



## Don't Be Shy: Trade!

Enough pixel dust has been spilled over the psychology of the fantasy trade to choke a wood nymph. So today, let's talk about the psychology of the nontrade. If you are gunshy, if the idea of dealing a fantasy stud makes your palms sweat, this note's for you.

Trade. It's what you play for. Fantasy sports originated because a few very sun-deprived, very biceps-challenged individuals believed they could run a sports organization better than real-life general managers. "Shake things up!" they shouted over their agate box scores, Strat-O-Matic player cards and gazpacho. "Deal that bum! Call up that kid! And for god's sake, get rid of those Burger King uniforms!" (Note: that last cry was most typically heard among fans of the early-'80s San Diego Padres.) If you're going to invest emotionally in fake sports, you might as well be a fake Jack McKeon, right?

Fantasy football, in particular, begs for the wheeler to meet the dealer. We all act as though we absolutely know what to expect in August, we draft accordingly, and then LaDainian Tomlinson, Steven Jackson, Frank Gore and Larry Johnson proceed to play like Moe, Larry, Curly and Shemp for a month. Meanwhile, the top point-getters in ESPN.com leagues include Derek Anderson, LaMont Jordan and the Minnesota defense. Collectively, we are Schultz from "Hogan's Heroes": We know nuth-thing. And we rarely get it right the first time.

But trading affords us the opportunity to get it right the second, third or fourth time. While generally speaking, I advise against dealing players who are extremely undervalued, or buying players who've monumentally surprised, so many more deals in fantasy football wind up being good and fun and worth it, rather than scary or soul-killing. Package three guys to get a stallion. Trade your extra wide receiver for a long-shot running back. The season, like life, is short. As Magnapop once intoned: "Careful stays and careless dies. But careless is and careful tries."

The best part about this is fantasy football may be the one such game where one deal can absolutely transform your squad. I guarantee there are at least five NFL players languishing unused on fantasy rosters from sea to shining sea who will, in the next two months, wind up blowing off your league's doors, causing upsets, unsettling favorites, inducing sneers. Go find those guys. I wish I could tell you who they'll be, but the truth is: Opportunity and circumstance will dictate these studs-in-waiting, and it's awfully hard to predict either of those things. So err on the side of gluttony. Deal for several players, stock them away like so many unfermented Bordeaux, awaiting the kind of chemical reaction that produces sweet results.

Make offers. Make counteroffers. Accept offers. Deal a pleasant surprise at the height of his grandeur, and take on a former stud who'll romp again. Pry a superstar away with your depth. Confuse your loyalties with your horse-trading. Cause your league mates' eyes to roll with your audacity.

This is what fantasy sports are for. Say yes.