




FFU106: Basics to Free Agency

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As you know your ultimate goal each year is to capture your fantasy league's championship. Many people believe in the fallacy that if they draft a good squad, they can sit on their laurels and let the ship direct itself on the championship highway. However, most fantasy experts indicate that the draft constitutes only 50 % of your fantasy achievement in a season. Just drafting a good team is not enough and nobody ever comes away with a faultless team. Injuries to your players will occur, but if you are prepared, your season can nevertheless remain successful. We feel that as a fantasy owner your duties are more of a general manager than as a coach. As a team general manager you need to become more involved in the football decision-making process throughout the campaign. You need to actively pursue the other team rosters or the waiver wire of your respective league looking for trades or additions which will bolster your roster. It's imperative that you manage your fantasy rosters well to account for injuries, schedule match-ups, bye weeks and offensive tendencies.

There is no one set of strategy which will enable you to dominate your fantasy league. However, every season you will need at least several players from the waiver wire if you want to stay in contention for your league championship. If you want to improve your chances of winning, the art of upgrading your roster begins directly after your draft. Developing roster depth will allow you to substitute players on any given week. Our advice is to be an active owner and don't be afraid to take chances because procrastination normally becomes "instant death". If you wait on a decision, the player you desire will most likely be vanished and may end up beating you later in the year.

The waiver wire allows owners to drop and add players to their roster over the season. Most waiver acquisitions are conducted weekly with the teams having the worst record having first choice, followed by the second worst team, etc. Nearly all leagues allow a time period of one to two days whereby you may submit your choices. Some leagues carry out bidding on players after a set amount (salary cap) is determined for the season. Once you use your allotted amount, your waiver options are closed for the year. Others leagues, like many free online league services have the chaotic free-for-all which results in a first come-first serve basis. Thus, it's imperative to know and understand the waiver procedures which exist in your league. Be aware that the majority of leagues require some type of payment for the acquisition of players; therefore, you must be aware of rulings regarding this type of transaction.

Don't be fooled into thinking that players on waivers are not valuable. How many league championships were captured by teams last season who acquired the services of such players as quarterbacks Drew Brees or Billy Volek, running backs Reuben Droughns, Julian Jones, or Larry Johnson as well as wide receivers such as Drew Bennett, Brandon Stokely or a Nate Burleson.

We recommend taking a deep examination of each team's offense. If a team is performing inadequately in an area of the offense, chances are that they will continue to struggle throughout the season. The difference in many players abilities are very marginal and in the right circumstances that player should have equal opportunity as the previous starter. Take for example the Denver Broncos. Over the past few seasons, the player who wins the starting role is almost guaranteed a 1,000 yards season. Many experts hopped on the Quentin Griffin band wagon early but we questioned his durability and his ability to hold onto the football. After a sensational opening game against Kansas City, Griffin only touted the football 62 times the remainder of the season. Although we expected rookie Tatum Bell to become the starter by mid-season, injuries hampered him throughout the campaign. As a result, Reuben Droughns basically was awarded the starting role by default. Droughns finished the season with six 100 yards games and scored eight touchdowns. The Broncos exceeded the 100 yards plateau in eight of their games. Kansas City was another team that eclipsed the 100 yards barrier nine times last year with three different players. The key to a strong rushing attack relies on the quality of the offensive line.

We believe the toughest position to analyze may be wide receiver. Therefore, we make it a point to check pass targets every week. Several theories can be developed from pass targets. Chances are if a receiver is targeted often, his production will surface as the season progresses. On the other hand, if he is not targeted often in successive weeks, the probability of him producing throughout the season is greatly diminished. We also look at distribution among receivers. We become very wary of wide receivers that are part of an offense which likes to spread the football around like the New England Patriots.

Several rules are applicable with the successful management of your rosters in regards to waivers. Always be aware of who is available in your league. Injuries will occur at the most inopportune time during your season and you must act promptly. Always

examine your bye week situation closely. We strongly recommend planning ahead and to investigate replacements for your players who are in bye-week situations. Too often do owners wait till the last moment to generate substitutions for bye-week players. One should never assume that a team ahead of you will submit a move on the player during the current free agent cycle. If someone ahead of you on the wire does get him, you lose nothing and you move up on the wire. Always have alternate choices at a position in the case your first preference is unavailable. The lower your position is on the waiver wire, the more alternatives you need to include and make sure you apply preference to the players you desire.

Waiver acquisitions are vital to your team success throughout the season. Every season there are a few un-drafted players who will become key fantasy players. No team is ever impeccable and one must continually scrutinize their roster and employ careful analysis and decision-making skills. The waiver wire is exceedingly valuable and if you don't use it properly, you are going to have a very hard time winning a league solely with players you drafted. Again, the key is to become familiar with promising stars whether it is a rookie who is becoming accustomed to the speed of play in the NFL or a veteran backup behind an established performer. The way one maneuvers the waiver wire can greatly benefit your team's depth and strength. Team management is an art and the ability to add impact players throughout the season only enhances your chances of success in fantasy play. The longer you become involved in fantasy football the more you realize that the skill of being a fantasy owner revolves around your ability to draft, trade, pick up from the free agent list, and, most importantly, start each week.