




FFU103: Fantasy Football Etiquette

 January 15, 2008

In baseball, you do not showboat when you hit a home run. In basketball, you don't chuck up three-point shots when your team is ahead by 25. In golf, you don't cough during someone's backswing. It's called etiquette... and, yes, believe it or not, there are rules of etiquette in fantasy football too. It is incumbent upon pupils attending class here at Fantasy Football University to learn and live by certain accepted codes of conduct or face possible blackballing by their league.

Remain Active

By this we don't mean getting 30 minutes of exercise three times a week, though by the looks of a lot of the couch potatoes and former jocks who participate in fantasy football, that's not a bad idea. Staying active in this context is all about league participation, and it begins right away on draft day. Don't be a chowder-head...pay your league fees on time! There is nothing worse than waiting for certain owners to pay their dues if you are the commissioner because it turns into a series of awkward and oftentimes confrontational phone calls and emails. Worse yet is the owner who doesn't pay the entry fee all season long and then makes the champion wait to collect his spoils in January just because someone is too lazy to get off their butt and drop a check in the mail. Staying active is about much more than money, though. It is about doing your job as an owner. It's one thing to forget that a certain player was already drafted and yell out his name two rounds later on draft day after a couple 13-14 barley pops; it's another thing to do so five times in a 14-round draft. Pay attention. This extends into the regular season as well. Get your lineup set on time each week and make transactions in an effort to improve your squad throughout the season. There is nothing worse than an owner who drafts his or her team, sets their lineup once, and then mails it in for the rest of the season. It's easy to spot said owner; they are the one with players on the bye week or Injured Reserve in their lineup for half the season. This effectively creates a bye week for whoever plays them and thereby compromises the integrity of the league. The same concept applies to those owners who begin the season 1-6 and have no shot at making the playoffs. Don't throw in the towel. You need to at least try to remain competitive. How would you like it if you were battling for a playoff spot down the stretch and your competition was playing against an owner who hadn't changed his lineup in a month? Don't be that guy. You signed up for the league, so follow through on your commitment.

Follow the Rules

This may seem self-explanatory, but by following the rules we mean both the letter and the spirit of your league rulebook. In other words, don't be that owner who constantly looks for loopholes to jump through or ways to circumvent the laws that govern your league. Fantasy football league rules, in many instances, have areas that are not specific enough to cover every possible event or circumstance that arises during the course of an NFL season. The prudent and ethical thing to do when you notice a loophole is not to exploit it, but to alert the league so it can be addressed. And in the event that an odd situation arises during the season that is not covered in your rules, let the commissioner and/or the objectivity of league owners make a ruling based on the reasonable intentions of the rulebook. And then don't be a jerk and complain about it just because it negatively affects your team.

No Collusion

There is no such thing as cozy relationships in fantasy football. It doesn't matter if your spouse, dad, or best friend is in the league. There is simply no tolerance for teaming up with another owner on the down low in an effort to make one of your teams invincible via purposely lopsided trades or other sneaky roster shenanigans. This is called collusion and it is the cardinal sin of fantasy football. It is the one instance in which commissioners or fellow owners have every right to veto trades and kick owners out of the league.

Practice Fair Trade Policies

Collusion is one way to misbehave when making trades. There are other more subtle things to consider when making trades as well. First of all, if someone offers you a trade, don't just ignore it. That's just rude. Furthermore, time is usually of the essence when making deals in fantasy football because of the deadlines for waiver claims, pickups, and lineups, so don't just respond to offers, do so quickly. And if you don't want to do the deal, simply say "no thanks" or, better yet, make a counter-offer to get the ball rolling on negotiations. Giving out disinformation or hiding information is also a lousy way to act when participating in trade talks. Don't tell an owner a certain player is hurt or benched when they aren't and don't hide the fact when they are. Full disclosure should be the basis for every trade. Calling up a buddy at work when he is not allowed to access certain Internet sites and offering him a running back who just tore up his knee in practice is cruel and deceitful.

Keep it Clean

And we don't just mean that you should refrain from using four-letter words around the kids, though again that's probably a good idea. What we mean is that fantasy football is about enjoyment and competition, so a little chest-thumping and trash talking is fine and actually expected. But don't take the smack talk to a personal level or to such an extreme that it's no longer frivolous banter. Crossing the line from civility to bad-mouthing is uncalled for. Keep it fair and keep it fun.