

What is fantasy football and how do you play?

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By Kevin Marshall

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Fantasy football is growing more and more popular by the second. It seems like everywhere you look you see another ad for a fantasy football related product or service and everyone is talking about this great game. But what is fantasy football, and more importantly, how do you play?

At the most basic level, fantasy football is a statistic-based game. You select real-world NFL players that will make up your fantasy team roster and score points based on how they perform in real-world NFL games. If your fantasy team scores more points than other fantasy teams in your league, you win.

With just this basic idea, there's an unlimited amount of variations on how to play fantasy football, and many fanatics have spent countless hours creating their own specific and detailed rules.

Sound interesting? Then here are some general steps and advice to starting your own fantasy football league.

Pick a commissioner

The first and most important step in starting your own fantasy football league is to pick a league commissioner. The commissioner will be the leader of your league. They'll be responsible for defining and enforcing your league rules. The commissioner is also in charge of organizing league events, calculating team scores, and keeping all teams informed and involved throughout the season.

As you can see, this is a very important decision. A good commissioner can make for a great fantasy football experience but a weak commissioner will quickly sap all the fun out of your league. Make sure to select someone who is willing to put in the required work, who is diplomatic and fair with others, and who is detailed oriented.

Note: For more information about selecting a commissioner and what's involved in the job I recommend you read the article *The Army had Patton ... You Have a Fantasy League Commissioner* by Joseph Legler at <http://www.draftwizard.com> .

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Get a group of people to play

Once you've got a quality commissioner in place, your next step is to get a group of people together who want to play. Most leagues are made up of 12 teams, but with a little creativity in your scheduling, you can play with just about any number of people.

Fantasy football may be a statistic-based game, but the real addiction behind the game is the community that it's played around so try to find other players that enjoy football at or around the same level that you do. Statistic lovers will enjoy fantasy football more if they are playing against other statistic lovers, casual NFL fans will enjoy playing with other casual NFL fans more than any other level of player. If you're a hardcore NFL fan that knows everything there is to know about football, you can

easily crush the casual NFL fan in a fantasy football league, but chances are you won't have much fun doing it.

Set up your rules

So you've got a commissioner and a group of players, now it's time to set up your rules. It's important to set up strict and well-defined rules for your league, but try not to sap all the fun out of the game with restricting rules. Your rules should be used more as guidelines than as laws. Be flexible enough to allow for change when a rule is shown to be inaccurate or the majority of your league demands such. Your rules are there to add structure to the game play. Remember that in the end, the game is supposed to be about fun.

Some general rules that you'll want to cover include what your roster limitations are, how trades will work, how free agency works, what your scoring rules are, and how team disputes will be handled.

Set up your league schedule

Next up, you'll need to put together a schedule for your league. Because your fantasy teams are made up of real-world NFL players and your points are based on their performance in real-world games, your schedule should be set within the course of the NFL regular season. It's recommended that the final game of your fantasy season be no later than the second to last game of the NFL regular season. This is because many real-world NFL teams rest their stars once they have qualified for the playoffs. These stars are almost certainly the same players that some of the teams in your league rely on. Additionally if your schedule goes into the playoffs, there is a strong chance that many of the real-world NFL players on various fantasy teams won't have any active games left.

Whenever possible, you should try to create a schedule which allows each team to play every other team in the league at least once.

Note: Draftwizard.com has a great tool to help you Create your fantasy league schedule.

Draft your teams

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Now that you've got your commissioner, set up your rules, and put together your fantasy schedule you're ready to have your fantasy draft. The point of your draft is to let all the teams in your league fill out their rosters in as fair and simple a way as possible.

Try to schedule the draft for a time when everyone can attend and participate. In general live drafts make for a more community filled and fun league, but, especially at first, a live draft can be a slow and drawn out process. The more organized and structured you can make your draft, the more fun each team should have and the quicker the whole process should go.

Note: Draftwizard.com has a great tool to set up and run your draft.

Play your games

Finally, you're ready to play your games! Submit your starting lineup, keep an eye out for possible trades or free agent pickups, gloat about your success, and trash talk to your league mates when they fail.

Most important of all, remember that fantasy football is a game and the basic idea, whether you're winning or losing, should be to have fun. So enjoy!

Kevin Marshall is the founder of various fantasy sports sites including www.draftwizard.com and www.supermug.com. When he's not deep into coding new and improved features for one of these sites, he's generally doing research which has helped him to win his league championship two years in a row!

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:

that your team

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

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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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