will likely keep Moncrief from being an every-week fantasy WR3, but I see Washington in more of a field-stretcher role in 2019. On the other hand, I think Moncrief will see more of the intermediate looks and do a lot of damage near the goal line.”

– Doug Orth (FFToday)

***Q3. Name the QB you believe is the most undervalued according to our early QB ADP Rankings and tell us why you feel that way.***

Mitch Trubisky (QB – CHI): ADP – QB18 | Dak Prescott (QB – DAL): ADP – QB20

“There’s a bunch of value in the later rounds, but the best values include both Mitch Trubisky and Dak Prescott. We saw both of them reach top-five potential in 2018 once they got some talent around them. Trubisky will be in year two of the Matt Nagy offense and should have a healthy receiver corps, something he didn’t throughout last year. Prescott has been a top-12

quarterback in every season, and then flashed top-five potential once they acquired Amari Cooper. He'll also be getting Travis Frederick back on the offensive line, which will bring down the sack totals. I'd be okay with either of these quarterbacks as my starter heading into the fantasy season."

– Mike Tagliere (FantasyPros)

"Jameis Winston is a candidate here, but we've seen enough from him to know that he can screw up what looks like a great situation. Instead, I'll go with Mitch Trubisky. He was essentially a first-year quarterback last year, playing for a first-year head coach. The foundation in Chicago is set for the offense to take off this season, and Trubisky can add a ton of fantasy production with what he does on the ground."

– Michael Beller (Sports Illustrated)

Drew Brees (QB – NO): ADP – QB8

"I feel like for the last few years, Drew Brees just keeps creeping his way down draft boards, and he's currently sitting at QB8. Last year, he had a 6.4:1 TD:INT ratio, which was second only to Aaron Rodgers, so he definitely provides security. He did fall back a bit in yardage compared to what we usually see, but I'll be all over Brees this year regardless. On a more anecdotal note, I feel like the departure of Mark Ingram is going to signal a pass-crazy offense for New Orleans, which obviously benefits Brees."

– Donald Gibson (Fantasy Fusion)

Derek Carr (QB – OAK): ADP – QB25

"I see a handful of quarterback values (Kyler Murray, Lamar Jackson, Dak Prescott and Josh Allen among them), but Derek Carr at No. 25 is just disrespectful. Carr was a top-20 fantasy QB last season in his first year in Jon Gruden's offense with Jordy Nelson, Seth Roberts, and Marcell Ateman serving as his top wideouts for half a season. Antonio Brown and Tyrell Williams are serious upgrades, and it wouldn't surprise me if Hunter Renfrow immediately becomes a long-term fixture in the slot. Throw in running backs (Josh Jacobs and Jalen Richard) who are adept receivers and a better offensive line, and Carr could easily be a top-15 quarterback."

– Doug Orth (FFToday)



## Which Studs From 2018 Will Be Duds in 2019?

By Mike Tagliere

Each and every year there are fantasy footballers who buy into last year's performance, expecting the same thing moving forward. Instead, what they should be looking for are outliers, which will drag those players back down to earth.

That's not the only thing we'll be looking for today, but also which players may have lost opportunity due to talent added on the roster, maybe a coaching change, or maybe their career suggests they're not the player you thought they were. Whatever the case, these players are the ones who I believe won't live up to expectations in 2019 when looking at their current draft slot.

### ***Quarterbacks***

Patrick Mahomes (KC)

Before you jump on me about calling Mahomes a dud, this is in reference to his current draft position inside the top two rounds. He threw a touchdown on 8.6 percent of his passes in 2018, the seventh-highest mark of all-time. Here's the list of quarterbacks who are ahead of them, included with their touchdown rate in that season, as well as the following season: Peyton Manning (9.9 to 6.2), Ken Stabler (9.3 to 6.8), Deshaun Watson (9.3 to 5.1), Aaron Rodgers (9.0 to 7.1), Tom Brady (8.7 to 5.0), Mark Rypien (8.7 to 4.6). But Mahomes is different, right? You know what? Everyone who drafted those guys the following year said the same thing. We haven't even discussed the possibility of him losing Tyreek Hill, either.

Ben Roethlisberger (PIT)

There's probably a zero percent chance I draft Roethlisberger in any league this year, as I'm unwilling to come close to his current cost. Sure, he finished as the No. 2 fantasy quarterback in 2018. That was with Antonio Brown while throwing the ball 675 times, which was the fourth-most of all-time. Did you also know that a league-high 54.0 percent of his passing yards came after the catch? Losing Brown will hurt more than most like to admit, as Roethlisberger has been a mediocre fantasy quarterback for much of his career. Here's a comparison between the careers of him and Matthew Stafford, who is currently going as the QB23.

Player	Top-5 %	Top-12 %	Top-18 %	Boom %	Bust %
<a href="#">Matthew Stafford</a>	16.3%	39.0%	63.1%	12.8%	34.0%
<a href="#">Ben Roethlisberger</a>	14.4%	38.4%	56.9%	11.6%	40.7%

### ***Running Backs***

Jordan Howard (PHI)

If you've been hibernating since the end of the football season, you may have missed Howard being traded to the Eagles for a measly sixth-round pick. While some saw this as a value, Howard is an afterthought now that the Eagles spent a second-round pick on Miles Sanders, the more complete running back. Doug Pederson has allowed one running back to play more than 42 snaps in a game during his three years in Philadelphia: Darren Sproles, a do-it-all running back. Howard topped that number five times while with the Bears in 2018 alone with absolutely zero competition for the early-down role. He's more likely to be on waiver wires than he is returning to stud status.

Adrian Peterson (WAS)

If anyone knows what the Redskins are doing with the running back position, please let me know. Not only did they re-sign Peterson to a two-year deal, but they also drafted Bryce Love at the top of the fourth-round, said that Derrius Guice's rehab is right where it's supposed to be, and still have Chris Thompson on the roster. I believe the Peterson signing was more Guice insurance than anything, but the Love pick in the fourth-round put my concerns for Peterson over the top.

Kareem Hunt (CLE)

I don't know how else to say this, but DO NOT DRAFT Hunt in your redraft league this year. I don't care if he's there in the 13th round, let someone else take on that burden. Not only is he suspended for the first eight games of the season, but he's behind a guy who rushed for nearly 1,000 yards despite not starting until Week 7. Did I mention that running back was also drafted by the Browns at the start of the second-round in 2018? The first four weeks of the season are the most important weeks of the season for the waiver wire, so why hold yourself hostage with a guy who's not even a lock

to play once his suspension is over? Not to mention bye week issues you'll have. On top of that, you've never seen him outside a Chiefs offense, where every running back put in the lineup succeeds. I'm not saying he's not a good player, but Chubb is better.

### ***Wide Receivers***

Tyler Boyd (CIN)

It's like everyone forgot how good A.J. Green is/was and now he's dropping down draft boards while Boyd is skyrocketing up them. It's not to say Boyd will return to the waiver wire fodder he was his first two seasons in the league where he scored 15 PPR points just twice in 26 games, but he's not going to return to the player who saw seven or more targets in 9-of-14 games with Green back in the lineup. Do we really believe Andy Dalton can support two consistent top-24 receivers? That's what you're banking on with Boyd, because we know Green will be there if healthy. The only time Dalton has produced two top-30 receivers was in 2014, when Green missed three games, allowing Mohamed Sanu to finish as the WR29. It's not to say it's not possible Boyd takes a leap in the new offense, but he's being drafted at/near his ceiling without a Green injury.

Emmanuel Sanders (DEN)

A 32-year-old coming off a torn Achilles? This is an injury known as a career-killer, as no one has successfully returned from it. In fact, over half of the players who have dealt with it have never returned at all. The Broncos acquired Joe Flacco, who has rarely supported a consistent fantasy receiver, and on top of that, they have former second-round pick Courtland Sutton, last year's emerging slot receiver DaeSean Hamilton, and then drafted possession-style tight end Noah Fant in the first-round of this year's draft. Sanders is someone you should let others draft.

Adam Humphries (TEN)

Remember from Week 6 on when Humphries was a consistent receiver you could plug-and-play as a WR2/3 and get a high floor? If you forgot, he was the No. 15 wide receiver from Week 6 through the end of the season. That will not be the case anymore. He went to Tennessee, where we've all waited on Corey Davis to pan out, though that hasn't exactly gone in our favor. On top of Davis as the top guy, they will get Delanie Walker back on the field, and they drafted my top receiver in this draft class, A.J. Brown. Marcus

Mariota couldn't support one consistent fantasy receiver, let alone three of them. Humphries is a solid, underrated player, but he's on the wrong team.

### ***Tight Ends***

Eric Ebron (IND)

You don't need me to tell you that Ebron's going to come back down to earth in 2019, right? Let's say you're optimistic and aren't worried about the additions of Devin Funchess and Parris Campbell, or the return of Jack Doyle. He scored 14 touchdowns in 2018, which ranks as the third-most all-time by a tight end. While his targets (110), however, ranked 13th all-time, and his yardage (750) ranked 132nd all-time. Regression is coming.

Jared Cook (NO)

Recency bias is real with Cook, who has been a disappointment throughout his fantasy career. Sure, he's going to play with Drew Brees in New Orleans, but don't forget that he played with Aaron Rodgers just a few short years ago. Did you know that 2018 was the first time he scored more than five touchdowns in a season? Or how about that it was his first time topping 54 receptions or 759 yards? Over the last three years there hasn't been a running back/tight end duo who's topped 195 targets on the same team (the highest duo on the Saints has been just 151). Over the last two years, Kamara has totaled at least 100 targets, which tells you that Cook's ceiling is extremely limited.

## Which Duds From 2018 Will Be Studs in 2019?

By Mike Tagliere

You know how we saw guys like James Conner, Joe Mixon, Tyler Lockett, Tyler Boyd, and Mitch Trubisky take the leap into fantasy territory last year after being disappointments in 2017? Well, that happens every year.

Some of those guys will go away the following year, while others just took advantage of their opportunity and are here to stay. There were warning signs with all of those aforementioned players, with exception to Boyd, who took advantage of an injury to A.J. Green. We'll attempt to identify which players will find their way to fantasy relevance in 2019 after staying in the shadows during the 2018 season.

### ***Quarterbacks***

Jameis Winston (TB)

Have you ever wondered which player was going to go off in a particular offense? Think about teams like the Patriots or Bears, who seemingly always had someone different posting big fantasy days. Moving to a food reference: instead of figuring what pancake it will be, take the syrup that'll go over all of them. Many have labeled Chris Godwin and O.J. Howard as breakout candidates, and while I agree with them, Mike Evans is still there, too. Instead of trying to figure out which player is going to go off every week, take the guy who's distributing the ball to them. The addition of Bruce Arians is fantastic, as is the horrible defense that'll be out there, because you'll watch the pass attempts (and fantasy points) rack up.

Jimmy Garoppolo (SF)

Did you guys watch Nick Mullens and C.J. Beathard produce half-decent fantasy numbers last year? Between them two, they posted 198.5 fantasy points over the 13 games that Garoppolo didn't play. Over the course of a full season, that would have amounted to the No. 16 quarterback. That was with Marquise Goodwin missing in action much of the time, with Pierre Garcon out for the year, and with Dante Pettis not getting on the field in a full-time role until the end of the season. Not only will Pettis be a full-time receiver, but the 49ers also drafted Deebo Samuel and Jalen Hurd inside the top three rounds. The running backs on the roster are all better pass-catchers than they are ball-carriers, which again favors Garoppolo.

## ***Running Backs***

David Johnson (ARI)

In a recent interview, Johnson stated that he's been training to run 90-95 plays per game under new head coach Kliff Kingsbury. While that's tongue-in-cheek, it's clear the Cardinals will be one of the fast-paced offenses in the league, which is a far cry from last year where they ran just 56.4 plays per game, the second-fewest in the NFL. With Kyler Murray under center, it'll also help keep defenses honest, even if the offensive line isn't very good. Volume is everything to running backs and it doesn't help that Johnson now has an offensive-minded coach to help unlock the efficiency he had under Bruce Arians.

Leonard Fournette (JAX)

Here's a fun fact that not many people will acknowledge. Fournette is a really good fantasy running back. Don't believe me? Here's his Boom, Bust, and Everything In Between numbers over his career compared to first-round pick Melvin Gordon:

<b>Player</b>	<b>RB1 %</b>	<b>RB2 %</b>	<b>RB3 %</b>	<b>Boom %</b>	<b>Bust %</b>
<a href="#"><u>Leonard Fournette</u></a>	52.4%	71.4%	81.0%	14.3%	14.3%
<a href="#"><u>Melvin Gordon</u></a>	47.3%	67.3%	81.8%	18.2%	18.2%

If you want to say Fournette has had difficulty staying healthy, that's fine, but when on the field, he's an every-week RB1. Towards the end of last year – when everyone developed their bad feelings towards him – did you know the Jaguars were down 4-of-5 starting offensive linemen? The Jaguars have been slowly building one of the better offensive lines in football and they added Jawaan Taylor in the draft, raising the talent-level even more. He should bounce-back into everyone's good graces in 2019.

Aaron Jones (GB)

I don't want to call Jones a 'dud' when he led the NFL in yards per carry in 2018, but he was a dud when you consider the leap many expected him to make. After being suspended for the first two games, Jones returned to what was a timeshare with Jamaal Williams, despite Jones clearly being the superior talent. Fortunately, there's a new head coach in town and Jones has

apparently been getting into the best shape of his life, preparing to handle a bigger workload. Remember the days Eddie Lacy was a top-six fantasy running back? That was due to him playing alongside Aaron Rodgers. If Jones does indeed get the workhorse role, he's finishing top-10 and maybe top-five.

Ronald Jones (TB)

I've been doing my best to shout-out Jones this offseason, warning readers not to get too carried away with a 30-touch sample size under Dirk Koetter. If we judged David Johnson alone on what he did under Steve Wilks last year, we wouldn't have him ranked as a top-10 running back this season. The same could be said about Jones, who is now under Johnson's old coach, Bruce Arians. Remember the success Adrian Peterson, Chris Johnson, David Johnson, and Andre Ellington had in Arizona? Well, it was all under Arians, and he's been talking up Jones this offseason.

### ***Wide Receivers***

A.J. Green (CIN)

Why in the world was Green considered a bust in 2018? The way everyone talks about him is like he's washed-up. News flash: Green was the No. 6 receiver in fantasy prior to going down with his foot injury. However, recency bias when he missed time with his toe injury has distorted the public perception of his talent-level. He's been stuck with Marvin Lewis in mediocrity for a long time, so you should know there's upside for more with the new hire of Zac Taylor, as he's said to be installing the Rams offense, which is extremely receiver-friendly.

Chris Godwin (TB)

The Bucs offense had a lot of production last year, but it was sporadic. Many casual fantasy players will see Godwin's current ADP as the WR20 and scoff at it, but there's good reason for analysts to be enthusiastic about Godwin's potential. He was fighting for snaps with DeSean Jackson on the perimeter and then fighting for snaps with Adam Humphries in the slot. Both of those players are gone, and new head coach Bruce Arians has already talked about Godwin's role and how they'll use him all over the formation. He may have finished as the WR25 last year, but it was a bumpy ride. This year, with more snaps and targets, he's going to smooth out that ride.

### Mike Williams (LAC)

Just like the player above him on this list, Williams was fantastic in a very limited role in 2018, though many called him a bust due to his inconsistency. Well, it's hard to be consistent when you're not a full-time player. Fun fact about Williams' 2018 season: There have been just 16 wide receivers who've been able to finish as a top-20 fantasy receiver with less than 100 targets over the last 10 years. Mike Williams just did it with 66 targets while Tyler Lockett did it with 71 targets in 2018. No other wide receivers can say they did it with less than 79 targets. Now, with Tyrell Williams gone, he's set up for a full-time role with more targets. He has top-15 upside right now.

### Dante Pettis (SF)

He didn't start for the 49ers right away, which was somewhat puzzling, but when Pettis got onto the field, he flashed a bit. It was Week 10 when Pettis turned into a full-time player, and from then until Week 16, he was the No. 20 wide receiver in fantasy, with Nick Mullens as his quarterback. The 49ers did add Deebo Samuel in the draft, but as we saw with Pettis, there's no guarantee he'll be a starter right away. Even if so, Jimmy Garoppolo returning to the lineup should only help his consistency in fantasy lineups.

### Anthony Miller (CHI)

It was a somewhat rough year for Miller in 2018, as most don't realize he had a Jones fracture in his foot prior to the NFL Draft, which was why he didn't participate in the Combine. He then went on to play through a separated shoulder his rookie season, yet proceeded to score seven touchdowns on just 54 targets. Miller seemingly has a knack for the end zone, as he scored 33 touchdowns in his final 26 games at Memphis. He did have shoulder surgery this offseason, but he is expected to be ready for the start of training camp. Knowing how well he played through injuries, you must wonder what he can do when healthy while playing the slot in Matt Nagy's offense.

### ***Tight Ends***

#### Evan Engram (NYG)

He was someone I was telling everyone to fade in 2018, as the star wide receivers were going to be healthy and back in the lineup. With Odell Beckham gone, there's over 150 targets up for grabs, and though Golden



Tate was added, he plays a different role than Beckham. With Tate starting in a new offense at 31 years old, Sterling Shepard moving to the perimeter where he hasn't succeeded, and the Giants potentially moving on to check-down rookie Daniel Jones, the 2019 season seems full of targets for Engram, who might return as a top-five fantasy tight end.

#### Vance McDonald (PIT)

With Antonio Brown and Jesse James out of town, there's over 200 targets up for grabs in the Steelers offense, though they're not likely to throw the ball as much in 2019. Still, McDonald was given a vote of confidence when the Steelers didn't draft a tight end in the first four rounds of what was considered a deep tight end class. Not much slides past me, but did you know McDonald saw 73 targets in 2018? That ranked 12th among tight ends and he finished as the No. 10 fantasy tight end. If McDonald stays on the field, he's absolutely locked-in for 90-plus targets and a top-eight finish in 2019.

## 10 Mistakes to Avoid

By Dan Harris

I'll be honest: I know I'm going to be writing this article every year. On the one hand, it's a bit hurtful. Why do my editors assume that I'm the person who understands the biggest draft-day mistakes? Because I took Peyton Manning first overall after his record-breaking season like 15 years ago? Am I seriously never going to live that down?

But on the other hand, it makes my life a little easier knowing that each year, I can make note of all the many draft mistakes that I notice each year and boom, this article writes itself. So, despite the blow to my pride, I'm more than happy to take the assignment.

Truth be told, there are easily 20 or more common draft mistakes to avoid that we could discuss. But here are the 10 that I see most often.

### 1. Losing Focus

You know those Royal Guards who stand there all day every day and just don't react to anything people do, no matter how ridiculous? They are so focused on doing their job – which, as far as I understand it, is just to stand there and not react to anything people do, no matter how ridiculous – that nothing can break their concentration.

Channel those guys for the two or three hours of your fantasy football draft. Of course, some good ol' fashioned trash talk in your draft room is part of what makes fantasy sports great. But there's a fine line between that and not realizing that you're on the clock.

Turn the television off. Use your phone only for Twitter to check the latest news. When your leaguemate calls you to ask why that guy took a defense in the fifth round (oh, we'll get there, don't worry), just ignore it.

You'll have several months to dissect the draft. It can certainly wait a few hours.

### 2. Failing to use the Draft Assistant

This is the part of the article where I apologize to you for recommending a FantasyPros product because it seems like I'm just pushing our stuff, but I do so anyway because I use it and it's awesome, and you're just hurting yourself if you don't.

Draft Assistant syncs to your draft, follows you in real time and gives you expert consensus recommendations as to who you should draft next based on your needs and the rosters of the other teams. You want to see the odds a player you're considering makes it back to you? You want to see everyone else's strengths and weaknesses? Draft Assistant does it all for you.

I've done a pretty detailed study on this, and the only people who did not find this useful are a) people who begin celebrating Christmas in March, b) people who did not enjoy Breaking Bad, and c) people who think The Godfather Part III was the best of the trilogy. If you are one of those people, then just stop reading this article now and think about the path you've chosen. If you are not one of these people, then be smart and get some expert advice in real time during your draft.

### 3. Failing to have players in your queue

If you use the Draft Assistant, this mistake won't be quite as bad, but still, don't do this. Don't be the guy or gal who takes their FULL 90 seconds to make each pick because they're desperately searching for a draftable player.

Drafts move pretty fast. At least six or seven picks before your draft slot comes up; you need to be actively looking at the remaining players, figuring out who might fit, and making sure they're in your queue. Because you know there is going to be that round where you think there are a ton of players left and then boom-boom-boom-boom, you have no idea who to pick.

I may not have yet convinced you of the importance of using your queue. So, if you need another reason, you always need to guard against your toddler accidentally resetting your wireless router during the middle of your draft and making you auto-draft Chase Edmonds because you didn't have anyone in your queue and the draft-room rankings are wonky. Oh, which leads me to...

### 4. Not putting your own rankings in the draft room

If you're a regular fantasy football player, you've probably played in leagues hosted by several different websites. So I don't have to tell you that some of the rankings in the draft room are plum crazy.

Sometimes I legitimately think that one of my leaguemates found a way to hack the draft room and put in fake player rankings for the rest of us. Trust me, if you knew my buddy George, it wouldn't sound so crazy.

The draft room rankings can create several problems, including the dreaded auto-draft issue mentioned above. But also, I guarantee you, you're going to be sitting there in the eighth round while your competitor drafts someone who should've gone three rounds earlier, but who you didn't realize was still on the board.

If you use the Draft Wizard, you should be fine. But either way, just take the 20 minutes and personalize your rankings in your draft room with something you can trust. If you're in a time crunch, just important the FantasyPros expert consensus rankings, so you'll know there's no chance of someone falling through the cracks that way.

#### 5. Drafting a defense too early

With almost no exceptions, fantasy owners should be drafting their defense with one of their last few picks. Yet over the last few years, on average, there's better than a 30-pick difference between the expert consensus rankings and average draft position. Don't be like that. The earlier you draft your DST, the better the flex option you're passing on will be.

Wait as long as you reasonably can to draft a defense, and if you miss out on the top options, it's the easiest position to stream. Legitimately, if you look a week or two ahead and plan accordingly, you can stream your way to a top-10 defense.

#### 6) Locking yourself into a strategy

Of course, you're going to have at least a rough plan of what you want to do going into your draft heading in. But drafts are unpredictable, and locking yourself into a single strategy can spell disaster.

Suppose you want to load up on wide receiver early, but come draft day, so does the rest of your league. It makes little sense to continue to take

second-tier receivers just because that was part of your draft-day plan when instead you could be scooping up all those upper-tier running backs that have started to fall.

Getting value in your draft is key, and if that means abandoning your preferred strategy early, so be it. A fantasy draft is like jazz – you know the music, but it requires some improvising.

#### 7. Getting caught up in a position run

No matter how many drafts you've done, it's always unsettling to see a position run. Two minutes ago, you felt great about the number of running backs left in the draft. But after seven straight went off the board, you're getting nervous.

I mean, you didn't plan to take another running back here, and you don't necessarily need one. But look at how many are being drafted!

Take a deep breath. A good draft is always about value, so stick to your rankings and take the best player available. If you're prepared, you'll have plenty of depth at every position and know where your sleepers are.

#### 8. Not considering a quarterback until the late rounds

Remember when that cool strategy of waiting to draft a quarterback came around? Right, well now so does everyone else.

Most savvy fantasy owners know that waiting to draft a quarterback is a winning strategy. But, for the most part, quarterbacks aren't going in the first or second round anymore. If everyone else is avoiding quarterbacks and the elite quarterbacks start lasting later than expected, you need to be at least open to pulling the trigger.

I will stress that waiting on quarterback is a generally sound principle and one I will surely employ this year. But there comes a point when you need to consider taking one earlier than usual. And don't lock yourself into avoiding that.

#### 9. Failing to separate real football from fantasy football

You know how most football fans who live outside of New England hate the Patriots? Well, now imagine you're a die-hard Jets fan.

Who then married a woman whose family is full of Patriot fans. Who then moved from New York to New England because "happy wife, happy life."

How do you think this person feels about drafting Julian Edelman and other members of the Patriots? Well, I'm going to let you in on a little secret. That imaginary dude is me, and the way he feels about drafting Patriots is that it makes him feel like a "wicked mawron."

But you know what? I owned LeGarrette Blount on a ton of teams in 2016 and rode his many lumbering one-yard touchdown runs to a championship or two. Because while it may rip apart a small piece of my soul to have root for one or more members of the Patriots each season, you do what you need to do to bring home fantasy glory.

#### 10. Being uninformed on draft day

No matter how well-prepared you are, it won't do much good if you're drafting a quarterback who just fractured his back or tore up his knee earlier that day. Of course, sometimes life gets busy, and you won't always hear about the breaking football injury news on the day of your draft.

But do yourself a favor — follow @FantasyProsNFL on Twitter and just check the feed five minutes before your draft. If it's clear of injury news, you're good to go.

And there we are. All simple things that you can do to optimize your draft. And I look forward to talking about most of them next year, too, when my editors suggest that I'm the most appropriate person to draft this article. Good luck, drafters!

## The 10 Fantasy Football Commandments

By Dan Harris

If my wife is reading this (and judging by her constant eye rolls whenever I talk about fantasy football, she probably isn't;) then I can't remember any of the girls I dated before I met her. Seriously, not one. Life was but a blur.

Is she looking? No? Ok, cool.

Yes, it's true, when you get married, you pretty much forget your old flames, and I certainly have. Except for one: Laura (not her real name).

You see, Laura (not her real name) had a bit of a fancy upbringing. And every Sunday, her family would throw this lavish lunch party at their house. The waitstaff wore white gloves and tuxedos, guests wore seersucker suits, and the food was tiny and sounded French. And every Sunday, like the good boyfriend that I was, I attended.

Oh sure, Laura (not her real name) hated those parties herself and knew how much I loved football – both real and fantasy – and she felt awful dragging me to them. But she couldn't bring herself to lie to her parents. She felt like the ol' "Dan really doesn't want to have to wear his college sweatshirt and take the SATs again so he's skipping the lunch party to make sure he doesn't finish last in his fantasy football league" just wouldn't go over well.

One Monday night, I was watching the final football game of the week and was in an insanely close fantasy football matchup. I desperately needed a Reggie Wayne touchdown, and, as the Colts approached the goal-line, I said something silly like, "Please God, let this throw go to Wayne." Laura (not her real name) overheard me, and boom. Every Sunday from then on, she could accurately tell her parents that I was unable to make the Sunday luncheon because I was attending "religious services."

I know what you're thinking – I should have married that girl. I know, but if you met my wife, you'd understand why I didn't. And although I never have a reason to think of any of my other previous relationships, I'll always remember the only non-fantasy player I've ever known to understand that fantasy football could qualify as a religion...unless my wife is reading this. In which case, what were we talking about?

Anyway, in honor of Laura (not her real name) and her understanding of the religious implications of fantasy football, here are our 10 Fantasy Football Commandments for 2019.

### 1. Thou shalt honor thy superstitions

It's not a football movie, but I love "Bull Durham." Seriously, I'll watch it whenever it's on. And one of my favorite lines is when Crash Davis (Kevin Costner) is trying to explain a winning streak to Annie Savoy (Susan Sarandon). He says, "If you believe you're playing well because you're getting laid, or because you're not getting laid, or because you're wearing ladies underwear, then you are!"

And you know what? That's accurate. If you think you draft better when you eat asparagus for dinner or wear your hat backwards, then you do. If you think your fantasy football team performs better because you grocery shop and read your kids Horton Hatches the Egg on Sundays (and I do), then it does.

Don't let anyone else tell you that not washing your favorite shirt for four weeks because your fantasy team is on a roll is "unsanitary" and "embarrassing to your children." Respect every streak and superstition. Because if you think it has an impact on your fantasy football performance, then it does.

### 2. Thou shalt mock draft as often as possible

No matter how much research you do or how much you know about every player, for the most part, it's all for naught if you don't practice with mock drafts. How does your team look when you start with two running backs or draft a tight end early? What's the right move when there's an insane run on wide receivers in the first three rounds?

The only way to prepare yourself to make the necessary split-second decisions is to practice making those split-second decisions over and over again. Truthfully, this should be the first commandment, but I love that Bull Durham quote, so mocking gets bumped to number two.

Note: nearly every fantasy sports website has a tool that allows you to mock draft against other players. If you've done them before, you know they can be time-consuming and often frustrating, when other mock-drafters drop out of the draft after two rounds or think it's funny to take Keke Coutee first



overall. If you find yourself with these same concerns, I'd recommend using the FantasyPros Draft Wizard.

You draft against artificial intelligence that uses individual expert rankings. That means you know that the other drafters know what they're doing, you know everyone will finish the draft, and the entire thing takes about five minutes. You'll also get some post-draft analysis, noting your strengths, weaknesses, etc., and you'll get different results every time you mock, meaning you'll get to explore nearly every draft-day scenario.

This is not a part of the second commandment. Merely a public service announcement.

### 3. Thou shalt know thy league settings and roster positions

Seems simple, right? Any fantasy football player worth his salt knows that one's strategy can vary greatly depending on whether the league is PPR, has a superflex, or awards points for first downs. And yet probably everyone reading this has that person in their long-standing league who still shows up to the draft room and writes in the chat, "How many wide receivers do we start again?"

Truthfully, the mistake of not knowing your league settings happens to the best of them, as it's not always easy to keep things straight when you play in 10 or more leagues. But put a reminder in your phone on the day before every draft to take five minutes and go to the scoring settings tab in your league page. It's an easy way to avoid that awful feeling midway through your draft when you think you're crushing it only to realize you've got the scoring settings wrong.

### 4. Thou shalt honor thy running backs and wide receivers

It can be incredibly nerve-wracking to watch other managers draft backup quarterbacks and tight ends when you haven't yet filled your starting spot at those positions. Of course, there comes a point where you reach the end of a tier, even your third or fourth tier, when it's the right time to make a move.

But good teams are built on running back and wide receiver depth. And really, that's all you care about. So help me, if I see a backup kicker on your team...well, there's pretty much nothing I can do about it.

But seriously, don't panic if you're the last one to draft a player at any other position. Hit your running back and wide receiver depth, and hit it hard.

#### 5. Thou shalt trash talk appropriately

There's nothing wrong with a little good old-fashioned trash talk, particularly if it's good-natured. But there's a right way and a wrong way to do it.

Lobbing personal attacks, bringing up results from six seasons ago, or discussing an opponent's real-life favorite football team should all be off limits. It's just a game, guys, so let's keep it civil. In fact, your best trash talk is to not talk down to your opponent at all, and simply have a little fun with it.

My preferred method? The fake press conference is always my go-to. I've drafted hundreds of fantasy articles at this point, but, in my opinion, the best thing I've ever written was a press conference before my championship match debating whether or not I would start Joe Webb at wide receiver in a Yahoo! league when there were rumors that he would start at quarterback for the Vikings that week.

I have it framed in my office. It would be the first thing I would save in a fire, even though it's still probably available in the Yahoo! archives.

I also enjoy benching your players until just before game time not to allow your opponent to prepare his or her fantasy defense. Mind games like this are critical to getting in your opponent's head. However you do it, just have fun with it and keep it light. Friendships have ended over less than fantasy football smack talk gone wrong.

#### 6. Remember thy waiver wire day, and keep it holy

We all put enormous energy into our draft preparation, but in-season management is just as important. And that's why your waiver wire day, whether it be Tuesday, Wednesday, or whenever, is sacred.

Always, without fail, do your research leading up to that day, use your waiver position or budget effectively, and keep your team as strong as possible. No matter how many leagues you're in, never, for even one week, forget to put in your claims. The little moves you make could be the difference between attaining a championship or not.

And never, ever abuse the waiver wire. Your opponent's tight end is on a bye, and you want to pick up the best one out there to block him? Totally fine.

You want to pick up every available tight end and then immediately drop them so that they're all on waivers and your opponent can't pick up anyone? That's just not cricket.

#### 7. Thou shalt play out thy entire season

There's nothing worse than when your fantasy football team gets off to an awful start and your season is done by Week 7. What once looked like a promising roster turned out to be the worst team in the league, either due to injury, bad luck, or just plain poor drafting.

Scratch that – there is something worse. And that's when you're in a desperate race for the playoffs with another owner, and you realize his or her opponent is starting two players on a bye and one on injured reserve.

Yes, it stinks to have nothing to play for. But you owe it to your league – nay, society as a whole – to play out your entire season and give it your all. The fantasy gods look kindly on those who respect the game.

#### 8. Thou shalt not be afraid to use thy waiver priority

That first waiver claim is a thing of beauty. You can have any player you want at any time. The world is your oyster.

The problem is that most fantasy owners are so reluctant to use their top priority that they just sit on it for weeks. It's like when Frank Costanza gets the good parking spot in front of his house. "Once he gets it, he doesn't go out for weeks [Goal of working a Seinfeld reference into every article remains alive]."

In the meantime, these owners allow holes to fill their rosters and are simply unable to fill them. By the time a player they deem worthy of the top spot comes along, their team has often fallen out of the playoff race.

Yes, it would be nice to have the top waiver spot when that critical running back injury comes. But, for the most part, it's overrated, and your team is much better served when you feel free to pick up players whenever your team needs to plug holes.

#### 9. Thou shalt never lose a matchup intentionally

Remember that talk about those fantasy gods looking kindly on you for playing out a season to the end? Well, they can also be a vengeful lot, too. And there is nothing they hate more than when fantasy owners lose matchups intentionally.

Sure, there are times when it can be a sound strategy to lose a matchup. If it's the opening week, your waiver wire grants priority to the worst team, and there is suddenly a fantastic option available, it's understandable that you might bench some players to finish with the lowest point total of the week. Or you might look to give yourself what you perceive as a better first-round playoff matchup by losing in your final week and getting the second seed instead of the first.

No, do not do this. Do not do any of this. Above all, you must play our beloved game with integrity and honor. Play every game to win (within reason, of course), and your fantasy karma will improve.

#### 10. Thou shalt not overreact to any single performance

It happens every year. Some running back or wide receiver has a monstrous game in one of the first few weeks and owners blow the bulk of their FAAB on him. With rare exception, owners get a serviceable but unspectacular performer for a week or two and little else. And worst of all, when you spend so much FAAB on a player, you feel compelled to keep him in your lineup for far longer than he is useful, further damaging your prospects.

Certainly, early season performances can be indicative of a breakout. Phillip Lindsay, for example, was outstanding all year, and owners who picked him up after his early success benefited greatly. But for the most part, avoiding going crazy over one or two performances is a much wiser strategy than making a big move based on a single game.

On the other side of the coin, you also don't want to overreact negatively to any performance. The number of spite drops you'll see in a season is remarkable.

It's a long season. Ride it out. Actually, "no spite drops" probably deserved its own commandment. I'll talk to the fantasy gods about it.

## Should you Handcuff Running Backs?

By Zachary Hanshaw

Running backs are often the most productive fantasy assets on a team. Selecting a top-tier talent at the position then is a virtual no-brainer. What about selecting that top-tier back's backup? The method of "handcuffing" is a universally recognized and employed practice, but the effectiveness of it does carry some debate. Today, I'm going to discuss the strategy of handcuffing and whether or not is a sound fantasy football practice.

### The Method

Handcuffing involves using a draft pick or waiver wire claim to select the backup of one of your starting RBs. This is done almost entirely for insurance purposes as handcuffs rarely carry standalone value in their limited roles. If a star running back misses time due to injury or suspension, having the backup on your roster means that you can move seamlessly to another starting RB who will take his place. This is definitely done on a player-by-player basis. Consider these criteria when deciding if a running back should be handcuffed:

- Injury history of incumbent – Does the starter have an injury history that makes you think he will reasonably miss time during the season? If so, handcuffing is a smart move.
- Looming suspension – Does the back you want to handcuff have any pending legal issues? If so, grabbing the handcuff makes sense.
- Opportunity – Some teams don't have a clear contingency plan behind their starting back. Instead, those teams may choose to employ an RBBC if the star goes down or just not have a clear-cut number two option. Those situations should be avoided. You should target backs with a clear path to the starting gig should the starter miss time.
- Skill set – Opportunity is important, but it's not everything. Talent is valuable when deciding which players to draft, especially when selecting backups. Don't handcuff a stud with a mediocre backup regardless of how much work he'll get if made the starter. You'll never feel comfortable playing him anyway.
- Shaky role of starter – Some starters have a very short leash and in those situations, it's a great idea to roster the backup in case the leash is yanked.

## Citing Precedent

We've been over the method, but is it an effective one? There are numerous examples of handcuffs who became league-winners. Handcuffing Le'Veon Bell with his backup James Conner in 2018 proved to be a lucrative move, as Conner totaled 1,470 total yards and 13 total TDs on the way to an RB1 finish. Alvin Kamara finished as an RB1 in 2017 behind 1,554 scrimmage yards and 13 total TDs. Those were draft or early-season moves, but adding a handcuff for the playoffs can be highly rewarding too.

Elijah McGuire was the RB10 in half-PPR scoring in Weeks 14-16 of 2018, and Jaylen Samuels was the RB12. Both were elevated to handcuff status in-season, and both were highly useful for fantasy owners. The same is true in the fantasy playoffs for Giovani Bernard (RB7) in 2017 and Bilal Powell (RB4) in 2016. There are countless examples of handcuffs who have helped to lead fantasy managers to a championship.

## Draft and In-Season

Handcuffs are often available in the later rounds of fantasy drafts. Instead of using those picks for unnecessary bench depth and players you may not ever play, why not select a handcuff? The best handcuffs could be potential lottery tickets, and the final few picks of a draft should be spent on players with the highest upside. Most players you select at the end of drafts will sit on your bench for a few weeks before getting dropped, so why not snag a strong handcuff who could win your league if given the chance?

Handcuffing isn't just limited to fantasy drafts, nor should it be. Handcuffing is a fluid process that should be considered each and every week. The value of a handcuff is much less in Week 1 than it is in Week 13. In Week 1, the football season is just beginning and no true rankings or values have shaken out. By Week 13, fantasy managers should have a clear perspective on the value and expected production from most players.

Handcuffs are far more valuable here because of the proximity to the fantasy playoffs. The fantasy playoffs typically run from Weeks 14-16 and are do-or-die. The best handcuffs grow in value as the season goes on because the chance of the starter getting injured grows and the production of those handcuffs matters far more in the fantasy playoffs than it does in the regular season.

Handcuffs themselves can change as the season progresses. Consider Adrian Peterson's departure from the Saints early into the 2017 season. Alvin Kamara was third on the depth chart before AP left, but he became Mark Ingram's handcuff when the Saints' backfield was whittled down to just two after Week 3. He then went on to win the AP Offensive Rookie of the Year, and fantasy managers smart enough to roster him likely won their leagues. Kamara achieved an extreme amount of success as a rookie, but he was an afterthought in 12-team leagues until he became a primary handcuff. Pay attention to teams' in-season moves, including trades, cuts, and injuries down the depth chart, so that you can stay up-to-date on the most valuable handcuffs and the next potential league-winner.

### Conclusion

Handcuffing is a sound strategy to use if there is concern about a starter missing time or losing the starting job, and fantasy managers would be wise to invest a late-round pick when the situation calls for it. Don't spin your wheels on a backup who will never be a fantasy starter for your team, even if he ends up as the starter for his real-life team. Handcuffing, like any other aspect of fantasy football, doesn't end at the draft. Fantasy managers should be diligent in their preparation and keep track of handcuffs' values all season long, picking them up as needed and gaining an advantage over fellow managers. Rostering an RB handcuff is a sound strategy that can lead to elite production and be the tipping point between a good season and a championship season.

## What is the Zero Running Back Draft Strategy?

By Zachary Hanshew

There are many different strategies that fantasy managers can employ on draft day. One of the most well-known is the "Zero RB" strategy. This strategy gained traction and popularity some years back and has been analyzed and debated by the fantasy community ad nauseam since that time. What is this strategy and what are the risks and rewards of employing it on draft day?

What is it?

The Zero RB strategy is a draft strategy in which the manager does not select a running back until at least the sixth round of the draft. The manager instead selects primarily wide receivers in those rounds, sometimes selecting a tight end or quarterback if the selection makes sense. The logic behind this strategy is that RBs get injured far more often than any other position because of the vast amount of touches many of the top-tier players receive. Because of the injury risks associated with these players and the huge amount of draft capital you must invest to acquire one, these elite backs could bust and ruin your fantasy title hopes.

The Zero RB strategy is built on minimizing risk and capitalizing on elite pass-catchers early. Because RB is so often taken at a huge volume early in drafts (especially the first round), the strategy of drafting quality producers at other positions is a calculated move designed to pivot from the competition and thus gain an advantage.

Pros

If you subscribe to the idea that RBs are inherently more injury-prone than pass catchers, this makes complete sense. By taking an RB later in the draft, you minimize the risk of injury to one of your top players. The first several rounds of a fantasy draft carry a lot of weight in the future of the team, and it's important to minimize risk when making early picks.

The old saying goes, "you can't win your draft in the first round, but you can definitely lose it," can be applied here. Selecting an RB with a first- or second-round pick means investing huge draft capital into a player who may not play the entire season, so taking a WR with one of those early picks is



the much safer option. Running backs on average handle far more touches and take many more hits per season than pass catchers, meaning durability can be a concern.

You can look at passing on an RB early as minimizing the risk of a “bust” season as well. Running backs are usually selected more than any other position in the first round of a draft, meaning there are far more chances for a player to underachieve. Performance issues, head coaching changes, and a lack of surrounding offensive talent are all reasons why a top-tier RB may not live up to expectations. The more backs, the more risk — it’s as simple as that.

### Cons

In order to properly execute the “Zero RB” strategy, managers must be steadfast in only selecting pass catchers or signal callers in the first five rounds of the draft. That means that even if a star running back falls into your lap late in the early rounds, you can’t take him. Drafting with a “set-in-stone” strategy can make it difficult to win your draft. Drafts are fluid and never 100 percent predictable, meaning you need to be flexible in your approach. This strategy brings too much rigidity with it and may cause managers to miss on value.

The RB position has been a top-loaded position in fantasy football for many years. The top-tier studs and performers are usually six or a dozen guys who will tear it up and a bunch of mediocre options after that. At wideout, there is a wealth of talent throughout the draft, and the best of the best are not all loaded up at the top. In this way, fantasy managers may miss out on a top-five talent. In fact, in half-PPR scoring, the top-five overall non-QB players from 2016-2018 featured 14 RBs and just one WR.

When using this strategy, you have a lot less room for error than you would by simply drafting the best player available. By not taking an RB until Round 6 and beyond, you have to hit on almost all of your early pass-catching selections. You also have to hit on your late-round RBs because it’s much more difficult to find a fantasy starter at the position after Round 6 than it is to find one in the first two rounds. A lot of waiver wire work may be involved throughout the season as you look to upgrade at the RB position.

Should I Use this Strategy?

The Zero RB strategy works best in PPR formats because quality RB production can be had later in drafts due to points scored from receptions and receiving yards. It is much more difficult to employ the strategy in standard scoring formats, so try to avoid it unless your league awards points for receptions. Using the "Zero RB" strategy is essentially punting one position in order to upgrade at other positions, minimize risk, and go against the grain. If you are certain that you can find great RB value in the later rounds of drafts or you're worried about RB injuries, this may be the strategy for you.

Keep in mind the pros and cons of employing the Zero RB strategy, and complete some mock drafts using it so you understand how it could actually play out. After all, there's no better teacher than experience. Good luck on draft day, no matter what strategy you use!

## 5 Rule Changes to Improve Your League

By Raju Byfield

I began my fantasy sports career way back in 2003. The NFL was much different back then. I remember when the idea of a flex position was first introduced. The opposition was overwhelming, and rightfully so. In the early-to-mid 2000s, the idea that a team could roster three stud running backs would break the league.

In 2004, nine running backs carried the ball over 300 times. From 2013-2019, eight running backs carried the ball over 300 times in a single season. You may not even want to start three running backs now. Back then, with all the bell-cow backs that existed, the best strategy was to begin your draft with as many running backs as you were allowed to start. As the NFL changes, our fantasy leagues must change alongside it. Here are five rule changes your league should consider implementing in the upcoming season.

### Previous Changes

Before we get into the new changes, I would be remiss to ignore aspects of fantasy leagues that should be universal. When I say universal, I mean it literally. If your league does not do any of the following, you should absolutely leave that league. These are rules so fundamental to fantasy football that it is unacceptable to not have them.

### FAAB Waivers

No Week 17 Championships

Fractional Scoring

I have other “dealbreakers” for myself, but those are the big three.

### Rivalry Weeks

For scheduling purposes, 14-team leagues are the best because every team plays every other team once and then it is playoffs time. In 12-team leagues, leagues have had to tackle what to do with those extra two weeks in a standard 13-week regular season. You play every team once and then what? My leagues have experimented with two “rivalry week” ideas.

Position Week – Usually these would occur in Weeks 7 and 14. For those unfamiliar with the term, a position week is where matchups are determined based on the standings. First place versus second place, third place against

fourth place, etc. It doesn't solve the issue of playing two teams twice while playing every other team just once, but it removes the randomness of which two teams you play twice.

**Battle Royale Week** – One of my leagues experimented with this for the first time in 2018 and it was a huge success. In Weeks 1 and 13 (these are the best choices because there are no teams on bye), instead of having a head-to-head opponent, it's a straight-up battle royale. The top six scoring teams each week receive a win and the bottom six each receive a loss. Under this system, you play every team once and the two additional weeks you just need to finish with a top 50% point total. It's a ton of fun. The only caveat is it may require some ex post facto schedule manipulation by your commissioner.

### Two-Win System

Piggybacking on the battle royale week is the two-win system scoring format. Under the two-win system, a perfect season would be 26-0 as opposed to 13-0. Each week is both head-to-head and battle royale, with a win being awarded for defeating your head-to-head opponent and finishing with a point total in the top 50% of your league. For those of you who have endured the season where you feel like you run into a buzzsaw every week, this would alleviate at least half of your pain. If you're curious, go back and analyze some of your league's previous seasons as if you had used the two-win system. You might be quite surprised at how differently things would have turned out.

### Change Your Starting Roster Spots

This one harkens back to my introduction about how different the NFL was 15 years ago. Consider giving fantasy owners more flexibility. Instead of two starting RB slots, change one to a flex. With so few NFL teams employing a workhorse running back, requiring fantasy owners to start two is a bit outdated. Running back by committee has become the norm with some teams employing as many as three backs in a rotation.

Fantasy owners should be afforded the same options. Try a starting roster that looks like this: QB, RB, WR, WR, TE, WR/TE, WR/RB, flex. Fantasy owners can still start three running backs if they wish. They can also start just one and roll with five wide receivers.

The NFL is transitioning to become much more pass heavy. Starting five wide receivers may seem like a lot, but adding that extra starting roster spot rewards teams for finding those gem players later in drafts or on the waiver wire. There is certainly a point where too many starting roster spots drastically increases the luck factor. Only requiring one starting RB and adding one extra starting spot is not too much. Give it a try!

#### Award Final Playoff Spot to Highest Scoring Non-Playoff Team

This is another way to combat the bad luck fantasy owners can experience over a short 13-week season. Nothing is more frustrating in fantasy football than having a great team and watching your opponents just tee off on you every week. Assuming your league has six playoff spots, the teams finishing one through five are in as normal, but that sixth spot would go to the highest scoring team remaining.

That could mean the sixth place team by record gets the boot. So be it. The 5-8 team with 200 more points deserves it more.

#### Allow Injury Replacements

There is already so much luck in fantasy football. It's bad enough when your player gets hurt because you no longer have him. When a player gets hurt early in a game, it can cost you a matchup.

The logistics of implementing this on the primary fantasy host sites may be difficult, but first, decide if you like the idea. For quarterbacks, the solution is easy — if your starting QB goes down, you continue to accumulate points scored by his backup. This can also be solved by having "Team QB" instead of the individual player.

For other positions, it's a bit more complicated. The best solution I've come up with is having each team list their bench players in the order in which they would replace injured starters. If a starter gets hurt in the first half and does not return to the game at any point, the replacement automatically takes his spot (it has to be automatic, otherwise fantasy owners could exploit this if the injured player happened to have a monster first half). Obviously, fantasy owners would have the choice to decline setting injury replacements prior to kickoff should they so desire.

Always be open to new ideas. Don't be the guy that hates instant replay because "that's how things were back in my day." Never be that guy. The

longer fantasy football exists and the more popular it becomes, the better the community will get at improving the game and making it more enjoyable for everyone involved.

## How to Hold the Perfect Draft Party

By Raju Byfield

How does one hold the perfect draft party? While giving you a step-by-step guide may be a tad too subjective, there are indeed some things you want to consider when setting up your own draft party or parties. It is true that some prefer to draft in solitude so they can focus, but there are many others who welcome the idea of drafting with other league members.

It is not always possible to get all league members in one place for the draft, but it is a good idea to at least present the option to them. Draft parties do not have to be elaborate or expensive. In fact, you can run them on a 'bring your own' or potluck theme. If your league does decide that meeting up to draft sounds intriguing, consider the following when planning.

### Draft Software

The first thing you have to decide is whether or not you want to use any draft software. This includes drafting from traditional providers or doing it completely offline. Draft software is your friend and should be strongly considered. In the digital age, it is likely that much of your draft room will be relying on digital cheat sheets regardless of whether your draft is online or not.

Draft software makes life a lot easier, but there are a lot of competing options to sort through. Yahoo is great for redraft leagues, but consider options like MFL, Fleaflicker, or Sleeper for your dynasty leagues. Of course, draft software is a must if all league members can't attend the draft party.

### Live Draft Board

Even if you decide to do a completely offline draft, there are still live draft board services you can utilize. This will allow you and others in your draft room to visually see which players have been taken rather than being forced to keep track by yourselves. Live draft boards are an exciting way to spruce up your draft and make things feel more 21st century rather than doing things by hand.

### Refreshments and Food

Refreshments and food are a must at any draft party. The choice of what refreshments or food will be dictated by your draft room. If you play in a league full of heavy drinkers then alcohol is a must. Some leagues have hired a bartender, model, or other form of entertainer to serve the alcohol.

When it comes to food, knowledge of dietary restrictions is required, so consider polling your league before deciding on an option. You can use an online delivery service to ensure your food arrives at a specified time. You can also fire up the grill and have your leaguemates bring their favorite meats. However, if you are in a league with dominated by members who frequent the gym and enjoy eating healthy, perhaps some protein shakes, flavored BCAAs, protein cookies, and grilled chicken are more in order.

### Raffle

If your league is a money league, consider holding a small raffle for your draft party participants. A small \$5 or \$10 entry can result in an exciting prize for the raffle winner, or perhaps even cover their entry.

### Crowning of Previous Year's Champ

If you are holding a draft party for a returning league in its second year or further, crowning the previous year's champion is a must. It can be a small ceremony type of affair, or can simply be awarding the championship belt or trophy, and allowing the champion to say a few words. You should also take this time to single out, and perhaps take some light jabs at the owner who finished in last the previous season.

### Atmosphere

Ambiance is key for any party, and a draft party is no different. Consider setting up a playlist or two and bringing a Bluetooth speaker that others can connect to. A Bluetooth speaker can allow everyone to have some speaker time. Keeping the music low is recommended in most settings as your draft room will want to stay relatively focused on the task at hand. If you have televisions available consider playing a live sporting event or highlights from the previous season. Best runs or best catches are keywords you can start with if you are searching for YouTube.

### Location

Location, location, location. This is an adage in real estate, but is also important as it pertains to your draft party. Finding the perfect location is not an easy task, and ultimately comes down to the budget of your draft room. There are many options to choose from, so we will discuss some of them.

### Party Room

One popular location for those who live in bigger cities is to rent out the party room in the condo of one of the league members. They have a kitchen,



and often have televisions and stereos for use. They will run you a small fee plus a deposit, but are completely private.

### Lounges

Lounges are a popular place to hold drafts, especially if they are not on the weekends. Most of these lounges will welcome you with open arms provided you will be buying food and drinks. They are a good option for those on a tighter budget who do not want to deal with the hassle of hosting their own draft party. Lounges help avoid the responsibility of post-draft cleanup.

### Bars/Pubs

Pub and bars are another excellent option. As long as they have Wi-Fi and will allow you and your party to bring and plug in your laptops, drafting at a bar can be a very exciting affair. Similar to a lounge, most establishments will not turn away paying customers, but be cognizant that a pub or bar may be a little louder than your typical lounge.

### Draft Party Bars

There are now some pubs/bars that offer draft party packages. Some larger chains have even gotten in on the action, so be sure to search what is available in your area. Some even offer some free swag for your league. Fantasy football has exploded in popularity, and as such, local businesses are eager to tap into the market.

### Out of Town

This option, of course, depends on the budgets of those in your league. Perhaps an all-inclusive to the Caribbean or a trip to Las Vegas is too pricey for your league, but what about a location just outside of your city or town? Chalets and cottages have become popular options over recent years, but can require a significant budget if one of your league members does not have access to one. Consider the options within an hour or two driving distance as well as the ones out of the state or country and poll your league.

### Contests to Determine First Pick

Consider holding some sort of contest to determine who gets first pick in the draft. You can use contests to establish the entire draft order, but this requires devising a fair contest that everyone has a chance to win. Luck based contests are best, as skill-based contests can favor one or more drafters more than others. Be creative.