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RB Rankings – Players Worth The Price Of Football Tickets

By Jay Nault

Today we'll continue our look at players who by themselves are worth the price of football tickets by ranking the RB's in the NFL who are a cut above the rest. A good RB can make a bad team a threat and a good team great. The "modern" RB presents a dual threat to opposing defenses, as the "new breed" of RB can both run and catch. There are still throw-back types who smash defenses in the mouth all day long, but they are more easily defended than the RB who can sprint out into the flat, catch a pass and break off a big play. As usual, more than statistics go into these rankings.

1. LaDainian Tomlinson

Tomlinson remains the best all-around RB in the NFL. He can run, he can catch, he's fast enough to outrun defenders, and he's basically a threat every time he touches the ball. He's deceptively elusive, and he's had years where he basically carried the Chargers' offense. Drew Brees should thank "LT" for his new mega-contract with the Saints, as Tomlinson made Brees' ability to pile up stats that much easier. He'll do the same thing for Phillip Rivers as he takes over at QB for the Chargers.

2. Shaun Alexander

Alexander is the reigning NFL MVP, and there's good reason for that. He's big, strong, fast and versatile. He's continually chewing up 4 or 5 yards per carry, and he's got enough speed to break a long run. Alexander also seems to have an innate ability to score touchdowns. He's the prototypical West Coast Offense RB, as he has great receiving skills and will block. He had a somewhat unfair reputation in recent years of being "soft," but he put that to rest in 2005.

3. Tiki Barber

Barber was the Giants' offense in many games last year, and many felt he should've been the MVP over Alexander. Barber ran for nearly 1,900 yards last year and he caught more than 50 balls out of the backfield. "Numbers" guys feel that Barber is too small to be durable, but like Alexander, he put that rap to bed in 2005 when he logged over 350 carries. Barber has helped young QB Eli Manning mature by taking a huge amount of pressure off of him with his running skills. Giants' fans bought their football

tickets for the sole purpose of seeing Barber in many games last year.

4. Larry Johnson

Many wonder if I'm crazy ranking "LJ" this low, as he tops many fantasy football rankings. However, this is reality, and Johnson has not done it long enough yet to outrank those above him in these rankings. He had an incredible second half of 2005, and he's looking to continue that trend this season. However, he's not a great receiver and he's working with a new coach and a revamped offensive line that lost at least one future Hall of Fame-worthy player in LT Willie Roaf. 2006 will help define Johnson's true skills.

5. Steven Jackson

Jackson is somewhat overlooked, but watch out for him this season. He rushed for over 1,000 yards

last season and only got 250 carries. This year, Marshall Faulk is not playing, and the coaching change in St. Louis will most likely benefit Jackson. The Rams will be running more than they did under Mike Martz, but the Martz regime did force Jackson to develop his pass-catching skills. Jackson is a load, runs behind a good offensive line, and will be a RB that gives opposing coaches fits in 2006.

6. Honorable Mention

There are three RB's who would be ranked in the Top 5, although each of them has a "but" next to their qualifications. Edgerrin James would be ranked, but he now plays behind a questionable offensive line in Arizona. Cadillac Williams would be there, but he needs to show he can play a full season, as his reputation for being injury prone was not dispelled last year. Kevin Jones would be there as well, but he hasn't had an opportunity to become the "new" Marshall Faulk in Mike Martz's offense. He could be there next year. Regardless, each of these three is still worth the price of football tickets, and each will be successful if healthy.

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The Cool Thing About Fantasy Football

By Chris Hinde

Everyone loves fantasy football and get very excited for the fantasy drafts. But, have you ever really thought about why? I mean, beyond the obvious.

Fantasy football is really the only place or way for you, an average person, to create a football team that you have control over. You choose which football player starts, and who is on the bench. You get to draft whatever players you want to your team based on their real life performance record. The really cool thing? Well, you don't have to worry about anything else. You don't have to deal with any money issues except for salary cap. That's it. You don't have to worry about how much money the fans are pulling in by purchasing tickets to your stadium, nor do you have to worry about purchasing the football equipment, such as football helmets like these:

http://www.sports-collectibles-store.com/Riddell_Deluxe_Football_Helmets-p-1-c-3.html

that your team

will be using. Now, that my friends...is very cool indeed.

So you basically have free reign of a team of great football players (if you've done your homework), and now can decide who plays when. Obviously, it is not as in depth as Madden Football, but this is more of a player game. Meaning, you choose your players based on their record in the NFL and create your team and score your points that way instead of making plays, you are making a team.

Now, my question is: What about college football? The enormous fan base across the US would make fantasy college football a huge presence in the sports world. Sure, it would be a lot harder to predict what players to pick because although they are way better than I would ever be at football, they are not always as consistent as most NFL players are. Especially when you are drafting your defense. But, just imagine how much more varied and exciting the world of fantasy football would be if you could create your own college team too.

You could go off of the "experts" top college football picks, starting with the team and working your way down. Just think of the huge potential talent that is stuffed away at big 10 colleges because they've already got their star quarterback or wide receiver. This would give little known players a chance to get their name out there before even completing college. You could help them kick start their career!

Chris Hinde is an aspiring sports column writer. If you would like to read more of his articles, please visit:

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