




FFU602: Basic of Commissioning

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For those that are ready to take the leap, chances are you may have to start a league on your own. If you do, then the Commissioner duties would naturally fall to you.

First, you must decide if you are committed enough to be the King, ummm, Commissioner. This requires a special personality. A good Commissioner is dedicated to the good of the league above all other considerations (including his own personal team), ethical in all of his dealings and fair in all of his decisions. The importance of these three traits cannot be overstated. We will cover each to show you the reason why they are consider them trademarks of a great commissioner.

Dedication

One of the quickest ways to lose owners is to be late with reports. If you set schedules, follow them. Being a Commissioner requires a lot of work. You are responsible for scoring games, awarding Free Agents and validating trades. All of these things take time and effort. Recent advances in software have made them easier, but they still require a certain amount of time and effort. If you need to go out and party on Friday nights, you should let someone else be the Commissioner.

Ethics

Another way to lose owners and kill a league is to take advantage of people. Whether it be by not paying winners in Pay-for-play leagues, or favoring one owner over another in league decisions. The minute owners see you as unethical; you might as well fold the league. In the NFL, players must pass a physical prior to a trade being validated. If you, as commissioner, know that one owner is trading a player that has been injured to another owner without sharing that knowledge, I believe the trade should not be allowed. Many owners will disagree and state that every owner is responsible for keeping up with the information and if they spend the time, it is not their fault that others don't. I heartily disagree. Going back to the NFL example, there are times when the information is not readily available, hence the physical. I believe all dealings must be done in good faith if you want a league to last beyond one year.

Fairness

Never, ever, ever let personal feelings influence your decisions regarding an owner. It doesn't matter if you like the owner, or despise them. They are just as important to the success of the league as you are. And in fairness to everyone, when you make a decision, it is best if you send your reasoning with it. This way people can see that you have made a reasoned decision and not a personal one.

All righty then, now you can say, "No problem, I can do this Commish thing". What next? You need to complete a basic checklist that covers how you want to set you your league. This checklist should include things like number of teams, divisions and conferences, number of players on the roster and in the starting lineup, whether you are running an auction league or a draft league, how you plan on handling free agents and trades, how many weeks your regular season and playoffs will last. Pretty much everything you are going to put into your final rules, you want to include an entry on your checklist for. You will use this checklist to double-check your rules.

After you have completed the checklist, you will want to flesh out the rules, to include your scoring system. Remember, the more detailed your rules, the less chance for problems later. Also, your rules should allow for oversight by a committee of owners. The Commissioner is the King, but he MUST listen to his Court. I recommend that three owners be selected as an Executive Committee

that handles any appeals of a Commissioner ruling. Yes, this will mean that your decisions might be overturned on occasion, but remember the first quality required of a good Commissioner - Dedication to the good of the league above **ALL** other considerations.

Having a solid set of rules for the running of your league is a very good start but it by no means completes your job.

You will also need a couple of what I call "housekeeping" rules. First, the Commissioners specific duties and responsibilities should be clearly spelled out. Acceptable conduct of league owners should be thoroughly described (for instance, bragging/challenging remarks should be encouraged, while flaming/obscenity should be taboo). This paragraph should also detail the possible ramifications of "Conduct Unbecoming". A schedule of events, to include draft dates, trading deadlines, roster freezes, dates for discussion of rule changes and declaration of keepers should also be included. I would recommend that rules only be changed in the off season.

Now all you need to do is commit these rules to paper (or Web page) so that prospective owners can view them when deciding whether or not they want to participate.

Of course all this needs to be done early enough to allow for your draft, but once the rules are done, the fun begins.

Once this is done, you are ready to gather some owners and start your play.