2018 B.E.S.T. Fantasy Football Draft Guide

By: Nick Guarisco

Round 1 (Picks 1-12):

Who should you take with the first overall pick? Nearly every fantasy expert out there will give cop out response on who to take first like, "You can't go wrong with Bell or Gurley!"

But the truth is you CAN GO WRONG. And you aren't reading this Draft Guide to get in line and follow the order of consensus rankings and experts' groupthink. You're reading this to get an edge.

You're reading this Draft Guide because you want to be a wolf – not a sheep – in your draft this season.

So let's take it from the top and open with my first "controversial" fantasy take of the season:

Ezekiel Elliot (ESPN: 4, NICK: 1) – Zeke is my #1 overall player and should be top pick in drafts this season. Last year, legal issues distracted Zeke mentally (weekly flights to and from Court in New York, never knowing whether he would actually suit up for games) and physically (not being able to practice / work out with team prevented him from shedding weight gained in offseason due to stress from lawsuit). Dallas offense imploded when he was suspended, speaking to importance. Tyron Smith's injuries played a role in his on-field efficiency, too. STILL a Top-10 RB last year despite the above and missing 6 games. Centerpiece of Dallas offense who knows bread is buttered by dominant O-Line and feeding Zeke. Expect more work in receiving game sans Bryant and Witten. Volume could near or exceed 400 touches. Expecting monster season from Elliot.

Consensus top picks Le'Veon Bell and Todd Gurley should be great again if they stay healthy, but regression factors to consider: **Todd Gurley** NEVER appeared on the injury report once last season – unlikely to sustain perfect health again. Likewise, Rams O-Line starters made 80/80 possible starts last season. Not one starting O-Lineman missed a single game, a rare feat and guarantee to not be repeated… **Le'Veon Bell** touched the ball 405 times in 12 games in 2016 and 431 times in 16 games last season. That means he's had a whopping 846 touches in the last 2 years. Steelers will run him into the ground during his contract year this season knowing he won't be retained in 2019. Be weary though: players who hold out into and through training camp have historically been far more likely to miss regular season games due to injury. Bell isn't exactly a pinnacle of health.

With an ADP of 4.3 overall on ESPN, I'm rolling with Elliot if I'm gifted a Top-4 Pick in drafts.

After Zeke, Picks 3-5:

David Johnson (ESPN: 3, NICK: 2) - The fantasy community seems too quick to forget and too willing to excuse the fact that David Johnson was the RB1 two seasons ago. Scored 20 touchdowns in 2016 and 35 PPR points more than last year's RB1 Todd Gurley. Plays for a sub-500 team, which I hate for early round running backs, but such a weapon in the receiving game that a negative game script won't affect his bottom line. Cardinals were decimated along the offensive line last season; no O-Line missed more starts than Arizona. Unit upgraded with signing RG Justin Pugh. Johnson has an excellent work ethic and seems extra motivated this season in a contract year. He's the bell-cow and pretty much the entire focal point of his offense (and team). Perhaps most importantly, the broken wrist that caused him to miss 15 games last season means he's got fresh legs… something Bell and Gurley can't say.

Antonio Brown (ESPN: 5, NICK: 4-6) – Four years in a row: AB has finished as WR1. And five years ago, he was WR2. Some stats are extremely difficult to argue. Deserving of a Top-5 pick in any PPR format. Slight concern over OC change (Todd Haley out), and emergence of JuJu Smith-Shuster. But production in AB's final five healthy games including playoffs (excluding Weeks 15-17 because of calf injury) in PPR formats was unbelievable:
Week 11 – 10-144-3 (42.4 pts);

Week 12 – 10-169-2 (40.9 pts);
Week 13 – 8-101-1 (24.1 pts);
Week 14 – 11-213-0 (32.3 pts);
Week 18 – 7-132-2 (32.2 pts).
Especially in PPR formats, I'm thrilled with AB in the middle of Round 1.

Picking Outside the Top 5:

Leonard Fournette (ESPN: 14, NICK: 4-7) – Opened the season scoring a TD in each of his first 6 games. Had three 100+ yard rushing games in that span, averaging 4.5 YPC, and scoring 21.7 PPR points per game. Then, LF became limited with ankle injuries, the same chronic ankle issues he had at LSU. Only averaged 3.3 YPC over his final 200 totes, scoring 14.2 PPR points per game. Has lost weight this offseason, looking leaner and faster (down to 223 lbs. after playing at 235 lbs. last season), to avoid recurring ankle woes. Had a tough schedule: 9 of the 13 teams LF faced last season finished in the top 12 of rush defense DVOA. He played 5 games against teams that finished in the top-7. Per Mike Clay, Fournette faced an average box of 7.1 defenders (90th percentile), which drove his "expected" YPC down to 3.85. The Jaguars upgraded O-Line, signing LG Andrew Norwell, one of the best run blockers in the NFL. Fournette was a high investment who plays on an extremely run-committed team with great defense, has a QB that the coaches don't trust in the red zone, and Coach Marrone said he wants to get Fournette more involved in the passing game. Jacksonville has one the softest run defense schedules in the NFL. Fournette is a virtual lock for 320+ touches if he stays healthy. Every first round RB will come with injury risk based on nature of position and volume of touches. We must acknowledge Fournette's ankle issues make him MORE of a risk, but he also has RB1, rushing title upside if ankle doesn't act up. So many things going for him. ADP is 13, and you can typically get him anywhere in Round 1. Fournette is a Top-5 player overall on My Board.

Alvin Kamara (ESPN: 7, NICK: 5-7) – Strengths are obvious: dynamic playmaker in Sean Payton's creative offense that can get him into space, Drew Brees is his QB, positive game scripts because the Saints are expected to be good. Very elusive - Broke a tackle once every 3.5 touches, the best in the NFL. Negatives are just as clear: scoring efficiency was otherworldly in 2017 but due for possibly substantial regression. Kamara won't catch defenses off guard, plays a much tougher schedule. Increased volume (Ingram suspended first 4 games, and Kamara saw more touches as season went on) can compensate somewhat for inevitably drastic drop in efficiency. However, durability with increased volume is an issue. Kamara has never had more than 12 carries or 19 touches from scrimmage in any game last season. 18 carries was his high at Tennessee. His range of outcomes includes being this year's biggest first round bust (small sample size, less efficiency without volume of other first rounders spells trouble, Ingram could steal TDs, maybe he can't stay healthy as "the guy") to the MVP of fantasy football as the star of the Saints' potent offense. Could be the third RB ever to record 1,000+ rushing AND receiving yards. Could catch 100 passes.

*Often times in Fantasy Football you're presented with all the information and you STILL can't make a confident decision. To me, **Leonard Fournette vs. Alvin Kamara is our first "Go With Your Gut" moment in the Draft Guide.** The vast majority of readers are probably thinking: "Oh, I'm going Kamara no question." But I really do have them dead even, and the best answer could depend on what type of league you're in (PPR = Kamara, Non-PPR = Fournette).*

Melvin Gordon (ESPN: 15, NICK: 7-12) – Not as talented as other first and second round picks, but in great situation as Chargers' lead back. Los Angeles upgraded O-Line, adding C Maurkice Pouncey and RG Forrest Lamp, who may be average starters but still a huge improvement over what LAC was trotting out last season. Loss of TE Hunter Henry means Gordon should be utilized more in passing game. Plays on good team with good QB. Proven production (two straight Top-6 RB finishes) despite inefficiency from a per-carry standpoint. This is an extraordinarily deep fantasy draft class in the first two rounds. Gordon would be a surefire first round pick if any other year.

Round 2 (Picks 13-24):

My philosophy in Rounds 1-2 is to play for safety, not upside. Every player comes with injury risks, but if all things are equal and full health is assumed, I want to target the players with the highest floors, and lowest chances of busting for non-injury related reasons. Some tips for lowering bust rates: avoiding players on new teams, avoiding players coming off knee surgeries, targeting proven talent, WRs and TEs with GOOD quarterbacks, RBs on winning teams, duel threat RBs who catch passes too, and players who are unquestionably red zone threats (not RBs who are pulled on the goal line, not small WRs who don't score TDs). These guidelines eliminate a lot more players than you'd think. Essentially, I want to BE CONFIDENT that my first two draft picks will NOT flop unless they sustain some unfortunate injury. Safety first, upside later. I want to solidify my team's foundation (floor) before I build its walls and ceilings.

Rob Gronkowski (ESPN: 21, NICK: 9-15) – Extremely undervalued this year by mainstream rankings and ADP alike. Can create massive advantage if Gronk laps the field at TE. Entire position is extremely thin and filled with question marks. Quick glance at the shallow field: Kelce has new QB, Ertz peaked statistically and due for regression, Engram has to compete with Beckham and Barkley this year, Olsen is old, coming off injury, and now competing with Moore, McCaffrey, and Funchess, Walker nicked up with toe injury, Hunter Henry tore ACL, Rudolph has new QB, competing with Diggs/Thielen… it's rough out there for TEs. But with all the injuries at RB for New England (Michel/Burkhead), and Julian Edelman's suspension weeks 1-4, Gronk could get even more red zone usage. Things are shaping up for Gronk to have a monster year, and the advantage he gives you over the field at TE could be substantial.

Gronk's Statlines in Final 7 Games: 5-82-2, 9-147-0, 9-168-0, 5-67-0, 6-81-1, 1-21-0*****, 9-116-2. The ***** game was when he got concussed and had to exit the game prior to halftime. These figures are provided here to remind you that that Gronk could produce similar numbers to many of

the receivers being drafted in Round 2. So why not get the valuable leg up at a FAR more scarce position? Drafting a TE that high is a tough pill to swallow, but he's one of the surest bets in fantasy for outstanding production barring injury, and you'll be surprised how many trade offers you get for Gronk once your fellow league members realize they are screwed at TE. Gronk is a Top-10 overall player on my board, #9 to be exact, and a potential league winner, so I'm not shy about selecting him in Round 2.

If you aren't feeling Gronk, and you want to take a more traditional route, these are the three WRs I like in Round 2:

Christian McCaffrey (ESPN: 18, NICK: 15-25) – Not efficient as a rusher as a rookie, and the Panthers lost OG Andrew Norwell, but McCaffrey is dirty in the receiving game, and his touch count could nearly be doubled in 2018 (coaches and beat writers agree with this sentiment). Over his last 10 full seasons as HC or OC, Norv Turner's offenses have targeted RBs on 25.7% of attempts, NFL average is 21%. Third easiest run defense schedule this year. If preseason is any indication, C.J. Anderson not as big of a threat as initially perceived. Panthers O-Line sans RT Daryl Williams (knee) is a bottom five unit, but again, CMC will be looked at in receiving game as quick outlet.

Keenan Allen (ESPN: 13, NICK: Rd. 2) –
Allen's First 9 Games: 25.3% Team Target Rate, 4.8 catches, 66.2 REYD/G, 1 TD (WR26)
Allen's Final 7 Games: 30.7% Team Target Rate, 8.3 catches, 113.9 REYD/G, 5 TDs. (WR1).
Players almost ALWAYS start slow in the year following ACL surgery. Allen was no different. But once he regained explosiveness at midseason, he was unstoppable – fantasy football's best WR in the second half of the season.

Michael Thomas (ESPN: 16, NICK: Rd. 2) – Brees' go-to guy. Positive TD regression coming after only scoring 5 times last season. Finished strong: in 7 games throughout December and in Playoffs: 69/49-656-5 (93.7 YPG). This extrapolates to 157/112-1,499-11.4 over a full season. For reference, last season's WR2 DeAndre Hopkins went 96-1,378-13.

Davante Adams (ESPN: 20, NICK: Rd. 2) - Adams scored 10 TDs and was on a 1,000+ REYD pace despite only playing 7/14 games with Rodgers. Had a 119 or better QB rating when targeted by both Rodgers and Hundley. Rodgers said he's going to be looked at as more of the "go-to guy." Adams has improved each season he's been in the league and plays with the game's best QB. There's not much behind him. Uncertainty at RB, TE Graham is on his last legs and likely won't make a huge impact outside of the red zone, and WR Cobb has been inconsistent and battling nagging injuries for years. Adams' ceiling includes pacing the NFL in receiving TDs.

A.J. Green (ESPN: 17, NICK: 15-25) – Despite nightmarish season in 2017, Green still finished Top 10 in PPG for the 5th straight year. Has one of the easiest opposing CB slates in the NFL, not seeing a single top-tier CB until Week 10 vs. Lattimore. Won't be double teamed as much with Tyler Eifert and John Ross (4.22 '40) commanding coverage. Bengals improved O-Line

should allow more time for Dalton to throw, and improved running game will keep Green on the field longer (the Bengals ranked dead last in snaps). Green had 2 long TDs called back by penalties away from the play in 2017.

Round 3 (Picks 25-36):

Round 3 is very tricky if I'm being true to my board. Now that Guice is OUT (huge blow to my Draft Board), there's simply no one I love once Mixon is taken. Once Mixon is gone, I've been going BPA (best player available) in this round, and often times it's a receiver. I'm OK with Rodgers here too.

Joe Mixon (ESPN: 26, NICK: 18-25) – Averaged 5.02 YPC over his final 4 games (up from 2.91 YPC before that). Flashed talent and should more be more consistent behind retooled O-Line that ranked 28th per PFF grading. Significant upgrades on O-Line in terms of talent AND coaching. Added LT Cordy Glenn and C Billy Price to replace Cedric Ogbuehi and Russell Bodine, both of whom were awful. Added O-Line guru, Coach Frank Pollack, who served as primary O-Line coach for the Dallas Cowboys elite O-Line since 2013. Team has talked Mixon up as a bell cow. Mixon played at up to 238 pounds last year and has slimmed down this offseason to his college playing weight of 220. Mixon is projected to face the easiest RB schedule in the NFL. The Bengals ran a league-low 57.9 plays per game. Now Tyler Eifert and speedster John Ross will help open up the running game. Also, Joe Mixon is a very gifted athlete and really good at football. Mixon is my favorite third round pick this season.

~~**Derrius Guice (ESPN: 44, NICK: Rd. 3)**~~ **–** RIP my go-to 3rd Round Pick ☹.

Stefon Diggs (30, NICK: Rd. 3) – Excellent entrance to 2017 season: 7-93-2 (27.7 pts), 2-27-0 (5.1 pts), 8-173-2 (37.3), 5-98-0 (14.8 pts) in his first four games before he began dealing with debilitating Week 5 groin injury. Diggs was never the same after that and has had groin issues in prior seasons. In a contract year, Diggs is the real deal from a talent perspective and can the steal of Round 3 is groin acts right.

T.Y. Hilton (ESPN: 28, NICK: Rd. 3) – Hilton led the NFL in receiving yards two years ago, the last season he played with Luck. Hilton has excelled in the offseason, cutting fast food out of his diet and all that jazz. By all accounts, he appears focused and wants a bounce back season, with Luck now healthy. The main reason for the Hilton appeal, however, is the lack of competition for targets. Hilton is a near lock for at least 8 targets a game in an offense that lacks a decent WR2 or WR3. Furthermore, the team has no running game whatsoever, a terrible defense, and is projected to be trailing often (Vegas Over/Under is 6 wins). These factors take a lot of the risk out of Luck underwhelming in his return. In other words, even if Luck sucks, Hilton projects as a garbage time hero.

Aaron Rodgers (ESPN: QB1, NICK: Rds. 3-4) – Has finished as Top-2 QB in the last 5/6 seasons he played at least 15 games. 40 TDs in his last 16 games. QB is deep as ever, but the third round is weak in my opinion. Experts will advise against QB this early, but there's value to selecting a player who is sure bet to be a HIT in your draft (assuming health), and not a MISS. In the end, it comes down to hits and misses. Ultimately, draft success is about WHO you select, not WHEN. I don't mind considering Rodgers in Round 3.

Rounds 4-5 (Picks 37-60):

I've been hitting RB hard in Rounds 4-8 because the position kind of dies after then. There are several mid-round RBs who I like. All are ranked pretty evenly, so truly go with whom you feel. Preferably, I'm looking to grab 2 of the following:

Derrick Henry (ESPN: 49, NICK: 35-45) – Henry has untapped upside in a new offense run by Matt LaFleur, who oversaw Sean McVay's genius overhaul with the Rams that made Todd Gurley last season's fantasy MVP. Expect Henry to be used on screens more often, and he should be the team's goal line back despite the addition of Dion Lewis. Lewis and Henry will likely open the season splitting carries nearly evenly, but my money is on Henry to be the better back and earn more touches as the season wears on. The Titans have a good O-Line and a mobile QB in Marcus Mariota who can help open up lanes in the running game. Henry can be a league winner if Dion Lewis were to go down. Tennessee has the softest schedule against the run in 2018.

Alex Collins (ESPN: 48, NICK: 35-45) – There are quite a few analytical reasons to invest in Collins this season. In Alex Collins' final 12 games in 2017, he was the RB17, handled 17.5 touches per game, handled 54% of the Ravens' carries (12th highest rate), averaged 2.8 yards after contact (12th best), and ranked 18th of 53 in missed tackles forced. Collins faced the 8th toughest slate of run defenses behind one of the NFL's most injured offensive lines, had Joe Flacco at QB, but Collins nevertheless produced a success rate ranking 4th best of 32 RBs with 150 carries, trailing only Gurley, Zeke, and Dion Lewis, per Warren Sharp. As a team, the Ravens have finished inside the top 12 in cumulative PPR points for 4 straight seasons. Collins led all RBs with at least 70 carries in PFF rushing grade in 2017. Collins will likely concede passing down work to Buck Allen, but Greg Roman is one of the most respected run-game designers in the NFL. OG Marshal Yanda returns, which is huge. Collins isn't a household name, but I think he's one of the safest picks in fantasy football this year. His role is secure, he's a talented runner, and the goal line back for the Ravens, a conservative team. Flacco's extra motivation received from the Ravens drafting Lamar Jackson only helps Collins' outlook. I'd be surprised if he doesn't finish as a quality RB2 this year.

Marshawn Lynch (ESPN: 51, NICK: 35-45) –
Lynch started slowly last year because he was out of shape coming off a year and a half of retirement. Lynch worked his way into shape and back into the flow of games in the second

half of the season. He quietly ranked as a Top-12 RB in the final 8 games, including at least 19 touches in 5 of his final 6 games. His yards after contact still ranked 5th in the NFL last season. He plays for a team with an old school coach that has a below average QB but a top-3 O-Line and he's being drafted in the 5th round. Keep an eye out on Doug Martin siphoning some carries, as the Raiders want to keep Lynch fresh, but I think Lynch is going to pick up 2018 where he left off in 2017, which is better than most realize.

Lamar Miller (ESPN: 60, NICK: 40-50) –
I like running backs who are unquestioned starters.
I like running backs who get receiving work and goal line carries.
I like running backs who play for winning teams.
I like running backs who lose weight in the offseason because they were playing too heavy. I like running backs who play with good, mobile quarterbacks.
I like running backs who are discounted because they are coming off bad seasons.
I like Miller Time.
Miller's numbers during the small 6-game sample size of when Deshaun Watson played prorated to 16 games would have made Miller RB12. I'm not worried about Miller's job security like others. D'Onta Foreman returning from Achilles tear in full form in less than a year is highly unlikely historically. And the Texans knew the injury was serious and Foreman was unlikely to be ready for the season and still did not address running back in the offseason. This could be the year everything comes together for Miller, who has been a huge disappointment so far in Houston. He's one of my primary targets as my third or fourth RB.

Jay Ajayi (ESPN: 50, NICK: 40-50) - The Eagles run-blocking graded fourth-highest last year, without Jason Peters for much of the season. Peters will be back, and even at 35 years old was our second-highest-graded offensive lineman through six weeks, before suffering a Week 7 knee injury. Ajayi benefitted, averaging 2.2 yards before initial contact once he became an Eagle (sixth-best of 73 running backs), versus 0.6 yards before contact with the Dolphins (71st of 73 backs). Ajayi is a free agent after the season, and especially with his recent hiring of Drew Rosenhaus, it's not crazy to expect the Eagles will run him into the ground before bidding him adieu. Ajayi's touch totals after he got traded to the Eagles: [8, 8, 8, 6, 12, 16, 14, 16, 18, 21, 9]. Clearly trending upward. Now he has a full offseason to get integrated into the system. We can't expect Ajayi to be involved in the passing game with Darren Sproles and Corey Clement there, but if he's the leader in the Eagles' RBBC, he has double digit TD potential.

Royce Freeman (ESPN: 45, NICK: 40-50) – Gary Kubiak's offenses have produced plenty of successful fantasy football RBs over time. Freeman was selected in the third round after a successful career as the bell cow at Oregon. He's not a special talent by my view, but he rarely makes mistakes, and you don't need special to thrive in Kubiak's zone-blocking system (a very specific vision and one cut style is needed, however). I don't think Freeman will get passing down work in Denver over Devontae Booker, but Freeman is a capable receiver, and as a bigger back, he should secure goal line carries. He could get off to a hot start with an

easy schedule to open the season. Ultimately, I think he'll be Denver's lead RB and his ADP is spot on.

If I feel comfortable at running back (have at least 3 RBs), I'll consider adding these WRs if they slide:

Amari Cooper (ESPN: 40, NICK: 40-50) – I liked the way Matthew Berry summed it up in his 100 Facts column: Under Jon Gruden from 2005 to 2007, Joey Galloway accounted for 34.5 percent of Tampa Bay's receiving yards (third-highest rate in the NFL in that time frame). In 2008, under Jon Gruden, Antonio Bryant accounted for 32.9 percent of Tampa Bay's receiving yards (eighth-highest rate that year). In Amari Cooper's 13 career games with 10-plus targets, he has averaged 21.8 PPG. In Amari Cooper's 22 career games with eight-plus targets, he has averaged 18.0 PPG... Basically Gruden has a history with feeding his #1 WR heavily back in his coaching days. Now, he's vowed Cooper will be the main vein in the passing game. Cooper has always had talent, but he's battled (played through) nagging injuries throughout his career, limiting his production and consistency. This could be the year it all comes together for him. And his ADP is down after a disappointing season.

Josh Gordon (ESPN: 39, NICK: 40-50) – I may be partial because I drafted him on every fantasy league I played in 2014, the year he wrecked the league en route to a WR2. But I'm drinking the Kool Aid upon his long-awaited return. Gordon is a supremely gifted athlete and has incredible potential at WR. I like the fit with Tyrod Taylor, I like that he's in a contract year, and I like that Browns will be trailing often. He has the type of upside I encourage in the middle rounds of your draft. I don't think a replication of his 2014 is in the cards, but being a Top-10 WR is certainly within the realm of possibility... as is failing another drug test and getting suspended for the entire season. Still, people don't trust Gordon, and it causes him to slide to the 50s in many drafts. I'm willing to scoop him up and assume the risk there after my RBs are solidified.

Rounds 6-7 (Picks 61-84):

From this point, forward, I'm all about grabbing players with high ceilings. I'm generally playing for upside now, not safety. Your draft is made up of HITS and MISSES. Your hits are what matters the most. Your misses don't matter near as much. If they bust, I can cut them and replace them with someone in free agency. So once you get your base, you can start swinging for the fences.

Emmanuel Sanders (ESPN: 57, NICK: 50-65) – Sanders will be highly motivated this year, essentially entering a contract year. Sanders stayed in DEN this summer "to have a laser-sharp focus" heading into the season. Last season was a wash as he battled nagging injuries and miserable QB play (Siemien + Osweiler). Many beat writers have been impressed with

his movement and newfound chemistry with New QB this summer. Did I mention he gets a massive upgrade at quarterback? Case Keenum seemed to hone in on Thielen and Diggs when they were lined up in the slot last year, and Sanders is the Broncos' slot WR.

Marquise Goodwin (ESPN: 71, NICK: 60-75) – Strong finisher, Top-10 WR in 5 games played with Jimmy Garoppolo at QB:
Week 13 – 8-99-0 (17.9 pts)
Week 14 – 6-106-0 (16.6 pts)
Week 15 – 10-114-0 (22.4 pts)
Week 16 – 3-37-0 (6.7 pts)* vs. JAX, the best corners in the NFL
Week 17 – 2-28-1 (11.8 pts)* Left in second quarter with concussion.
Has an alarming 6 documented concussions, so there's inherent risk. Should be Jimmy G's favorite target, which is valuable in a Kyle Shanahan offense. Shanahan can scheme Goodwin open. Won't be a red zone threat, but his speed and big play ability can win you weeks. Little competition for targets, which is huge.

Delanie Walker (ESPN: TE5, NICK: TE4, 50-70) – Positive TD regression coming after only 2 RETDs last season. New OC Matt LaFleur will be better play-caller and schemer than previous, dull offense. Walker always consistently battling minor injuries (already has toe issue worth keeping a close eye on), but annually reliable. Expecting somewhat of a breakout year in the new offense. One of the league's most underrated players and tends to slide on draft day. My go-to TE if I miss out on Gronk.

Cam Newton (ESPN: QB3, NICK: QB3, 50-70) – A top-5 QB option for 3/4 past seasons, including a quiet QB2 finish last season despite horrendous weapons and not being fully recovered from a shoulder surgery he had last offseason (it's debatable whether his throwing shoulder was ever right last season, but he played through it and maintained big numbers). Offensive line is a huge concern, but Cam has the best skill position supporting cast in his career. Christian McCaffrey has a year under his belt and is primed for a better season. TE Greg Olsen and SWR Curtis Samuel return from injury-plagued seasons. WRs D.J. Moore and Torrey Smith join Devin Funchess. Carolina also faces an easy passing schedule that features plenty of potential shootouts.

Drew Brees (ESPN: QB11, NICK: QB4, 50-70) – One of the biggest values in fantasy football, Brees is ranked stunning low, as QB11 on ESPN. Brees had a down year from a fantasy perspective in 2017, he averaged 33.5 attempts per game – his fewest ever as a Saint – on an 11-5 team that protected leads and dramatically slowed its pace, running 105 fewer offensive plays than the year prior, which equates to nearly two full games' worth of snaps. Brees' TD rate also sank from 5.8% over the previous six seasons to 4.3%, a stat primed to bounce back. But it's not simply about positive TD regression that makes Brees one of the best draft picks in the game this year, it's about usage. Last year, the combination of New Orleans' dominant running game and cupcake schedule created a situation where Brees wasn't needed much, especially in the second halves of games. This year, not only do the Saints play a much tougher schedule, but teams will inevitably key in on the ground game, forcing Brees to burn

them with an upgraded group of pass catchers (plus Cam Meredith, plus Ben Watson, plus TreQuan Smith). Expect the ground game to be less efficient, and the passing volume to increase. If the Saints are as good as advertised in 2018, it wouldn't shock me if Drew Brees finally won a coveted MVP award. At minimum, he's a huge bargain in your fantasy draft. Keep in mind that his ADP is much higher in local leagues! New Orleans knows.

Rex Burkhead (ESPN: 73, NICK: 50-70) – "Burkhead's cost would likely be far higher had he not missed Weeks 3-6 with a rib fracture and Weeks 16-17 plus the Divisional Round with a sprained left patella. Most fantasy leaguers remain afraid of Patriots running backs, but competitive-edge seekers know Belichick's team plays fast, scores a ton of points, and runs the ball voluminously after building leads. Burkhead is a lock to be one of my highest-owned 2018 fantasy players." – Evan Silva. In the last 14 seasons, New England has averaged 17.9 rushing touchdowns, and they've ranked in top 12 in rushing touchdowns in EVERY year, including eight top-5 finishes. I can't put the reasoning to take a flier on Burkhead any better than that. The upside is worth the price. We've seen the Patriots deliver outsized backfield returns across several running backs, and often during the same season. They have 17 more rushing touchdowns than any other team since 2007. Burkhead is the early favorite for the all-important Patriots goal-line role, and he can catch and run routes. He doesn't come without medical red flags, however (knee problems). I love the idea of pairing Burkhead and Sony Michel in back-to-back rounds.

Rounds 8-9 (Picks 85-100):

This is usually the last of the decent RBs and WRs before the talent pool at those positions dries up. Here are a few players who may slip through the cracks and you can grab to add to your important depth at RB and WR before Pick 100:

Sony Michel (ESPN: 89, NICK: 80-90) – The epitome of a boom-or-bust draft pick my philosophy advises in the mid-rounds. Michel is one of the most fragile players out there, is already out until week 1 at the earliest with a knee issue, and he could be a true waste of a draft pick if the Pats basically medically red shirt him in his rookie season. OR he can be the steal of your draft as this year's Alvin Kamara. It's one of those two scenarios. In seriousness, Michel has potential to at least be a strong finisher that helps you win your league provided he can stay healthy. My opinion is based purely on personal scouting and the opportunity of his landing spot. After watching film cutups from Georgia before the NFL Draft, I was honestly blown away by how good Michel was. Granted, he wasn't a featured back, and he had durability issues in college too, but Michel nevertheless had my jaw on the floor when watching some of his runs. Landing in New England got me extra excited about his fantasy outlook. He was a lock for my 4th round picks before he got his knee drained recently, but now after missing his first training camp as a rookie, he's likely very behind in learning New England's complex system. There's a scenario, however, where he takes control of New England's backfield by midseason and is a RB1 the rest of the way similar to the way Dion

Lewis emerged last season. In the last 14 seasons, New England has averaged 17.9 rushing touchdowns, and they've ranked in top 12 in rushing touchdowns in EVERY year, including eight top-5 finishes.

Will Fuller (ESPN: 76, NICK: 75-90) -
Games with Deshaun Watson:
Week 4 – 4-35-2 (19.9 pts)
Week 5 – 2-57-2 (20.2 pts)
Week 6 – 2-62-1 (14.2 pts)
Week 7 – BYE
Week 8 – 5-125-2 (29.5 pts)
Watson and Fuller didn't even get to practice together because Fuller missed all of training camp and preseason with an injury, admittingly a common theme for him. Seven TDs in 4 games, much less on only 13 catches is clearly unsustainable, but he's a big play threat who can win you weeks. Most importantly, there's not a lot of competition for targets in Houston outside of Hopkins and Fuller. Mid-round picks are all about upside. Fuller's ceiling is high.

Carlos Hyde (ESPN: 99, NICK: 70-90) – Looks like the starting RB for the Browns, for whatever that's worth. But seriously, the Browns have a solid O-Line and are expected to win 6.5 games year (Vegas Over/Under), a vast improvement over a winless 2017. Tyrod Taylor is a mobile QB who helps create running lanes with read-option. Hyde highly motivated to keep job for as long as possible over Nick Chubb, who is waiting in wings. Talented runner with proven success in fantasy football. Will have some nice games, mostly early in the season.

Adrian Peterson (ESPN: 128, NICK: 75-100) – Washington's starting RB. Eventually his ADP will be established, but don't forget about him if your draft is in the next few days! He's one of my targets before pick 100 as a 4th RB.

Peyton Barber (ESPN: 99, NICK: 75-100) – Tampa Bay's starting RB. Has out-produced Ronald Jones in every facet of the game and appears super motivated since the team selected Jones. Barber is shooting up draft boards (I managed to draft him in Rounds 14-15 merely two weeks ago, now he's typically being drafted in the 8th or 9th round. There's still value here. He's one of my targets before pick 100 as a 4th RB.

Kerryon Johnson (ESPN: 88, NICK: 80-100) – The Lions have a Top 10 O-Line on paper. Added a first round guard/center Frank Ragnow who allows them to slide Graham Glasgow to his preferred position at center. They added RG T.J. Lang and RT Ricky Wagner before last season, but injuries (Wagner missed 4 games, Lang missed 3, on top of LT Taylor Decker missing the first 8) made the unit ineffective last year. They were forced to deploy some terrible left tackles for the first half of the season, and Decker looked a bit rusty getting back in form after his injury. Also fired Ron Prince and changed some of the schemes. Can we say with confidence the Lions will remain a heavily pass-first offense under new coach Matt Patricia? They signed LeGarrette Blount, traded up in the second round to draft running back

Kerryon Johnson, and picked a first-round interior lineman and a fullback. Detroit seems committed to fixing the running game. Although Johnson is already the most talented RB on the roster, the main worry is Blount, who could siphon 10 carries a game and possibly valuable goal line carries, playing for a coach who trusts him in Patricia, who came over from New England. I like Johnson to beat out Blount by midseason if not sooner, but Blount may frustrate owners early. IF and when Johnson does take over as the Lions' lead back, has the upside to be a low-end RB1 in fantasy. But this pick admittingly requires patience.

Rounds 10-17 (Generally)

This is where things get interesting because everyone starts going in different directions. The most important aspect of winning the later rounds of the draft is judging the flow of positional runs and scarcity. This is different in every draft. It's about seeing who is available and deciding whether I can or can't afford to wait a round or two before you select a particular player or position on my board.

*For example, if I've waited on QB, Round 10 is about the time where I start looking to select one or two fringe starters. But if I look at the QB board and still see several quality options available (think **Ryan, Garoppolo, Rivers, Mahomes**), and I determine that I'm the only team that doesn't have a QB, I can probably afford to be patient and wait a bit, at least until the first two teams select their backup QBs.*

Matt Ryan (ESPN: QB15, NICK: QB7) – Ryan played better in real life than his fantasy numbers suggest. He was PFF's third highest graded passer per attempt, and the Falcons receivers were near the league lead in dropped passes. Ryan's unnaturally low TD rate (3.8%) will increase in 2018 in his second season under Steve Sarkisian. Ryan has an excellent supporting cast – RBs Tevin Coleman and Devonta Freeman are dangerous receivers. The Falcons added first round pick Calvin Ridley to go with Julio Jones and Mohamed Sanu. Ryan is a huge bargain and will likely be a Top-12 QB this season with the upside as a Top-6 finisher.

Jimmy Garoppolo (ESPN: QB14, NICK: QB8) – Kyle Shanahan is an offensive genius. Jimmy G" was the fantasy QB6 during his Weeks 13-17 starting run, leading the NFL in passing yards and YPA in that span. This was with banged-up Marquise Goodwin (back, concussion), fullback Kyle Juszczyk, and day-three rookies Trent Taylor and George Kittle serving as his four most-targeted weapons. Most impressively, Garoppolo quarterbacked a 44-33 shootout upset of the Jaguars in Week 16, finishing as the fantasy QB4 that week. Garoppolo's immediate success was especially remarkable in the context of Matt Ryan's first-year struggles under Shanahan before Ryan's 2016 NFL MVP explosion. Garoppolo will enter 2018 with a full offseason to learn the playbook and No. 1 receiver Pierre Garcon returning and improved line play with the additions of five-year, $47.5 million C Weston Richburg and No. 9

overall pick RT Mike McGlinchey. There is much to like about Garoppolo's 2018 fantasy outlook.

If I haven't drafted a TE yet, it's probably time to do so. Typically about 9 or 10/12 teams have their TEs by this point, so it's wise to strike before the teams that don't have one yet do.

Trey Burton (TE11, NICK: TE6) – Matt Nagy's first move as head coach of the Bears was signing Burton to a huge deal to play the valuable "Z / Move Tight End" role in his offense, the same role Travis Kelce played for him in K.C. last season. I don't advocate paying a premium draft price for big money free agents entering their first years with new teams, but Burton is affordable, currently going as the 10ᵗʰ TE in average drafts. The player who may have prevented his breakout, TE Adam Sheehan, is now out indefinitely with a foot injury. Burton is set up to succeed.

Jack Doyle (TE10, NICK: TE7) – The Colts signed TE Eric Ebron in free agency, which is scaring some folks off Doyle. But Luck showed chemistry with Doyle two seasons ago, and the Colts don't have any real receiving weapons outside of T.Y. Hilton. With a talented QB, no running game and no defense, and on a team that is projected to only win 6 games or so, we could see Doyle rack up plenty of garbage time catches. Hilton has never been a red zone threat. Doyle can be Luck's primary target in that area.

Jordan Reed (TE8, NICK: TE8) – We know the drill. Reed is a very productive TE when on the field but is brittle and never actually on the field. The same health risks apply this season, but at least his cost is as affordable as it's ever been. Alex Smith's favorite target was a fellow athletic TE, Travis Kelce.

I expect the Jaguars Defense to come off the board around Pick 100. I'm not actively pursuing them, but if they fall in my lap after pick 100, let's say picks 110-120, I typically don't hesitate. The Jags DST was THAT much better than the rest last year, and was a Top-10 most valuable asset for teams last season among any player, believe it or not.

Jacksonville Jaguars (ESPN: DST1, NICK: DST1, ~110+)

*If I just recently took a QB (let's say Ryan or Garoppolo) and I start to see the backup QBs slide (we're talking **Ryan/Garoppolo, Matt Stafford, Philip Rivers, Dak Prescott, or even Pat Mahomes**), I'll consider pairing my low-end starter with another fringe starter to play matchups. One backup QB who I continue to see fall in drafts is Prescott, who I'm high on.*

Dak Prescott (ESPN: QB18, NICK: QB11) –
Prescott QB6 in 10 games w/ Elliot. 17-6 TD/INT. 2178 PAYD, 232 RUYD, 4 RUTDs.
Prescott QB17 in 6 games w/o Elliot. 5-7 TD/INT. 1146 PAYD, 125 RUYD, 2 RUTDs. Even with Elliott on the field, Prescott's passer rating collapsed to 69.2 when targeting Bryant last year and only got worse after Elliott's suspension. Free-agent signings notwithstanding, perhaps the biggest addition to the Cowboys receiving corps was wide receivers coach Sanjay Lal.

Allen Hurns specifically named Cowboys receivers coach Sanjay Lal as part of why he ultimately chose Dallas. Cole Beasley was very impressed with him, too. From the draft, the Cowboys stole Michael Gallup in the third round. Injuries to O-Line crippled Prescott's numbers. Prescott was sacked 12 times alone during two of the 4 games that Tyron Smith missed. Thankfully Smith is healthy and back to All-Pro form and Zeke is ready feast. Recall Prescott was a Top-6 QB in 2016 as a rookie, and was a Top-5 QB through Week 7 last season, before the O-Line injuries and Zeke suspension caused the team to implode.

Downtown John Brown Round (Pick 120 'ish)

John Brown (ESPN: 162, NICK: 80+) – The best sleeper in fantasy football right now is healthy and ready to rock. Everyone has their "this is his year!" guy. Brown is mine. But seriously, his ADP is about to sky-rocket, so grab him late while you still can. Brown battled sickle-cell trait in his legs, a condition which was exasperated by the Arizona heat in the desert. In Baltimore now, Brown appears as healthy as ever and by all accounts is gelling with Joe Flacco, who is motivated after the Ravens selected QB Lamar Jackson in Round 1. Brown has the ability to lead the Ravens in receiving this season if he stays healthy. I've drafted him on all of my teams. Now, we don't have the luxury of waiting until the final rounds. Brown is a must-have player in the later rounds. Ideally, you can steal him in Rounds 12-13.

Kicker Round (Picks 130-150'ish)

As you may or may not know, I value kickers a little higher than, well, every expert ever. I think having a top kicker is more valuable than people in the industry think. And I also believe predicting the top kickers is easier than they assume. My kicker strategy is a simple one: WAIT pick 130 overall OR until the first team grabs a kicker (whichever comes last), and then you take one of the following three kickers:

Justin Tucker (K2) – Point Totals Weeks 5-17: [13, 12, 14, 12, 9, 11, 14, 17, 9, 10, 11, 10]. Incredible totals gave weekly advantage. Huge leg with deadly accuracy. Ravens use Tucker as offensive weapon, in a sense. After slow start, Tucker's point total increase coincided with Alex Collins' emergence, improvement of running back. Ravens added WRs Crabtree, John Brown, and Snead, TE Hayden Hurst, and get best lineman Marshal Yanda back from injury. QB Flacco normally untrustworthy but looks motivated after team drafted Lamar Jackson. Improved offense would help Tucker replicate second half of 2017.

Stephen Gostkowski (K3) – Kickers who play with good offenses and on winning teams consistently get more kicking opportunities. Gostkowski as safe as they come for Top-5 production. Has finished as Top-3 Kicker 4 of last 5 seasons.

Matt Bryant (K4) – Point Totals Weeks 8-17: [14, 7, 11, 11, 11, 9, 10, 7, 8, 19]. That's outstanding. Falcons offense started slow in Year 1 under OC Steve Sarkisian. Now entering Year 2 with familiarity. Added Calvin Ridley to offense already including Matt Ryan, Devonta Freeman, Tevin Coleman, Julio Jones, Mahomed Sanu, and Top-10 O-Line. Plays in dome. Winning team. Plenty of FG chances.

If you somehow miss out on those kicker studs, WAIT UNTIL THE LAST ROUND of the Draft and take someone like Dan Bailey, Ryan Succop, or Mason Crosby.

Defense Round (Also Picks 130-150'ish)

The sweet spot for defenses is the 4-9 range, partly because the defenses are good, but also because you can tell when the DST run is coming and prepare accordingly. I've been fine with settling for the Patriots, Chargers, and even the Saints:

Los Angeles Rams (DST3) – Weak at DE, but gained N'damukong Suh to pair with Aaron Donald, the league's best defensive player. Also added Aqib Talib and Marcus Peters. Great secondary. Great coaching with Wade Phillips.
Minnesota Vikings (DST4) – Stacked on paper. Mike Zimmer a defensive guru. Great D-Line. But were very healthy last season. Only 1 single game missed among 12 starters, including NCB. Added DT Sheldon Richardson, and only 1 DTD are reasons they could improve on DST7 ranking in 2017.
Houston Texans (DST5) – Demoralized by injuries last season. DE Whitney Mercilus DNP weeks 5-17, DE J.J. Watt DNP weeks 5-17. DE Christian Covington DNP weeks 9-17. Added NCB Aaron Colvin and FS Tyrann Mathieu to secondary. Easy schedule.
Baltimore Ravens (DST6) – NT Brandon Williams DNP weeks 2-6 last year, and CB Jimmy Smith DNP weeks 14-17 (he's suspended weeks 1-4). Loaded depth at DB. Easy schedule last season, but doesn't look difficult this year either. 7 DTDs likely regress. History of success in Baltimore, though.
New England Patriots (DST7) – Added DE Adrian Clayborn, CB Jason McCourty. Get Don't'a Hightower back from injury. NE routinely plays with leads, creating opportunity for sacks/turnovers. Easy offensive division. Finished strongly last year. Only 1 DTD which will improve.
Los Angeles Chargers (DST8) – DST5 last season. Slow start but were DST3 weeks 5-17. Loaded at important positions – pass rush and defensive back. DL and LB weak, but ILB Denzel Perryman missed chunk of games with injury last year.
New Orleans Saints (DST9) – Added DE Marcus Davenport, CB Patrick Robinson, LB Demario Davis. Much tougher schedule; last season they faced very easy slate of opposing QBs. Opens vs. TB with Fitzpatrick in week 1 and vs. CLE in week 2, both at home.

Denver Broncos (DST10) – Added Bradley Chubb to fierce pass rush. DE Derek Wolfe DNP weeks 12-17. Shane Ray DNP weeks 1-7, 16-17. Lost Aqib Talib, but better offense should help keep the D off the field.

If you miss out on all of those defenses, keep an eye out for these lower-ranked DSTs you can grab in free agency after the draft:

Green Bay Packers (DST17) – Added DE Muhammad Wilkerson, forming great D-Line. OLBs Clay Matthews and Nick Perry (combined 7 missed games) need to stay healthy. Added two first round talents at CB, Jaire Alexander and Josh Jackson. Kevin King entering year 2 after injury-plagued rookie season. New DC Mike Pettine takes over Dom Capers, who should have been fired years ago. Opens with CHI. Could be sleeper DST.
Chicago Bears (DST18) – Quietly DST10 last season. Good on paper, adding ILB Roquan Smith. Finished strong last year. Easy opening schedule after week 1.

SLEEPERS (Rounds 14+)

QUARTERBACKS:

Andy Dalton (ESPN: QB23, NICK: QB16) – Dalton is the last resort, streaming QB. He opens the season against the Colts, a pathetic defense. And he's finished as a top-18 QB in every season he's been in the league. He never misses games and has two Top-6 seasons under his belt. The Bengals offense gets back TE Tyler Eifert and WR John Ross to help out the studly A.J. Green, and they added two critical O-Linemen to boost their running game upfront. If I miss out on QBs, I'm waiting and grabbing Prescott to pair with Dalton.

RUNNING BACKS:

Bilal Powell (ESPN: 163, NICK: 125+) – Essentially the Jets' starting RB. Very mispriced. Should be drafted 5 rounds higher in PPR formats.
Jordan Wilkins (ESPN: 143, NICK: 135+) – Likely a RBBC in Indy, but he could lead it out of the gates.
Frank Gore (ESPN: 200+, NICK: 135+) – Will get A LOT more touches than Kenyan Drake owners want to believe. Could be goal line back in Miami.
Matt Breida (ESPN: 156, NICK: 135+) – Dealing with shoulder injury. Could play Tevin Coleman role in Kyle Shanahan's offense by midseason.

WIDE RECEIVERS:

Sterling Shepard (ESPN: 93, NICK: 100+) – Shepard continues to fall in drafts because drafters fear a limited role behind Saquon Barkley, Odell Beckham, and Evan Engram. I think OC Pat Shurmur is going to coax a nice season out of Shepard. Shepard could be playing the Adam Thielen role in his offense with Beckham is the Stefon Diggs. Shepard has no shortage of potential.

Keelan Cole (ESPN: 136, NICK: 100+) – Finished last season strong, becoming Bortles primary target in the final 5 games before a quiet playoffs. Marquise Lee hurt, which will result in steeper price point, but is an underrated talent and could lead Jaguars in receiving. Bortles has supported top-12 WRs before.

Chris Godwin (ESPN: 129, NICK: 115+) – Many mouths to feed in Tampa Bay, and the 3-game suspension for Winston may complicate things. But Godwin is the real deal from a talent perspective. Bucs should find a way to get him targets. Injury to Mike Evans or D-Jax could propel him. Finished strongly last season.

Kenny Golladay (ESPN: 112, NICK: 120+) – My favorite of the Lions 3 wideouts.

Tyler Lockett (ESPN: 118, NICK: 120+) – Will be inconsistent but have some spiked performances. Wish his ADP was lower, but I'm striking if he gets past pick 130.

D.J. Moore (ESPN: 115, NICK: 120+) – Panthers new OC Norv Turner hand-selected him in Round 1 of draft. After studying Moore, I was a huge fan of his leading up to draft. Great route runner and quick with ball in hands.

Michael Gallup (ESPN: 112, NICK: 120+) – Drawing rave reviews in training camp / preseason. Getting on board because he's still slipping to picks 130+ in drafts. Some Dallas pass catcher will be severely undervalued. It could be Hurns, but Gallup wouldn't surprise me.

Anthony Miller (ESPN: 138, NICK: 140+) – Underrated talent, dark horse to lead Bears in catches. He will sport a mid-round ADP in 2019 fantasy drafts.

Taywan Taylor (ESPN: 200+, NICK: 140+) – One of my favorite selections in the final round of deep drafts.

Mike Williams (ESPN: 158, NICK: 160+) – Could slide in as red zone threat for Philip Rivers now that Hunter Henry is on IR. Chargers invested heavily in him (7th overall pick in 2016).

As you can see, there's a lot of worthy late-round fliers at WR, which is why waiting on them is recommended.

TIGHT ENDS:

George Kittle (TE15) - George Kittle had 97th percentile SPARQ score (a.k.a. Freak Athlete), averaged a monster 2.57 yards gained per route run (most among TEs) in Jimmy G's five starts, including a 100-yard game in the season finale. Was limited with ankle injury Weeks 13-17 too. He's already hurt now with a shoulder injury keeping him out for the rest of preseason, but he's in a situation where he could blossom. WRs Garcon and Goodwin don't have skillsets to be red zone threats. Someone needs to be the go-to guy in the red zone for Garoppolo.

DEEP LEAGUE PARTING SHOTS:

James Conner (ESPN: 200+) – Le'Veon Bell's handcuff. Could be legitimate Top-12 RB if Bell were to go down. Reminder: Bell has over 800 touches in the last 2 years, and is holding out until regular season.

Chase Edmonds (ESPN: 200+) – David Johnson's handcuff.

Geronimo Allison (ESPN: 200+) – An injury to the oft-injured Cobb would put Allison on the fantasy map as a WR2 or Flex option. Rodgers has created success from his #3 WR before.

Christian Kirk (ESPN: 200+) – Sometimes backup WRs develop chemistry with backup QBs over the summer. Wouldn't be surprised if he's trusted by Josh Rosen if and when he starts. Regardless, Kirk should start in the desert from the get-go.

Vance McDonald (ESPN: TE19) – Always hurt, but had a 15-catch game in the playoffs. Roeth has wanted a big TE over the middle for years. Likely a slow starter who could become a streamer play by midseason.

Ricky Seals-Jones (ESPN: TE23) – Sam Bradford loves targeting the middle of the field. RSJ flashed athleticism and knack for end zone in limited sample of snaps last season.

PLAYERS I'M NOT DRAFTING AT COST (AVOID!)

Saquon Barkley (ESPN: 6) – Giants gave up A LOT to draft him, and it looks like they intend to feed him. But I'm all about safety in Rounds 1-2. Can't advocate taking a rookie this high, especially one with below average O-Line. May have a nice rookie year, but can't justify drafting him over studs. Better left until Round 2.

Dalvin Cook (ESPN: 12) – Against my philosophy to draft someone in first year following ACL surgery. If history is any indication, expect a slow start. Latavius Murray is a goal line threat, and we could see a split in carries, at least early, to lighten Cook's load. New OC John DeFilippo comes from Philly, where he was part of a wildly successful offense with a committee backfield. Love Cook as a player, but ADP is too high. Will likely target him next year, when his explosiveness is 100% back, after he underperforms this season. Minnesota's front five remains a concern. C Pat Elflein is coming off ankle surgery. LG Nick Easton fractured his right ankle in Week 16. RG Mike Remmers is transitioning from tackle to guard, and OTs Riley Reiff and Rashod Hill are sub-par run blockers.

LeSean McCoy (ESPN: 23) – Bills' offensive centerpiece, but getting up there in age, has always been a health risk, and Chris Ivory could steal goal line carries. Bills' ineptness at QB/WR could cause defenses to stack box and key in on McCoy. Buffalo projected by Vegas to be 5-11 team, which could be generous, so negative game scripts are in play here too. The Bills open up with the NFL's toughest schedule in Weeks 1-6: @BAL, LAC, @MIN, @GB, TEN, @HOU. I smell 0-6. Oh, and did I mention McCoy has possible legal trouble looming? No thanks. There's a scenario where McCoy helps fantasy teams this year, but the cost should be closer to Round 5.

Jerick McKinnon (ESPN: 25) – Landed in a great spot with offensive genius Kyle Shanahan, who has great track record of fantasy RB success. However, my philosophy of avoiding high priced free agent signings in year 1 with their new teams still applies. McKinnon has never shouldered full workload. Is already dealing with calf issue. New team, new offense, and just got paid $$$. History tells us we're more likely we'll see his true upside NEXT season after a disappointing first year. Third round price is too steep for too many question marks. The bad news is that McKinnon's efficiency has been downright awful during the past two seasons. Of the 38 running backs with at least 200 carries during the span, McKinnon ranks 37th in YPC (3.59) and 36th in YAC (1.51).

Adam Thielen (ESPN: 29) – Cousins has never targeted a wide receiver more than 6.9 times per game, which amounts to 110 targets in a season, a far cry from the 143 Theilen saw in 2017. The Vikings lost OC Pat Shurmur, the catalyst to Thielen's career. Run-first offense with a new QB who seems to be favoring Stefon Diggs, whose presence will always limit Theilen's upside.

Demaryius Thomas (ESPN: 34) – QB upgrade, but play has clearly declined the last 3-4 seasons. Emmanuel Sanders, who is more explosive at this point in his career, is 2-3 rounds cheaper for similar, if not better, production. Offense has stopped feeding Demaryius the screens that made him so effective. WR Courtland Sutton could make red zone impact in Year 1.

Allen Robinson (ESPN: 35) – I don't like taking players in first year back from ACL surgery. Usually don't regain full explosiveness until Year 2. I also don't like taking players who signed big deals with new teams. Expectations far too high (see ADP) and motivation at all time low after signing big $ deal. Has to get used to new QB, new offense, new team, etc. Would be an exception to the rule if he hits in Year 1 on new team after big contract.

Golden Tate (ESPN: 37) & Marvin Jones (ESPN: 44) –

Marvin Jones without Golladay in lineup = 9.8 Targets/Game, 17.5 PPG.
Marvin Jones with Golladay in the lineup = 5.3 Targets/Game, 12.5 PPG

2017 Target Share when Golladay played over 50% of snaps (10 games):
Tate (22%), RBs (20%), Ebron (18%), Jones (16%), Golladay (13%).
2017 Target Share WITHOUT Golladay: Jones (23%), Tate (20%), RBs (16%), Ebron (11%)

Detroit WRs in Final 3 Games:
Golden Tate = 18/13-151-1 (27.5 points)
Kenny Golladay = 16/10-137-1 (24 points)
Marvin Jones = 15/10-216-1 (32 points)

Kenny Golladay is starting on the outside in 2-WR sets in training camp and in preseason

games thus far, moving Golden Tate to the slot full time. Many are expecting a breakthrough sophomore season from Golladay. He certainly has the talent. However, with the supremely talented Jones and short-area catch machine Tate racking up catches, Golladay's emergence is more likely to muddy the waters of Jones and Tate's value. Marvin Jones (4th Round ADP), Golden Tate (5th Round), and Kenny Golladay (10th Round) will likely wind up with similar numbers, making Golladay the best pick of the three.

Alshon Jeffery (ESPN: 43) – PUP candidate, could miss the first 6 games of the season. Shoulder surgery has prevented him from practicing. I don't like taking players who miss training camp. Hasn't had a 100-yard receiving game in 22 games since being popped for PEDs.

Ronald Jones (ESPN: 49) – He's behind Peyton Barber in the pecking order. He's done nothing this offseason to earn a starting role. Unlikely to get goal line over Barber due to size and running style. Needs to get better in receiving game and learn how to block before we can take him seriously. Tampa is a pass-first team with tons of receiving weapons. His ADP is 5 rounds too high.

Greg Olsen (ESPN: TE4) – Over his past 17 regular season games, Olsen has averaged just 3.4 receptions for 38.5 yards while scoring just two touchdowns. Over that span, he's finished as a TE1 for fantasy scoring just five times. After returning from a fractured foot in Week 12 last season, Olsen had a 9-116-1 game and an 8-107-1 game in the playoffs, but just five catches for 47 yards in the other four weeks. Entering 2018 at age 33, Olsen will begin the season fresh and healthier than he left the previous two seasons, but he will have to string along more of those big weeks to be a weekly mainstay. He also will have the most target competition he's ever had while in Carolina with Devin Funchess, Christian McCaffrey and D.J. Moore all in the fold for significant targets.

Duke Johnson (ESPN: 61) – Had an underrated season in full-point PPR formats in 2017, but the Browns were barren at skill positions last season. Cleveland added RBs Carlos Hyde and Nick Chubb. Promising TE David Njoku is now a full-time player. Target hog Jarvis Landry is now there and supremely gifted Josh Gordon is 100% from the get-go. Johnson will keep his role as 3rd down weapon, but his target share will drop substantially.

Devin Funchess (ESPN: 70) – No longer "the guy" in Carolina. Greg Olsen's injury played a big role in Funchess's breakout season. Funchess is now competing with Olsen, Torrey Smith, Christian McCaffrey and C.J. Anderson out of the backfield, and D.J. Moore, a first round pick who was hand-selected by new OC Norv Turner.

Chris Thompson (ESPN: 74) – Guice injury helps (Guice was definitely going to cut into receiving downs and destroy Thompson's value), but Thompson is still not as healthy as public thinks. Wouldn't shock me if he started season on PUP List, forcing him to miss the first six games. Massive TD regression coming. New quarterback that he doesn't have chemistry with. Team wants to limit his touches to about 10 per game.

Carson Wentz (ESPN: QB4) – Wentz threw a TD on 7.5% of passes last season. League average passing TD rate for a QB is 4.3%. Expect TD regression. Try to avoid players in first year coming off ACL surgery. Wouldn't be shocked if Eagles are more conservative with him (re: misses Weeks 1-2) knowing they have a capable back up in Foles.

Cooper Kupp (ESPN: 90) - Cooper Kupp averaged 2.3 more catches and 51.9 more yards/ game with Robert Woods OUT. Now they signed Cooks.

Rishard Matthews (ESPN: 105) – Undisclosed injury and contract hold out has kept him out of training camp and preseason. While he's gone, Taywan Taylor has been soaking up first team reps in the new offense the Titans are installing.

Kirk Cousins (ESPN: QB9) – Great weapons at skill positions, but expect decrease in passing volume in Minnesota run by conservative, run-first Mike Zimmer and his top-5 defense. Washington annually ranked in top-10 for pass attempts. Alarming offensive line concerns for Vikings – major downgrade from Redskins, and Cousins has tended to falter under pressure.

Gio Bernard (ESPN: 121) – Mixon will be the bell cow. Bernard will only be valuable barring injury to Mixon. Bernard averaged 4.8 touches per game in the 11 games prior to Mixon's concussion. Had more than 2 targets in just 4 of those 11 games. He's a change-of-pace RB, nothing more.

Theo Riddick (ESPN: 122) – We know who he is by now, and that's right on the fence from rosterable and waiver wire fodder. Capped upside and sparse consistency. We don't know how Kerryon Johnson affects his limited role.

Jared Goff (ESPN: QB19) - Rich Hribar noted Goff threw a league-high eight touchdowns on passes behind the line of scrimmage; the No. 2 quarterback threw three. Goff will struggle to sustain his 5.9% TD rate, the NFL's third-best mark among signal callers with at least 250 throws. The Rams ranked 24th in pass attempts and are unlikely to become a high-volume passing team supported by offensive centerpiece Todd Gurley and Wade Phillips' top-ten defense that added N'damukong Suh, Aqib Talib, and Marcus Peters. Goff adds zero rushing value to mask any loss of passing efficiency. Jared Goff completed just 41.4 percent of his passes while under pressure, the fourth lowest mark in the NFL, and the Rams O-Line (80/80 Possible Starts a.k.a. flawless health among the starting 5 linemen) is bound for health regression.

Dez Bryant (ESPN: 132) – Don't get cute. It's over. Move on. Dozens of better picks at his ADP.

Marqise Lee (ESPN: 99) and Donte Moncrief (ESPN: 141) – Lee may be the most talented of the bunch, but JAX receivers look like a timeshare between Lee, Moncrief, Keelan Cole, D.J.

Chark, and DeDe Westbrook. Too many pieces of the pie, and Blake Bortles is serving the pie in a run-oriented offense.

Eric Decker (ESPN: 166) – Big name, but may not make the team, and there's little upside once Edelman returns from suspension.

D'Onta Foreman (ESPN: 202) – Likely to start the season on PUP. Achilles injuries historically difficult to come back from, especially in Year 1.

Fantasy Questionnaire

FANTASY MVP:	**Ezekiel Elliot**
FANTASY FLOP:	**LeSean McCoy**
MUST-HAVE PLAYER:	**Rob Gronkowski**
MUST-AVOID PLAYER:	**Jerick McKinnon**
COMEBACK PLAYER:	**David Johnson**
BOUNCEBACK PLAYER:	**Matt Ryan**
ALL HYPE:	**Jimmy Graham**
WORTH THE HYPE:	**Jimmy Garoppolo**
OLDIE BUT GOODIE:	**Drew Brees**
OLDIE FALLS OFF CLIFF:	**Greg Olsen**
ROOKIE SENSATION:	**Saquon Barkley**
ROOKIE WR:	**D.J. Moore**
TOP SLEEPER:	**John Brown**
SLEEPER NEVER WAKES:	**DeVante Parker**
ONE YEAR TOO EARLY:	**Dalvin Cook**
BREAKOUT QB:	**Pat Mahomes**
SLEEPER QB:	**Andy Dalton**
OVERVALUED QB:	**Carson Wentz**
UNDERVALUED QB:	**Matt Ryan**
BREAKOUT RB:	**Christian McCaffrey**
SLEEPER RB:	**Sony Michel**
OVARVALUED RB:	**Ronald Jones**
UNDERVALUED RB:	**Frank Gore**
BREAKOUT WR:	**Marquise Goodwin**
SLEEPER WR:	**Keelan Cole**
OVERVALUED WR:	**Golden Tate**
UNDERVALUED WR:	**Emmanuel Sanders**
BREAKOUT TE:	**Delanie Walker**
SLEEPER TE:	**George Kittle**
OVERVALUED TE:	**Greg Olsen**
UNDERVALUED TE:	**Trey Burton**
BREAKOUT K:	**Matt Bryant**
SLEEPER K:	**Ka'imi Fairbairn**
OVERVALUED K:	**Greg Zuerlein**
UNDERVALUED K:	**Mason Crosby**

BREAKOUT DST:	**Los Angeles Chargers**
SLEEPER DST:	**Chicago Bears**
OVERVALUED DST:	**Philadelphia Eagles**
UNDERVALUED DST:	**New England Patriots**
LEAGUE-WINNER IF 16 GP:	**Leonard Fournette**
BIGGEST INJURY RISKS:	**Le'Veon Bell, Leonard Fournette, Melvin Gordon, Rex Burkhead/Sony Michel, Deshaun Watson, Sammy Watkins, Alshon Jeffery, Jordan Reed, Tyler Eifert, LeSean McCoy, Charles Clay**
NFL MVP:	**Drew Brees**
SUPER BOWL PREDICTION:	**Saints over Patriots**

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My 2017 Fantasy Results

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Best Calls:

- **Russell Wilson** being the poster boy of the Draft Guide as last year's must-have player. ADP was QB6. Finished QB1. Owned him in 4/5 Leagues.
- Ranking **Cam Newton** as QB2. Finished as QB2.
- **Kareem Hunt** as sleeper and ideal 9th-10th round target (pre-Ware injury). Direct Quote from Draft Guide: "Bold Prediction: Kareem Hunt will be a first round pick in 2018 fantasy drafts." Lo and behold. Owned him in 3/5 leagues.
- Listed **Alvin Kamara** as sleeper. Drafted him in 2/5 leagues.
- **Stefon Diggs** and **Keenan Allen** as breakout WRs. Drafted Diggs in 5/5 leagues. Allen finished as WR3.
- Advocating reaching for **Travis Kelce** in Rounds 3-4. Kelce finished as TE2. Drafted him in 4/5 leagues.
- **Zach Ertz** was also high on my board. Finished as TE3. Drafted him in 2/5 leagues.
- **Jimmy Graham** was on my breakouts (targets) list. He led all TEs in TDs.
- Telling drafters not to be afraid to take **Stephen Gostkowski** as K1 after a down K9 season in 2016. Gostkowski finished as K2. Drafted Gostkowski in 3/5 leagues.
- Speaking of kickers, listing **Will Lutz** as my fall back kicker if you miss out on Gostkowski. Lutz finished as K5. I had Gostkowski or Lutz in every league. Great kicker year.
- Saying that pairing the **Jacksonville Jaguars and Pittsburgh Steelers DSTs** was the ideal combination. The Jags finished as DST1 by a mile, and provided a huge advantage to owners, while the Steelers finished as DST5 in their own right. It was great to have the Jags in 4/5 leagues and the Steelers in 3/5 leagues.

- Listed **Nelson Agholor, Paul Richardson, Tarik Cohen, Ted Ginn, and Cooper Kupp** among my deep sleepers. All were fantasy relevant. Agholor and Kupp finished as a top-25 WRs.

Worst Calls:
- I made excuses and deviated from my philosophy to put **Jay Ajayi** on my board despite his horrible QB situation and apparent risk level that I normally never approve of in Rounds 1-2. I was LUCKY to only draft him on 1/5 teams. Sorry guys. I'm strictly adhering to all of my draft principles this year. Not making excuses for anyone.
- **Doug Martin & Ameer Abdullah** were ill-advised mid-round RB targets.
- I bought into the **Amari Cooper** hype despite the fact I told everyone to avoid Derek Carr and he was bound for regression. Very inconsistent advice. Cooper battled injuries again and was a disaster. A high-priced one, at that.
- **DeVante Parker & John Brown** – I loved Parker and Brown last year. Parker started out OK until he got hurt... again. Brown never got healthy after he aggravated his sickle-cell leg injury in the offseason. I should have seen it coming with them.
- **Thomas Rawls** – One of my favorite sleeper RBs never woke up. I thought he'd win the starting job and be a steal in the later rounds. He was useless all year.
- **Seahawks Defense** – I expected a bounce back season from the Seahawks Top-5 ranked defense, even taking them as the DST1 in two drafts. The Seahawks finished as DST10 and were not worth it. Luckily I was able to draft the Jaguars or Steelers in the later rounds.
- On last year's "DO NOT DRAFT" list, I correctly identified 34/39 players on the list who wound up underachieving based on their ADP. Unfortunately, the 5 misses were bad misses. I wrongly told readers to avoid drafting **Mark Ingram, Leonard Fournette, Carlos Hyde, Adam Thielen, and Robert Woods**. Whoops!

My Fantasy Teams Results (2017):

- <u>Total Regular Season Record</u>: 56-12 in 5 Leagues (12-2, 13-1, 9-4, 10-3, 12-2);
- <u>Made Playoffs in 5/5 leagues</u> (haven't missed playoffs in any league in last 3 years – 19/19 postseason appearances in that span);
- <u>2017 Standings Finishes</u>: 2 firsts, 2 seconds, 1 third;
- <u>2017 Points Finishes</u>: 3 firsts, 1 second, 1 fifth.

League Breakdown: Last season I played in 5 leagues. Three of those were high-stakes money leagues. Two are competitive private leagues. Four of the five leagues are 5+ years old. I serve as commissioner in three leagues.

My Fantasy Football History (since 2009)

- <u>Total Leagues:</u>   49

- <u>Reg Season Record</u>:   444-223 (.6656)
- <u>Playoff Appearances</u>: 41/49 leagues (83%)
- <u>Standings Finishes</u>:   21 firsts, 13 seconds, 3 thirds, 4 fourths, 6 fifths, 1 seventh, 1 eighth, 1 twelfth
- <u>Points Finishes</u>:   25 firsts, 11 seconds, 4 thirds, 2 fourths, 5 fifths, 2 eighths

2017 NFL Over/Under Bets Results:

- "Bet the UNDER on the Ravens to win 8.5 games."
    - Result: 9-7. LOSS.
- "Bet the UNDER on the Lions to win 8.0 games."
    - Result: 9-7. LOSS.
- "Bet the UNDER on the Jets to win 5.0 games."
    - Result: 5-11. PUSH.
- "Bet the UNDER on the Chiefs to win 9.0 games."
    - Result: 10-6. LOSS.
- "Bet the OVER on the Chargers to win 7.5 games."
    - Result: 9-7. WIN.
- "Bet the UNDER on the Colts to win 8.0 games."
    - Result: 4-12. WIN.

Last season, I went 2-3-1 on the over/unders in my Draft Guide. Not too good. I feel better about this year's picks, especially now that you don't have to go to Vegas to place these bets (shout out to SCOTUS!). You can bet these NFL over/unders in casinos in Mississippi! I may or may not have already done so…

2018 NFL Over/Under Bets:

- Atlanta Falcons OVER 9.0 wins
- Seattle Seahawks UNDER 8.0 wins
- Cincinnati Bengals OVER 6.5 wins
- New Orleans Saints OVER 9.5 wins
- New York Giants UNDER 7.0 wins

STILL APPLIES: SUPER FLEX LEAGUES ARE THE FUTURE

Fantasy football is stupid.

We play a game where players like Bilal Powell, Danny Woodhead, and Golden Tate are all somehow seen as MORE VALUABLE than Aaron Rodgers and Tom Brady – the NFL's best and most important players in reality.

Most of you who are taking the time to read this know that the reason Powell, Woodhead, and Tate are typically selected after Brady and Rodgers in fantasy drafts is a matter of supply and demand.

As fantasy experts throughout the industry will explain: drafting Rodgers or Brady in Round 1 is a rookie move. They'll tell you it's a smarter strategy to spend early draft picks on more valuable and scarcer positions like running back or wide receiver because the advantage of having an elite QB is not nearly as important as having quality depth at RB and WR. And because there are PLENTY of quarterbacks who put up quality numbers, experts advise you to wait before addressing the position.

Now stop reading and take a moment to think about what you just read. If you're a seasoned fantasy football veteran, this line of thinking probably seems totally normal to you.

Should it, though?

Imagine telling an NFL GM that you would rather focus on acquiring your second and third running back instead of Drew Brees in round 4. Think about the perplexed look on his face when you tell him that you can find quality quarterbacks later in the draft or even in free agency. That there's a surplus of good QBs in the league, so the position doesn't really matter that much.

There comes a time where you have to put things in perspective. That perspective comes quickly for anyone who has ever tried to explain fantasy football strategy to someone who has never played before. Try explaining to an NFL fan that Bilal Powell, Danny Woodhead, and Golden Tate are MORE VALUABLE ASSETS THAN AARON RODGERS, TOM BRADY, AND DREW BREES. Their most likely response is to think this game was STUPID and makes ZERO sense.

And they would be right.

Mainstream fantasy football roster constructions are currently lagging behind the times.

Essentially, as real football has become more dependent on strong QB play – quarterback is without a doubt the most important position in all of sports – running backs have become devalued to role players who split the workload and are dependent on the system.
But this has had the EXACT OPPOSITE EFFECT in fantasy football. The mass-pass hysteria has created so many good statistical QBs that they are now a lot LESS valuable in fantasy football, even though they've never been more valuable in REALITY.

While most everyone in your fantasy league has a backup QB who throws for 4,000 yards and 25 TDs riding their bench all year because they can only start 1 QB, we're usually HOPING our 2nd or 3rd RB, who plays fewer than 50% of snaps on his own team, but who we have to start, is going to get 10 touches in his game. It's idiotic nowadays.

Fantasy football is about statistics, so it's curious why in a league with so few bell cow RBs, where 62% of plays are pass plays, and over 80% of total yardage coming through the air, and at least 20 QBs putting up very respectable passing stats each year, that this game nevertheless continues to require you to start 2 or 3 RBs, and only 1 QB.

Simply put, based on the way the NFL is played today… it doesn't make sense!

I mean come on, early Average Draft Positions in expert leagues have dudes like Samaje Perine (who?) going AHEAD of top-15 real-life QBs like Eli Manning, Ben Roethlisberger, Carson Palmer, Philip Rivers, etc… simply because your 4th string RB is clearly more important in this game than your backup, or sometimes even your starting QB.

It sounds so ridiculous when you say it out loud.

It's time to stop sitting back and accepting this as normal.

While the NFL has evolved, fantasy football has de-volved (*probably not a word) to even worse than the dinosaur ages.

At some point, you have to stop answering "this is way it's always been done" and start asking WHY?
What's wrong with the game?
And how can we make it better?

SUPER FLEX IS THE ANSWER

Last year I tested out my version of what has been tabbed by industry experts as "Super Flex" leagues. That is, I added a Super Flex position (aka "Offensive Player") to the starting lineup, where you can play any offensive position in, INCLUDING A SECOND QB.

My starting lineup now looks like this:

QB
RB
RB
WR
WR
FLEX
SUPER FLEX (OP)
TE
K
DST

There are several excellent reasons to convert your league to a Super Flex league.

First, because the Super Flex allows for much more lineup FLEXIBILITY and CREATIVITY. If you've already selected Tom Brady, and you're in round 6 and you hate the best available RBs/WRs on the board, you can take Cam Newton if he would be your Best Player Available.

Second, now for your second flex spot, you have to choose between a QB, WR, or RB. This can make lineup decisions more CHALLENGING, or it can help people out of a bind if they have a rough BYE week situation or injuries to their skilled positions. This makes lineup decisions and coaching calls more difficult and more crucial.

Third, Super Flex can make the draft more INTERESTING AND UNPREDICTABLE. League members aren't constrained in the draft to oblige by one archaic strategy that everyone is robotically following. Roster Flexibility is key.

Fourth, QBs are more fun to watch and evaluate than most wrs/rbs. Everyone knows them and focuses on them because of their value in the real game, so there's a certain increase in the level of entertainment you get out of the game expanding the league to possibly starting 2 QBs or having your opponent start 2 against you. In other words, it's more fun to watch Tyrod Taylor or Carson Wentz play and score meaningful points than a 2nd flex option of Danny Woodhead or Marvin Jones.

What are the drawbacks of Super Flex lineups?

There are two criticisms.

1) Everyone would want to use a second Quarterback in the Super Flex spot because QBs score the most points. This makes them too valuable.

MY SOLUTION: Keep the Super Flex, but Lower your QB scoring.

The goal, in my opinion, should be to raise the value of QBs generally because they are devalued, but not to the point where it completely changes the dynamic of your league.

Therefore, if you do NOT want to make the league a "2-QB league" by default, I WOULD LOWER QUARTERBACK SCORING SIGNIFICANTLY so it aligns with the values of RB/WR scoring.

Because the values are even, you want your league members have the legitimate OPTION of playing a second QB in that Super Flex spot, or playing a RB/WR/TE there if your depth/matchups at those spots are better.

For example, lower your Passing TDs to a value of 3-4 points, and your Passing Yardage to 1-1.5 points for every 50 yards passing. You can mess with a variety of combinations to get the point values for each position to the point where you think they are fairest.

Personally, I think the ideal scoring system would have the scoring totals of QBs, RBs, and WRs, near even, maybe with QBs scoring slightly more (note that there will still be a greater demand for RBs/WRs in drafts because of positional scarcity and because you're forced to use a RB/WR in the other Flex).
In my scoring (a non-PPR system with bonuses and lowered QB scoring), the QB12 last year had 200 points, the RB12 scored 185 points, and the WR12 scored 191 points. This more evenly distributed weight on each position, which will enable roster flexibility and draft creativity (more on this in a moment)...

2) The other main criticism of Super Flex leagues is that there aren't enough starting QBs – in other words, if everyone in a 12-team league drafts 3 QBs now (1 starter, 1 possible flex starter, and 1 backup), then it adds up to 36 QBs... yet there are only 32 starting QBs in the NFL. The Math doesn't seem to add up...

MY SOLUTION:

To eliminate that legitimate concern, I would place a ROSTER LIMIT OF TWO HEALTHY QUARTERBACKS PER TEAM. This means that teams cannot have more than 2 QBs on their active roster at one point unless one of their starters is placed in the I.R. spot first, in which case they can add a third QB temporarily until the QB on I.R. is active again.

With this roster limit of 2 healthy QBs per team, in 12-team leagues there will ALWAYS be about 8 starting QBs in free agency at all times, alleviating any concern of not having enough QBs per team. Plus, this is not a 2-QB league. This is a Super Flex league. Even if there were no starting QBs in free agency, you still have the option of playing a RB/WR/TE in the Super Flex spot.

...

IN CONCLUSION, Fantasy Football needs to catch up with the times. It's a pass-first league, and QBs should be more valuable.

As a result, Super Flex is what the fantasy football industry is rightfully trending toward. Super Flexes will be commonplace / default settings among the mainstream sites in fewer than 5 years.

If you're serious about fantasy football like I am, you want to be ahead of the curve, not slow to adapt, and you want the best experience possible. Super Flex leagues are both. I strongly recommend trying out a Super Flex league (with lowered QB scoring).

Either way, I hope I have convinced most of you to at least be somewhat excited, intrigued, and interested to try out some version of Super Flex. If not, I would nevertheless be quite surprised if you felt the same way after trying it, as even those who voted against it in my other leagues last year ended up LOVING it.

Super Flex with lowered QB scoring is the way Fantasy Football should be played now.

PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE to ask me questions if you are thinking about trying it out in your league but are curious about settings or need help with scoring. I'm happy to answer.

Show off your Flex Appeal, and encourage your league commissioner to switch to a Super Flex format with lowered QB scoring this year!

Your Playoff System Stinks!
Implement the "G9" Playoff System:

The purpose of the playoffs should be to reward one of the best teams in the regular season that also finishes strongly in the playoffs. But so many people struggle to come up with the best way to accomplish this, as one-week individual matchups are too luck-driven and often driven by seeding, BYE weeks are too important and don't always go to the best teams, and there's always that pesky little question of what to do with Week 17…

The bottom line is that most playoff systems suck, and after thousands of complaints, ESPN finally realized this a few seasons ago when they changed their default system to two 2-week matchups that take place from Weeks 13-16. While this format is certainly an improvement over the prior single elimination tournament, it still has its flaws.

Whether you're a commissioner who has ever been yelled at because your playoff system is whack, an annual playoff contender who never seems to take home the trophy, or a regular old league member who is open to new playoff system ideas…

The G9 Playoff System is worth considering:

WHEN: Weeks 15-17 (the playoffs last three weeks)

ENTRY: The **top-4 teams** in the standings at the end of the Week 14 automatically make the playoffs.

A **5TH TEAM WILDCARD** can clinch a playoff berth if they achieve BOTH of these qualifications: The 5th Team Wildcard must have a record at or above .500 (7-7 or better), AND The 5th Team Wildcard must have more points than at least two of the playoff teams. If no other teams after the top-4 have met both of these requirements, the playoffs will proceed with four teams.

HOW THE G9 PLAYOFF SYSTEM WORKS:

Each team presumably goes into the playoffs at 0-0. There are no individual matchups between two teams in the playoffs. **Every playoff team plays every playoff team each week (weeks 15, 16, and 17).**

So if four teams make the playoffs, every team would accumulate three results (wins or losses) for each of the three weeks in the playoffs. The team with the best overall record in the playoffs will be declared the league champion.

Perhaps this is better explained with a demonstration:
If one team outscores the other three playoff teams in week 15, that team would go 3-0 for that week. If they outscored only one team, they would be 1-2, and so on. A coach's overall win/loss record throughout the playoffs is compiled for weeks 15, 16 and 17. By the end of the three weeks, each team should have a total of 9 games played. The team with the best overall playoff record will be declared the winner.

TIE-BREAKERS IN THE PLAYOFFS: If there is a tie in the 9-game standings (if two teams finish 5-4, for instance) the tie-breaker **goes to the team with the most total points in regular season PLUS playoffs.**

This tie-breaking procedure rewards teams for good seasons. Think of this as the "home-field advantage" for the better team throughout the season.

G9 also reduces the impact of Week 17 "sit-outs," while not eliminating them. We don't want to overhaul the entire system or eliminate a week of football (we only get 17 of them every year!) solely because of the possibility exists that 2-3 players MIGHT rest in week 17. Plus, we are forced to deal with variables every week; that's the nature of fantasy football. G9 keeps Week 17 relevant because it's still a legitimate and meaningful week of the NFL season, but because there are 9 mini-games that result from Weeks 15-17, the concern and impact of "getting screwed" by your star player who rests in Week 17 are minimized.

I created the G9 Playoff System 11 years ago and applied it to every league I've commissioned since, and I have NEVER gotten a single (NOT ONE) complaint about the system. Everyone loves it. You will too.

Again, encourage your Commish to adopt the G9 Playoff System!

Don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about it or need help implementing it!

My General Philosophy & Strategy Notes:

1. It doesn't matter WHEN you pick certain players; it matters WHO you pick.
   a. Player ranks are overrated. In the end, your draft is made up of Hits and Misses. Half the picks in every round will be misses. Misses are cut replaced by free agents.
   b. Perceived "value" of certain players is based on rankings that end up being completely inaccurate anyway.
   c. Don't be afraid to "reach" for players you like. As long as that player hits, it doesn't matter how high you selected him.
2. Any draft strategy works if you select the right players.
3. Safety First – How to spend early round picks:
   a. RBs on winning teams and/or with good QBs
   b. WRs with good QBs
   c. Rule of Thumb: With premium picks, steer away from poor QB play. So many early picks are ruined by a bad situation.
4. Risk Later – go for gold in later rounds.
5. Schedules are a piece of the puzzle, if used correctly, more important for RBs/DSTs than QBs and WRs.
6. Players who finished strong last season tend to carry over production to this season.
7. Discourage drafting players coming off significant knee injuries.
   a. Usually the NEXT year is the time to pounce, when regained 100% explosiveness and ADP is low.
8. Discourage spending early picks on free agents who just signed $$$ deal with new team.
   a. Usually the NEXT year is the time to pounce, after a year of learning new offense, timing down, when expectations are lower, and motivation to rebound is higher.
9. Discourage spending early picks on players who missed large portion of offseason due to injury / holdout
   a. Not as focused, more likely to be out shape, get injured, lack timing/rhythm w/ QB.
10. Encourage taking advantage of injury-prone stigmas. Injury-prone labels = possible discount value.
11. Discourage "filling out" RB/WR position early in drafts.
    a. For example, drafting WR-WR-WR to open pigeon holes your board.