

BEST-BALL DRAFT PLAN

By John Hansen

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Note: As we launched this new site, our first partnership of note is with the people over at BestBall10s.com and the [NFFC](#), whom I've known and have worked with for over 20 years. If you're into trying out a draft after reading this article, check these guys out.

I've never written up a draft plan for Best Ball, but in these times, I'm champing at the bit to get a handle on my plan of action for 2020, and before we (hopefully) get to season-long draft season, we first navigate Best Ball draft season. I haven't drafted a ton of Best Ball teams in my life, but I did participate in five of them last year while on the air on SiriusXM, and I wound up winning three of them ... I'm told that's a very good percentage. Best Ball is more about upside than any other fantasy format, and I've been about upside my entire career, so that probably explains my success in 2019.

I have spent a lot of time examining the Best Ball landscape by following the excellent ADP data from our partners over a BestBall10s.com, and I have participated in three drafts there since late-March, so I had a good feel for how I want to proceed leading up to the NFL draft. But with the draft now in the books, I've gone back to update this plan.

We here at Fantasy Points default to consensus rankings for keeper, season, and weekly rankings; but with this article, I'm on my own. I'm sure the rest of the staff agrees with 85-90% of my picks, but this here below is *my* plan, not exactly the site's plan.

Let's get to it.

THE QUARTERBACK PLAN

It's been a while since I've endorsed drafting a QB early in any type of fantasy football format, and for a couple of weeks there in March and April, I saw an opening to actually draft a QB early, but that ship has already sailed with **Patrick Mahomes** now commanding a 2nd-round pick in a 12-team BB draft, per BestBall10s.com's latest ADP. I had written in April that I would not take Mahomes unless he slips to the third round, and as of 5/5/20, that appears to be a pipe dream.

Mahomes does stand out to me as a league-winner, as **Lamar Jackson** was last year, but since he was being drafted in early May, on average, ahead of high-impact RBs like **Miles Sanders** and **Clyde Edwards-Helaire**, I can no longer endorse Mahomes. It was a fun few weeks, at least, when he was available in the 3rd round (and for the record, the rest of the staff didn't love my Mahomes plan even in the 3rd round).

So I probably won't take Mahomes, but a new and viable option has emerged in the first 50-60 picks of best ball drafts, and it's **Dak Prescott** (53 ADP as of 5/5). Considering his embarrassment of riches at receiver after the drafting of **CeeDee Lamb** at 17 overall, I will consider Dak - as long as the RB talent has dried up, which is possible. Like, if **Todd Gurley** is the best available back, the RB talent in my mind "has dried up."

Otherwise, I'm probably going to fade all other QBs going off the board in the top 100 overall. I'm not exactly feeling guys like **Russell Wilson**, **Deshawn Watson**, **Kyler Murray** and **Josh Allen**, who all have ADPs in the double-digits. Yes, those guys all run and are good fantasy producers, but other than maybe Murray, I don't necessarily view them as brilliant options. I may warm up to Wilson, but he's still a little too streaky to love at his price. Watson lost his stud WR and is rolling with two major injury risks at WR in **Will Fuller** and **Brandin Cooks**. And Allen hasn't progressed enough as a passer, so I'm not excited about those guys at their cost.

I'm more excited about some strong options who are more affordable, so if I don't draft Mahomes, I'll be targeting one of these guys 100-150 picks into a Best Ball draft:

- **Carson Wentz** (Phi, 115 ADP) – He wasn't a great fantasy guy last year, but he played well overall, and his WR corps can't get any worse than it was in 2019. I'm not worried much about **Jalen Hurts** vulturing some TDs here and there.
- **Daniel Jones** (NYG, 123 ADP) – He's clearly capable of putting up big fantasy numbers at least occasionally, in part because he runs, and so I see no reason to believe he won't continue to improve and ascend after a promising rookie campaign. I loved how they used their #1 pick in the 2020 NFL draft on an O-lineman.
- **Tom Brady** (NE, 123 ADP) – I'm not making it a point to get Brady, but I'll take him. I have Brady projected for 4400 yards passing and 30 total TDs, so he's squarely inside my top-12 at the position.
- **Baker Mayfield** (Cle, 131 ADP) – I'm not giving up on Baker, and in fact I'm fully behind him in 2020. His upside isn't through the roof because he doesn't run a lot, but 30 total TDs are within reach with so many elements crucial to his success improving in 2020, especially his OL with two new (and good) bookend tackles.
- **Ben Roethlisberger** (Pit, 140 ADP) – I love Big Ben's chances to go down as a great value this year, and anything they can get out of WR **Chase Claypool**, their 2nd-round pick, is a bonus.
- **Joe Burrow** (Cin, 148 ADP) – I'm a major Burrow believer, and because he will add to his fantasy totals with his legs, I view him as a very solid QB2. More often than not, quality rookie QBs who run RPOs have immediate success for fantasy, in part because there's no NFL tape on them.
- **Jimmy Garoppolo** (SF, 150 ADP) – Based on his solid play last year and his affordable price, I'm high on Jimmy as a nice pick in 2020. I also talked one-on-one with HC **Kyle Shanahan** at the combine and came away very encouraged about Jimmy G, Deebo, and even slot receiver **Trent Taylor** (who Shanahan told me was their best player in camp last year).

It may not be easy for me to get two of these guys listed above, but I'm also willing to take some other players if the value is solid, like **Matt Ryan**, **Matthew Stafford**, and **Jared Goff**. The sweet spot is about 100-150, and if you can get two of the options I've listed, I think you're looking good.

The other question about my QB plan for Best Ball is do I draft two or three of them? I do worry about being devastated at the position with multiple injuries, which can ruin a Best Ball team, so assuming we're going 20 rounds, I'd prefer to take three QBs. Options I'll be looking at 150+ picks into a draft include **Sam Darnold** (169), **Drew Lock** (168), **Gardner Minshew** (190), and **Derek Carr** (200). I also actually drafted **Nick Foles** (230) in the 20th round of a BB draft done on 4/4/20.

THE RUNNING BACK PLAN

Since fantasy players have continued to kick it old school by adding RBs early and often in drafts, my 2020 RB plan will continue to be to acquire as many strong options as possible. I usually default to getting one stud at RB and WR to open a draft, but since RBs are so valuable and tend to fly off the board (62.5% of the top-24 overall in BB were RBs as of 5/5/20, up from 58.5 before the NFL draft), and since WR is so deep, I'm perfectly willing to open a draft going RB-RB. In fact, I hope I have no choice but to.

Excluding all the top guys and consensus RB1s, here's a short list of RBs I'll be actively targeting for my RB2 spot from roughly 20-50 picks into a draft.

- **Miles Sanders** (Phi, 15 ADP) – Uh, oh. Since I first published this article 4/20, Sanders' ADP is up five spots and is approaching a Round 1 pick. I don't think you'll greatly regret taking him that early, but he's way more appealing in Round 2. The last two BB drafts I did in early April, I got the 7th and 8th picks, which forced me to go WR because I didn't love the RB options (took **Michael Thomas** and **Davante Adams**). Both times, I grabbed Sanders in Round 2 as my RB1. He's also a little dangerous going off the board this early, since he plays for a coach who



rarely commits to one guy, but he's also supremely talented and commands the ball. From Weeks 9-16, Sanders averaged a healthy 19.8 opportunities a game.

- **Kenyan Drake** (Ari, 18 ADP) – He's a little risky this early, but I actually drafted him more often than not in my BB drafts last year, and while it was slow going early, he likely won me a league or two because of his explosive output once he got to Arizona. That same upside obviously exists this year, big time.
- **Clyde Edwards-Helaire** (KC, 21 ADP) – I'm all-in on CEH, even at this high ADP.
- **Jonathan Taylor** (Ind, 25 ADP) – He may not remain a 3rd-rounder for long, but I'll still take him in the 2nd, shortly after CEH is off the board, and especially if I went WR in the 1st.
- **Melvin Gordon** (Den, 29 ADP) – He's a lock for 15-20 touches per week because they are apparently down on **Phillip Lindsay** and really down on **Royce Freeman**, which is why they signed Melvin. Denver's suddenly an interesting offense with several intriguing young skill players.
- **Mark Ingram** (Bal, 46 ADP) – I can't call Ingram a must-have, especially with **JK Dobbins** in town, but I'll take him. It doesn't hurt that he thinks he can play at a high level another few years, which I wouldn't rule out given his small-ish workload (he's never had more than 230 carries). His ADP is down six spots since Dobbins was added, and I honestly do not like the other RBs going off the board around Ingram (**D'Andre Swift**, **James Conner**, Dobbins).
- I don't see a ton of RBs I'm into in the 50-100 range, which is a reminder why it's important to grab as many quality backs as possible early in the draft, but there are some options I find appealing:
- **Cam Akers** (LAR, 50 ADP) – I did have **Darrell Henderson** here on 4/20 with a palatable 70 ADP, but Henderson's stock took a huge hit when they used their first pick (2nd round) on Akers, who is immediately the favorite to lead this team in RB touches. It could be an ugly committee, but I'd bet the cream (Akers) rises to the top and that the rookie has solid value.
- **David Montgomery** (Chi, 55 ADP) – I'm usually into more exciting options, but with 17.3 opportunities a game last year and no real competition in the backfield for early-down work, Montgomery has a real chance to produce well at this cost. The Bears offense has to be better this year because it can't get much worse than what we saw in 2019.
- **Ke'Shawn Vaughn** (TB, 82 ADP since the draft) – He's more of a workmanlike grinder than a dynamic creator, but he has good vision and untapped potential in the passing game, and he obviously landed in an ideal spot with only **Ronald Jones** to beat out for a huge role.
- **Kareem Hunt** (Cle, 80 ADP) – He's sketchy for sure given his off-field issues, but I'll take my chances for a guy as talented as Hunt, even if he's just an RB2 for his team. It's a new staff, but he was tremendous off the bench last year from the first series he played on.

Once I'm 100 picks into a draft, I generally want four quality RBs on my team, and for my depth I'm mainly looking for some promising rookies whose ADPs could rise if they're drafted by an ideal team. Plus, I'm looking for any viable longshots and handcuffs. The pickings are slim, but here are the players I'm highlighting outside the top 100 (per recent BB ADP in April):

- **Tarik Cohen** (Chi, 116 ADP) – He's still a good player, and **David Montgomery** was underwhelming last year. It seems a lot of people didn't notice that Cohen was 3rd in RB targets and 4th in catches last year - and the offense should improve.
- **Duke Johnson** (Hou, 140 ADP) – When I did Houston's RB projections last week, Johnson really stood out to me as a great selection this late. He's actually never run as well as he ran last year, and the only way he doesn't deliver nicely at this ADP is if **David Johnson** has a revival and handles 300+ touches. That's possible, but betting against a 28-year old (29 in December) back coming off three straight disappointing seasons is a good move, considering Duke's low price tag.
- **Boston Scott** (Phi, 137 ADP) – He averaged 5.75 catches a game the final four games of the 2019 season, and he caught 23 of 25 targets. I'll also draft **Scott Boston** if he falls far enough just because.
- **Anthony McFarland** (Pit, 173 ADP) – Some analysts are higher on him than others, but he has big-play ability and receiving potential, and it wouldn't be shocking to see him lead this backfield in touches, or at least to see him get 10+ opportunities a game.

- **Ryquell Armstead** (Jac, 184 ADP) – I like him a lot as a good stash-and-hope option. The Jags are very high on him and he can catch the ball well and pass protect. I've been out on **Leonard Fournette** all off-season, even though he's in a contract year, and the Jags would love to be out as well, only they're stuck for 2020.
- **Joshua Kelley** (LAC, 185 ADP) – He's a no-nonsense north-south runner, but that projects well alongside **Austin Ekeler**, so if he can beat out **Justin Jackson**, who has availability issues, Kelley is in line for 150+ touches, making him a very sneaky late selection. HC **Anthony Lynn** loves him and specifically wanted him for their revised running game, which will feature more zone concepts.
- **AJ Dillon** (GB, 150 ADP) – He could have zero value if he's buried on the depth chart, but then again if **Aaron Jones** misses time, Dillon could easily be looking at 15+ touches, and he could play over **Jamaal Williams** right away with Jones picking up Williams' work in the passing game.
- **Giovani Bernard** (Cin, 286 ADP) – Unusually small role last year, but in six starts from 2017-2018, Gio was highly impactful for fantasy. And since he's a **Clyde Edwards-Helaire** clone, he could very well get more love than expected with **Joe Burrow** locked in as the starting QB.
- **Darrynton Evans** (Ten, 210 ADP) – A long-shot, but he has a lot of juice along with legit receiving ability, and he might have a decent role behind **Derrick Henry**, since he's a different type of back and more versatile.
- **Damien Harris** (NE, 215 ADP) – There's talk of his role increasing this year, so he may actually get more than the 4 touches he got last year. Seriously, he's a **Sony Michel** injury away from having a big opportunity.

THE WIDE RECEIVER PLAN

My plan here, first and foremost, is to be smart because the ridiculous depth at this position the last few years is even more outrageous due to one of the stronger rookie WR classes we've seen in a while. Let's also keep in mind that, in **Best Ball drafts** conducted only in early May, just 25% of the picks the first two rounds (24 overall) are WRs, so loading up on wideouts doesn't make much sense and will likely crush you at RB.

I usually want at least one high-end option to anchor my WRs corps, so I'd usually prefer to open my drafts going RB-WR or WR-RB. The order in which I add these two stud players depends on which position I think will be the better pick in the second. Ideally, if I'm getting my RB first and then I'm targeting a guy like **Julio Jones**, **Tyreek Hill**, or **Chris Godwin** in the second. The most recent draft I did in April, I felt like I had to take **Davante Adams** in the first at #8 overall, and then the best RB in the second round was **Miles Sanders**. I'm willing to take Sanders that early, but I'd prefer to open a draft with a top back, and I include **Joe Mixon**, **Nick Chubb**, and **Aaron Jones** as worthy, and then I get a really nice WR like those mentioned above plus a few other strong options like **DeAndre Hopkins**, **Kenny Golladay**, and **Odell Beckham**.



It's worth noting that I don't see as much strength as usual with the consensus top-12 WRs, aka the WR1s, though, so I'm perfectly willing to go RB-RB to open a draft if I feel the two RBs are the best picks at the time, which they very well may be. Among the top-24 picks overall right now in Best Ball, 58% of them are RBs, so they are flying off the board. Locking in two RBs to open a draft is your best way of securing a strong RB corps, which is critical.

Basically, I'm staying flexible at WR while keeping in mind the unusual depth and the myriad solid choices available after the top-50 picks overall. In a perfect world, my ideal draft through five rounds has me taking 3 RBs and 2 WRs, for example. Here are some of the WRs I'll be targeting in rounds 2-5 (25-60 overall) as, ideally, my WR2.

- **Kenny Golladay** (Det, 27 ADP) – The only concern I have with Golladay is that it will be tough to improve his insane TD percentage from last year. The dude caught a TD pass on 10.5% of his targets, which is insane. But there's still a ton to like about Golladay, namely a healthy **Matthew Stafford**.
- **DJ Moore** (Car, 31 ADP) – I won't expect many TDs, but he should fit well with **Teddy Bridgewater**, aka Captain Checkdown.
- **Cooper Kupp** (LAR, 35 ADP) – I do like **Robert Woods** A LOT more, but I'm also into Kupp now that **Brandin Cooks** is gone.
- **Odell Beckham** (Cle, 34 ADP) – With his ADP down well over a full round this year, I'm willing to buy. OBJ will likely be volatile the rest of his career, but if you catch him in a good year, there is probably a good payoff, and 2020 feels like a good year.
- **Allen Robinson** (Chi, 39 ADP) – He absolutely balled out last year, only you may not realize that given the poor QB play. **Nick Foles** helps.
- **Adam Thielen** (Min, 42 ADP) – I'm not expecting a lot of passing here, but he will get some of the vacated 6.2 targets/game left by **Stefon Diggs**, and 10 TDs are doable for Thielen.
- **Calvin Ridley** (Atl, 47 ADP) – I didn't quite realize how good he was looking going into 2020 until I did his projections. This dude is looking at a ton of targets here this year, so I LOVE him as a 4th or 5th round pick.
- **Robert Woods** (LAR, 50 ADP) – He's very underpriced, which won't last too much longer (he's up five spots just the last two weeks). I'd take him 15-20 spots higher.
- Obviously, the desirable options don't stop here, but in the 60-100 overall range, I narrowed down the options I'm into, and they are:
- **Tyler Lockett** (Sea, 60 ADP) – I know he slumped late last year and can be volatile, but it looks like they will throw more this year, and his price is reasonable, especially given his ability to go off a few times a year.
- **D.J. Chark** (Jac, 62 ADP) – His was also a very nice second-year arrival, and even though **Laviska Shenault** has been added to the mix, Chark is the guy, and this price is very appealing.
- **Terry McLaurin** (Was, 63 ADP) – He was absolutely incredible as a rookie, and while his QB play is a concern, it's also baked into this surprisingly low ADP.
- **T.Y. Hilton** (Ind, 66 ADP) – I'm worried about age and injuries catching up with him, but most of my concerns are alleviated by his affordable ADP. **Phil Rivers** can get him the ball, for sure.
- **Jarvis Landry** (Cle, 72 ADP) – I didn't like him last year, but I was wrong. At the end of the day, he's reliable as hell ... if healthy.
- **Marquise Brown** (Bal, 77 ADP) – This is a little pricey, but especially if I was looking for some juice and upside, I'd pay up. Brown's a good bet to go nuclear three or four times in Year Two.
- **Jamison Crowder** (NYJ, 95 ADP) – Here's a guy I pushed hard last year, and he did come through, and targets should be even more plentiful this year with **Robby Anderson** gone. I can't say he's a great value, but the 8th round isn't bad for a guy who was a surprising 16th in WR targets and catches last year. **Denzel Mims** is a wildcard here, but Crowder's role in the slot is secure no matter what.

Through about nine rounds, I don't really feel the *need* to own more than three wideouts, but I'd expect to have three I feel good about. So in the 100-150 range, I'm mostly drafting backup types, but eventual top-40 guys can still be found this late if you focus on upside, which most in this next group have.

- **Diontae Johnson** (Pit, 103 ADP) – I loved what I saw from Johnson last year, and I cannot wait to see him with a major QB upgrade this year. He's probably my favorite WR target on the board in 2020. I'll take him as early as the 7th round, actually.
- **Jalen Reagor** (Phi, 135 ADP) – People may be unsure of his role exactly, but the bottom line is he's going to see the field a lot and he'll be moved all over the place and will be a threat both horizontally and vertically. I love Reagor, who we currently have projected as the #1 rookie WR for 2020.



- **CeeDee Lamb** (Dal, 100 ADP) – I think he’s a little more volatile than **Jerry Jeudy**, but he may also have more upside on this team in terms of his ability to post two or three huge games.
- **Mecole Hardman** (KC, 101 ADP) – I spoke with HC **Andy Reid** about Hardman at the combine, and Reid was impressed with his ability to get on the field quickly as a rookie. There are a lot of mouths to feed, but his speed can ensure two or three big games, which makes him worth it in Best Ball.
- **Breshad Perriman** (NYJ, 149 ADP) – I seem to be higher on Perriman than everyone else this year, but after struggling with drops and mental lapses earlier in his career, Perriman turned it around in 2019, dropping just one pass on 69 targets. Targets won’t be a problem for Perriman with **Robby Anderson** and **Demaryius Thomas** departing and opening up 154 looks from last year (9.6 per game), and I’m not yet sold that **Denzel Mims** can make a big impact in year one. Perriman’s ADP is down 10+ spots since the selection of Mims.
- **Anthony Miller** (Chi, 133 ADP) – Miller has definitely shown enough in two seasons to merit a flyer in the 12th round. There’s a large need for someone to step up in the passing game with **Allen Robinson**, and Miller is the obvious choice. **Nick Foles** is a lot more accurate than **Mitchell Trubisky**, and Foles usually does well targeting inside receivers.
- **Henry Ruggs** (LV, 128 ADP) – It’s Best Ball, so it’s all about upside, and at this low price, I don’t care if Ruggs has a **Marquise Brown**-type season, with 2-3 big games and not much else.
- **Justin Jefferson** (Min, 133 ADP) – He’s not elite at anything, but he’s very good at everything and, as expected, he was drafted in the first round by a WR-needy team. I don’t actually love the spot in Minnesota, but he will start right away and should get targets immediately, so I’ll buy at this affordable price.

And finally, the final six or seven rounds in Best Ball should be all about upside for the WRs, or mostly about upside. Here are the players who stand out to me as having that desirable ceiling.

- **Michael Pittman** (Ind, 168 ADP) – I don’t think he’s the best receiver in this class, but he’s my favorite receiver in this class, which is exactly how I felt about **Deebo Samuel** last year. Part of the reason I love him is that people are sleeping on him a little like Deebo last year, as evidenced by Pittman’s pre-draft 20th round ADP. He’s moved up 60 spots, which is a lot, but I’ll still take him 10 times out of 10 in the 14th round.
- **Desean Jackson** (Phi, 156 ADP) – You can’t truly count on him, but he’s an ideal BB pick because of his ability to go HAM any given week. He played essentially one game last year, and scored twice.
- **Brandon Aiyuk** (SF, 178 ADP) – He’s a little redundant with Deebo, but he’s a #1 pick in a great offense and they did need more help at WR. He’s a better deep threat than Deebo, too.
- **Antonio Gandy-Golden** (Was, 235 ADP) – He may need some time to develop, but there’s a huge need for his services here, and he may be able to get by on physical attributes alone as a rookie. Regardless, his upside vs. his cost is very appealing.
- **Bryan Edwards** (Oak, 237 ADP) – He’s a very solid prospect and should be set as their top outside receiver if **Tyrell Williams** has any issues, so he’s very much worth a shot this late.
- **Hunter Renfrow** (LV, 160 ADP) – I love Renfrow in general, and he’s penciled into a large role as their slot guy. His upside took a hit with three offensive weapons added in the draft, including former WR **Lynn Bowden**, who will play RB. But Renfrow’s ADP is also down 20 spots since the draft, so he’s still viable.
- **Parris Campbell** (Ind, 195 ADP) – He’s very talented and there’s a big need at the position in Indy, even with **Michael Pittman** added, so I will target him the final five rounds of every BB draft I do.
- **Josh Reynolds** (LAR, 215 ADP) – Don’t forget about this talented guy with **Brandin Cooks** now gone. He may not see the field a ton, as they go with a lot of 2-TE sets, but he will be a big factor for sure, and if there’s an injury, his value could skyrocket. The addition of **Van Jefferson** does hurt his floor, though.



- **Russell Gage** (Atl, 228 ADP) – He’s actually a bargain considering the likelihood that he sees 100+ targets. From Week 8 on last year, he averaged a robust 7.3 targets/game. Over 16 games that’s 117 targets, and at his 2019 66% catch rate, that’s 77 grabs this year. We have him projected for 62.
- **Miles Boykin** (Bal, 235 ADP) – Viable breakout guy in his second season, though the Ravens did draft **Devin Duvernay** and **James Proche**.
- **KJ Hamler** (Den, 236 ADP) – Great kid and he can run like **DeSean Jackson**, which is whom he compared himself to when I talked with him at the combine.
- **Trent Taylor** (SF, 240 ADP) – We’ll see where he is this summer, but in February at the NFL Combine, his HC **Kyle Shanahan** told me Taylor was their best player in camp last summer before he got hurt.

THE TIGHT END PLAN

As I mentioned in my Lessons Learned article here on the site, paying up for a top TE wasn’t a bad move on the surface, since the consensus top-3 guys, **Travis Kelce**, **George Kittle**, and **Zach Ertz**, all finished as top-5 producers. But Kelce out-scored the TE7 in PP/G (**Evan Engram**) by just +2.2 fantasy points per game. Compare that to the WR1 vs. the WR7 (+6.5), the QB1 vs. the QB7 (+7.3), or the RB1 vs. the RB7 (+10.7), and drafting the top TE doesn’t seem as appealing – especially since you’re going to pass on some outstanding RB options to get a Kelce, Kittle, or (to a lesser extent) Ertz.

I was not targeting any of those studs last year and preferred to focus on the second tier guys like Engram, **Hunter Henry**, **OJ Howard**, and **Jared Cook**. But as you likely know, their overall results were poor. Of the consensus top-12 TEs last year, all 12 ADPs were in the range of 15-100 overall. But in terms of the actual finishes in 2019, only five of the top-12 producers had an ADP of less than 100, so 58% of the top-12 producers were available 100+ picks in. I looked back at the previous 3-4 seasons, and each year 4-6 of the top-12 producers were typically available 100+ picks into a draft.

So, since I want at least 1-2 high-end WRs and as many strong RB options as possible, I’m planning on fading all the TEs with top-100 ADPs (other than maybe Henry, whose ADP is down to 88 now). I actually did that last year in my #1 league (the ACI from my SXM radio show) when I grabbed my preseason pick for breakout TE of the year, **Mark Andrews**, as my TE1 with the 138th pick of the draft.

It’s certainly not easy to nail down a great value at TE in every draft, but you seriously increase your chances if you draft two or more strong breakout candidates in a season-long draft. In a Best Ball draft, you’d be wise to draft three, which obviously improves your chances of hitting on a great value. And I think you can withstand making three TE picks because you’re not addressing the position until you’re 100+ picks into the draft. Luckily, there are a plethora of candidates this year, which cements my 2020 TE strategy (for now, we’ll see about August).

Here are my favorite TE targets for 2020 and their Best Ball ADPs as of early May:

- **Hunter Henry** (LAC, 88 ADP) – I’m concerned about his QB situation, but I can’t quit Henry, especially with him now landing as an 8th round pick as of 5/5. At that point, Henry’s upside isn’t easy to pass up.
- **Hayden Hurst** (Atl, 133 ADP) – **Austin Hooper** was a fantasy stud in this offense before getting injured, and I actually think Hurst is a little more talented. He’s 27 years old, so he’s not exactly ascending, but he’s still in his prime and his game is improving for sure. I love Hurst as a BB pick in the 11th or 12th round.
- **Mike Gesicki** (Mia, 113 ADP) – He saw a promising 7.1 targets a game from Week 9 on in 2019, and he stands out as possibly this year’s **Mark Andrews**.
- **T.J. Hockenson** (Det, 121 ADP) - I’m still 100% convinced this guy is going to be a stud, and with a year under his belt and his starting QB returning, I’m expecting a significant jump.
- **Jack Doyle** (Ind, 135 ADP) – He’s as unsexy of a pick as possible, but I’ve always had a soft spot for Doyle, who is usually Mr. Reliable. **Philip Rivers** will appreciate and use him often just like **Andrew Luck** did.
- **Blake Jarwin** (Dal, 145 ADP) – He’s been intriguing since 2018, and now he’s the guy with **Jason Witten** gone. Granted, they added a stud WR in **CeeDee Lamb**, which hurts Jarwin’s PPR upside, but I would not be surprised if he scored 6 or so TDs this year, as **Dak Prescott** leans on him at times in the middle of the field. This is a guy who dropped 7/119/3 on 8 targets playing with Dak Week 17 of 2018.

- **Eric Ebron** (Pit, 160 ADP) - He's volatile and TD-dependent, but they have been dying for an athletic TE in Pittsburgh for years. If things click, he could easily score 7-8 TDs playing with a good QB in Big Ben.
- **Chris Herndon** (NYJ, 170 ADP) -- **Adam Gase** may ruin him like he ruins everyone, but they are still quite high on Herndon. I actually asked Gase about him at the 2019 combine and he called him a "unicorn," which I think is a compliment.
- **Dawson Knox** (Buf, 190 ADP) - The Bills absolutely love him, which I can see because he's very athletic and is one of the most likeable guys you'll find in the league. We can't expect a blowup on this team with a shaky QB and three quality wideouts, but I'll take my chances on a talent whose team is high on him this late.
- **Jace Sternberger** (GB, 191 ADP) – Of all the rookie TEs I've interviewed at the combine, and there have been many, my favorites are **Travis Kelce**, Hurst, Knox, and this guy. I saw a lot of Kelce in his game, and right now he's poised to be the guy for the Packers. He's my favorite TE2 with upside, for sure.

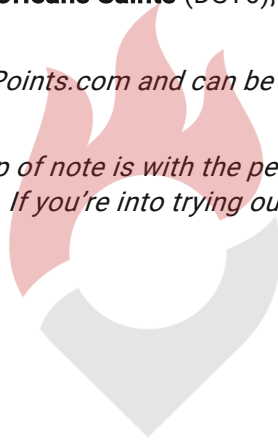
THE TEAM DEFENSE PLAN

I don't have much here, but I will say that I've already drafted the **Pittsburgh Steelers** in a Best Ball draft, and I think so highly of them that I didn't even grab a backup. I loved the Steeler defense last year, actually, and I had them as the #2 DST on my board, and they were #2 in 2019. I feel the same away this year about the **Baltimore Ravens**.

Otherwise, I'd plan to draft two defenses in Best Ball, and my favorite cheap options to target this year include **Tampa Bay Buccaneers** (DST10), **New Orleans Saints** (DST6), **Kansas City Chiefs** (DST8), and **Chicago Bears** (DST7).

John Hansen is the majority owner of FantasyPoints.com and can be heard every weekday morning from 7-9 AM ET on SiriusXM's Fantasy Sports Radio.

As we launch this new site, our first partnership of note is with the people over at BestBall10s.com, whom I've known and have worked with for over 20 years. If you're into trying out a draft after reading this article, check these guys out.



BEST-BALL NOTEBOOK: QUARTERBACKS

By Graham Barfield

Published July 14, 2020

Over the last few years, there has been a growing debate within the fantasy community about how to fix QB scoring. It's clear a change is needed. Running quarterbacks have broken the standard scoring system used in most leagues while QBs that can't scramble, like **Kirk Cousins** and **Jimmy Garoppolo**, are automatically at a disadvantage unless they throw for 35 touchdowns.

Superflex and 2-QB leagues sort of remedy the supply side of the problem at the position -- there are at least 25 startable quarterbacks every week -- but in best ball, the surplus of depth works in everyone's favor. Since you don't have to set a weekly lineup and everyone has access to a deep player pool, building your QB corps is the easiest position to strategize in best-ball leagues.

HOW MANY QBS SHOULD YOU TAKE?

In **BestBall10 leagues**, you have to fill 20 roster spots and start 1 QB, 2 RBs, 3 WRs, 1 TE, 1 FLEX (RB/WR/TE), and 1 D/ST every week. The format forces everyone into basically just two options for roster construction. This year, 98% of the team's drafted in Fanball's BB10s have taken 2 or 3 quarterbacks.

Whether or not you roll with 2 or 3 quarterbacks on your squad is a matter of team-building philosophy. Knowing optimal roster construction is one of the biggest edges you will have over your opponents and at quarterback specifically, all you need to apply is a bit of common sense. Obviously you don't want to hang yourself out to dry and only have two QBs with the same bye week, like **Kyler Murray** and **Drew Lock** (Week 8). While that's an easy mistake to avoid, some other pitfalls aren't so straightforward.

For example, if you draft **Lamar Jackson** in the third round -- you're banking on him being your team's top-scoring quarterback almost every week. Since your opponents in this range are all likely going to be drafting running backs and wide receivers, the opportunity cost of drafting a QB in Round 3 is, very likely, worse RB/WR depth than your teammates. However, after you take Jackson, the next quarterback you take should always be in the late-rounds. Why spend two premium picks on QB?

I'm just not sure spending up at quarterback -- even if it's Jackson or for **Patrick Mahomes** -- is optimal this year. Instead, I find myself defaulting to a mid/late-round quarterback strategy in most leagues because drafters are overconfident on who the best fantasy QBs are going to be, the late-rounds are always full of upside, and the math for 2-3 mid/late-round QBs makes sense. The last few years have been proof that a mid/late-round QB strategy works extremely well.

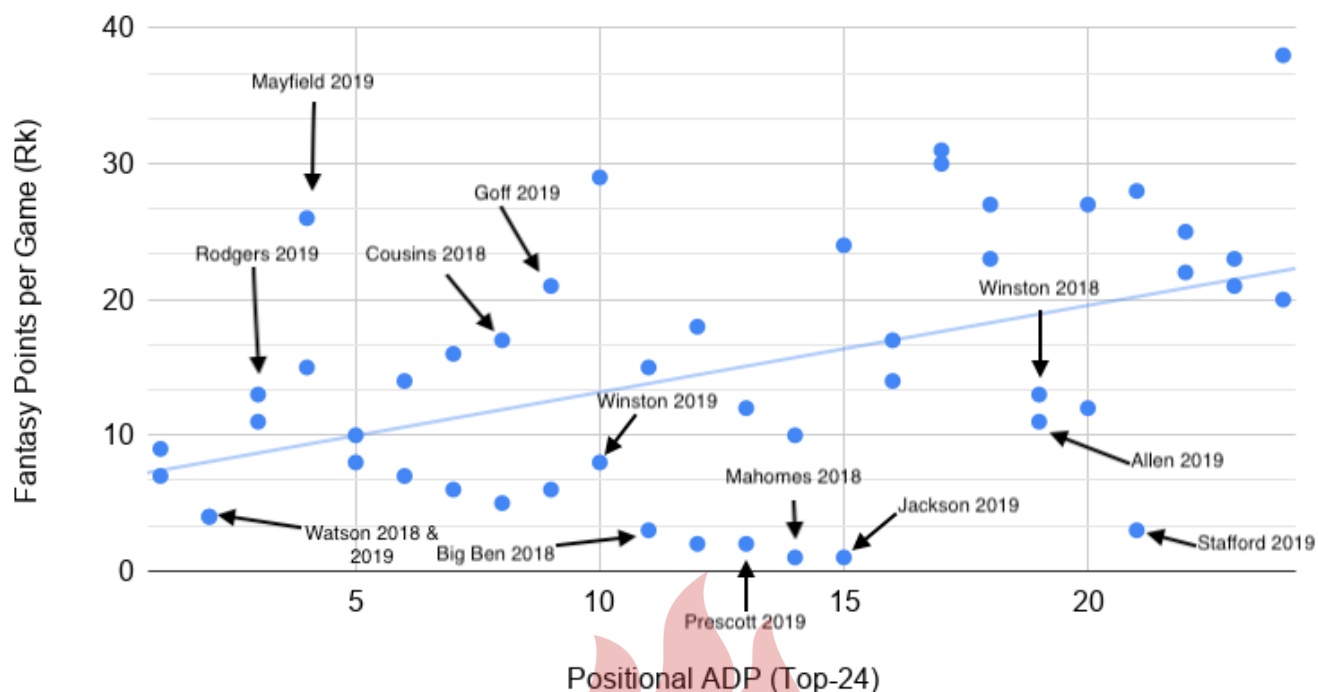
ADP IS STILL INEFFICIENT

Over the last two years, exactly 50% of the quarterbacks that were among the first eight QBs taken in drafts actually finished top-8 in fantasy points per game.

Unlike running backs, who rely on volume, quarterbacks rely on efficiency (or rushing) to score their fantasy points. And since efficiency is fairly unpredictable on a week-to-week basis -- even Mahomes fails in great matchups from time to time -- we get a fairly wide range of outcomes for passers on any given week in fantasy football.

This plot of the top-24 quarterbacks in average draft position vs. their actual finish (in fantasy points per game) shows just valuable a mid/late-round QB strategy has been over the last two seasons:

QB PPG Finish vs. Positional ADP (2018-19)



This graph shows two things. First, early-round QB drafters aren't very good at picking which quarterbacks are actually going to be best. 2020 will definitely test that theory, though. It would be a shock if **Patrick Mahomes** and **Lamar Jackson** finish outside of the top-5 QBs -- but Mahomes and Jackson's greatness still doesn't take away from the second and more important point. The sweet spot for QBs over the last two years is between QB5 and QB15 in ADP as 15 of the 22 quarterbacks (68%) taken in this range have either met or exceeded their fantasy output based on their draft slot.

Mahomes and Jackson both finished as the No. 1 scoring quarterback while being taken outside of the top-12 in positional ADP in back-to-back years, but the success stories don't stop with those two. **Dak Prescott**, **Josh Allen**, and **Matthew Stafford** all smashed their late-round ADP last season, **Ben Roethlisberger** was one of the best values in 2018 drafts, and **Jameis Winston** out-performed his late-round ADP in back-to-back seasons.

2020 is setting up as another perfect year for those who wait on quarterback and draft for value. Granted, best ball drafters aren't making any egregious mistakes at quarterback in the early-rounds this year -- Mahomes and Jackson are usually the only two QBs that go in the first four rounds and usually after 25 overall -- but the QB pool is looking deeper than ever this season.

WHICH STATS EXPLAIN QB SCORING?

Before I get into the actual player analysis, it's important to know which stats should you be looking at to help inform your QB decisions. To get a better understanding of how QBs actually score their fantasy points, I correlated a few of the most important QB stats -- like pass attempts and touchdowns -- to determine how positively or negatively they correspond to actual points.

STAT	CORRELATION
Dropbacks	0.86

STAT	CORRELATION
Pass Attempts	0.84
Passer Rating	0.62
Passing FP/Dropback	0.62
Rush Attempts	0.55
Pass TD%	0.54
YPA	0.49
Completion%	0.45
aDOT	0.14
Pass INT%	-0.36

The results were pretty straight-forward with volume (dropbacks and pass attempts) being the main two drivers of fantasy scoring followed by four efficiency metrics (passer rating, passing fantasy points per dropback, TD%, YPA, and completions) as the top-8 metrics that matter.

For reference, I subtracted out every quarterbacks rushing totals to determine just their passing fantasy points per dropback and, it is, by far, the best efficiency metric we have to evaluate quarterbacks. Since every passer gets similar volume every week -- between 25-35 attempts -- the gap between finishing QB8 and QB18 is often just a few fantasy points every game. Also note that touchdown rate (TDs divided by attempts) and yards per attempt are both in the same neighborhood as rush attempts.

If you're deciding between two quarterbacks who you expect to have similar efficiency, always default to the one who runs.

QB TIERS

TIER 1

- **Patrick Mahomes**
- **Lamar Jackson**

TIER 2

- **Dak Prescott**
- **Kyler Murray**
- **Russell Wilson**

TIER 3

- **Deshaun Watson**

- **Josh Allen**

TIER 4

- **Carson Wentz**
- **Matt Ryan**

TIER 5

- **Tom Brady**
- **Daniel Jones**
- **Baker Mayfield**
- **Joe Burrow**
- **Matthew Stafford**
- **Drew Brees**
- **Ryan Tannehill**
- **Ben Roethlisberger**
- **Jared Goff**
- **Aaron Rodgers**
- **Jimmy Garoppolo**

TIER 6

- **Cam Newton**
- **Gardner Minshew**
- **Kirk Cousins**
- **Drew Lock**
- **Sam Darnold**
- **Derek Carr**
- **Philip Rivers**
- **Teddy Bridgewater**



TIER 7

- **Dwayne Haskins**
- **Justin Herbert**
- **Tyrod Taylor**
- **Nick Foles**
- **Tua Tagovailoa**
- **Ryan Fitzpatrick**

Note: These tiers are based on our season projections.

QBS TO TARGET

Dak Prescott (Round 5-7) -- I've found myself drafting Prescott quite a bit when the running back pool dries up or my WR/TE targets aren't on the board. Prescott is usually taken over 30 picks later than Mahomes and Jackson and even though his ceiling isn't as high as those two, Prescott has an amazing floor and is probably one of the safest picks you can make within his ADP range. If Prescott does bust, it'll only be because of an injury. Over his first four seasons, Prescott has finished as the QB6, QB10, QB10, and QB2 (2019) in fantasy points per game and arguably has the NFL's second-best supporting cast behind the Chiefs. Prescott's rushing upside is still underrated, too. Over the last two years, Prescott ranks 4th among all QBs in red-zone carries (33) behind **Lamar Jackson** (65), **Josh Allen** (43), and **Deshaun Watson** (37). Prescott has quietly averaged nearly 20 rushing yards per game over his career, too.

Kyler Murray (Round 5-7) -- On a team level, the Cardinals should be incredibly fantasy-friendly. Last year, HC **Kliff Kingsbury** leaned pass-heavy and ran an extremely fast-paced attack despite having a rookie QB and below-average surrounding talent. Arizona called pass on 59% of their plays (15th) and ranked 4th in pace (seconds in between snaps) when the game was within a score (+/- 7 points). Now, Murray has **DeAndre Hopkins**, and his addition will allow Kingsbury to run the 4-WR offense he had to mostly scrap last year because Arizona didn't have the personnel. Murray just posted the fourth-most fantasy points by a rookie QB all-time, finished second behind **Lamar Jackson** in rushing yards at QB, and cleared 18 fantasy points in 11-of-16 games last year. I've been taking Prescott ahead of Murray, but I wouldn't argue if anyone has those two flipped in their rankings.

Josh Allen (Round 8-9) -- Allen is one of my favorite values in fantasy this year regardless of position. Most drafters are simply underrating how big **Stefon Diggs'** addition is for Buffalo, mainly because it will allow OC **Brian Daboll** to run a significantly better version of the attack the Bills were trending towards. Daboll increased the Bills 3-WR usage as the season progressed last season, using 11-personnel on 77% of plays in Weeks 9-17 (2nd-most) after having 3-WRs on the field on just 60% of plays in Weeks 1-8 (17th). Now, the Bills have one of the NFL's best pure route runners in Diggs, one of the best deep threats in **John Brown**, and **Cole Beasley** running out of the slot. Last year, Allen had one of the best floor/ceiling combinations among all quarterbacks, clearing 17.5 fantasy points in 13-of-15 starts. Allen's fantasy appeal is tied to his rushing upside -- he leads the Bills in carries inside of the 10-yard line over the last two years (and has scored 13 TDs on these rushes) -- and only **Lamar Jackson** (81.6) has averaged more yards on the ground than Allen (40.8) among quarterbacks in this span. Allen will never be one of the most efficient passers in the league because of how aggressive he plays and because his accuracy comes and goes, but I'd argue Allen's playing style actually *helps* his fantasy outlook. As **PFF's Ian Hartz** noted, Allen never checks the ball down and is always looking to push downfield or scramble if no one is open. Allen will be my main QB target in every seasonal league in 2020.

Matt Ryan (Round 9-10) -- Perennially underrated, I've spent all summer buying Ryan in dynasty leagues and drafting him as much as possible in seasonal leagues. Ryan is simply one of the most underrated fantasy QBs in recent memory. I'm sure this will come as a shock to many, but Ryan has finished as a QB1 (top-12) in 65% of his starts over the last two seasons -- which is more often than **Deshaun Watson** (61%) and not too far behind the elites (Mahomes/Jackson - QB1 in 73% of games). Ryan has finished 3rd in pass attempts in back-to-back seasons and the Falcons project to be one of the NFL's most fantasy-friendly teams again thanks to their leaky defense and pass-first attack. In OC **Dirk Koetter's** return last year, Atlanta was the most pass-heavy team when leading (58%) and the third-most pass-heavy team in the league when the game was within a score (63%) and when trailing (75%). Sometimes fantasy isn't sexy, but don't make this hard. Just draft **Matt Ryan**.

Daniel Jones (Round 10) -- Last year, Jones was the QB15 in fantasy points per game despite never making a start with **Saquon Barkley**, **Evan Engram**, **Sterling Shepard**, and **Golden Tate** all on the field. You have to hunt for big-spiked week potential in best-ball leagues and Jones has it. Last year, Jones scored 25 or more fantasy points four times in just 12 starts -- joining **Cam Newton**, **Robert Griffin**, **Russell Wilson**, **Josh Allen**, **Kyler Murray**, **Andrew Luck**, and **Deshaun Watson** as the only QBs to put up 25+ points more than three times as a rookie. Danny Dimes also has underrated rushing upside after clearing 20 yards on the ground seven times last season. Plus, all of Jones' stacking options are all relatively cheap with **Evan Engram** going in Round 7 while all of the Giants receivers come off the board in Round 9-12.

Ben Roethlisberger (Round 12-13) -- Back in 2018 when Roethlisberger was healthy, the Steelers were the most pass-heavy team when the game was within a score (66.4%) and when trailing (81.5%). Big Ben's health is an obvious concern, but it's not like you have to pay the iron price to figure out whether or not he can recapture an elite fantasy ceiling. Before his elbow fell apart last year, Roethlisberger had previously finished top-10 in fantasy points per game in four of his 5 previous seasons. If you draft **JuJu Smith-Schuster** or **Diontae Johnson**, make sure you target Big Ben late for the stack. The only problem with Roethlisberger is that you probably have to draft a 3rd QB no matter what in order to insulate yourself from any missed time.

Ryan Tannehill (Round 13) -- Tannehill just posted the second-most passing fantasy points per dropback over the last three seasons -- only Mahomes' 2018 was better -- and no one wants to draft him. I can't make sense of it. Sure, Tannehill will regress. There is no way he can sustain 9.6 yards per attempt (best in NFL) or a 7.7% touchdown rate (second-best) because he's not **Russell Wilson**, but I also don't think we should expect his

efficiency to just fall to below-average levels. Outside of losing G **Jack Conklin**, the Titans are running the same exact offensive ecosystem that worked so well in 2019, and Tannehill now has a full offseason to prepare with OC **Arthur Smith**. Plus, after clearing 20 yards or scoring a touchdown on the ground in 6-of-13 starts last year, Tannehill has underrated rushing upside to boot. The only concern is that the Titans are extremely run-heavy -- they called a run on 50% of plays when the game was within a score last year (second-highest rate) -- but I think we can safely project the Titans to throw a little bit more in 2020. In theory, you don't give a QB a four-year extension worth up to nearly \$120M to only let him manage games.

Jimmy Garoppolo (Round 13-14) -- Since joining the 49ers, Jimmy GQ has finished as a QB1 (top-12) in weekly output in 38% of his starts -- which is exactly how often **Aaron Rodgers** finished top-12 last season. In 2019 alone, Garoppolo had four games with 25 or more fantasy points. So did Rodgers. While Garoppolo is basically free (162 overall ADP), Rodgers goes in Round 10 (116 overall). Sometimes finding arbitrage isn't hard. If the 49ers find themselves trailing just a little bit more often in 2020 after winning 13 games last season and leading on 71% of their offensive plays (4th-highest rate), Garoppolo will absolutely crush his late-round ADP. Plus, he's easy to stack with **George Kittle** and/or **Brandon Aiyuk** late.

Teddy Bridgewater (Round 14 or later) -- Everyone loves the Panthers weapons and thinks new OC **Joe Brady** is going to build a great offense, but no one wants to draft Bridgewater. It's a total blind spot. I've never been high on Bridgewater's talent, but he's being drafted as a No. 3 quarterback on a team we should expect to be a carnival. Carolina ranked 2nd in points allowed and was 25th in FootballOutsiders defensive DVOA metrics last year and just lost **Luke Kuechly**, **Eric Reid**, **James Bradberry**, and basically their entire defensive line (Addison/Irvin/Butler/McCoy/Poe). Two things are for sure: Carolina is going to give up a ton of points and run an up-tempo offense. That is a perfect recipe for fantasy goodness.

Gardner Minshew (Round 14 or later) -- Want to take a guess at who was No. 2 behind **Lamar Jackson** in rushing yards off of scrambles last year? That's right. It was one **Gardner Minshew II**. Minshew's rookie season has flown completely under the radar and I think it's mostly because people are just biased towards the Jaguars. As someone who lived in Jacksonville for 10 years (and they are technically the only team I have somewhat of a rooting interest in)... I totally get it. But last year, Minshew finished as a QB1 in 46% of his starts while **Kyler Murray** did so in 44% of his games. Now, I am by no means saying Minshew will out-score Murray this year nor am I implying that the two are remotely comparable fantasy picks, but Minshew is undeniably a great value right now. And, the Jaguars win total is the lowest in the NFL (5.0), so they should have to throw a ton.

My most-drafted QBs this year are: Bridgewater (on 30% of teams), Garoppolo (25%), Allen (20%), and Prescott (19%) followed by Ryan/Jones/Wentz/Tannehill (15%).

QBS TO FADE

Deshaun Watson -- This isn't so much of a fade and more of a "beware." Watson will have to carry Houston now more than ever since Texans' oligarch **Bill O'Brien** replaced All-Pro WR **DeAndre Hopkins** with 30-year-old **Randall Cobb** and **Brandin Cooks**, who has suffered five known concussions in six career seasons. Between Cooks and **Will Fuller**, the Texans have one of the most fragile supporting casts in the NFL now that Nuk is gone and Watson is still being drafted as if nothing has changed. Watson and **Russell Wilson** essentially have the same exact average draft position (around 75 overall) and **Josh Allen** usually goes 1-2 rounds after Watson.

Aaron Rodgers -- Fading Rodgers in fantasy has been a profitable idea for two years now as the once-great QB has basically become an expensive middling QB2 on a team in the middle of an identity change. All of the Packers offseason moves suggest that HC **Matt LaFleur** wants to lean more on the run, become more balanced, and take control away from Rodgers. And even with Rodgers doing whatever he wants offensively over the last two years, he's not exactly been great efficiency-wise. If we combine the 2018-19 seasons and look at passers with 250 or more attempts in this span, Rodgers ranks 14th in passer rating, 22nd in touchdown rate, 25th in yards per pass attempt, and 31st in completion rate.

Tom Brady -- Over the last two years, Brady has finished as the QB15 in fantasy points per game in back-to-back seasons despite having some of the NFL's worst surrounding weapons. **Chris Godwin** and **Mike Evans** are

inarguably one of the games best two duos, but going into his age-43 season, I'm not finding much value in Brady's ADP. **Daniel Jones, Baker Mayfield, Matthew Stafford,** and **Jared Goff** all go off the board well after Brady is taken and all of those quarterbacks are within 10 points of him in our projections.

Sam Darnold -- Call it low-hanging fruit, but fading **Adam Gase** is never a bad idea. In Gase's career without **Peyton Manning**, his offenses have ranked 21st > 24th > 25th > 31st > 32nd in yards per game (2015-19) and finished 23rd > 17th > 28th > 26th > > 31st in points per game. Lol. Darnold (182 overall ADP) is cheaper than Bridgewater (175), but I believe in the Panthers ecosystem and surrounding talent way more than the Jets. I especially couldn't imagine taking Darnold over **Jimmy Garoppolo**.



BEST-BALL NOTEBOOK: RUNNING BACKS

By Graham Barfield

Published July 15, 2020

So far this summer I've completed over 50 best-ball drafts. Am I a sick individual? Possibly. Have I just been bored? Most definitely. I'm mainly just a believer in having skin in the game to test which players I'm convinced on and how to build fantasy teams. But, one theme has been common in all of these drafts: Running backs are coming off the board earlier and faster than ever. The common strategy this year is to hammer running backs in the early rounds and it has reignited the Zero RB "debate" within the fantasy community.

This year, 15 running backs go in the first two rounds and 21 total are taken in the top-40 picks. In 2018, 12 RBs went in the first two rounds while 18 were taken in the first 40 picks. Three years ago, 12 RBs went in Round 1-2 again but just 14 RBs in total were taken in the top-40. That's a huge shift in the market in just three years. Scarcity is pushing RBs up the board and it has simultaneously created a buying opportunity for wide receivers in the mid-rounds since more than half of the first 40 picks are all running backs. **Adam Thielen**, **Calvin Ridley**, both Rams WRs, and **Tyler Lockett** are all fourth-round picks.

The thing is, pushing RBs up the board is somewhat justified. Running backs are the most valuable asset in fantasy and have dominated recently. ***Over the last four years, 11 of the top-12 non-QB fantasy scorers over the course of each season were running backs. Additionally, 17-of-24 non-QBs in total fantasy points were RBs in this span (that's 70.8%).***

In season-long leagues with a weekly waiver wire, rolling with a zero RB strategy or just building your teams around WRs is a proven league-winning strategy -- but I argue that it's a lot harder in best-ball. Fading running backs in the early rounds is all about profiting off of randomness and it requires many of the expensive, workhorse backs to fail or get injured. Opportunity is king at running back and ADP is fairly efficient, **unlike quarterback**. The first three to four rounds of drafts are generally filled with all of the running backs that are expected to lead the NFL in touches.

In an environment where the first 24 picks are dominated by running backs, I've found myself starting most of my drafts either RB-RB or RB-TE and then basically not touching the position again until Round 6 or later unless a player I'm targeting falls. numberFire's JJ Zachariason wrote an article earlier this year and found that, on average, **50% of league-winners at running back go in the first two rounds** while just 8.8% of league-winners are drafted in Round 4 and 5 combined. The mid-rounds are constantly filled with potential landmines at running back and this year is no different. (I'm looking at you, **Raheem Mostert**). If you're going to go Zero RB or with a modified Zero RB approach, your best odds of finding value at the position is in Round 6 and beyond. It's possible to find league-winners in the late rounds of best-ball, but that requires both good drafting *and good luck*. With finite roster spots and no waiver wire, Zero RB requires precision drafting and that isn't always easy to do.

Knowing when to take your RBs is only a part of the equation, though. Roster construction -- how many players you should take at each position -- is also a massive edge you can have over your opponents.

HOW MANY RBs SHOULD YOU TAKE?

In **BestBall10 leagues**, you have to fill 20 roster spots and start 1 QB, 2 RBs, 3 WRs, 1 TE, 1 FLEX (RB/WR/TE), and 1 D/ST every week. RBs, WRs, and TEs all earn one point per reception. This year, 81% of teams drafted on Fanball have taken at least five or six running backs with 3% of teams only taking four RBs and 12% taking seven backs. SharpFootball's Rich Hribar analyzed **winning roster construction in best-ball leagues over the last three years** and found that there wasn't much of a difference in win rate between rosters with five (9.2% win rate) or six (8.5% win rate) running backs. Interestingly, going with just four RBs (8.1% win rate) was as nearly as optimal as taking 5-6 but taking seven RBs (7% win rate) was clearly detrimental.

On my teams, I have taken 5 or 6 running backs 86% of the time but have started to warm up to a robust 4 RB approach if the board falls just right. For example, I have a few teams where I've started **Saquon Barkley-Clyde Edwards-Helaire-Melvin Gordon** when I pick second overall and **Travis Kelce, George Kittle, and Chris Godwin** are all gone when it's my turn to pick in the late-second. This approach allows you to ignore running back for the rest of your draft, you can easily take an extra WR or a 3rd QB like we previously discussed, and it especially works if the three RBs you take all have separate bye weeks. I wouldn't go out of my way to have a bunch of 4 RB teams, but the data suggests it's still optimal.

OPPORTUNITY FUELS RB SCORING

It's widely understood that the more touches a running back gets, the more likely he is to score fantasy points. But how well do touches actually correlate to points? Does efficiency matter? To find out, here is how some of the most important RB stats correspond to PPR fantasy points:

STATS	CORRELATION
Snaps	0.93
Routes	0.91
Rushing Yards	0.91
Carries	0.89
Targets	0.88
Receptions	0.87
Receiving Yards	0.87
Rushing TD	0.85
Goal-line carries (inside the 5)	0.78
Receiving TD	0.69
Yards per Route Run	0.29
Yards per Carry	0.22
Yards after Contact	0.08



FP/Touch

0.02

The numbers are clear here. ***Snaps, routes, and touches are, by far, the most important stats you should be projecting at running back followed by scoring opportunities (inside-the-5 carries). YPC and yards after contact are nearly 3 times less influential on fantasy points than any opportunity stat. An efficiency stat like fantasy points per touch is essentially worthless and using it as a key point in your projections will actively make them worse and noisier.***

Of course, things like how good the surrounding team is and offensive line play also matter, but the two things you should be basing your picks around are simple. Snaps and touches. Also, note that targets essentially have the same correlational value to fantasy points as carries. That's because, **as Scott found a few years ago**, targets are 2.75 times more valuable than a single carry in terms of expected PPR fantasy points. All touches are not created equal. A running back that gets 180 carries and 60 targets on one of the best offenses in the league is not getting equal opportunity to a running back getting 230 carries and 20 targets on a bottom-5 offense. Finding the backs that not only run a lot of pass routes but actually earn targets on those snaps are the true league-winners. Unless your name is **Derrick Henry**.

RB TIERS

TIER 1

- **Christian McCaffrey**

TIER 2

- **Saquon Barkley**
- **Ezekiel Elliott**
- **Alvin Kamara**

TIER 3

- **Joe Mixon**
- **Dalvin Cook**
- **Derrick Henry**
- **Miles Sanders**

TIER 4

- **Aaron Jones**
- **Kenyan Drake**
- **Josh Jacobs**
- **Nick Chubb**
- **Clyde Edwards-Helaire**
- **Austin Ekeler**
- **Melvin Gordon**

TIER 5

- **James Conner**
- **Jonathan Taylor**
- **Le'Veon Bell**
- **Todd Gurley**



- **Leonard Fournette**
- **Chris Carson**
- **Mark Ingram**
- **David Montgomery**
- **David Johnson**
- **Cam Akers**

TIER 6

- **Raheem Mostert**
- **Kareem Hunt**
- **Devin Singletary**
- **D'Andre Swift**

TIER 7

- **James White**
- **Tarik Cohen**
- **Damien Williams**
- **Ronald Jones**
- **Ke'Shawn Vaughn**
- **Jordan Howard**
- **Tevin Coleman**
- **Sony Michel**
- **J.K. Dobbins**

TIER 8

- **Marlon Mack**
- **Derrius Guice**
- **Duke Johnson**
- **Zack Moss**
- **Phillip Lindsay**
- **Alexander Mattison**
- **Kerryon Johnson**
- **Tony Pollard**
- **Latavius Murray**
- **Chase Edmonds**
- **Matt Breida**
- **Darrell Henderson Jr.**
- **Boston Scott**



TIER 9

- **Nyheim Hines**
- **Giovani Bernard**
- **Anthony McFarland**
- **Ryquell Armstead**

TIER 10

- **Darrynton Evans**
- **Damien Harris**
- **Justin Jackson**
- **Joshua Kelley**
- **A.J. Dillon**

- **Jamaal Williams**
- **Antonio Gibson** *Note: Gibson is listed as a WR in BB10s, which makes him harder to draft. He's listed as a RB on Underdog and a great late-round target.
- **Adrian Peterson**
- **Carlos Hyde**
- **Chris Thompson**
- **Mike Boone**
- **Jerick McKinnon**
- **Benny Snell Jr.**

RBS TO TARGET

Alvin Kamara (3-5 overall) -- Great advice, right? Target **Alvin Kamara!** Fantasy is easy! In all seriousness, I still think Kamara has underrated upside even as a top-5 pick. His 2019 season was completely harpooned by an ankle and knee injury. But, before he got hurt, Kamara was just as effective as ever. From Weeks 1-6, Kamara was averaging 20.8 opportunities (attempts and targets) and 108.2 scrimmage yards per game. He just got a little unlucky in the TD department by only scoring twice in those 6 games. Kamara was the same dynamic player he's always been before getting hurt and was 2nd among all running backs in missed tackles forced per touch (0.32) in Weeks 1-6. In Weeks 10-18 after he returned from an injury, Kamara ranked 39th-of-52 RBs in missed tackles forced (0.14). Kamara and **Ezekiel Elliott** are way closer in expected fantasy points than the general public believes.

Miles Sanders (Late-Round 1, Early-Round 2) -- HC **Doug Pederson** had to roll with a running back by committee for the first few years of his tenure in Philadelphia not because he *wanted* to but because he *had* to. Any coach would run a committee if their RBs were all replacement-level guys like **LeGarrette Blount, Josh Adams, Wendell Smallwood, and Corey Clement**. Pederson finally has a featured back in Sanders and he knows it. **Jordan Howard** missed the back half of last season which cleared the way for Sanders to ball out. In Weeks 11-17 without Howard, Sanders averaged 18.7 touches and 17.2 fantasy points per game. Those figures would have ranked 10th and 11th, respectively, over the full season. And, in this span, only three running backs ran more pass routes than Sanders. Honestly, I hope that the Eagles do add a veteran like **Devonta Freeman** or **Lamar Miller**. It'll only make Sanders cheaper. His rookie year was genuinely one of the best we've seen in NFL history as only 16 RBs have produced over 1,200 scrimmage yards on fewer than 250 touches in their first season all-time. This list includes names like Kamara, **Todd Gurley, Reggie Bush, Maurice Jones-Drew, Herschel Walker, and Tony Dorsett**. Fantasy is all about predicting future points and Sanders' ceiling is top-5 while his floor is, at worst, RB15 because of his involvement in the passing game.

Austin Ekeler (Round 2-3) -- Ekeler will be hard-pressed to repeat his 93/993/8 receiving line from a year ago now that **Philip Rivers** is gone, but his role is just so valuable. Ekeler routinely falls out of the top-10 running backs overall in best-ball drafts but he is the exact type of back we want to target. Last year when **Melvin Gordon** sat out in Weeks 1-4, Ekeler was the RB2 in PPR points behind **Christian McCaffrey** as he played on a bell cow-like 71% of Chargers snaps. Even once Gordon returned in Week 5, Ekeler ranked 8th among all running backs in routes run and was 2nd in targets. Now, Gordon is gone and Ekeler's only competition for touches is **Justin Jackson** -- who only earned 6.8 touches per game in Week 1-4 last year -- and fourth-round rookie **Joshua Kelley**.

Clyde Edwards-Helaire (Round 2-3) -- My **yards created love letter** should suffice here.

Melvin Gordon (Round 3) -- No disrespect to **Phillip Lindsay** who is a good player in his own right, but I think Gordon is the Broncos bell-cow. In this RB economy, you don't give a free agent a nearly completely fully guaranteed deal unless you're going to use him as a featured back. About 85% of Gordon's two-year pact with Denver is guaranteed and he'll be making \$8M/year on average (7th-most among RBs). Our guy Adam Caplan has suggested that Denver views Gordon as their No. 1 and Lindsay as the change-of-pace. That makes a ton of sense. Last year, the Broncos tried to make **Royce Freeman** a thing but ended up having to roll with as Lindsay their featured back again and it didn't result in anything special for fantasy. Keep in mind, Lindsay is only 180lbs and doesn't have the frame to be a workhorse back. Gordon does. Over the last four seasons, Gordon ranks 9th among all backs in **Scott's weighted opportunities (attempts plus targets) per game metric** that adjusts for the value of passing targets. Gordon is also

a significantly better receiver than Lindsay. In arguably his worst season as a pro since his rookie year, Gordon averaged 1.4 yards per route run and earned 4.6 targets per game. Meanwhile, Lindsay averaged 0.9 YPRR and earned 3.0 targets per contest.

David Montgomery (Round 5-6) -- This is all about cheap volume and buying into positive TD regression. Last year, Montgomery was 14th among all RBs in snaps played, 18th in touches per game, and tied for 3rd with **Joe Mixon** in inside-the-5 goal-line carries. Last year, Montgomery *scored two or more touchdowns below expectations* based on his volume. 12 running backs saw 12 or more inside-the-5 carries and averaged 7.1 TDs on those attempts. Montgomery scored just five times on his 18 inside-the-5 carries. If you're drafting for volume, there is zero reason for Montgomery to go 25+ picks later than **Leonard Fournette** (whose average draft position is 24 overall) and a round or two later than **David Johnson** (whose ADP is 43 overall).

Kareem Hunt (Round 6-7) -- Once he joined the team last year, Hunt ranked 3rd in receiving yards, 4th in receptions, 6th in targets, and 9th in routes run among RBs in Week 10-17. All of Hunt's passing game usage made him nearly as valuable as Chubb on a weekly basis despite seeing significantly less work on the ground. Over the Browns final eight games, Hunt averaged 12.7 fantasy points per game while Chubb put up 13.0 FPG. Hunt has the floor of a low-end weekly RB2 and would be a league-winner if Chubb misses time.

James White (Round 7-8) -- Over the last two seasons, White has finished as a weekly RB2 (top-24) or better in PPR leagues in 71% of his games. For reference, **Tarik Cohen** is a very similar back in terms of usage -- but has only finished top-24 in 50% of his games over the last two years. Combining the 2018-19 seasons, White is 5th in routes run and 2nd in targets among running backs. White is a strong weekly RB2 in PPR leagues and is being drafted as RB35. That's amazing value. Adding **Cam Newton** is just icing on the cake.

Tevin Coleman (Round 8-9) -- Coleman's efficiency was brutal last year -- he ranked dead last in yards after contact per attempt -- but many have completely forgotten that he suffered an ankle injury in Week 1. You won't want Coleman in most 10- or 12-team season-long redraft leagues because of how unpredictable the 49ers RB usage is, but Coleman is way too cheap in the game he's perfectly suited for. As *4for4's TJ Hernandez noted*, there were 341 instances of a RB accounting for at least 60% of his team's backfield touches in a game last season. Only three of those instances came from the 49ers backfield, which was the fewest of any team in the league. Fade Mostert. Draft Coleman.

Jordan Howard (Round 8-9) -- Cheap, boring volume is still valuable volume. We have Howard projected for 210 carries, which is tied for 18th-most among RBs, but his ADP is RB41! Since entering the league in 2016, Howard ranks 10th in rushing yards per game (68.3) despite playing for two different teams. Still only 25-years-old, Howard has plenty of good football left and should be the Dolphins clear No. 1 over **Matt Breida**. In his career, Breida has handled 15 or more carries five times in 46 career games.

Zack Moss (Round 10-11) -- Wrote *my full thoughts on Moss and his short- and long-term outlook* back in April. I am lukewarm on Moss' ability as a runner but he is undoubtedly a better receiver than Singletary. I still don't know why Moss has remained 5-6 rounds cheaper than Singletary in best-ball leagues throughout the summer.

Chase Edmonds (Round 11-13) -- My favorite late-round dart throw at RB. Edmonds is way cheaper (ADP: RB51) than more popular "handcuff" type players like **Alexander Mattison** (RB44), **Latavius Murray** (RB45), and **Tony Pollard** (RB47) -- but I'm not sure he should be. Like we saw last year, Edmonds can handle a full workload if **Kenyan Drake** should miss any time and his only competition for touches as the Cardinals No. 2 back is seventh-rounder **Eno Benjamin**, who finished last in this class in yards created per attempt. Plus, Drake can't play every snap. There is a path for Edmonds to have a decent floor on 8-10 touches per game.

Anthony McFarland (Round 13-15) -- Led the 2019 rookie class in yards created per attempt and is arguably already the best pass-catching back on the roster. **James Conner** is the clear No. 1 in this backfield still and has been a top-15 fantasy back when healthy, but he has missed 9 starts over the last two seasons and our Dr. Edwin Porras has *been preaching caution on Conner this offseason*.

Damien Harris (Round 14 or later) -- **Sony Michel** has a degenerative knee and just had another surgery, this time on his foot. Harris only played five snaps in his rookie year and was pretty over-hyped as a prospect but this is a total "bet on randomness" play here. The Patriots have refused to give **Rex Burkhead** more than 94 touches in a season

and **James White's** passing down role is clear, so if Michel misses time or is not effective, the Pats could turn the "lead" rushing role over to Harris. Plus, with **Cam Newton** in the backfield, New England is going to be run-heavy and his presence will help their run game in general. I'm targeting Harris whenever I can as my RB5 or RB6.

Gio Bernard (Round 16 or later) -- Bernard has averaged 19.8 PPR points on 17.5 touches per game in Mixon's four missed starts over the last three seasons. If Mixon misses time, Bernard is a locked-in top-15 RB.

Carlos Hyde (Round 16 or later) -- It's so boring, but Hyde is a nice value at his 184 overall ADP in BB10s. **Chris Carson** and **Rashaad Penny** are both coming off of injuries and if they miss time during the season, Hyde is a perfect fit in Seattle's scheme and is more than capable of having a few nice games for fantasy. Hyde is about to be 30-years-old but got a good one-year deal (\$2.8M; \$750k guaranteed), which likely means he'll be involved in a small weekly role even if Carson (hip) and Penny (ACL) are both healthy. Despite playing for four different teams over the last four years, Hyde has remained effective and is tied with **Leonard Fournette** in yards after contact per carry (2.7; 24th-of-46 RBs) in this span.

Mike Boone (Round 19 or later) -- I'm targeting Boone late in every league. If Cook holds out or misses time due to injury, Boone is, at worst, the 1B as a part of a committee with **Alexander Mattison**. There is also a decent chance Boone is just better at football than Mattison is. Last year, Boone had a 39% success rate (carries that gained positive expected points) on his 49 carries while Mattison's success rate was dramatically lower (31%) on double the carries (100). Boone is also a much better athlete than Mattison. Per PlayerProfiler, Boone is a 91st percentile SPARQ athlete based on his combine performance while Mattison rates out in the 60th percentile.

My most drafted RBs so far are: Edwards-Helaire (on 38% of teams), Gordon (31%), Coleman (31%), and Howard (27%) followed by Sanders (21%), Edmonds (21%), Barkley (18%), and Kamara (17%).

RBS TO FADE

Nick Chubb -- I love Chubb as a player. I just hate his price. Last year, I was all-in on Chubb when he was a late-2nd or early-3rd round pick because he had the backfield all to himself for the first half of the season. Chubb was subsequently the RB5 in fantasy points per game (19.7) in Week 1-9. However, once Hunt joined the team off of suspension in Week 10, Chubb's production dropped drastically. From that point on, Chubb was the RB23 in fantasy points per game (13.0), his target share dipped from 12% to 5%, and **Hunt out-scored him in 6-of-8 games**. Chubb's ADP (13 overall) for a player that likely won't be involved in the passing game is incredibly pricey.

Aaron Jones -- Even though no one should expect Jones to repeat his absurd 2019 season where he scored 19 times on 285 touches, his ADP (17 overall) is a few spots higher than both **Josh Jacobs** (20 overall) and **Austin Ekeler** (21 overall). The Packers could get Jones more involved in the passing game -- his targets have increased every year he's been in the league (18 > 35 > 68) -- but touchdown regression will hit Jones hard, especially if **Jamaal Williams** and **A.J. Dillon** are heavily involved. Even without the second-rounder Dillon on the team last year, Jones averaged significantly fewer snaps per game (41.4) than **Chris Carson** (48.2). Carson goes in Round 4 of best-ball drafts. (Side note: If you play in a dynasty or keeper league, you should be buying Jones. His cost in startups has plummeted to the 3rd or 4th round despite most people being extremely confident in him in seasonal leagues. He's only 25 and is so much more talented than Williams and Dillon.)

Leonard Fournette -- Few players got as unlucky as Fournette did in the touchdown department last year. It's really, really hard to only score just three times on 341 touches. The thing is, Fournette wasn't *that* unlucky. Remember that **David Montgomery** stat from earlier? The one about Montgomery only scoring five times on 18 carries inside-the-5? Well, Fournette only got 8 carries from inside-the-5 last year because the Jaguars were rarely in scoring position. All three of his TDs came on those goal-line carries. So, before you think that Fournette is going to dramatically increase his touchdown total in 2020, understand that he rarely actually got the opportunity to score last year. Will that improve this season? I don't think so. The Jags' have the NFL's lowest win total (5) and are coming off of a season in which they ranked 12th in red-zone plays (inside the 10 yard line) and 9th-worst in drives ending in a score. Fournette's receiving totals are also projected to dip dramatically after he turned his 76 receptions into just 522 yards last season. New HC **Jay Gruden** loved playing free agent addition **Chris Thompson** in passing situations in Washington and rookie WR **Laviska Shenault** is basically a running back playing

wide receiver. We have projected to catch just 45 balls this year, which is reasonable considering he caught 2.8 balls per game in his first two seasons. His late-2nd, early-3rd round ADP screams avoid.

Todd Gurley -- I could not imagine looking at Gurley's name in the third round and thinking "oh, this is a good pick." Gurley looked like a shell of his former self and earned just 49 targets last year after seeing 80+ targets in 2017 and 2018. I think a large part of the reason **Sean McVay** didn't use him normally in the passing game was that his burst and agility looked totally shot last year. Talent at running back fades quickly and Gurley's RB16 finish (in fantasy points per game) last year was completely buoyed by his 12 rushing TDs. Atlanta was the most pass-heavy team when leading (58%) and the third-most pass-heavy team in the league when the game was within a score (63%) and when trailing (75%) last year, so at the very least, we should expect Gurley's carries to go down some. Plus, this passing offense centers around Julio and Ridley as no team has targeted their WRs more often over the last two years than Atlanta. Gurley's lack of involvement in the passing game and a two-year downward trend in performance makes him the easiest player to fade on the board.

David Johnson -- Imagine clicking Johnson's name over **Tyler Lockett**. Or **Robert Woods**. Or **Adam Thielen**. Or **Calvin Ridley**. Or **Mark Andrews**. Because that's what you're doing when you take him. Honestly, I thought D.J. had way more juice left in the tank than Gurley after re-watching Arizona's first 4-5 games last year before he got hurt, but his fourth-round ADP has me completely off of him. Plus, D.J. is a bad fit with a quarterback who doesn't check the ball down. And, it's not like **Duke Johnson** is going to disappear and not earn targets himself. **Deshawn Watson** only targeted his running backs on 14.7% of his throws last year. That was the third-lowest rate in the NFL behind only **Jared Goff** (10%) and **Ryan Tannehill** (12.6%).

Raheem Mostert -- Over his final eight games (including postseason) last year, Mostert averaged 19.8 fantasy points per game but a whopping 46% of those points came from TDs. Additionally, 31% of his total output in this span came in that one monster playoff game against Green Bay. Anyone that is drafting Mostert in Round 4 or 5 of best-ball leagues simply isn't paying attention to usage. During his hot-streak to close out last year, Mostert was playing on just 57% of 49ers snaps and only saw 11 targets in those eight games. Also, see the **Tevin Coleman** blurb.

D'Andre Swift -- Discussed my concerns over Swift in-depth [here](#). Swift has the same exact ADP as **David Montgomery** (52 overall) and I trust Montgomery's volume way more. If you're going to take a rookie RB in this ADP range, **make it Cam Akers**.

Sony Michel -- Best-ball is a game of opportunity cost and there really isn't a price that would make me want to draft Michel this season. Where is his upside? He doesn't see targets in the passing game and has, at best, been a replacement-level runner since entering the league. We only have 20 roster spots to fill in BB10s and at least six of those are going to be used on QB/TE/Defense. If I'm taking a Patriots back, it's White in the mid-rounds or Harris super late.

BEST-BALL NOTEBOOK: WIDE RECEIVERS

By Graham Barfield

Published July 17, 2020

As we discussed in the [RB notebook](#), there has never been more value at WR in drafts than this season. Not only are receivers getting pushed down the board because everyone is chasing running backs early, the position *feels* deeper than ever. Whether or not receiver is *actually* deep is a matter of debate, but in best-ball where we don't have to set a weekly lineup, you can still find upside late in drafts. Wideouts like **John Brown**, **Mike Williams**, and **DeSean Jackson** are perfectly suited for this game -- they're too unpredictable to start in most redraft leagues but are always liable to have multiple week-winning performances -- and are all going in the 10th round or later in best-ball leagues.

So, in an RB-heavy market, how should you approach wide receiver?

HOW MANY WRS SHOULD YOU TAKE?

In [BestBall10 leagues](#), you have to fill 20 roster spots and start 1 QB, 2 RBs, 3 WRs, 1 TE, 1 FLEX (RB/WR/TE), and 1 D/ST every week. RBs, WRs, and TEs all earn one point per reception. Almost half of the team's drafted in BB10s this year have taken seven wide receivers while 22% have taken 6 WRs and 23% have taken 8 wideouts.

Over the last three years of BB10 leagues, roster builds of seven (8.7% win rate) and eight (8.9%) wide receivers have virtually the same chance of winning their league, [per SharpFootball's Rich Hribar](#). Meanwhile, six WRs (7.3% win rate) and nine WRs (7.8%) are less optimal. The data here is clear: You want to leave your BB10 draft with 6-7 WRs and 5-6 RBs.

TARGETS ARE EVERYTHING WITH WRS

This is by no means a ground-breaking idea but targets and air yards are the lifeblood of WR scoring. The wideouts with the most targets have seen a near-perfect correlation between their opportunity and fantasy points followed closely by air yards. Here is a chart of correlational values between fantasy points scored for some opportunity stats (like targets) and efficiency stats (like yards per reception) at wide receiver:

STAT	CORRELATION
Targets	0.96
Air Yards	0.94
Routes	0.88
Yards per route run	0.64
YPT	0.35

STAT	CORRELATION
Catch%	0.33
YPR	0.17
YAC/R	0.12
aDOT	-0.03

Targets = talent for pass catchers. If you're good, you get the ball. Simple. At wide receiver, routes run is the true barometer of opportunity. Getting on the field and seeing playing time is only half of the battle. In the NFL, you have to earn the targets you get and that's why I think a receiver like **Jarvis Landry** is so underrated. Over his entire career, Landry has earned targets on multiple teams and from so many different passers. His quarterbacks always look his way. Why? Because he's earned those targets. Because he's good at football.

Most efficiency stats do an absolutely terrible job of describing how good a player actually is but yards per route run is the only efficiency stat that I have found that actually matters for fantasy football. And it matters a lot. This data looks back at the past three seasons and compares one data set (yards per route run) to another (fantasy points scored). And, yards per route run is clearly the best efficiency stat we have to evaluate. Yards per route run has double the correlational value than yards per target and catch rate.

WR TIERS

TIER 1

- **Michael Thomas**
- **Davante Adams**

TIER 2

- **Julio Jones**
- **Tyreek Hill**
- **Chris Godwin**

TIER 3

- **DeAndre Hopkins**
- **Allen Robinson**
- **Kenny Golladay**
- **Mike Evans**
- **Adam Thielen**
- **Odell Beckham Jr.**
- **JuJu Smith-Schuster**

TIER 4

- **Calvin Ridley**
- **Robert Woods**
- **D.J. Moore**
- **Amari Cooper**
- **A.J. Brown**

- **Tyler Lockett.**
- **Cooper Kupp**
- **D.J. Chark**
- **D.K. Metcalf**

TIER 5

- **Terry McLaurin**
- **Courtland Sutton**
- **Keenan Allen**
- **Marquise Brown**
- **T.Y Hilton**
- **Jarvis Landry**
- **Tyler Boyd**
- **Will Fuller**
- **A.J. Green**

TIER 6

- **Stefon Diggs**
- **Diontae Johnson**
- **DeVante Parker**
- **Julian Edelman**
- **Michael Gallup**
- **Marvin Jones**

TIER 7

- **Jalen Reagor**
- **Jerry Jeudy**
- **Jamison Crowder**
- **Darius Slayton**
- **Brandin Cooks**
- **Christian Kirk**
- **Emmanuel Sanders**
- **Mike Williams**
- **John Brown**
- **Breshad Perriman**
- **CeeDee Lamb**
- **Golden Tate**
- **DeSean Jackson**
- **Deebo Samuel**
- **Brandon Aiyuk**
- **Henry Ruggs**



TIER 8

- **Anthony Miller**
- **Preston Williams**
- **Sterling Shepard**
- **Mecole Hardman**
- **Justin Jefferson**

TIER 9

- **Curtis Samuel**

- **Robby Anderson**
- **Sammy Watkins**
- **Antonio Brown**
- **N'Keal Harry**
- **Allen Lazard**
- **Larry Fitzgerald**
- **Hunter Renfrow**

TIER 10

- **Parris Campbell**
- **John Ross**
- **Tee Higgins**
- **Corey Davis**
- **Cole Beasley**
- **Dede Westbrook**
- **Russell Gage**
- **Mohamed Sanu**
- **Steven Sims Jr.**
- **Kenny Stills**
- **Denzel Mims**
- **Laviska Shenault**
- **Antonio Gandy-Golden**

Note: Tiers are based on our season-long WR projections

WRS TO TARGET

Allen Robinson (Round 2-3) -- Robinson is fantasy football's sneakiest WR1. His ADP (31 overall) is a full round a half later than **Julio Jones** (16 overall) -- but it should be much closer. Last year, Robinson finished 5th among all wide receivers in targets per game. Only **Michael Thomas**, **Davante Adams**, **DeAndre Hopkins**, and **Julio Jones** saw more. Outside of **Anthony Miller**, Chicago has no depth at wide receiver and it will, once again, give Robinson a super high floor and ceiling. Robinson saw at least 20% of Bears' targets in 15-of-16 games and finished as a WR2 or better (top-24) in 10-of-16 games. For reference, Julio did so in 8-of-15 games. Not only is Robinson's volume being underrated but he's also one of the most talented receivers in the NFL. Per Matt Harmon's Reception Perception metrics, Robinson ranked No. 1 in success rate vs. man coverage over Thomas (2nd) and Adams (3rd) last year. Add in the fact that the Bears face the easiest slate of opposing secondaries [according to Scott's schedule-adjusted SoS metrics](#) and we are cooking with gas. There is a chance A-Rob finishes as a top-3 receiver this season and he isn't priced near that ceiling.

JuJu Smith-Schuster (Round 2-3) -- I have been taking JuJu as early as 10 spots ahead of his ADP, which is right around the 3-4 turn (36 overall). Buying low on young, supremely talented wide receivers will always be a long-term recipe for success. Remember when JuJu was a top-20 pick in most leagues last year? It's hilarious to me that people think he stinks now because he was 1) injured all of last year and 2) he had the worst QB situation in the NFL. Your opponents' ignorance is your profit. Smith-Schuster has averaged 5.7 receptions, 77.3 yards, and 16.1 fantasy points per game when **Ben Roethlisberger** plays in his career, which spans 30 games. JuJu's efficiency was so much better back in his rookie year and in 2018 with Big Ben, too. Last year, JuJu ranked 36th out of 57 wide receivers in yards per route run from the slot. In his two previous seasons, Smith-Schuster ranked 3rd (2017) and 17th (2018) in YPRR. Not having **Antonio Brown** on the field to draw coverage away last year likely hurt JuJu even more, but **Diontae Johnson** is looking like he'll be an excellent No. 2 option for defenses to account for. And, all of Pittsburgh's recent moves -- drafting **Chase Claypool** to go along with **James Washington** and signing **Eric Ebron** -- suggest they are going to throw a ton. Back in 2018 when Roethlisberger was healthy, the Steelers were the most pass-heavy team when the game was within a score (66.4%) and when trailing (81.5%). JuJu's floor is 110 targets and his ceiling is 150 and you can draft him in the 4th round. It's a slam dunk.

Adam Thielen (Round 4) -- Robinson and Thielen are the two receivers I've been targeting the most aggressively. Just like with A-Rob's ADP, Thielen's price (WR14; 40 overall) makes no sense. Over his last 40 healthy games (since 2017), Thielen ranks 6th in fantasy points per game, 6th in yards per game, 7th in receptions per game, and is 9th among all WRs in yards per route run in this span. With **Stefon Diggs** gone, Thielen's only competition for targets is a rookie, **Irv Smith/Kyle Rudolph**, and **Olabisi Johnson**. Fantasy doesn't have to be hard.

Robert Woods (Round 4-5) -- **Cooper Kupp** got off to a white-hot start to last season and ended up getting super lucky in the touchdown department, which is why he's usually taken ahead of Bobby Trees. That is a mistake. Kupp scored 10 TDs last season on 134 targets while Woods only scored twice on the same amount of volume (139 targets). To be fair, Kupp did see six more targets inside of the 10-yard line than Woods (10 vs. 4), but there is no doubt Woods was unlucky. Last year, Woods became just the 19th wide receiver to see at least 130 targets and score 3 or fewer touchdowns in a single-season since 2000. Of these 19 wideouts, 14 went on to play at least 14 games in the following season. 13 of those 14 qualifying WRs increased their TD output in the following year (and by an average of +2.8 TDs). With **Brandin Cooks** now in Houston, Rams targets will mostly be concentrated on Woods, Kupp, and their tight ends. I'm drafting Woods whenever I can and trying to add to him to all of my dynasty teams.

Tyler Lockett (Round 4-5) -- The common theme of these players to target is value, and Lockett is yet another excellent example (WR20 ADP; 50 overall). This will come as a surprise to anyone who is just blindly backing **D.K. Metcalf** as the second coming of **Calvin Johnson**, but Lockett sharply out-produced and out-targeted Metcalf when healthy last year. Excluding Week 12-13 when he was on the injured list (shin/leg), Lockett had 94/1217/9 across 16 healthy games. This includes the postseason. Lockett's 16.5 fantasy points per game in his 16 healthy games would have ranked 8th-most among WRs, just behind **Cooper Kupp** (16.9). In fact, Lockett finished as a top-24 wide receiver in 9-of-14 healthy starts during the regular season. Meanwhile, Metcalf had *three* (3!!) top-24 performances in 16 games. Lockett also out-targeted Metcalf 123 to 108 in those 16 games he was healthy for and has unrivaled chemistry with **Russell Wilson**. Over the last two seasons, the Wilson-to-Lockett connection has ranked 1st and 3rd in Next Gen Stats completion rate above expectation metrics. This stat accounts for how difficult a throw and catch was to complete. Not only is Lockett the better fantasy option than Metcalf but his talent is slept on in general.

Terry McLaurin (Round 5-6) -- Everything about McLaurin just screams Buy. Sure, **Dwayne Haskins** has a long way to go according to **Greg Cosell**, but McLaurin's chance to see 125+ targets this year is undeniable. Washington doesn't have a tight end worth a damn and McLaurin's only competition at WR right now is **Steven Sims** and **Antonio Gandy-Golden**. I guess **Trey Quinn** is still a thing, too. But especially with **Kelvin Harmon** (ACL) out for the year, McLaurin is really the only show in town. At least it's a good one. McLaurin averaged 13.7 fantasy points per game last year, which tied for 10th-most with **JuJu Smith-Schuster** for any WR drafted in the second round or later of the NFL draft since 1970. McLaurin also accounted for 33% of Washington's passing yards last season, which is the best mark by any wide receiver in their first season since **Odell Beckham's** insane rookie year. And, oh by the way... McLaurin was 14th out of 86 WRs in PFF's predictive yards per route run metric.



Marquise Brown (Round 6-7) -- The Ravens will remain the most run-heavy team in the NFL, but that doesn't mean their WR1 isn't valuable. After playing all of last year with a screw in his foot and below his normal playing weight, Hollywood is back healthy and is going to tear it up. Even at less than 100 percent, Brown was one of the league's most effective wideouts in the NFL last season. Out of 75 qualifying wide receivers, Brown ranked first in passer rating when targeted (134.4) and was 11th in fantasy points per route run (0.45). He also ranked 19th-of-50 WRs in success rate vs. man coverage and 4th-best in success rate vs. zone coverage per Matt Harmon's Reception Perception. **Mark Andrews** is the Ravens No. 1 target and I'm drafting him every time I can but Brown is my third-most draft wide receiver in best-ball (on 33% of my teams) because of his massive spiked week potential. We saw glimpses of Hollywood's ceiling as a rookie like in Week 1 against the Dolphins (4/174/2 on 14 snaps), in Week 10

against the Bengals when he came back after missing a few games (4/80/1 on 18 snaps) or in the Ravens playoff loss to the Titans (7/126). Imagine what he'll do in 2020 with an offseason to get healthy and build more chemistry with **Lamar Jackson**.

Tyler Boyd (Round 7-8) -- Boyd is being drafted like a WR3/4 in fantasy despite having a chance to be the Bengals No. 1 target in 2020. **A.J. Green** is back, but he's about to turn 32 and has missed 29 possible games over the last four years. Boyd is only 25 and still ascending. Even though he has finished as the WR25 and WR20 in fantasy points per game over the last two seasons with 1,000+ yards in each year, Boyd's ADP is WR33. You're looking at nothing but upside there. Keep in mind, **Justin Jefferson** went 111/1540/18 (in 15 games) as **Joe Burrow's** slot WR in 2019. No rookie WR saw an accurate pass more often than Jefferson, too (69% of targets). Last year, Boyd ran two-thirds of his routes from the slot.

John Brown (Round 9-11) -- I'm targeting **Josh Allen everywhere** and Brown is a way cheaper stacking option than **Stefon Diggs**. While Diggs' ADP is WR26 (61 overall), the guy who just dropped 72/1060/6 and finished as the WR24 in fantasy points per game is going off the board at WR43 (104 overall). I'm not taking anything away from Diggs at all, but Brown is undeniably the better value.

Mike Williams (Round 10-12) -- Williams is a still-ascending talent and he's basically free (ADP: WR47; 113 overall). After running super hot in the TD department in 2018 -- he scored 10 times on 66 targets -- Williams got super unlucky last season. He and **Robert Woods** became just the 16th and 17th WRs all-time to have 1,000 or more yards and score 2 or fewer TDs in a single-season. Plus, Williams has gotten better every single year after his dismal first season. After ranking 115-of-127 WRs in yards per route run as a rookie in 2017, Williams ranked 42nd in 2018 and 25th in YPRR last year. The only Chargers I want in fantasy this year are **Austin Ekeler** ([case for him here](#)) and Williams.

Jalen Reagor (Round 11-13) -- My rookie WR1. Here is everything working in Reagor's favor:

- Broke out at 20 years old for 72/1061/9 in his sophomore season at TCU.
- Was the alpha at TCU. Saw 34% of his team's targets in that sophomore season and 25% of targets in 2019. For reference, **CeeDee Lamb** commanded 25% of OU's targets in his 2019 season while **Justin Jefferson** saw 23% of LSU's targets.
- Reagor's junior year stats declined (43/611/5) because TCU's freshman QB was brutally bad. Per PFF, Reagor saw an accurate pass on just 31% of his targets last year -- the lowest rate among the 2020 WR class. If he had gone to OU or LSU, no one would have questioned the Eagles picking him where they did.
- He's an all-world athlete. Per [PlayerProfiler](#), Reagor has 99th percentile burst and 70th percentile weight-adjusted speed. Reagor ran 4.47 in Indy but I think he plays even faster than that on tape.
- Perhaps most importantly, **Carson Wentz** is awesome and the Eagles have nothing at wide receiver. **Alshon Jeffery** is 30-years-old and nursing a foot injury that may land him on the PUP list to start the season. **DeSean Jackson** is about to be 34. The **J.J. Arcega-Whiteside** experiment is still up in the air. Former college QB **Greg Ward** was Wentz's best option at receiver at times last year.

Golden Tate (Round 11-13) -- He's the cheapest Giants' pass catcher and maybe shouldn't be. Excluding his first game back from a four-game suspension, Tate averaged 15.0 fantasy points per game last season and only one performance below 11 fantasy points. Tate's 15.0 fantasy points per game (excluding Week 5) would have tied **Calvin Ridley** as the WR18 last year. Tate averaged 7.7 targets per game last season while **Darius Slayton** -- who goes in the ninth round for some reason? -- only saw 5.9 targets per game. **Daniel Jones is one of my main QB targets** and Tate is just an easy-money stacking candidate.

Brandon Aiyuk (Round 14) -- **Deebo Samuel** is such a stud, but he might miss considerable time with a Jones' fracture. Obviously, we *hope* that Samuel doesn't miss a game but foot injuries have a tendency to linger with receivers. You won't go broke by ignoring *Injury Optimism* long-term. There is a good chance Samuel's injury thrusts Aiyuk into a bigger role than expected in 2020 and even if Samuel misses zero games, Aiyuk is still a value. He led this year's rookie class in yards after the catch per reception and I know that HC **Kyle Shanahan** will use him in creative ways that will be good for at least one or two monster fantasy performances.

Antonio Brown (Round 15+) -- Scott **did a great job making the case for AB a few months back**. Someone will take the chance on one of the most talented receivers to ever grace a football field. AB is being drafted after **Alshon Jeffery**, who might miss the first few games of the season too.

Late-round darts: **Mohamed Sanu**, **Russell Gage** (especially on teams with **Matt Ryan**), **Corey Davis** (especially on teams with **Ryan Tannehill**), and **Tee Higgins/John Ross** (especially on teams with **Joe Burrow**).

WRS TO FADE

Mike Evans -- Love the player, hate the price. 53% of Evans' fantasy points came in just three games last year (Weeks 3, 8, and 9) and he was out-scored by **Chris Godwin** in nine of their 3 games together. **Tom Brady** won't turn the ball over as near as much as **Jameis Winston** did -- those extra possessions provided more opportunity for Tampa's receivers -- and their defense is quietly really good. They just need their secondary to improve a bit. I expect the Bucs' will be pretty pass-heavy but the loss of volume for Evans (and Godwin to a lesser extent) isn't being accounted for at Evans' ADP (WR8; 26 overall). I prefer A-Rob and Thielen over Evans straight-up.

Kenny Golladay -- Love the player, hate the price. Golladay goes in the late-second round of drafts while **Marvin Jones** goes in the 7th or 8th. Golladay has out-scored Jones (15.3 to 14.1 fantasy points per game) but only slightly out-targeted him (154 to 153) in their 26 games played together over the last two seasons.

Courtland Sutton -- He was awesome in his rookie season but the Broncos won't stop adding weapons and **Drew Lock** is by no means a lock. (Pun intended.) **Jerry Jeudy** will be *way* more competition for Sutton above anything **DaeSean Hamilton** or **Tim Patrick** did last season. Plus, **Noah Fant** is an ascending talent that deserves more targets and I think **Melvin Gordon** will be pretty involved in the passing game, too. There are just too many mouths to feed and questions over **Drew Lock's** ability to justify Sutton's ADP (WR19; 49 overall) over Lockett (WR20). Just ask yourself this: Would I rather spend my fourth-round pick on a receiver attached to **Russell Wilson** or an unproven Lock?

DeVante Parker -- I have done over 50 best-ball drafts and I don't think I have considered taking Parker once. The only reason Parker broke out last year was because **Preston Williams** got hurt and Parker ended up being **Ryan Fitzpatrick's** only good receiver. Before tearing his ACL, Williams out-targeted Parker 60 to 52 in the Dolphins' first eight games while Parker just barely out-scored Williams in fantasy in this span because he scored 3 TDs while Williams had just one score. Parker had five top-12 (WR1) scoring weeks over his final seven games when Williams was on I.R. and had zero WR1 scoring weeks when Williams was healthy. Fade recency bias and profit here.

Keenan Allen -- How much different will the Chargers offense look in 2020 without **Philip Rivers**? There is no denying that Allen is extremely talented and that he's been a great fantasy receiver. Allen has finished as the WR8, WR12, WR4, and WR6 in fantasy points per game in his last four full seasons dating back to 2016. But, how much volume does Allen stand to lose? Rivers ranked in the top-14 in pass attempts every year from 2016-19 and had three seasons inside of the top-10. In fact, Rivers' career-low in pass attempts is 460 while **Tyrod Taylor** has never attempted more than 436 passes in a single-season. Allen has been awesome in fantasy, but you can't always look backward. Don't just draft last year's best team. Allen might end up being a value pick at his ADP (WR22) but just understand that this team is no longer the Chargers of old. Taylor and rookie **Justin Herbert** are downgrades not only from a quality standpoint but L.A. will likely throw way less with one of those two at the controls.



Deebo Samuel -- This is an easy one. Samuel's ADP has slipped to WR37 over the last three weeks but even that discount doesn't really justify the risk in best-ball. Unlike in normal redraft leagues, we can't just go to the waiver wire and add another option. The opportunity cost of taking zero's from your 7th-8th round pick is less than ideal.

Darius Slayton -- Slayton (ADP: WR41) is the first Giants receiver off of the board over Shepard (WR48) Tate (WR52), but that doesn't really make any sense. Across **Daniel Jones'** 12 starts, Slayton was fourth on the team in targets per game (6.0) behind **Evan Engram** (7.7), Tate (7.7), and Shepard (8.4). Slayton (52.9) also trailed Tate (61.5) and Shepard (59.3) in yards per game. A whopping 39% of Slayton's fantasy points in Jones' starts came in just two games, one of which was without Shepard (Week 10 vs. Jets) and the other was without Engram (Week 14 vs. Eagles). With everyone healthy, I don't think it's necessary to overpay for Slayton when Shepard and Tate are both significantly cheaper.



BEST-BALL NOTEBOOK: TIGHT ENDS

By Graham Barfield

Published July 21, 2020

Outside of a handful of elite options, tight end is the most scarce position in fantasy football. In redraft leagues, it's much easier to replace TE production off of waivers. Of course, the goal of TE streaming isn't to just keep scrounging around at the bottom of the barrel of replacement-level options. **Darren Waller** was one of the biggest league-winners in recent memory and went undrafted in some leagues last year. If you took **Travis Kelce** early, you were rewarded with the No. 1 scoring tight end but the sharp managers that either spent a late-round pick on Waller or picked him up off of waivers were awarded a weekly top-5 TE for free.

This lesson can be broadly applied to best-ball leagues. Because the position is so scarce and because ADP is so efficient in the early rounds -- everyone knows Kelce and Kittle are the best options -- I've been taking a barbell approach to tight end in all of my drafts. Thinking of investing like the weights on a barbell was a strategy made popular by Nassim Taleb and it has broad applications to our game. On one side the barbell we have picks that are high risk but offer a high reward potential (think late-round tight ends) while on the other side you have options with low risk that offer safety (think Kelce and Kittle). Meanwhile, you completely avoid the middle ground (or average risk) at tight end. You're either seeking safety or upside and nothing in between.

In Scott's [Anatomy of a League Winner](#) piece, it's clear that making your TE picks with a barbell mindset is a league-winning strategy. Over the last three seasons, the 10 most common tight ends on championship rosters were either taken in the first four rounds of drafts, they were late-round options (Round 10 or later), or they weren't drafted at all. You either want the safest picks in the early rounds (on the low-risk side of the barbell) or the late-round, riskier picks (on the high-risk side) and nothing in between.

I've been drafting Kelce and **George Kittle** a bunch this year because of the consistency and safety they provide. It also allows you to not have to worry about tight end for the rest of the draft and lets you build up other positions on your roster. Over the last two years, Kelce (finished as a TE1 in 84% of games) and Kittle (TE1 in 80% of games) have been unrivaled top tier players relative to their position. **Mark Andrews** and **Zach Ertz** are both in this conversation too, just to a lesser extent. Both go in the 4th or 5th round of most drafts and both finished as weekly TE1's in over two-thirds of their games last year. Even though they're both expensive relative to the rest of the position, both Andrews and Ertz are still values because of the consistency they provide. And, as you will read below, Andrews looks like a league-winner once again.

TE ROSTER CONSTRUCTION

In [BestBall10 leagues](#), you have to fill 20 roster spots and start 1 QB, 2 RBs, 3 WRs, 1 TE, 1 FLEX (RB/WR/TE), and 1 D/ST every week. RBs, WRs, and TEs all earn one point per reception. Out of all of the positions, TE roster construction is the easiest and most straight-forward. 97% of BB10 teams have selected two or three tight ends this year.

Let common sense be your guide with your TE roster builds. If you do spend up at tight end in the early rounds on Kelce or Andrews, the wisest choice is most likely to only take one other TE for the rest of your draft. If you go with the other, riskier side of the barbell and load up on late-round tight targets -- you'll definitely want to take 3 of them to give yourself as many weekly options as possible.

WHICH TE STATS MATTER THE MOST?

Just like we [discussed in the wide receiver notebook](#), targets and air yards are the main factors that drive tight end scoring while yards per route run is the GOAT efficiency metric:

STAT	CORRELATION
Targets	0.97
Air Yards	0.93
Routes	0.86
Yards per route run	0.64
Yards per target	0.36
Yards per reception	0.26
Average depth of target	0.26
Catch rate	0.17
Yards after the catch	-0.01

Getting on the field and getting playing time is only half of the battle for pass catchers because targets = talent in the NFL. Over the last two years, the top three tight ends in targets per game are Kelce, Kittle, and Ertz by a mile. Meanwhile, even though **Mark Andrews** wasn't a full-time player last year and didn't run as nearly as many routes as Kelce or even Kittle, he was still funneled the ball every time he was on the field. In 2019, **Lamar Jackson** targeted Andrews on a league-high 36% of his routes. The next two closest players in targets per route run were Kittle (34%) and **Austin Ekeler** (33%).

This has been a running theme of these notebooks, but by in large, ignoring all efficiency stats and solely drafting for volume will probably make your projections and draft picks better. Except for yards per route run. At tight end, YPRR is 2.5 times more impactful on fantasy output as yards per reception and over 3.5 times more meaningful than catch rate.

These are the top-15 TEs in yards per route run over the last two combined seasons:

1. **George Kittle**
2. **Darren Waller**
3. **Mark Andrews**
4. **Travis Kelce**
5. **Tyler Higbee**
6. **Jared Cook**
7. **Zach Ertz**
8. **Rob Gronkowski**
9. **Evan Engram**
10. **Eric Ebron**
11. **Dallas Goedert**
12. **Hunter Henry**
13. **O.J. Howard**
14. **Jordan Reed**

15. **Blake Jarwin**

TE TIERS

TIER 1

- **Travis Kelce**
- **George Kittle**

TIER 2

- **Mark Andrews**
- **Zach Ertz**

TIER 3

- **Darren Waller**
- **Evan Engram**
- **Tyler Higbee**
- **Hayden Hurst**
- **Jared Cook**
- **Hunter Henry**

TIER 4

- **Austin Hooper**
- **Mike Gesicki**
- **Noah Fant**
- **Rob Gronkowski**
- **T.J. Hockenson**

TIER 5

- **Blake Jarwin**
- **Dallas Goedert**
- **Jonnu Smith**
- **Chris Herndon**
- **Jace Sternberger**
- **Eric Ebron**
- **Irv Smith Jr.**
- **Jack Doyle**
- **Ian Thomas**
- **Gerald Everett**
- **O.J. Howard**

TIER 6

- **Dawson Knox**
- **Greg Olsen**
- **Kyle Rudolph**

TIER 7

- **Jimmy Graham**
- **C.J. Uzomah**
- **Will Dissly**



- **David Njoku**
- **Tyler Eifert**
- **Josh Oliver**
- **Jordan Akins**
- **Darren Fells**

TES TO TARGET

(Note: These are the players I'm targeting when I do not take Kelce or Kittle in the second-round.)

Mark Andrews (Round 3-5) -- After breaking out for 64/852/10 (TE5 finish) at 23-years-old last year, Andrews will have a great chance to improve on those numbers in 2020. **Hayden Hurst's** departure quietly leaves behind 10% of Ravens targets from last year and it should make Andrews an every-down player. Last season, Andrews led Ravens tight ends in routes run (19.7 per game) but Hurst was still pretty heavily involved (12.9 routes per game). Andrews was just dominant in a part-time role in his sophomore campaign because **Lamar Jackson** targeted him more often than any player in the NFL was thrown to. Now, Hurst is gone and the Ravens are going to rely even more heavily on Andrews as their No. 1 target. Plus, we should expect Baltimore to throw *a little* bit more this year after winning 14 games and leading on a league-high 81% of their snaps last season. The Ravens are still a double-digit win team with ease, but if they are in tighter ball games this year and Jackson is forced to the air more, Andrews will have an outside chance to finish top-2 at the position.

Hayden Hurst (Round 9-11) -- Hurst's average draft position is starting to skyrocket as we get closer to the season and I've pumped the brakes on him a little bit for that reason, but even in the 9th round, I think there is still plenty of potential value there. The Falcons traded a 2nd round pick for Hurst this spring -- which was largely viewed as an overpay -- and do not have a third passing target behind **Julio Jones** and **Calvin Ridley**. The team is invested in making Hurst work and his environment for production is perfect. After being the No. 2 tight end behind **Mark Andrews** on a run-first Baltimore team, Hurst's new team is the complete opposite. In OC **Dirk Koetter's** return last year, Atlanta was the most pass-heavy team when leading (58%) and the third-most pass-heavy team in the league when the game was within a score (63%) and when trailing (75%). There is also a chance Hurst might be more talented and versatile of a player than the guy he's replacing, **Austin Hooper**. Over the last two years, Hurst has averaged more yards per route than Hooper (1.58 vs. 1.42) and been way more explosive after the catch when targeted downfield. On all targets traveling 10 or more yards in the air, Hurst has averaged 7.9 yards after the catch while Hooper has as averaged a lowly 3.2 YAC in this span.

Noah Fant and **T.J. Hockenson** (Round 10-12) -- With Hurst's ADP rising, I've pivoted back to the cheaper Fant and Hockenson when I miss out on Hurst. For what it's worth, Fant (122 overall) and Hockenson (127) have virtually the same exact average draft position. Fant's 562 yards as a rookie ranks 14th-best for any TE 22 years old or younger all-time. Even though Lock is by no means a finished product and the Broncos have two very talented wideouts between **Jerry Jeudy** and **Courtland Sutton**, Fant is the cheapest of Denver's pass catchers. And there is reason to believe Denver will be more pass-heavy than some are expecting. New OC **Pat Shurmur's** Giants were the 4th- and 10th-most pass-heavy teams when the game was within a score (+/- 8 points) over the last two seasons. Meanwhile, Hockenson was on pace for 549 yards before **Matthew Stafford** got hurt. Outside of Week 1, Hockenson's rookie season looks like a disappointment on the surface-level but don't forget he sustained a concussion in Week 6 and he hurt his shoulder in the middle of the season that caused him to miss the team's final three games. Like Fant, Hockenson also has to deal with two supremely talented wideouts and is at best the No. 3 target on his team but both of these tight ends should command more targets in their second season. Tight end is the hardest position for rookies to learn outside of quarterback and both Fant and Hockenson are freak athletes and mismatch nightmares. At the 2019 combine, Fant's forty-yard dash time was in the 97th percentile for tight ends when you adjust for weight while Hockenson's was in the 77th percentile.

Blake Jarwin (Round 11-13) -- Last year, geriatric **Jason Witten** -- who just spent the previous year on the couch and in the TV booth -- walked on to the field at 37-years-old and got 83 targets. Witten led Dallas in red-zone targets (inside-10 yard line), he finished 8th among TEs in receptions, was 10th in targets, 11th in fantasy points, and 13th in air yards. What will Jarwin do with a similar level of opportunity? Last year, Jarwin ranked 11th out of 47 TEs

(with at least 25 targets) in yards per route run. Witten ranked 28th in YPRR. Even if he's the No. 4 target behind Cooper, Gallup, and Lamb -- the path for Jarwin to see 85-95 targets is pretty easy if Dallas throws the ball 600 times. **Dak Prescott** had 596 pass attempts in 2019. I want exposure to the Cowboys offense whenever I can get it and Jarwin is extremely underpriced (ADP: TE19) relative to his upside.

Eric Ebron (Round 14 or later) -- The great thing about best-ball is that it allows you to draft players you otherwise wouldn't roster in season-long leagues or DFS. At his ADP (TE22), Ebron is so cheap that he won't even come close to killing your team if he busts. Back in 2018 **when Roethlisberger** was healthy, the Steelers were the most pass-heavy team when the game was within a score (66.4%) and when trailing (81.5%). In that year, the Steelers TEs ranked 8th in fantasy points, 7th in receptions, and 5th in yards. Pittsburgh is going to throw a ton this season and Ebron will assuredly have 2-3 blowup games. We might not know when those great Ebron games are coming, but in best-ball, that doesn't matter.

Jace Sternberger (Round 15 or later) -- After an ankle injury caused him to miss most of his rookie year, Sternberger has been an afterthought in most best-ball drafts this summer. That's a mistake. With only **Davante Adams** entrenched as the Packers top target, **Aaron Rodgers** doesn't have a clear-cut No. 2 target. That could be Sternberger. The whole Rodgers "doesn't throw to his TEs narrative is completely overblown. Over the last two years, the Packers rank 12th in both targets per game and target share to their tight ends. And that was with late-career **Jimmy Graham** as their only decent tight end. Sternberger was PFF's No. 1 graded tight end when he came out of college after he led Texas A&M in targets, receptions, yards, TDs, and yards per reception.

Gerald Everett (Round 17 or later) -- See the **Tyler Higbee** blurb below.

TES TO FADE

Darren Waller -- Unfortunately, Waller looks like he's in the "middle ground" of the barbell that I'm fading aggressively at tight end. After going in the 14th round (or later) in most leagues last year, Waller's ADP has skyrocketed into the 5th-6th round of best-ball this summer. Waller was awesome last year and I am not taking anything away from his talent or how unique of a player he is, but his cost has just gotten to a point where a fade is warranted. After breaking out for 90/1145/3 last season, Waller's target share may dip some this season after the team used their first-round pick on **Henry Ruggs** and third-round pick on **Bryan Edwards**. Last year, Waller led the team in targets (117) mainly because he's good at the game but he was also the only legitimately good option in the Raiders passing attack. Remember, **Tyrell Williams** injured his foot early in the season and played at less than 100 percent, too. Plus, Waller's lowly touchdown total from last year isn't likely to skyrocket. Waller saw only four targets inside of the 10-yard line in 2019 while **Travis Kelce** saw 12 inside-10 targets (in 15 games) and **George Kittle** had 9 (in 14 games).

Tyler Higbee -- This isn't so much of a fade but more of a "beware... and don't overpay." In general, I'm fine with drafting Higbee in the 9th or 10th round but have seen him go much, much earlier in some drafts. Higbee's finish to last season was incredible -- he led **all players** in receiving yards in Week 13-17 -- but that stretch of production needs a huge dose of context. First of all, four of those 5 games in Higbee's stretch run came against a bottom-3 defense in fantasy points allowed to tight ends (Arizona - twice; Dallas; Seattle). Also, **Gerald Everett** was hurt and did not play in Week 13-15 and in Week 17. Everett played just four snaps in Week 16, signaling he wasn't close to 100 percent healthy from his wrist injury. Keep in mind, before Everett got hurt, he was the Rams No. 1 tight end. Not Higbee. And it wasn't close. In Week 1-12, Everett ran way more routes (261 to 130) and saw more targets (55 to 36) than Higbee. This [quote from HC Sean McVay in April](#) should also scare Higbee truthers. McVay said, "Really, really excited about what Everett's going to do [this year]... I think Higbee did a phenomenal job, but I think Everett's a guy that I've got to do a better job of utilizing his skill set because he's a difference-maker." Higbee's ADP is 86 overall. Everett's is 206.

Mike Gesicki -- Other than drafters blindly following unreasonable fantasy hype, there is no reason for Gesicki (ADP: 115 overall) to go ahead of Fant (122) and Hockenson (127) in drafts. Last year, Gesicki was a completely forgotten man before **Preston Williams** went out for the season in Week 10 with a torn ACL. Gesicki averaged just 4.4 targets per game when Williams was healthy and his targets spiked to 7.3 per game in Weeks 10-17 without Williams. Even though he saw more opportunity after Williams missed time, Gesicki was largely inefficient. In Week 10-17, Gesicki

ranked 20th in yards per route run out of 24 TEs and was 15th in fantasy points per target. Now, Miami has a new OC, a new QB, and Williams is back healthy. Keep in mind, in new OC **Chan Gailey's** last five coaching stops, his TEs have finished last in the NFL in targets three times and 28th twice. Gesicki is the easiest TE fade on the board.



BEST-BALL NOTEBOOK: DEFENSE/SPECIAL TEAMS

By Graham Barfield

Published July 23, 2020

Now that we've covered all four of the major positions in the best-ball notebook series it's time to turn our heads to everyone's *favorite* position to draft: D/ST. Defensive scoring can be tricky and frustrating on a weekly basis, but in best-ball leagues with no weekly management, we should never just treat the position carelessly. It seems like a common theme among most drafters is to just act like D/ST doesn't really matter and any defense will do as long as the ones you pick don't have the same bye. That's an easy way to lose an edge.

Best-ball leagues are not just won and lost by picking the right players. Appropriate roster construction is just as important. Not only are we trying to outscore 11 opponents over the full season but you're also trying to beat the game with so. With finite roster spots (20) and mandatory minimums at quarterback (must have 2), running back (4), wide receiver (6), and tight end (2) -- there is inherently limited flexibility at defense. In fact, nearly 75% of the team's drafted in Fanball's BB10s this year have taken only two defenses.

But, just because D/ST is the last position we think of on our teams doesn't mean we can just ignore it until the final two rounds. You rarely ever want to be the first person in your league to draft a defense in any fantasy league but waiting until the last minute to take your D/ST is a surefire way to lose out on upside.

SharpFootball's Rich Hribar **studied win rates over the last three years of BB10s** and found that the sweet spot for D/ST was not in the final two rounds but instead in the Round 16-18 range. Hribar saw that drafters that sprung for a D/ST too early (Round 14-15) only managed a 7.5% win rate while waiting until Round 19 for your first defense yielded virtually the same result (7.6% win rate). Instead, drafting your first D/ST in Round 16 (8.9% win rate), Round 17 (9.5% win rate), or in Round 18 (9.6%) is clearly more optimal.

Drafting 3 defenses can be an optimal strategy in best-ball too but only under certain conditions. For example, let's say you go with the **three late-round QB approach we previously discussed**. If you also take three D/ST along with three QBs, you're automatically putting more pressure on your depth at other positions because at least 8 of your 20 total roster spots will have been spent on positions where we only need to start one player (QB/TE/Defense).

Taking 3 D/ST in best-ball leagues makes sense if you have 2 QBs and 2 TEs that can be standalone weekly starters. Let's say you paired **Dak Prescott-Matthew Stafford** and **Mark Andrews-Hayden Hurst** on a team. In this situation, it could make sense to draft 3 D/ST since you're not hurting your other onesie positions (QB/TE) in doing so and the late-rounds are filled with duds at RB/WR anyway. Drafting that third D/ST could be a bigger net advantage to your team than an 8th WR or 7th RB that may never even come close to cracking your starting lineup.

Remember, best-ball is a game of opportunity cost. When you pick one position, it affects another. For that reason, I recommend taking your first defense in the 17th or 18th round in almost all leagues. We know we don't want to rely on replacement-level production and, as you will read below, that particular ADP range is full of chock full of great options.

WINS AND SACKS DRIVE D/ST SCORING

To know which stats matter most for fantasy defenses, I went back and looked at the past three seasons of scoring data and ran some correlation figures for various stats. The most influential stat in terms of positive correlation to fantasy points wasn't touchdowns scored, turnovers, or sacks. It was winning.

STAT	CORRELATION
Wins	0.68
INT% (INT/pass attempts)	0.65
Sacks	0.59
Fumbles forced	0.43
TDs Scored	0.36
Pressures	0.28
YPC Allowed	-0.05
Rush Yds Allowed	-0.34
Pass Yds Allowed	-0.39
Points Allowed	-0.51
YPA Allowed	-0.65



Correlation does not always equal causation, but in this case, it makes perfect sense. Winning correlates to more fantasy points at defense. Why? Because when defenses are ahead on the scoreboard, the other team is likely throwing the ball to keep up. When the opposing offense is forced to the air more, those extra pass attempts allow defenses to have more opportunities to rack up sacks and turnovers. This has a broader application to DFS lineups, too. If you're trying to decide between two similarly priced defenses and one is a +1 underdog and the other is a -3 favorite, the best decision over the long run would be to play the favorite.

Also, note that yards per pass attempt (YPA) allowed is significantly more influential on D/ST fantasy scoring than yards per carry (YPC) allowed. That's because how well teams are passing dictates how the majority of NFL games go; and, as a result, passing dictates defensive scoring.

16TH-18TH ROUND D/ST TO TARGET

Buffalo -- The Bills allowed the league's third-lowest yards per attempt (6.2) last year just behind the Patriots (6.0) and 49ers (5.9) and, outside of now-Dolphin DE **Shaq Lawson**, they are bringing back the entire nucleus of their defense again in 2020. If **Josh Norman** can return to form now that he's out of Washington and in a new scheme alongside All-Pro CB **Tre'Davious White**, the Bills will have one of the deepest CB corps in the NFL. 33-year-old **Mario Addison** was brought in to replace Lawson and he obviously has familiarity with HC **Sean McDermott** from their days in Carolina together.

New Orleans -- The Saints go off of the board over 20 spots later than the consensus top-3 defenses in drafts this year (49ers, Steelers, and Ravens) and are my top value at the position. The Saints (10.5) have a comparable win

total to the Ravens (11.5) and 49ers (10.5) and have been one of the most consistent units in the league. New Orleans has finished top-12 in fantasy points and top-10 in sacks over the last three years and now have added S **Malcolm Jenkins** to an already talented secondary headlined by CBs **Marshon Lattimore** and **Janoris Jenkins**.

Kansas City -- The Chiefs (11.5) are tied with the Ravens for the highest win total in the NFL and just finished 10th in sacks a year ago, but they are the 8th-11th D/ST off of the board in most leagues. **Patrick Mahomes** and the Chiefs high-powered offense will always force their opponents to throw to keep up, which will lead to more opportunities for sacks/turnovers for their defense. Kansas City has finished 5th in fantasy points in back-to-back seasons but they aren't drafted anywhere near the top-5 defenses.

Philadelphia -- The Eagles win total (9.5) is the same exact figure as the Steelers (9.5) and, even though there is reason to believe their defense gets better in 2020, Philly is only the D/ST16 in average draft position. **Malcolm Jenkins'** loss is a big one but the Eagles have finally decided to plan to cover opposing wideouts. Adding **Darius Slay** is a massive upgrade and slot CB **Nickell Robey-Coleman** will provide consistency underneath. Philadelphia's strength has always been along their defensive line and their core that finished 6th in the NFL in pressures last season are all back. Because they are so cheap and such a great value based on win total and talent, the Eagles are my most-drafted D/ST in best-ball this year.

L.A. Rams -- The Rams have finished 5th, 2nd, and 3rd in fantasy points per game over the last three seasons but are the No. 12 D/ST off of the board in best-ball. DC **Wade Phillips** is gone and the Rams will have to replace 2019 starters **Dante Fowler/Corey Littleton/Nickell Robey-Coleman/Eric Weddle**, but Fowler's absence is really the only major loss after he recorded 11.5 sacks last year. **Aaron Donald** and **Jalen Ramsey** are still the lifeblood of the defense and the Rams win total (9.0) is the exact same as the Patriots and Vikings, but both New England and Minnesota go earlier than L.A.

NO. 2 D/ST TARGETS

Indianapolis -- The Colts made some big moves this offseason on defense, trading their first-round pick to the 49ers for stud DT **DeForest Buckner** and adding former stud CB **Xavier Rhodes** in free agency. If Rhodes can return to his previous form, the Colts will have a chance to field a top-12 defense this season. Even at 31-years-old, **Justin Houston** is still one of the league's premier pass rushers and is coming off an 11.5-sack season while DE **Kemoko Turay** is only 25-years-old and returning to the lineup after missing 12 games due to injury last year.

Obviously, **Darius Leonard** is one of the best young LBs in the NFL but MLB **Anthony Walker** led the team in tackles last year while OLB **Bobby Okereke** is entering his second year and will round out this solid LB corps. Okereke was PFF's 9th-best LB last season while Leonard was 7th-best. Indy has the NFL's most underrated front-seven talent-wise. The Colts also have the AFC South's highest win total (9.0) over the Titans (8.5) and Texans (7.5).

Cleveland -- DE **Myles Garrett** is back after missing six games due to suspension last year and the rest of the Browns defense is loaded with talent beyond their star pass rusher. After being drafted as a top-8 fantasy D/ST last year and failing miserably, the Browns are a nice post-hype sleeper with a new coaching staff in place. Cleveland routinely goes as the No. 20 D/ST off of the board.

Washington -- They might not win many games, but this front-seven is going to force a ton of sacks. Washington has five first-rounders along their front seven and have finished 7th and 10th in sacks over the last two years. If you're on the clock in the final round and need a second or third defense, Washington is my favorite punt option.

BEST-BALL STACKS: IDENTIFYING QBs TO DRAFT

By Tom Brolley

Published June 4, 2020

I've started to hit the **BestBall10 drafts** hard since the NFL Draft concluded, and I've honed in on my favorite quarterback-receiver "stacks" for the season. "Stacking" is one of my favorite strategies when I draft my quarterbacks and receivers in the mid-to-late rounds in best-ball formats. It's been a popular (and winning) strategy in the DFS community for years. If you're not familiar with stacking, it's picking multiple players from the same team – or game for DFS – whose fantasy production is correlated.

You don't need me to tell you that if a quarterback has a huge passing day (or season) then there's a good chance his receivers also posted strong production. Stacking players from the same passing game does bring in more risk if the passing game fails to produce but the potential upside outweighs the downside for me.

Most best-ball contest payouts are heavily weighted toward the winner so I'm more willing to take on some risk for a chance at a big payoff since there's no difference in finishing in fourth place or in dead last if my stacks don't work out.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A FANTASY QUARTERBACK

Before I identify my favorite best-ball stacks for the 2020 season in the second part of this article, I first need to identify which quarterbacks I'll be drafting at various ADP ranges this summer.

Frankly, last season was one of the easiest years I had drafting quarterbacks because rushing production wasn't being valued enough. Unsurprisingly, the market has made a huge correction this summer to value running QBs properly after **Lamar Jackson's** remarkable 2019 campaign.

This year could be as tough as ever to find great values at the QB position later in drafts because this year's ADP is pretty tight already. Take a guy like **Ryan Tannehill**, who finished behind only **Lamar Jackson** in fantasy points per start last season with 22.0.

Just a few years ago, Tannehill would've likely been drafted two-to-three rounds earlier as a low-end QB1. However, the fantasy community, including me, is concerned about his potential lack of passing volume this year, which has driven his ADP down to the QB18 range.

This year's quarterback ADP might be much tighter than last year, but I still see some upside values on the board. My goal when I narrow down my list of favorite quarterbacks every year is to find the highest upside options at different points in drafts. I also like to narrow down my list of draftable quarterbacks so I'm not spread so thin with my ownership shares.

When I think about upside fantasy quarterbacks, I'm looking for them to check off boxes in four categories if possible...

1. **Volume** (passing/rushing) – I want the ball in my quarterback's hands and not in his running back's hands.
2. **Rushing production** – I'm looking for players to supplement their passing totals with some work as a runner.
3. **Efficiency** (passing/rushing) – I want my quarterback to be effective when the ball is in his hands.
4. **Supporting cast** – I'm looking mostly at receiving corps and, to a lesser extent, offensive-line play.



I also consider other factors like coaching and durability to a lesser extent, but I'm mostly focused on these four areas when I'm drafting my quarterbacks. Let's put this exercise to practice by projecting out the starting quarterbacks for all 32 teams this season.

PROJECTING 2020 FANTASY QUARTERBACKS

ADP Data is from the month of May and courtesy of our partners at [BestBall10s](#).

Key: ✓ = 1 point, ✗ = .5 point, ☒ = 0 points

PLAYER	ADP	VOLUME	RUSHING	EFFICIENCY	CAST	TOTAL
Lamar Jackson (Bal)	26/QB1	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
Patrick Mahomes (KC)	33/QB2	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
Kyler Murray (Ari)	70/QB3	✓	✓	✗	✓	3.5
Dak Prescott (Dal)	73/QB4	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
Deshaun Watson (Hou)	81/QB5	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
Russell Wilson (Sea)	81/QB6	✗	✓	✓	✓	3.5
Josh Allen (Buf)	94/QB7	✗	✓	✗	✓	3
Matt Ryan (Atl)	104/QB8	✓	☒	✓	✓	3
Carson Wentz (Phi)	111/QB9	✓	✗	✗	✓	3
Drew Brees (NO)	114/QB10	✗	☒	✓	✓	2.5
Aaron Rodgers (GB)	115/QB11	✗	✗	✓	✗	2.5
Tom Brady (TB)	121/QB12	✓	☒	✗	✓	2.5
Daniel Jones (NYG)	121/QB13	✓	✓	✗	✓	3.5
Matthew Stafford (Det)	125/QB14	✓	☒	✓	✓	3
Baker Mayfield (Cle)	129/QB15	☒	☒	✗	✓	1.5

PLAYER	ADP	VOLUME	RUSHING	EFFICIENCY	CAST	TOTAL
Jared Goff (LAR)	138/QB16	✓	☒	✗	✓	2.5
Ben Roethlisberger (Pit)	140/QB17	✓	☒	✓	✓	3
Ryan Tannehill (Ten)	143/QB18	☒	✓	✓	✓	3
Joe Burrow (Cin)	146/QB19	✓	✓	✗	✓	3.5
Kirk Cousins (Min)	154/QB20	☒	☒	✓	✗	1.5
Jimmy Garoppolo (SF)	158/QB21	☒	☒	✓	✓	2
Drew Lock (Den)	163/QB22	✗	☒	✗	✓	2
Philip Rivers (Ind)	165/QB23	✗	☒	✗	✓	2
Sam Darnold (NYJ)	170/QB24	✗	☒	☒	✗	1
Teddy Bridgewater (Car)	172/QB25	✓	✗	✗	✓	3
Gardner Minshew (Jax)	182/QB26	✓	✓	✗	✗	3
Derek Carr (Oak)	196/QB27	☒	☒	✓	✗	1.5
Tua Tagovailoa (Mia)	222/QB28	✓	☒	✗	✗	2
Dwayne Haskins (Was)	228/QB30	☒	☒	☒	☒	0
Jarrett Stidham (NE)	229/QB32	✗	☒	✗	✗	1.5
Tyrod Taylor (LAC)	232/QB33	✗	✓	✗	✓	3
Nick Foles (Chi)	235/QB34	✗	☒	☒	✗	1

IDENTIFYING WHICH QUARTERBACKS TO DRAFT

I'm considering drafting the 17 quarterbacks who scored three-plus points in the four categories based on my projections. I'm also disqualifying three more players to narrow my list down to 14 quarterbacks to target in best-ball drafts.

Lamar Jackson and **Patrick Mahomes** are being drafted inside the first three rounds, which is far too rich for my blood. There are just too many potentially league-winning running backs and wide receivers being drafted in that range to select a quarterback that early. I also disqualified **Tyrod Taylor** from my list because there's too good of a chance that **Justin Herbert** sees significant playing time this season.

Here's my shortlist of quarterbacks to draft with my favorite QBs in each tier italicized:

MID-ROUND QBS

- **Kyler Murray** (Ari, 70/QB3)
- **Dak Prescott** (Dal, 73/QB4)
- ***Deshaun Watson*** (Hou, 81/QB5)
- **Russell Wilson** (Sea, 81/QB6)

MID-TO-LATE ROUND QBS

- **Josh Allen** (Buf, 94/QB7)
- **Matt Ryan** (Atl, 104/QB8)
- ***Carson Wentz*** (Phi, 112/QB9)
- **Daniel Jones** (NYG, 121/QB13)
- **Matthew Stafford** (Det, 125/QB14)

LATE-ROUND QBS

- **Ben Roethlisberger** (Pit, 140/QB17)
- **Ryan Tannehill** (Ten, 143/QB18)
- ***Joe Burrow*** (Cin, 146/QB19)
- ***Teddy Bridgewater*** (Car, 172/QB25)
- ***Gardner Minshew*** (Jax, 181/QB26)



A couple of observations from this exercise...

- Running quarterbacks are clearly at a premium after last season. The first seven quarterbacks checked the rushing production box for me while only five of the remaining 25 QBs received full points in the rushing category – **Daniel Jones, Ryan Tannehill, Joe Burrow, Gardner Minshew, and Tyrod Taylor.**
- I had four quarterbacks finish with perfect scores. I'd currently rank them **Patrick Mahomes, Lamar Jackson, Deshaun Watson, and Dak Prescott.** **Russell Wilson** and **Kyler Murray** finished with 3.5 points, and they round out the clear top-six QBs for me this season. Kyler is on my list of QBs to target this year, but I probably won't have a ton of his shares since he's typically being drafted ahead of Deshaun, Dak, and Russell.
- If you're strictly looking for upside, **Joe Burrow** stands out as the best value at the position right now. I could've easily given him a perfect score across the board based on his college performance, but I docked him a half of a point in the efficiency column since I'm expecting him to take some lumps as a rookie. I'd make sure to load up on him in drafts right now because I'm expecting more people to jump on the hype train as the summer goes along.
- I had the toughest time with **Jared Goff.** He just missed out on making my list because I still think he's going to be closer to 2019 Goff than 2018 Goff in the efficiency department. However, I'm expecting this entire Rams offense to have a mini bounce-back campaign. **Sean McVay** spent the off-season in his laboratory figuring out

ways to better use his receivers and to cover his O-line issues, and Goff should be slinging it plenty again because of their declining defense. Goff is one player I can see adding to my list of QBs to draft, especially if he starts falling behind Burrow, Tannehill, and Big Ben like I think he will later in the summer.

- I also struggled with **Tom Brady** and **Ben Roethlisberger**. I ultimately left Brady off my list and docked him in the efficiency department because of his declining performance last season and since he'll be a 43-year-old QB in a new offense this season. I ended up leaving Big Ben on the list because he played well and posted monster numbers the last time we saw an extended look at him in 2018, albeit with **Antonio Brown** on the field. I am concerned about his play declining coming off his throwing elbow surgery, and I'm also a little worried about the Steelers defense being so good that it limits his volume.
- I'm clearly not a big fan of the similar run-heavy offenses in Cleveland and Minnesota. In terms of upside potential, **Baker Mayfield** and **Kirk Cousins** are the two most overrated fantasy QBs based on current ADP. Neither player offers enough rushing potential to offset their lack of passing game volume for me to get involved with them this season.
- **Dwayne Haskins** was the only quarterback to score a not-so-perfect zero. Ouch! Prove the world and me wrong, Dwayne.
- I've never been a big **Tyrod Taylor** fan, but he's worth a look as a last-round pick in re-draft leagues if you decide to entirely punt the QB position. The Chargers are heavily leaning toward opening the season with him as the starter, and he's going to have opportunities to put up production against the Bengals, the Chiefs, and the Panthers in the first three weeks of the season.



BEST-BALL STACKS: PAIRING RECEIVERS WITH QBs

By Tom Brolley

Published June 5, 2020

I've started to hit the **BestBall10 drafts** hard since the NFL Draft concluded, and I've honed in on my favorite quarterback-receiver "stacks" for the season. "Stacking" is one of my favorite strategies when I draft my quarterbacks and receivers in the mid-to-late rounds in best-ball formats. It's been a popular (and winning) strategy in the DFS community for years. If you're not familiar with stacking, it's picking multiple players from the same team – or game for DFS – whose fantasy production is correlated.

You don't need me to tell you that if a quarterback has a huge passing day (or season) then there's a good chance his receivers also posted strong production. Stacking players from the same passing game does bring in more risk if the passing game fails to produce but the potential upside outweighs the downside for me.

Most best-ball contest payouts are heavily weighted toward the winner so I'm more willing to take on some risk for a chance at a big payoff since there's no difference in finishing in fourth place or in dead last if my stacks don't work out.

MY BASIC STACKING STRATEGY

I typically draft my quarterbacks first in my stacks before grabbing my receivers at similar ADP ranges or later to pair with my QBs. I never intentionally stack high-end receivers with my quarterbacks since I don't look at the available quarterbacks until after the first six rounds unless **Patrick Mahomes** or **Lamar Jackson** would fall past the top-40 picks or so.

For example, I'm not selecting **DeAndre Hopkins** in the second round this summer and then forcing myself to reach for **Kyle Murray** in the fifth round so I have a Murray-Hopkins stack. I have no problem stacking Hopkins and Murray if it happens organically, with Kyler falling to me in the seventh round when he happens to be one of the best players available.

In other words, I'm taking the best-player-available approach until after I take my quarterback, and then I'll consider small reaches at receiver to create stacks with my QBs.

My three favorite mid-to-late-round quarterbacks last season were **Dak Prescott**, **Lamar Jackson**, and **Carson Wentz**. Stacking receivers with those first two quarterbacks rewarded me with plenty of best-ball titles. I almost always selected **Michael Gallup** after taking Dak and I picked **Mark Andrews** and/or **Marquise Brown** a ton after drafting Lamar.

On the flip side, my Wentz and **DeSean Jackson** combos showed the downside to stacking. I thought I potentially had something special after D-Jax exploded for 8/154/2 receiving on the Redskins in Week 1. D-Jax ended up playing just 15 snaps the rest of the season and Wentz's season went downhill too without his top playmaker at receiver.

QBS I'M DRAFTING IN 2020

I broke down my favorite upside quarterbacks this season in the first part of this series. I encourage you to **give it a read** if you've yet to do it to see how I identified which QBs I'm drafting this summer.

MY QUARTERBACKS

*ADP Data is from the month of May and courtesy of our partners at **BestBall10s**.*

Kyler Murray (Ari, 70/QB3)

Dak Prescott (Dal, 73/QB4)

Deshaun Watson (Hou, 81/QB5)

Russell Wilson (Sea, 81/QB6)

Josh Allen (Buf, 94/QB7)

Matt Ryan (Atl, 104/QB8)

Carson Wentz (Phi, 111/QB9)

Daniel Jones (NYG, 121/QB13)

Matthew Stafford (Det, 124/QB14)

Ben Roethlisberger (Pit, 140/QB17)

Ryan Tannehill (Ten, 143/QB18)

Joe Burrow (Cin, 146/QB19)

Teddy Bridgewater (Car, 172/QB25)

Gardner Minshew (Jax, 181/QB26)

Now that I've pinpointed which quarterbacks I'm drafting this summer, it's time to see which receivers I'm pairing with them to try to maximize the production for my best-ball teams.

MID-ROUND QB STACKS

DESHAUN WATSON (HOU, 81) STACKED WITH WILL FULLER (HOU, 81), BRANDIN COOKS (HOU, 94), AND/OR KENNY STILLS (HOU, 212)

I'm really starting to warm up to Watson as we get more distance from **Bill O'Brien's** awful **DeAndre Hopkins** trade. This offense still has plenty of dynamic receiving weapons, and Watson is going to run a lot, if not more, with all the speed they have stretching the field. The Texans defense could also be a sieve this season, which could put the rock in Watson's hands even more this season. Watson has been a QB to target the last three seasons when he's playing from behind in negative game scripts. After **Patrick Mahomes** and **Lamar Jackson**, I think Watson has the third-best chance to finish as the QB1 if the Texans are chasing points more than ever before. The Texans have a 7.5 win total, which ranks in the bottom half of the league and is the lowest total Houston has had entering a season in the Watson era.

The Texans are moving ahead with a WR-by-committee approach this season, with Fuller and Cooks leading the way, and Stills and **Randall Cobb** also involved. Someone has to step into the 30% target share and the 34% air yards share left behind by Nuk, and I see Fuller as the 1A and Cooks as the 1B entering the season. I slightly prefer drafting Cooks because of his cheaper price and his better injury history, but Fuller does already have a downfield rapport with Watson. Stills will also be a boom-or-bust option like Fuller and Cooks, which is better for the best-ball format. I wouldn't advise handcuffing WRs in most situations, but it might not be a terrible idea because of Fuller's soft-tissue injuries and Cooks' troubling concussion history. I didn't include Cobb on my list of options because he doesn't have enough upside potential for me even with an ADP of 205.

DAK PRESCOTT (DAL, 73) STACKED WITH MICHAEL GALLUP (DAL, 73), CEEDEE LAMB (DAL, 102), AND/OR BLAKE JARWIN (DAL, 146)

It's hard to believe but this Cowboys offense under new HC **Mike McCarthy** could be even better than last year's edition. The Cowboys led the league in total offense (431.5 yards per game), and they finished sixth in scoring offense (27.1 points per game), which helped Prescott to finish as the QB3 last season by averaging 21.1 FPG. The

Cowboys drafted **CeeDee Lamb** in the first round to give Dak the league's most formidable trio at WR between **Amari Cooper**, **Michael Gallup**, and Lamb. Dak will also be getting a passing upgrade since they've promoted **Blake Jarwin** and his big-play ability to the starting role.

If you draft Dak this summer, you're going to have plenty of opportunities to stack him with his exciting young receivers. I paired Prescott and Gallup quite a bit last season with consecutive picks, and you could do it again this season near the sixth-seventh-round turn. Cooper is being overdrafted if you consider that Gallup finished just 8.2 fantasy points behind Cooper in their 14 games played together last season.

You can also wait a little longer to pair Dak with Lamb (102 ADP) and/or Jarwin (146). Lamb should be an upgrade over **Randall Cobb** this season after he averaged an absolutely silly 6.11 yards per route run out of the slot last season. He also led this year's draft class in yards per target (15.1), and he finished behind only **Brandon Aiyuk** in yards after the catch with 10.7. Jarwin has a huge opportunity this season after the Cowboys gave him a big raise and they let **Jason Witten** and his 14% target share and his 16% reception share walk this off-season. Jarwin finished seventh in yards per route run (1.82) among 40 TEs with 30+ targets last season, and he'll bring even more juice to this already potent passing attack down the seams and in the red zone.

KYLER MURRAY (ARI, 70 ADP) STACKED WITH CHRISTIAN KIRK (ARI, 90)

Patrick Mahomes and **Lamar Jackson** made huge leaps to become the top fantasy quarterbacks during their second NFL seasons in the last two years. Everyone is looking for the next quarterback to make a huge leap this year, and many have ticketed Murray as the guy to do it this season as a sophomore. Murray finished as the QB12 in FPG (17.8) last season despite playing with a debutant NFL head coach in **Kliff Kingsbury** and an extremely limited cast, featuring **Damiere Byrd** and **KeeSean Johnson**. He averaged just 6.9 YPA last season, but his cast will be much improved this season after the team traded for **DeAndre Hopkins**, who has been a top-five fantasy WR the last three seasons.

A more consistent Kirk would also go a long way to pushing Murray toward the top of the position. Kirk was a popular breakout WR candidate last summer but he couldn't deliver the goods, failing to score a touchdown in 12 of his 13 games last season. He won't see a 23% target share again this season either with Nuk in town so he'll need to be more efficient than 1.41 yards per route run last season (per *PFF*). I'm not actively targeting Kirk at his current ADP of 90 – I'm targeting **Diontae Johnson** and **Brandin Cooks** at that point – but a big season from Kirk could put Murray over the top as a fantasy option this season since he needs a legit #2 receiver to step up.

LACKS A GREAT PAIR

Russell Wilson (Sea, 81) – Wilson has been a top-14 fantasy quarterback in each of his eight seasons, and the only thing holding him back from higher finishes is a lack of volume. With an uncertain backfield and a defense that's been on the decline in recent seasons, maybe this is the year **Pete Carroll** unleashes Wilson. I'm only considering **D.K. Metcalf** and **Tyler Lockett** in drafts this summer from Seattle's receiving corps, and they're being selected two rounds before Russ. If **Greg Olsen** floats your boat, he's available around 176 picks into drafts. I'd much rather draft some of the young TEs who could take leaps into stardom this summer rather than stacking a potentially washed-up Olsen to stack with Wilson.

MID-TO-LATE-ROUND QB STACKS

CARSON WENTZ (PHI, 111) STACKED WITH DALLAS GOEDERT (PHI, 122), JALEN REAGOR (PHI, 134), AND/OR DESEAN JACKSON (PHI, 154)

Wentz is going to put together a massive season in the near future, and I plan on cashing in when he does it. He plays with an aggressive, downfield approach and he now has the speed at WR that plays to his strengths. Wentz already had a potentially elite receiving back in **Miles Sanders** and a pair of stud TEs at his disposal. Wentz managed to finish in the top 10 in total FP (275.9) at the position despite the Eagles being down to **Robert Davis** and **Greg Ward** as their starting WRs in the Wild Card Round last season. I'm going to continue to draft Wentz aggressively until his massive season comes, which could be 2020.

You're going to have plenty of chances to stack Wentz with his receivers, starting with TE Goedert before WRs Reagor and Jackson come off the board a little later. Goedert essentially played through a calf injury all of last season and he still finished as the TE12 in FPG (9.6). The Eagles drafted Reagor 21st overall to get him on the field immediately. He may have the most upside potential of this year's rookie WRs if he can quickly become the #1 WR in an Eagles offense that's clearly going to take more shots downfield. I'd much rather stack Wentz with Reagor and/or Goedert than with D-Jax at age 33 coming off a completely lost 2019 season because of his core injury. I can't completely trust him to stay healthy for most of the season after he burned me last season, but he tantalized me last year with his Week 1 receiving line (8/154/2) against the Redskins.

MATTHEW STAFFORD (DET, 124/QB14) STACKED WITH T.J. HOCKENSON (DET, 126)

I faded Stafford last summer with **Darrell Bevell** and his run-heavy tendencies from Seattle coming to town. It looked like a foolish move until Stafford went down with a season-ending back injury after Week 9. He was averaging a sizzling 20.8 FPG and he ended up finishing behind only **Ryan Tannehill** with an 8.6 YPA average. This passing attack has a chance to take another step forward with Hockenson another year older and with **D'Andre Swift** in the fold as a receiver out of the backfield. Stafford was averaging 40.0 dropbacks per game before his injury last season, and the Lions defense should have him chasing points again this season with their win total sitting at 6.5.

I have an affinity for drafting second-year receivers who didn't live up to expectations as rookies, and Hockenson meets that standard this summer. Rookie TEs almost never do anything, but I'm expecting Hockenson to take a leap in his second season with a healthy Stafford. Our guy **Greg Cosell** actually couldn't find a single weakness in Hockenson's game when he broke down his Iowa tape in 2019. Stafford needs to stop wasting so many throws in the middle of the field to **Danny Amendola** this season. He had a 17% target share compared to Hockenson's 13% share in games with Stafford last season. Our **Adam Caplan** said the Lions are planning on using him more as a movement TE this season. He ran a disappointing 40.1% of his routes from the slot with Stafford last season, which ticked up to 55.2% after Stafford went down for the season.

JOSH ALLEN (BUF, 94 ADP) STACKED WITH JOHN BROWN (BUF, 101)

The Bills improved Allen's cast for the second straight off-season by trading for **Stefon Diggs**. He now has a formidable trio at WR with Diggs, Brown, and **Cole Beasley**, and second-year players **Dawson Knox** and **Devin Singletary** have the potential to develop into excellent receivers too. Allen has yet to complete more than 60% of his passes or top 7.0 YPA in a season, but that could change this year because of his excellent cast. If Allen can keep making improvements as a passer, it's only going to boost his upside potential since he already has an excellent floor because of his rushing production.

I'm expecting Brown to regress this season after posting career-best reception (72) and receiving yardage (1060) totals. His 24% target share should dip quite a bit this season with Diggs in town. Still, Allen is going to have to take a major step forward as a passer to threaten for the QB1 spot, which means he'll need to be a much better deep passer. Brown saw a catchable pass on just 37% of his targets of 20+ yards last year, and Allen finished dead last in adjusted completion percentage (30.9%) on deep passes last season (per *PFF*). Brown could pop for a couple of big games if Allen can make any kind of improvement as a downfield thrower.

MATT RYAN (ATL, 104) STACKED WITH HAYDEN HURST (ATL, 117) AND/OR RUSSELL GAGE (ATL, 230)

Ryan certainly isn't a sexy pick inside the top-10 at the position, but he finished as a QB1 in FPG last season for the third time in the last four years. Ryan is once again on my QBs to target because he once again projects to be at or near the top in passing game volume. The Falcons attempted by far the most passes per game last season (42.8) after attempting the fifth-most in 2018 (38.6). It also doesn't hurt that he has two studs at his disposal in **Julio Jones** and **Calvin Ridley**, combined with a potentially terrible running game and a porous defense. Sign me up for Ryan again this season.

Hurst, a 2018 first-round pick, is going to get his first real crack at being an every-down player, and he goes from being a reserve on a run-heavy team to a starter in a pass-heavy offense. Hurst flashed big-play ability in his limited chances last season, ranking 10th in yards per route run (1.69) among 40 TEs with 30+ targets last season. **Austin Hooper** left behind a generous 18% target share, a 15% air yards share, and a 20% reception share. Gage is also an option to stack with Ryan at the very end of your draft after he averaged 7.3 targets per game after the Falcons traded **Mohamed Sanu** last season. Gage isn't typically a player I target in best-ball formats with his 9.1 YPR average, but it's also impossible to find a player in the 20th round who had a 17% target share like he had after the Falcons sent Sanu packing.

LACKS A GREAT PAIR

Daniel Jones (NYG, 121/QB13) – Jones showed an impressive ceiling last season by topping 28+ FP in four of his 13 games last season. He turned the ball over a ton as a rookie (23 times in 13 games), but he had to deal with a decimated skill group behind some shoddy pass protection. The Giants will hopefully stay healthier this season and they drafted LT **Andrew Thomas** fourth overall to give him more time. You can certainly pair Jones with **Sterling Shepard** (119 ADP) and **Golden Tate** (133), but I'm not actively drafting either of those receivers this season because they lack the upside I'm looking for at that point in the draft. Jones is going to need big-play receivers **Darius Slayton** and/or **Evan Engram** to elevate him to the next level if Jones hopes to break through as a top-five fantasy quarterback this season.

LATE-ROUND QB STACKS

JOE BURROW (CIN, 146/QB19) STACKED WITH JOHN ROSS (CIN, 191) AND/OR TEE HIGGINS (CIN, 199)

I wrote this in the first part of this series, but I want to reiterate that Burrow is the best value on the board if you're looking strictly for upside, which you should be. He's coming off the best single-season QB performance in college football history last year. Burrow completed a ludicrous 76.3% of his passes, and he averaged a silly 10.8 YPA for 5671 yards, which helped him throw for an FBS record 60 TDs with just six INTs. As our **Scott Barrett pointed out**, Burrow also averaged 6.6 FPG as a runner during his two seasons at LSU. The cupboard certainly isn't bare in Cincinnati either, with four legitimate receivers and a stud running back in **Joe Mixon**. Burrow has a route to QB1 production if he can get even average O-line play and if he can get a healthy campaign from **A.J. Green**.

A healthy campaign from Ross would be the cherry on top of the sundae for Burrow. He was playing the best football of his career in the first month of last season before another injury slowed his third campaign. Ross' 4.22-speed should pair better with Burrow's downfield throwing compared to **Andy Dalton's**. If he can't stay healthy, second-round pick **Tee Higgins** will be elevated to a prominent role as a rookie. He'll compete with Ross for targets and playing time, but it wouldn't be surprising if Higgins begins to surge in the second half of the year if he develops a rapport with his fellow rookie Burrow. Higgins should at least see fantasy's most valuable targets in the end zone and down the field. I have no problem taking either player if I draft Burrow, and I lean toward Ross having a slightly bigger impact in 2020 because of his potential for a couple of blow-up games, which is suited for the best-ball format.

GARDNER MINSHEW (JAX, 181) STACKED WITH DEDE WESTBROOK (JAX, 196)

The Jaguars have a chance to be gross this season with their league-low 4.5 win total this season, which might be why I'm getting lots of 2015 **Blake Bortles** fantasy vibes from Minshew and company this season. The Jags entered the 2015 season with a 5.5 win total before finishing 5-11, but second-year pro Bortles finished sixth in FPG (19.8) after his **ADP sat near 200** for the summer. Bortles finished at the top of the position by running for 310 yards and throwing for 35 TDs while tossing 18 INTs and completing an ugly 58.6% of his passes.

The Jaguars traded away **Nick Foles** this off-season and second-year pro Minshew is now the man in Jacksonville. He could be throwing and, more importantly, scrambling a lot while playing from behind this season. You might be surprised that Minshew finished fifth among QBs in rushing yards per game (24.6) last season. Don't sleep on

Minshew and his goofy mustache late in drafts. He's a real threat to crack the top 12 at the position if he continues to scramble, and he should be a more comfortable passer as he enters the season as the entrenched starter in **Jay Gruden's** offense.

D.J. Chark looks like he could be Minshew's version of **Allen Robinson** this season, and there's an outside chance Westbrook could play the **Allen Hurns** role — he cleared 1000+ yards back in 2015. I'm not particularly enamored with Westbrook, but maybe we can get some post-hype magic from him with his ADP sitting in the 17th round after being a trendy sixth-round pick last summer. Rookie **Laviska Shenault** (201 ADP) is also going off the board in the same neighborhood if you'd rather pair him with Minshew, but I see him as more of a project for the future rather than a regular Year One contributor.

RYAN TANNEHILL (TEN, 143) STACKED WITH JONNU SMITH (TEN, 135)

Tannehill played at a near flawless level last season, completing 70.3% of his passes with a 7.7% TD rate and averaging 9.6 YPA. He averaged 22.0 FFG in his 10 starts, which put him behind only **Lamar Jackson** for the season. The Titans rewarded him with a four-year deal with \$62 million guaranteed this off-season. Tannehill's 2019 efficiency isn't sustainable heading into 2020 so he's going to need more passing volume this season and/or big leaps from **A.J. Brown** and **Jonnu Smith** to maintain his QB1 standing this season.

Smith is typically being drafted in front of Tannehill but there's still a chance you could stack these two together if you draft Tannehill a little earlier than his ADP and if Smith falls a bit. During our **AFC South Pow-wow**, our guy **Adam Caplan** said the Titans are high on Smith, and he's looking for a career year as he enters the final year of his rookie deal. Smith finished behind only Brown, **Deebo Samuel**, and **Noah Fant** in average yards after the catch with 8.4 (per NFL Next Gen Stats). If Smith takes a leap in his fourth season, there's a great chance that Tannehill's passing volume ticked upward to give him another QB1 season.

LACKS A GREAT PAIR

Ben Roethlisberger (Pit, 140 ADP) — Big Ben is coming back from throwing-elbow surgery, and he'll be 38 years old this season so there are reasons to be cautious with Roethlisberger. However, he has the type of ceiling I'm looking for as he finished as the QB3 with 21.4 FPG in his last full season in 2018, albeit with **Antonio Brown**. I'm heavily targeting **Diontae Johnson** and **JuJu Smith-Schuster** at their current ADPs because the stink of 2019 Steelers offense seems to be still on them at their current prices — JuJu has an ADP of 37 and Diontae sits at 89. **Eric Ebron** (156) and **James Washington** (190) are available to pair with Big Ben later in drafts, but I'm not particularly high on either player. I'd rather draft higher upside options than Ebron and Washington even at their rock-bottom prices.

Teddy Bridgewater (Car, 172) — I've never been a huge Bridgewater fan, but I'm going to own a lot of Teddy best-ball shares this summer as my QB2/3. Bridgewater has no QB competition with just **Will Grier** and **P.J. Walker** behind him, and his receiving corps is a top-10 unit if you include **Christian McCaffrey**. Bridgewater has this year's hotshot young offensive coach calling plays for him in **Joe Brady**, who is going to spread defenses out with all of the Panthers receiving talent. The Panthers are also going to throw a metric ton in what could be a wild NFC South because of their potentially league-worst defense. Add it all up and it's more than worth spending a free pick on Teddy with his ADP at 170+ picks. Unfortunately, his receivers are likely to be all off the board by the time you select Bridgewater, but there's a chance **Ian Thomas** (ADP 149) could still be around to pair with Teddy.

INDUSTRY ANALYST BEST-BALL DRAFT

By The Fantasy Points Staff

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We started a **Best Ball 10** with our staff and some friends from around the industry and I'll be blogging the results here. It's a 20 round draft, we'll use PPR scoring, and we'll start 1 QB, 2 RB, 3 WR, 1 FLEX, 1 TE, and 1 defense.

Tom and John will pick back-to-back at 2nd-3rd, Graham is picking 5th, and Joe (7th) and Scott (11th) have to manage the back-half of the first round. We'll add analysis from around the league often, so make sure you keep this page locked for routine updates.

ROUND 1

PICK		TEAM	PLAYER
1.01	1 (overall)	Mike Clay	Christian McCaffrey, RB, CAR
1.02	2	Tom Brolley	Saquon Barkley, RB, NYG
1.03	3	John Hansen	Ezekiel Elliott, RB, DAL
1.04	4	Scott Pianowski	Alvin Kamara, RB, NO
1.05	5	Graham Barfield	Joe Mixon, RB, CIN
1.06	6	Tom Kessenich	Dalvin Cook, RB, MIN
1.07	7	Joe Dolan	Derrick Henry, RB, TEN
1.08	8	Brian Drake	Kenyan Drake, RB, ARI
1.09	9	Rich Hribar	Nick Chubb, RB, CLE
1.10	10	John Daigle	Michael Thomas, WR, NO
1.11	11	Scott Barrett	Davante Adams, WR, GB
1.12	12	T.J. Hernandez	Miles Sanders, RB, PHI

Analysis: Unsurprisingly, the first round was incredibly RB heavy as nine backs came off of the board before both **Michael Thomas** and **Davante Adams**. In most redraft leagues, Thomas should go around 4-5 overall, but since this is best-ball and we don't have access to a weekly waiver wire, scarcity pushes RBs up the board. After Daigle

and Barrett broke the RB train with Thomas/Adams, T.J. Hernandez took **Miles Sanders** to end the first round. Sanders' average draft position has been rocketing upward since he's coming off of a white-hot finish to his rookie season and the Eagles have not added another back that could seriously threaten his workload.

Why Graham went Mixon > Cook: The first four picks were chalk -- McCaffrey, Barkley, Elliott, and Kamara -- but I broke that trend with Mixon at 5 overall. **Dalvin Cook** is a special player, but the Vikings offense is headed towards a bit of scoring regression, his **injury history is incredibly concerning**, and now this "holdout" has only increased the risk. Even though Cook has little leverage in his contract negotiations, he could still follow in **Melvin Gordon's** footsteps and sit out half of the season to protect his body from further pounding. Meanwhile, Mixon closed the final eight weeks of 2019 as the RB7 in PPR points per game while ranking 3rd in both touches and yards from scrimmage per game on the worst team in football. If Mixon gets just a little more involved in the passing game and **Joe Burrow** is the truth, we'll be cooking with gas.

ROUND 2

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER
2.01	13	T.J. Hernandez Travis Kelce, TE, KC
2.02	14	Scott Barrett Tyreek Hill, WR, KC
2.03	15	John Daigle George Kittle, TE, SF
2.04	16	Rich Hribar DeAndre Hopkins, WR, ARI
2.05	17	Brian Drake Chris Godwin, WR, TB
2.06	18	Joe Dolan Aaron Jones, RB, GB
2.07	19	Tom Kessenich Clyde Edwards-Helaire, RB, KC
2.08	20	Graham Barfield Austin Ekeler, RB, LAC
2.09	21	Scott Pianowski Julio Jones, WR, ATL
2.10	22	John Hansen Josh Jacobs, RB, LV
2.11	23	Tom Brolley Allen Robinson, WR, CHI
2.12	24	Mike Clay Mike Evans, WR, TB

Analysis: Scott's draft position (11 overall) lent itself to a Zero RB build and he'll immediately have a massive advantage at WR over the rest of this league with his **Davante Adams-Tyreek Hill** duo. It'll be interesting to see which RBs he ends up with. After nine of the first 12 picks were backs, just four RBs came off of the board in Round 2. Joe has an amazing, high-ceiling duo with **Derrick Henry-Aaron Jones** while John has locked down 15-20 rushing

TDs right off of the bat with his **Ezekiel Elliott-Josh Jacobs** duo. RB-RB is the optimal start in building best-ball teams this year, especially when you're picking between 2 and 8 overall. In a sharp draft room, it was no surprise that both **Travis Kelce** and **George Kittle** flew off of the board early in the second to Hernandez and John Daigle. Over the last two years, Kelce and Kittle have finished as a TE1 (top-12) in over 80% of their games -- providing a massive positional advantage even though you only have to start one weekly. Hernandez and Daigle are now free to attack other positions throughout the rest of the draft without worrying about tight end.

Tom's second/third-round process: John sniped me by taking **Josh Jacobs** 22nd overall as I saw a major drop in players I was interested in at both running back and wide receiver. **Melvin Gordon, Jonathan Taylor, and James Conner** were my next favorite options at running back, and I've been comfortable taking each of these players starting around this range. I also knew I could get one of those backs with my next pick in the third round at 26 overall with **Mike Clay's** two picks sandwiched between my selections. I had **Allen Robinson, Kenny Golladay, and Mike Evans** as the next wide receivers I was interested in. I've been actively taking A-Rob starting in the early third round, and I've mostly been fading Golladay and Evans at their current late-second/early-third round ADPs. I ultimately decided to pull the trigger on A-Rob a little earlier than I've been typically doing, but I wanted him more than Evans or Golladay. Mike ended up taking Evans and **Leonard Fournette**, who I had no interest in at his current price, so I was able to get my favorite RB out of the Gordon/Taylor/Conner grouping.

ROUND 3

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER
3.01	25	Mike Clay
		Leonard Fournette, RB, JAC
3.02	26	Tom Brolley
		Melvin Gordon, RB, DEN
3.03	27	John Hansen
		Adam Thielen, WR, MIN
3.04	28	Scott Pianowski
		Kenny Golladay, WR, DET
3.05	29	Graham Barfield
		Odell Beckham, WR, CLE
3.06	30	Tom Kessenich
		Calvin Ridley, WR, ATL
3.07	31	Joe Dolan
		Lamar Jackson, QB, BAL
3.08	32	Brian Drake
		James Conner, RB, PIT
3.09	33	Rich Hribar
		D.J. Moore, WR, CAR
3.10	34	John Daigle
		Patrick Mahomes, QB, KC
3.11	35	Scott Barrett
		Mark Andrews, TE, BAL

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER
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3.12	36	T.J. Hernandez	JuJu Smith-Schuster, WR, PIT
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Analysis: RB scarcity is going to be a running theme in drafts this year and this league is yet another example with only 3 RBs coming off of the board in the third round, two of which were at 25 and 26 overall to Mike Clay (**Leonard Fournette**) and Tom Brolley (**Melvin Gordon**). Brolley is off to a hot start with Barkley-Robinson-Gordon and is now freed up to hammer receivers in the mid-rounds. It's always fun to see how long **Lamar Jackson** and **Patrick Mahomes** last in leagues filled with late-round QB adopters, but both Joe and Daigle couldn't pass them up here. It'll be interesting to see what Daigle's RB depth looks like after starting the draft with **Michael Thomas**, **George Kittle**, and **Patrick Mahomes**. Scott is going to have to nail his mid-round running backs, but if you're going to go Zero RB, Adams-Hill-Andrews is the perfect start.

ROUND 4

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER
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4.01	37	T.J. Hernandez	Chris Carson, RB, SEA
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4.02	38	Scott Barrett	Zach Ertz, TE, PHI
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4.03	39	John Daigle	Todd Gurley, RB, ATL
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4.04	40	Rich Hribar	Amari Cooper, WR, DAL
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4.05	41	Brian Drake	Cooper Kupp, WR, LAR
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4.06	42	Joe Dolan	Robert Woods, WR, LAR
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4.07	43	Tom Kessenich	Terry McLaurin, WR, WAS
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4.08	44	Graham Barfield	Jonathan Taylor, RB, IND
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4.09	45	Scott Pianowski	A.J. Brown, WR, TEN
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4.10	46	John Hansen	D.J. Chark, WR, JAC
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4.11	47	Tom Brolley	David Johnson, RB, HOU
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4.12	48	Mike Clay	Courtland Sutton, WR, DEN
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Analysis: The 4th and 5th round is where you want to invest at wide receiver this year. Seven wideouts went in 12 picks -- four of which were top-18 in PPR points per game just a year ago (Kupp, Woods, Cooper, and Chark).

Between those four, McLaurin, Sutton, and Brown, it's a safe bet at least three extremely high-value picks were made here. In a year where running backs are being pushed up the board, some of the receiver value is truly insane. **Amari Cooper**, **A.J. Brown**, and **Cooper Kupp** each had four or more weeks with 20+ PPR points while **Chris Godwin**, who went 17 overall, had 5 such weeks last year. We're always searching for ceiling performances (think 20+ points) at wide receiver and you can still find alpha WR1's past 40 overall.

ROUND 5

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER
5.01	49	Mike Clay
5.02	50	Tom Brolley
5.03	51	John Hansen
5.04	52	Scott Pianowski
5.05	53	Graham Barfield
5.06	54	Tom Kessenich
5.07	55	Joe Dolan
5.08	56	Brian Drake
5.09	57	Rich Hribar
5.10	58	John Daigle
5.11	59	Scott Barrett
5.12	60	T.J. Hernandez

Analysis: After starting his draft Thomas-Kittle-Mahomes, John Daigle dipped into the RB pool in back-to-back rounds with **Todd Gurley** and **Le'Veon Bell** as his RB1 and RB2. If this were 2017, Daigle would already have his check in the mail. Seriously, though -- this is the latest we've seen Bell go all year. He's usually off of the board in the late-3rd or early-4th round, but in a room without **Adam Gase** apologists, Bell slipped to 58 overall. To this point, we've had exactly 26 RBs and 27 WRs taken. After the first round, WR value starts to catch up to the running backs in a hurry.

Note: Hernandez took **Deebo Samuel** just a few hours before the news of his broken foot announced. Brutal.

ROUND 6

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER
6.01	61	T.J. Hernandez Michael Gallup, WR, DAL
6.02	62	Scott Barrett D'Andre Swift, RB, DET
6.03	63	John Daigle Marquise Brown, WR, BAL
6.04	64	Rich Hribar Mark Ingram, RB, BAL
6.05	65	Brian Drake Will Fuller, WR, HOU
6.06	66	Joe Dolan Tyler Boyd, WR, CIN
6.07	67	Tom Kessenich Damien Williams, RB, KC
6.08	68	Graham Barfield T.Y. Hilton, WR, IND
6.09	69	Scott Pianowski Diontae Johnson, WR, PIT
6.10	70	John Hansen Kareem Hunt, RB, CLE
6.11	71	Tom Brolley Jarvis Landry, WR, CLE
6.12	72	Mike Clay Darren Waller, TE, OAK

Analysis: We're obviously biased, but no one had a better start to this draft than Hansen. Elliott-Jacobs-Thielen-Chark-Akers-Hunt is about as close to perfect that you can get from third overall. Scott Pianowski has gone with a Modified Zero RB approach since taking **Alvin Kamara**, ripping off a stretch of five straight wide receivers. If he nails some RB values in Rounds 8-11, Pianowski might have the best team in the league. His **Julio Jones-Kenny Golladay-A.J. Brown-Tyler Lockett-Diontae Johnson** WR corps will be able to do some serious damage. Scott Barrett went Zero RB along with Daigle and collected his first backs here at the turn in **David Montgomery** and **D'Andre Swift** to go with his crazy WR/TE corps (Adams, Hill, Andrews, Ertz). Meanwhile, Mike Clay has quietly executed a really nice balanced lineup around **Christian McCaffrey**. After already getting his three starting wideouts (Evans/Sutton/Allen), nabbing **Darren Waller** rounds out the core of his team nicely.

ROUND 7

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER
7.01	73	Mike Clay Raheem Mostert, RB, SF

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER
7.02	74	Tom Brolley Marvin Jones, WR, DET
7.03	75	John Hansen Christian Kirk, WR, ARI
7.04	76	Scott Pianowski Dak Prescott, QB, DAL
7.05	77	Graham Barfield Jamison Crowder, WR, NYJ
7.06	78	Tom Kessenich Brandin Cooks, WR, HOU
7.07	79	Joe Dolan Darius Slayton, WR, NYG
7.08	80	Brian Drake Deshaun Watson, QB, HOU
7.09	81	Rich Hribar Evan Engram, TE, NYG
7.10	82	John Daigle Mecole Hardman, WR, KC
7.11	83	Scott Barrett Julian Edelman, WR, NE
7.12	84	T.J. Hernandez Kyler Murray, QB, ARI

Analysis: Two backs fell 20 spots past their average draft position in this draft between **Le'Veon Bell** (Picked: 58 overall; ADP: 38) and **Raheem Mostert** (Picked: 73 overall; ADP: 53). In a room filled with sharp fantasy minds, we're all collectively lower on the Jets offense and don't have as much confidence in Mostert as the public does. Bell is strictly a volume play whereas you're betting on somewhat random, but week-winning spiked weeks for Mostert. Last year, Bell ranked 5th among RBs in snap rate (83%) but was only the RB19 in fantasy points per game in the Jets low octane attack. Now **Frank Gore** and **Lamical Perine** are threats to his bell-cow workload. In Mostert's case, we'll always be wary of 27-year-old running back breakouts who bounced around the NFL before landing in a perfect scheme. We've been shying away from Bell and Mostert this offseason and, in a league where you have to start three wide receivers, this draft room wisely let these over-valued mid-round backs slide.

ROUND 8

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER
8.01	85	T.J. Hernandez Tevin Coleman, RB, SF
8.02	86	Scott Barrett James White, RB, NE

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER
8.03	87	John Daigle Alexander Mattison, RB, MIN
8.04	88	Rich Hribar Marlon Mack, RB, IND
8.05	89	Brian Drake Derrius Guice, RB, WAS
8.06	90	Joe Dolan John Brown, WR, BUF
8.07	91	Tom Kessenich Russell Wilson, QB, SEA
8.08	92	Graham Barfield Josh Allen, QB, BUF
8.09	93	Scott Pianowski Jordan Howard, RB, MIA
8.10	94	John Hansen Tyler Higbee, TE, LAR
8.11	95	Tom Brolley Ronald Jones, RB, TB
8.12	96	Mike Clay Ke'Shawn Vaughn, RB, TB

Analysis: We had a massive run on running backs here with eight flying off of the board in 12 picks. After a Zero RB start, Barrett landed his RB3 in **James White** (to pair with Montgomery/Swift). Pianowski bookended his Modified Zero RB start with one of our favorite RB values in **Jordan Howard**. And, both Bucs' backs were taken back-to-back by Brolley (Jones) and Clay (Vaughn) to close out the round. It's officially no longer a contrarian opinion to have Jones over Vaughn for redraft leagues as RoJo has usurped Vaughn in ADP over the past few weeks. We have Vaughn over Jones in **our projections**, but not by much. Jones obviously is the incumbent and that's a big reason why his ADP has spiked recently, but if you're looking to fade that narrative, the window to buy Vaughn is wide open.

ROUND 9

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER
9.01	97	Mike Clay Tarik Cohen, RB, CHI
9.02	98	Tom Brolley Hayden Hurst, TE, ATL
9.03	99	John Hansen Breshad Perriman, WR, NYJ

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER
9.04	100	Scott Pianowski Matt Ryan, QB, ATL
9.05	101	Graham Barfield Jalen Reagor, WR, PHI
9.06	102	Tom Kessenich Matt Breida, RB, MIA
9.07	103	Joe Dolan Zack Moss, RB, BUF
9.08	104	Brian Drake Sony Michel, RB, NE
9.09	105	Rich Hribar Kerryon Johnson, RB, DET
9.10	106	John Daigle Latavius Murray, RB, NO
9.11	107	Scott Barrett Mike Williams, WR, LAC
9.12	108	T.J. Hernandez CeeDee Lamb, WR, DAL

Analysis: There weren't many picks of note in this round, other than Brolley taking **Hayden Hurst** a little bit ahead of his ADP. After the top-4 TEs (Kelce, Kittle, Andrews, Ertz) are all gone, it makes a ton of sense to wait until Round 9 or later to think about TE again. Going from the most run-heavy offense in the NFL to a pass-first team is the most glaring positive for Hurst's fantasy stock in Atlanta. Over the last two seasons, the Falcons lead the NFL in pass attempts (1,394) while the Ravens are 3rd from last (1,054). Add in the fact that Atlanta doesn't have a true No. 3 wide receiver or a great pass-catching back and it's easy to see how Hurst pays off as a 9th round pick.

ROUND 10

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER
10.01	109	T.J. Hernandez Carson Wentz, QB, PHI
10.02	110	Scott Barrett Robby Anderson, WR, CAR
10.03	111	John Daigle Tony Pollard, RB, DAL
10.04	112	Rich Hribar Phillip Lindsay, RB, DEN
10.05	113	Brian Drake Rob Gronkowski, TE, TB

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER	
10.06	114	Joe Dolan	Duke Johnson, RB, HOU
10.07	115	Tom Kessenich	Hunter Henry, TE, LAC
10.08	116	Graham Barfield	Noah Fant, TE, DEN
10.09	117	Scott Pianowski	Chase Edmonds, RB, ARI
10.10	118	John Hansen	Daniel Jones, QB, NYG
10.11	119	Tom Brolley	Jerry Jeudy, WR, DEN
10.12	120	Mike Clay	Darrell Henderson, RB, LAR

Analysis: After Hurst goes off of the board, the late-round tight end market is a total free for all. In this room, we were all collectively lower on **Austin Hooper** as Gronk, Henry, and Fant all went ahead of the former-Falcon. Now on a run-first Cleveland squad behind two target hogs in Beckham and Landry, the path for Hooper to replicate his 2019 season will be tough. Last year, Hooper was the TE3 in PPR points per game behind Kelce and Kittle. Meanwhile, Rich Hribar may have gotten the steal of the draft at running back with **Phillip Lindsay** at 10.04. **Melvin Gordon** went 3.02 to Brolley. There is no doubt the Broncos signed Gordon to be their featured back, but Lindsay still has a path to flirt with high-end RB3 fantasy numbers as Denver's change-of-pace back and he obviously has a top-20 ceiling if Gordon misses any time.

ROUND 11

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER	
11.01	121	Mike Clay	Tom Brady, QB, TB
11.02	122	Tom Brolley	Matthew Stafford, QB, DET
11.03	123	John Hansen	Baker Mayfield, QB, CLE
11.04	124	Scott Pianowski	Austin Hooper, TE, CLE
11.05	125	Graham Barfield	Emmanuel Sanders, WR, NO
11.06	126	Tom Kessenich	Aaron Rodgers, QB, GB

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER	
11.07	127	Joe Dolan	T.J. Hockenson, TE, DET
11.08	128	Brian Drake	Jared Cook, TE, NO
11.09	129	Rich Hribar	Mike Gesicki, TE, MIA
11.10	130	John Daigle	DeSean Jackson, WR, PHI
11.11	131	Scott Barrett	Golden Tate, WR, NYG
11.12	132	T.J. Hernandez	Jonnu Smith, TE, TEN

Analysis: Hansen's strong draft continued in Round 10-11 when he doubled up at QB with **Daniel Jones** and **Baker Mayfield**. Danny Dimes had four games with 30 or more fantasy points in just 12 starts as a rookie while **Aaron Rodgers** had four 30+ games in 16 starts last year. We had another run on TEs in this range, too, with Hooper, Hockenson, Cook, Gesicki, and **Jonnu Smith** all coming off of the board in nine picks. Brian Drake doubled up in Round 10-11 with a nice **Rob Gronkowski-Jared Cook** pairing that should offer a ton of TD upside.

ROUND 12

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER	
12.01	133	T.J. Hernandez	Justin Jackson, RB, LAC
12.02	134	Scott Barrett	Preston Williams, WR, MIA
12.03	135	John Daigle	Sammy Watkins, WR, KC
12.04	136	Rich Hribar	Drew Brees, QB, NO
12.05	137	Brian Drake	Ben Roethlisberger, QB, PIT
12.06	138	Joe Dolan	Anthony Miller, WR, CHI
12.07	139	Tom Kessenich	Dallas Goedert, TE, PHI
12.08	140	Graham Barfield	Blake Jarwin, TE, DAL
12.09	141	Scott Pianowski	Chris Herndon, TE, NYJ

PICK		TEAM	PLAYER
12.10	142	John Hansen	Sterling Shepard, WR, NYG
12.11	143	Tom Brolley	Joe Burrow, QB, CIN
12.12	145	Mike Clay	Curtis Samuel, WR, CAR

Analysis: After starting his draft with **Davante Adams** and **Tyreek Hill**, Barrett attacked RB/TE in the mid-rounds and finally came back to attacking receivers with four-straight picks in Round 9-12 (**Mike Williams, Robby Anderson, Golden Tate**, and **Preston Williams**). Hribar has done a nice job of vacuuming up value all draft long and just scored **Drew Brees** as his QB1. Meanwhile, Dolan and Hansen made two of the best WR value picks of the draft in **Anthony Miller** (138 overall) and **Sterling Shepard** (142). Both wideouts play in the slot often and should easily have 60 receptions this year if they stay healthy.

ROUND 13

PICK		TEAM	PLAYER
13.01	146	Mike Clay	Henry Ruggs, WR, LVR
13.02	147	Tom Brolley	Jace Sternberger, TE, GB
13.03	148	John Hansen	Michael Pittman, WR, IND
13.04	149	Scott Pianowski	Hunter Renfrow, WR, LVR
13.05	150	Graham Barfield	Boston Scott, RB, PHI
13.06	151	Tom Kessenich	Brandon Aiyuk, WR, SF
13.07	152	Joe Dolan	Jared Goff, QB, LAR
13.08	153	Brian Drake	Antonio Brown, WR
13.09	154	Rich Hribar	Devonta Freeman, RB
13.10	155	John Daigle	Ryan Tannehill, QB, TEN
13.11	156	Scott Barrett	Jack Doyle, TE, IND

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER
13.12	157	T.J. Hernandez
		Jimmy Garoppolo, QB, SF

Analysis: Brolley wrapped up an expert-level demonstration in the late-round QB/TE strategy after alternating between RB/WR for the first eight rounds with Stafford-Burrow at quarterback and Hurst-Sternberger at TE. Burrow in particular is a fantastic best-ball value with all of the Bengals weapons at his disposal. Cincinnati's defense should give up a lot of points, too, which will lend itself to more pass-heavy game-scripts for Burrow. Kessenich took **Brandon Aiyuk** well ahead of his current ADP (17th-18th round) after the news of **Deebo Samuel's** broken foot came down. You could have made the argument that Aiyuk *should* have been much closer to Ruggs and Pittman in ADP even before Samuel hurt his foot.

ROUND 14

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER
14.01	158	T.J. Hernandez
		N'Keal Harry, WR, NE
14.02	159	Scott Barrett
		Ian Thomas, TE, CAR
14.03	160	John Daigle
		Eric Ebron, TE, PIT
14.04	161	Rich Hribar
		Kirk Cousins, QB, MIN
14.05	162	Brian Drake
		A.J. Dillon, RB, GB
14.06	163	Joe Dolan
		Irv Smith, TE, MIN
14.07	164	Tom Kessenich
		Nyheim Hines, RB, IND
14.08	165	Graham Barfield
		Teddy Bridgewater, QB, CAR
14.09	166	Scott Pianowski
		Gardner Minshew, QB, JAX
14.10	167	John Hansen
		Anthony McFarland, RB, PIT
14.11	168	Tom Brolley
		Parris Campbell, WR, IND
14.12	169	Mike Clay
		Justin Jefferson, WR, MIN

Analysis: Clay landed two rookie WRs in back-to-back rounds with **Henry Ruggs** (13.01) and **Justin Jefferson** (14.12). Neither Ruggs or Jefferson may end being their team's No. 1 passing target in 2020, but you can't argue that both are nice values at those prices. Fellow rookies that went in the first round of the NFL

Draft, **Jalen Reagor** (9.05) and **CeeDee Lamb** (9.12), both went much earlier. This round also further illuminates not only how deep receiver is this year but just how easy it is to roll a late-round QB strategy. Cousins, Bridgewater, and Minshew are all more than serviceable QB2's with paths to top-18 fantasy output at the position. Everyone loves the Panthers weapons and no one expects their defense to be any good -- but no one wants to draft Bridgewater. And Minshew is the late-round Konami Code special for this season (hat-tip to Rich Hribar). Minshew trailed only **Lamar Jackson** in rushing yards off of scrambles last year despite making 12 starts.

ROUND 15

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER
15.01	170	Mike Clay Drew Lock, QB, DEN
15.02	171	Tom Brolley Ryquell Armstead, RB, JAX
15.03	172	John Hansen Joshua Kelly, RB, LAC
15.04	173	Scott Pianowski Ravens D/ST
15.05	174	Graham Barfield Sam Darnold, QB, NYJ
15.06	175	Tom Kessenich Philip Rivers, QB, IND
15.07	176	Joe Dolan Steven Sims, WR, WAS
15.08	177	Brian Drake Steelers D/ST
15.09	178	Rich Hribar O.J. Howard, TE, TB
15.10	179	John Daigle Gerald Everett, TE, LAR
15.11	180	Scott Barrett 49ers D/ST
15.12	181	T.J. Hernandez Antonio Gibson, WR, WAS

We still have five rounds to finish up, but since we'll mostly be taking longshots and defenses, we'll end the blog here. If you want to check out the rest of the draft board, head [here](#). Thanks for following along!

NFFC CUTLINE STRATEGY AND DRAFT REVIEW

By Jules McLean

Published July 29, 2020

Even if you are not a “high stakes” player or participate in the NFFC Cutline, like most articles on Fantasy Points, you can get some pertinent information to apply in your drafts and/or in-season management.

I really like the NFFC Cutline because there are only three free-agent pick-up periods and the leagues are Best-Ball for first nine weeks. Great for those of us with lots of re-draft leagues or have time constraints. I also like that you get a shot at the \$100,000 grand prize. I’ve done 10 Cutline drafts so far and over 50 Best-Ball drafts, so I’m in a groove with this format.

If you aren’t familiar with the Cutline contest, a quick breakdown follows. After that I will layout some draft strategies for this type of contest and then take a look at a recent Cutline draft I did.

NFFC CUTLINE CHAMPIONSHIP

10 teams per league. \$150 entry fee. The NFFC does offer price discounts if you buy a package of five or nine. Also, be sure to follow the [NFFC](#) on Twitter, as they throw out promo codes from time to time.

Only THREE free agent periods (FAAB used):

Bidding Time Frame:

There will be only three free-agent periods during the regular season and none during the championship playoff.

Free agency will run on the Friday of the following weeks:

- **FAAB 1:** Week 2
- **FAAB 2:** Week 6
- **FAAB 3:** Week 9

Mark your calendars:

- **Week 2** – September 18
- **Week 6** – October 16
- **Week 9** – November 6

Best Ball weeks 1-9, then set your line-up weeks 10-16. Official rule:

Leagues have an optimal scoring format for Weeks 1 through 9 where your highest scoring player from each of the 10 starting positions is scored at the end of each week. Then in the Championship Round and Wild Card Tiers of Weeks 10 through 16, all owners must set their starting lineup each week. That is different from the regular season.

PPR scoring and passing TDs get 6 points.

The 6 points per passing TDs make QBs in the NFFC format a tad more valuable (most contests only give 4 points per passing TD).

League prize is \$250 for 1st place. The real money is in the Overall chase, as 1st place gets \$100,000!

NFFC CUTLINE GENERAL GAME THEORY

Best-Ball - Even though Best Ball for only nine weeks, I feel it necessary to treat the draft like as you would a full Best Ball league. This means two or more QBs, Kickers and Defenses. I realize there are three FAAB periods, but the

first one doesn't even run until after Week 1. With the regular Cutline season only nine weeks, you can't afford to throw away points in Week 1.

Optimal Scoring – The computer selects your highest scoring players and makes your starting line-up.

Optimize: make the best or most effective use of (a situation, opportunity, or resource).

You have to give the computer a fighting chance...give it players or teams to optimize.

Kickers & Defenses/Special Teams (DST) – Prime example of giving the computer something to optimize or not. I see it pretty much every draft -- some owner only takes one Kicker and one DST. I hate to harp on this, but if you aren't drafting two or more of each, you are giving points away. The main objective of fantasy football is to score more points than your leaguemates, so why give them an advantage?

If I have three Kickers, chances are one of them will score 10+ points every week. If you are someone who drafts one Kicker, what happens the week he only kicks two extra points? My team just got an eight-point advantage on you. That might not happen every week, but chances are really good my team with three Kickers will outscore your one-Kicker team by at least 5 points per week. Multiply that by nine weeks and you just gave me a 45 point advantage over the course of the regular season.

But those 45 points can be made up by one of the late-round darts that are being thrown instead of drafting a second Kicker, right? Wrong. How many late-round darts really hit and will hit for the full nine-week regular season? Not many. I looked at all the players in last year's NFFC Cutline contest and I found **Terry McLaurin, D.J. Chark, A.J. Brown, Raheem Mostert, and Darren Waller** as the only four big difference-makers from rounds 17 on. Only four of those players made it into the Top 100 at the end of the season (Mostert was barely out of the Top 100). Six non-Kickers in the last nine rounds were game-changers. 90 picks, and six out of 90 picks made a big difference. That's not a very good hit rate, as you have less than a 10% chance of hitting something big. So think smaller, think about Kickers and DEFs. Grind out some points.

Lastly out of the Top 100 scoring players in the NFFC Cutline last year, five were Defenses/Special Teams and two were Kickers. Looking at the Top-12 finishing teams in the Championship Round, 10 out of the 12 had either a Top 6 DST or Kicker, many had both.

COVID and the CUTLINE - Tighten up your game! I know, it is not a sexy pick to draft your RB handcuff, but in the age of COVID-19 and players missing three weeks because of a positive test, you better do it. And rarely does anyone talk about handcuffing your WRs, so guess what...you better do it. For example, if you own **Julio Jones**, there is no reason not to target **Russell Gage**. Not only can Gage be a Flex option in some weeks, but his value skyrockets if Jones goes down. He can be yours for a 20th round pick or later in most drafts. I got him in the last round (26th) of a recent Cutline (and I am neither the Jones or Ridley owner). I value back-ups that are talented and can strut their stuff should the starter go down; think RBs like **Alexander Mattison, Chase Edmonds** and **Tony Pollard**. Since this worldwide pandemic is lingering, in the past month I've bumped taking my handcuffs by a round. And while I really like carrying three Defenses in Best Ball leagues (and I consider the Cutline a Best Ball for the most part), I've been only drafting two Defenses so I can use a roster spot to back-up my WR.

Waiver Wire – I wasn't joking when I wrote above to mark your calendars for the three waiver wires. Unfortunately, a couple years back I missed the first waiver run... got confused with the dates. With only three waiver periods I dug a tremendous hole for myself. Plus, the first waiver period there are usually many key pick-ups that can be made. Did you only draft one Kicker and one Defense? Time to get those second ones during the first waiver run!

The NFFC uses FAAB to determine how free agents are awarded. If you aren't familiar with FAAB, it stands for Free Agent Acquisition Budget. You are given a budget of \$1000 "dollars" to acquire free agents throughout the season. How you spend it is up to you and there is no other way to get free agents. It is a bidding system, with the minimum bid at \$1.00 and if you spend all your \$1000, that's it... no more free agents for you.

I tend to be very aggressive in FAAB, not only in bidding, but in acquiring players too. In other words, I tinker with my roster a bunch. If my sleeper pick is not producing and I don't think he will (this is the key point...you have to know when the writing is on the wall), off he goes for a player that has upside. For example, I really liked **J.J. Arcega-Whiteside** and **Jake Kumerow** last season as super deep sleepers. I felt both were on teams that needed WR help

and specifically deep threats. Even before Arcega-Whiteside was hurt, he wasn't getting the targets, despite a 93% and 76% snap count. Same with Kumerow, 67%, 88% and 71% snap count, yet only 2 or 3 targets a game. It also didn't help he ran the wrong route early in the season, and we all know **Aaron Rodgers** will freeze a WR out after that. Cut bait and get someone else. Go get a **Russell Gage**, who one game got nine targets, while only playing 57% of the offensive snaps.

It is never a good feeling to drop a free agent only to see him go off later in the season. I've dropped my fair share of players, only to see them go off a month later. While looking over the free agent data from 2019 I saw plenty of folks drop **Kenyan Drake** and **DeVante Parker**. If that happens to you, use it as a lesson, try to identify why you dropped them and why they later went off. You can't beat yourself up over the **Kenyan Drake's** of the world. No one had a crystal ball that showed he and his 3.7 yards-per-carry average and zero TDs would be traded in-season and go 5.2 YPC and 8 TDs for the rest of the year. **DeVante Parker**, on the other hand, was getting 7, 7 & 6 targets the first three weeks of the season, Those target numbers indicate one should show some patience.

I'm aggressive because I'm also trying to identify the free agent before he breaks out. I want to roster him and only spend \$1. A perfect example is **Damien Williams** in 2018. Buried on the Chiefs depth chart and even when **Kareem Hunt** missed time, nobody wanted him. Nobody but savvy fantasy owners that is! While everyone was throwing \$400-\$600 at **Spencer Ware**, there were some owners (including me) that threw a \$1 bid on Williams. BAM! **Damien Williams** lit it up from Week 13 on and carried many teams in the play-offs (same with C.J. Anderson that year).

Because there are only three FAAB/waiver wire periods in the Cutline, I tend to spend more the first period, not so much the second period and then have a few hundred dollars left for the last period. The third and final waiver period is always interesting, as there are plenty of players that can be added to bolster your roster for a playoff run and about 40% of the teams have given up at that point and don't even make bids.

Giving up is never my style. Even if I am out of it, no one in my league is getting a free walk to the championship. I will always place bids, even in the final weeks and you better hope you have more money than I do. Besides, in the Cutline, there is a Consolation Round with prizes for the Top 12 finishers from \$400 - \$3,000, so I am always trying to better my team.

As far as how much I will bid on a player? It depends. Like I wrote, I try to identify players before they will cost much. When that doesn't happen, I'll pay anywhere from \$300 - \$700 for a difference-maker. It's also a good idea in the final two FAAB periods to look at what other owners have left to spend, especially the contenders. Maybe the top teams only have \$300 left to spend and there is a hot WR on the waiver wire; then you know you might have to spend at least \$301 to get the WR and maybe more if you think others in your league are still working the waiver wire.

Here are what some of last year's hot free agents went for:

D.J. Chark – High \$991, average \$175

Tyler Higbee – High \$221, average \$59

A.J. Brown – High \$470, average \$154

Gardner Minshew – High \$300, average \$61 (first FAAB, went up significantly third FAAB period)

Terry McLaurin – High \$996, average \$506

Raheem Mostert – High \$680, average \$181

Hunter Henry – High \$671, average \$300

Will Dissly – High \$1000, average \$575

Daniel Jones – High \$850, average \$210

Bye Weeks 10, 11 & 13 – Because the Cutline regular season ends after Week 9, there will likely be players on your roster whose bye week hits while you are playing in the Championship or Wild Card brackets. Luckily, you take your weekly scoring average from Weeks 1-9 into the brackets, but in order to keep advancing and stay over the "cutline," you need to maintain good scoring. Thus, it is very important to have bye week fillers that can get you a

good score. Of course you can always climb back over the “cutline” if you fall down, but it is hard if you take too big of a hit during these bye weeks. It is no secret that I am partial to a **Patrick Mahomes** and **Clyde Edwards-Helaire** hook-up. The trouble with that is they are both on Week 10 byes. So I have to replace my stud QB and what I am hoping is a PPR beast. It gets worse too. High octane offenses like Dallas and Atlanta are also on Week 10 byes. Because the WR position has good depth, I am not as concerned with covering myself at that position (unless I have two or more WR out in Week 10), but RB and QB does raise a red flag. I tend to draft 3 RBs early anyway, but I am mindful they aren’t on the same bye as “my guy” CEH. If I have **Patrick Mahomes**, **Dak Prescott** or **Matt Ryan** as my QB1, I am looking at QB2’s that have good match-ups in Week 10. I have identified the following, ranked in order of preference:

- Tom Brady @ Car
- Carson Wentz @NYG
- Josh Allen @ Ari
- Ben Roethlisberger vs. CIN
- Aaron Rodgers vs. JAX
- Garner Minshew @GB
- Baker Mayfield vs. HOU
- Dwayne Haskins @ Det
- Drew Lock @ LV
- Sam Darnold @Mia

If you are drafting Mahomes you don’t really like to have to pay up for a Brady, Wentz or Allen for your QB2, but if one of those fall, I pounce.

I always keep the NFL schedule in grid form up when I’m drafting to make sure my QB2 isn’t facing a tough DEF, it just becomes more important in the Cutline because the Championship hunt starts early.

Read the Rules – Even if you have played in a league for years, always helps to refresh yourself with the rules. A few years back the Cutline was not Best Ball for the first nine weeks, you had to submit a weekly line-up. The NFFC did a good job of letting folks know of the change, but what if you weren’t on social media or reading their newsletters or on their forums? You might not have found out about the change until after your draft and then you are sunk, everyone else is drafting Best Ball teams and you would have been drafting a re-draft team.

7/18 NFFC CUTLINE FROM THE NINE HOLE

#	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Team 5	Team 6	Team 7	Team 8	Team 9	Team 10
1	Christian CAR(13) → McCaffrey	Saquon NYG(11) Barkley	Ezekiel DAL(10) Elliott	Michael NO(6) Thomas	Alvin NO(6) Kamara	Davante GB(5) Adams	Dalvin MIN(7) Cook	Derrick TEN(7) Henry	Miles PHI(9) Sanders	Austin LAC(10) Ekeler
2	Julio ATL(10) ← Jones	Clyde KC(10) Edwards-Helair	DeAndre ARZ(8) Hopkins	Josh LV(6) Jacobs	Tyreek KC(10) Hill	Aaron GB(5) Jones	Nick CLE(9) Chubb	Kenyan ARZ(8) Drake	Joe CIN(9) Mixon	Patrick KC(10) Mahomes
3	Lamar BAL(8) → Jackson	Chris TB(13) Godwin	Travis KC(10) Kelce	George SF(11) Kittle	Melvin DEN(8) Gordon	Odeil CLE(9) Beckham	Kenny DET(5) Golladay	Allen CHI(11) Robinson	Jonathan IND(7) Taylor	Amari DAL(10) Cooper
4	Le'Veon NYJ(11) ← Bell	Adam MIN(7) Thielen	Leonard JAX(7) Fournette	Cooper LA(9) Kupp	James PIT(8) Conner	Juju PIT(8) Smith-	Todd ATL(10) Gurley	D.J. CAR(13) Moore	Mike TB(13) Evans	Chris SEA(6) Carson
5	David HOU(8) → Johnson	A.J. TEN(7) Brown	Devin BUF(11) Singletary	David CHI(11) Montgomery	Calvin ATL(10) Ridley	Robert LA(9) Woods	D.K. SEA(6) Metcalfe	Terry WAS(8) McLaurin	Mark BAL(8) Andrews	Cam LA(9) Akers
6	T.Y. IND(7) ← Hilton	Dak DAL(10) Prescott	DeVante MIA(11) Parker	D'Andre DET(5) Swift	Tyler SEA(6) Lockett	Kareem CLE(9) Hunt	Courtland DEN(8) Sutton	Zach PHI(9) Ertz	D.J. JAX(7) Chark	Keenan LAC(10) Allen
7	Stefon BUF(11) → Diggs	Darren LV(6) Waller	Kyler ARZ(8) Murray	JK BAL(8) Dobbins	Marquise BAL(8) Brown	Russell SEA(6) Wilson	A.J. CIN(9) Green	Diontae PIT(8) Johnson	Tyler CIN(9) Boyd	Jarvis CLE(9) Landry
8	Brandin HOU(8) ← Cooks	Ke Shawn TB(13) Vaughn	Michael DAL(10) Gallup	Marvin DET(5) Jones	Deshawn HOU(8) Watson	Damien KC(10) Williams	Will HOU(8) Fuller	Tyler LA(9) Higbee	Mark BAL(8) Ingram	Julian NE(6) Edelman
9	Evan NYG(11) → Engram	Ronald TB(13) Jones	James NE(6) White	Raheem SF(11) Mostert	Hayden ATL(10) Hurst	Derrius WAS(8) Guice	Alexander MIN(7) Mattison	Darius NYG(11) Slayton	Carson PHI(9) Wentz	Sony NE(6) Michel
10	Marlon IND(7) ← Mack	CeeDee DAL(10) Lamb	Emmanuel NO(6) Sanders	Matt ATL(10) Ryan	Christian ARZ(8) Kirk	Tevin SF(11) Coleman	Hunter LAC(10) Henry	Mecole KC(10) Hardman	Josh BUF(11) Allen	Jerry DEN(8) Juady
11	Jordan MIA(11) → Howard	Tom TB(13) Brady	Tarik CHI(11) Cohen	Henry LV(6) Ruggs	Latavius NO(6) Murray	Matt MIA(11) Breida	Zack BUF(11) Moss	Boston PHI(9) Scott	Jared NO(6) Cook	Drew NO(6) Brees
12	Mike LAC(10) ← Williams	Jamison NYJ(11) Crowder	Rob TB(13) Gronkowski	Noah DEN(8) Fant	Kerion DET(5) Johnson	Jonnu TEN(7) Smith	Mike MIA(11) Gesicki	Matthew DET(5) Stafford	Jalen PHI(9) Reagor	Austin CLE(9) Hooper
13	Deebo SF(11) → Samuel	Justin MIN(7) Jefferson	Aaron GB(5) Rodgers	Joe CIN(9) Burrow	Anthony CHI(11) Miller	Baker CLE(9) Mayfield	Antonio NE(6) Brown	Justin LAC(10) Jackson	Duke HOU(8) Johnson	BAL(8) Baltimore
14	T.J. DET(5) ← Hockenson	Phillip DEN(8) Lindsay	Robby CAR(13) Anderson	Sterling NYG(11) Shepard	Chase ARZ(8) Edmonds	Tony DAL(10) Pollard	Drew DEN(8) Lock	Daniel NYG(11) Jones	Michael IND(7) Pittman	John BUF(11) Brown
15	Preston MIA(11) → Williams	Dallas PHI(9) Goedert	San Francisco SF(11) San Francisco	Harrison KC(10) Butker	DeSean PHI(9) Jackson	Golden NYG(11) Tate	Cam NE(6) Newton	PIT(8) Pittsburgh	Breshad NYJ(11) Perriman	AJ GB(5) Dillon
16	Jared LA(9) ← Goff	Jack IND(7) Doyle	Wil NO(6) Lutz	Brandon SF(11) Aiyuk	Curtis CAR(13) Samuel	Sammy KC(10) Watkins	Jimmy SF(11) Garoppolo	Joshua LAC(10) Kelley	Nyheim IND(7) Hines	NE(6) New England
17	Antonio WAS(8) → Gibson	Kirk MIN(7) Cousins	Darrell LA(9) Henderson	Hunter LV(6) Renfrow	Ben PIT(8) Roethlisberger	Blake DAL(10) Jarwin	Damien NE(6) Harris	Justin BAL(8) Tucker	Anthony PIT(8) McFarland	Greg DAL(10) Zuerlein
18	BUF(11) ← Buffalo	Denzel NYJ(11) Mims	Parris IND(7) Campbell	O.J. TB(13) Howard	Eric PIT(8) Ebron	Chris NYJ(11) Herndon	N'Keal NE(6) Harry	Irv MIN(7) Smith	Allen GB(5) Lazard	Darrynton TEN(7) Evans
19	Ryan TEN(7) → Tannehill	Ryquell JAX(7) Armstead	Matt TB(13) Gay	Chicago CHI(11) Chicago	Ian CAR(13) Thomas	Zane ARZ(8) Gonzalez	Corey TEN(7) Davis	Steven WAS(8) Sims	TB(13) Tampa Bay	Kyle MIN(7) Rudolph
20	MIN(7) ← Minnesota	Chris JAX(7) Thompson	Philip IND(7) Rivers	Derek LV(6) Carr	Teddy CAR(13) Bridgewater	Gardner JAX(7) Minshew	IND(7) Indianapolis	NO(6) New Orleans	Giovani CIN(9) Bernard	Ito ATL(10) Smith
21	Carlos SEA(6) → Hyde	KC(10) Kansas City	Alshon PHI(9) Jeffery	LAC(10) Los Angeles	Matt DET(5) Prater	LA(9) Los Angeles	Tee CIN(9) Higgins	Sam NYJ(11) Darnold	Robbie SF(11) Gould	Gerald LA(9) Everett
22	Devonta ATL(10) ← Freeman	Dan MIN(7) Bailey	PHI(9) Philadelphia	Jalen LV(6) Richard	Jerick SF(11) McKinnon	Mohamed NE(6) Sanu	Randall HOU(8) Cobb	Eno ARZ(8) Benjamin	Tua MIA(11) Tagovailoa	Dwayne WAS(8) Haskins
23	Larry ARZ(8) → Fitzgerald	Jake PHI(9) Elliott	Jace GB(5) Sternberger	Bryan LV(6) Edwards	Younghoe ATL(10) Koo	Greg SEA(6) Olsen	Benny PIT(8) Snell	Chris PIT(8) Boswell	Ka'im HOU(8) Fairbairn	Brandon DEN(8) McManus
24	James PIT(8) ← Washington	Aldrick NYG(11) Rosas	Dede JAX(7) Westbrook	Jason SEA(6) Myers	DEN(8) Denver	Michael LAC(10) Badgley	Josh JAX(7) Lambo	KJ DEN(8) Hamler	SEA(6) Seattle	Laviska JAX(7) Shenault
25	Mason GB(5) → Crosby	TEN(7) Tennessee	GB(5) Green Bay	Rashaad SEA(6) Penny	CLE(9) Cleveland	DAL(10) Dallas	NYJ(11) New York	LA(9) Reynolds	Nick BAL(8) Boyle	Josh SEA(6) Gordon
26	Austin CLE(9) ← Seibert	Tyler BUF(11) Bass	John CIN(9) Ross	Adrian WAS(8) Peterson	Kenny HOU(8) Stills	Devin GB(5) Funchess	Trent SF(11) Taylor	DeeJay SEA(6) Dallas	Russell ATL(10) Gage	Lamical NYJ(11) Perine

1st Round (1.09): Miles Sanders (RB, Phi) – I've been on **Miles Sanders** since my first draft which started minutes after the Super Bowl ended (NFFC Trendsetters). I took Sanders at 2.04 in that draft; since then I have watched him steadily creep into the first round. Sanders is a dangerous weapon as he is extremely versatile and a great fit in **Doug Pederson's** offense. He finished his rookie campaign strong and had an impressive 4.57 yards per carry, not to mention 50 receptions. I was concerned over the loss of RG **Brandon Brooks** (massive loss), but the Eagles signed 9-time Pro Bowler **Jason Peters** to replace him.

2nd Round (2.02): Joe Mixon (RB, Cin) – I was indeed shocked that Mixon wasn't taken by Team 10 (they opted for **Austin Ekeler & Patrick Mahomes**). Each to their own, but no world exists where I take Ekeler over Mixon. He's entering his fourth year and coming off back-to-back 1,100+ rushing seasons. YPC off a little in 2019 at 4.1, but I chalk that up to Offensive Line injuries and poor QB play. With **Joe Burrow** under center, Mixon will face less stacked boxes in 2020. Pre-draft I had planned on taking either Sanders or Mixon at 1.09, whoever fell. Good feeling when you get both.

3rd Round (3.09): Jonathan Taylor (RB, Ind) – I might have taken **Allen Robinson** here, but he went one pick in front of me. I like starting three RBs in a row, plus Team 10 only had one RB, so I knew one of his picks on the turn would be RB. I wasn't going to let the upside of Taylor slide to the Mahomes owner. I do not care that **Marlon Mack** is there. I do care that **Nyheim Hines** is there, as he will take receptions away from Taylor, but I still think Taylor will get his fair share. If you have a Porsche, there is no reason to let it set in the garage collecting dust.

Bonus: **Jonathan Taylor** will be running behind one of the best offensive lines in the NFL. No preseason games, so Taylor should stay put as a 3rd round pick and should not be overlooked if he does.

4th Round (4.02): Mike Evans (WR, TB) – I've always liked **Mike Evans** and his long arms. Do I think he gives 100% all the time? Nope... and that is why he isn't on more of my teams. But with the QB upgrade of **Tom Brady** (who will be playing with a chip on his shoulder), Evans is too tempting to pass up here. I think Brady gets over 4,000 yards passing, which means big numbers for Evans, who has never had a season with less than 1,000 yards receiving. It's the 4th round and I got a WR that should put up over 1,300 yards and around 8 TDs (would be more, but Gronk is gonna hog those red-zone targets).

5th Round (5.09): Mark Andrews (TE, Bal) – I really like **Mark Andrews**, but if **Calvin Ridley** or **Robert Woods** would have been there, I would have taken one of them and hoped Andrews made it back to me. He surprisingly only started four games last year, but it didn't matter as he saw almost 100 targets (98) and had double-digit TDs (10). More of the same this year and I predict he leads all TEs in touchdowns.

6th Round (6.02): D.J. Chark (WR, Jax) – Both my targets, Chark and Dak Prescott are here. I opt for Chark because I took a top tier TE and if I would have went QB, that puts me in a WR hole. I like a balanced team and when I passed in Dak, I set my QB target as **Carson Wentz**. Chark has great chemistry with QB **Gardner Minshew** and I see him with another 1,000 yard receiving season. I also like that Jacksonville's Defense is not very good, so their offense will likely be playing from behind for many games, advantage Chark!

7th Round (7.09): Tyler Boyd (WR, Cin) – If you read the Fantasy Points Staff Dynasty draft article, you know I like Boyd. I'm not worried that Green is back or a rookie is under center. Both will make Boyd have a rock-solid season. Slight consideration for **Jarvis Landry**, who went to Team 10 with the next pick.

8th Round (8.02): Mark Ingram (RB, Bal) – I feel like Cliff Booth (Brad Pitt's character from "Once Upon A Time In...Hollywood) when the hippies come to do witchy things and he had just smoked an acid cigarette: "Uhhhhhhh...can I help you?" Cliff doesn't know what the heck is going on and neither do I when Mark Ingram falls to the 8th round and RBs like **J.K. Dobbins**, **DeAndre Swift**, **Chris Carson**, **Devin Singletary**, **Cam Akers** and **David Johnson** are getting drafted before him. **Mark Ingram** is the starting RB on one of the most electric offenses in the NFL. Enough said.

9th Round (9.09): Carson Wentz (QB, Phi) – He was my target and I got him in the 9th round. Shows that it pays off waiting on QB (although I do like taking Mahomes in the 2nd sometimes). He will build upon his 4,039 yards passing and 27 TDs of last season, with great coaching, strong O-line, strong run game and (finally) a game-changer WR in **Jalen Reagor**.

10th Round (10.02): Josh Allen (QB, Buf) – Horrible pick. I was greedy Gordon Gekko in the 10th round. **Carson Wentz** paired with **Josh Allen** in a Best Ball-format, yes please! However, the correct play would have been to back up **Miles Sanders** with **Boston Scott**. It almost worked out. I was one pick away from Boston Scott, but Team 8 decided to cock block me. Can I write that here? I don't care... still upset with myself for getting cock blocked. That's what greed will do to you. Team 8 is the **Kenyan Drake** owner, so it was even more surprising he took Scott with **Chase Edmonds** on the board. Scott, Edmonds, Mattison, Pollard, and a couple other back-up RBs will produce at a high level if needed. It stings even more if you look at the draft board and see all the quality QBs still around, didn't really need to take Allen.

11th Round (11.09): Jared Cook (TE, NO) – Since I got sniped on **Boston Scott** I decided to take my second TE. It was the right call, as five TEs went in the next round. I also noticed Team 10 had yet to draft a TE and Cook was the last TE of his tier, so I didn't want Team 10 to get him. Team 10 ended up taking **Austin Hooper** two picks later. Not even close in terms of projections.

12th Round (12.02): Jalen Reagor (WR, Phi) – It is not hyperbole when I wrote above that **Jalen Reagor** is a game-changer. I feel the same way about Reagor as I did **Eddie Royal** in his rookie year. Not that they are the same type of WRs (they aren't), but I don't think many people know what's coming. Carson Wentz is dying to throw the deep ball and finally will have a consistent target. Don't give me the **DeSean Jackson** talk. A few years back when I was on John Hansen's Sirius/XM show with Michael Rapaport, both he and Michael mentioned DJax as a mid-round value. They were both surprised when I said that I didn't like DJax and that they would be sorry they drafted him. I told them I had been watching him play since his Pac-10 days at Cal and dude doesn't like to go over the middle, doesn't like to get hit, and is a one-trick pony. I was right. By the way, when Reagor catches the ball in any kind of space, look out... you won't catch him from behind and he is a playmaker in the open field.

13th Round (13.09): Duke Johnson (RB, Hou) – I'm not sold on **David Johnson** being a three-down back or his effectiveness. And while I don't think **Duke Johnson** will take over the RB1 role, I do think he will get his opportunities to be involved in the offense. Solid bye week filler or Flex play. Fantasy Points projections have **Duke Johnson** scoring more points than **Boston Scott**, so take that Team 8!

14th Round (14.02): Michael Pittman (WR, Ind) – Living in Los Angeles, I got to see plenty of **Michael Pittman**. Tough, physical and smart, the perfect complement to **T.Y. Hilton**. He is going to learn so much from playing with **Philip Rivers**. I can't wait to see where he is at in three years, but for now, I will look forward to see where he is at after Week 8. I considered **Chase Edmonds** here, but since I took **Duke Johnson** the pick earlier, wanted to maintain some balance and Pittman is a fave, I rarely pass him up.

15th Round (15.09): Breshad Perriman (WR, NYJ) – I think Perriman in the 15th is a solid value pick. Like him in Best-Ball, as I see him having several big games and then disappearing the next week. Didn't consider anyone else here, as Perriman seemed like the obvious choice because he is usually gone by now. While I trust Perriman, you know who I don't trust? Adam Gase.

16th Round (16.02): Nyheim Hines (RB, Ind) – He's not a handcuff to Taylor, although his production will rise if Taylor goes down. Being the Taylor owner, made sense to take Hines here. There will be games he makes it into my Flex slot because of his PPR value.

17th Round (17.09): Anthony McFarland - It's the 17th round... will the **James Conner** owner please wake up?! Unlike Hines, if Conner goes down, I think McFarland will be huge. Taking a look at the draft board, Team 5 is the Conner owner and instead of taking McFarland, he drafted **DeSean Jackson, Curtis Samuel, and Ben Roethlisberger**. I can see the Big Ben pick, solid value and he needed a QB2, but don't like passing up McFarland for those two WRs. I will say McFarland's Achilles' Heel is his pass protection, hoping that is addressed in training camp.

18th Round (18.02): Allen Lazard (WR, GB) – Thought about Kicker or Defense here, but Team 10 already had two DEFs and one Kicker, so chances were low he would take another. I don't think Lazard is going to set the NFL on fire with big games, but I do think he is the preferred WR2 in Green Bay over **Devin Funchess**. Lazard had a 100-yard game last season and a couple games where we scored 16+ fantasy points. In the 18th round, I tend to look for my back-ups or guys who can crack my starting line-up a few times and Lazard fits the bill.

19th Round (19.09): Tampa Bay (DEF, TB) – Generally I do not draft Baltimore, San Francisco or Pittsburgh for my DEF. I like them, but the price tag is too high. Tampa Bay and New Orleans are my fall back DEFs. I think both are going to put up some good numbers and both tend to be overlooked by fantasy owners. Tampa Bay gets the nod before New Orleans because of pass rushers Shaquil Barrett and Jason Pierre-Paul. Barrett went undrafted in 2014 and in 2019 led the NFL in sacks.

20th Round (20.02): Giovani Bernard (RB, Cin) – Probably should have went with my third QB here, as the position dried up with five QBs going shortly after, but I like those PPR RBs and I have **Joe Mixon**. Again he won't be the starter in Mixon goes down, but he will get a bump in opportunities.

21st Round (21.09): Robbie Gould (K, SF) – Time to look at kickers. I try to get at least one Top 8 Kicker and Gould fits the bill. SF moves the ball well enough to give him plenty of FG opportunities. 2019 found Gould with a career-low 74.2% FG conversion rate, so I'm hoping for a rebound... but he was 41 of 42 on extra-point attempts.

22nd Round (22.03): Tua Tagovailoa (QB, Mia) – Because of COVID-19 and the Best Ball format, I want to carry three QBs. I should have taken one a couple rounds earlier, as I was left to choose between **Nick Foles** and Tagovailoa. Not a hard decision... I'll take the upside. I don't see him starting right away, but at some point, Miami will need to see him in game action. Very talented, hope his recovery from a gruesome hip injury is going well.

23rd Round (23.09): Ka'imi Fairbairn (K, Hou) – I'm looking for Kickers that play indoors for their home games for my second Kicker usually. Fairbairn has a career 83.7% FG conversion rate. Didn't have a great year in 2019, like with Gould, expecting a rebound.

24th Round (24.02): Seattle (DEF, Sea) – I end up with Seattle as my second DEF in the majority of my Best Ball leagues. They averaged almost 8 points per game in NFFC scoring last season. And with a Week 6 bye, there aren't many conflicts with the first DEFs I draft. They addressed their needs in free agency (Bruce Irvin among a few key signings) and via the draft (Linebacker Jordyn Brooks was a 1st round selection), so I anticipate the Seahawks moving up from their 26th ranked 2019 season.

25th Round (25.09): Nick Boyle (TE, Bal) – I handcuffed my TE instead of a third Kicker. The TE position is of value on the Ravens team, so if Andrews goes down, Boyle should put up decent enough numbers. Last year he saw 43 targets that resulted in 31/321/2.

26th Round (26.02): Russell Gage (WR, Atl) – I had one last opportunity to select my third Kicker, but I don't want to pass on **Russell Gage**, who is the No. 3 WR on one of the better offenses in the NFL. Gage saw 74 targets last year and had a 66% catch rate. I'll hope both my Kickers are playing in Week 1 and address the third Kicker during the first FAAB period. I was surprised the **Julio Jones** owner didn't select Gage, but he has solid WR depth and decided to throw a dart at **Devonta Freeman**. I would have taken Gage, Freeman declined an offer from Seattle, which seemed like an ideal landing spot.



ANATOMY OF A LEAGUE-WINNER

By Scott Barrett

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In May, I released an article titled “[Upside Wins Championships](#)” which introduced a draft-strategy describing essentially that: when it comes to winning fantasy championships, **UPSIDE IS EVERYTHING**. A player’s bull-case projection matters much more than his base-case projection which matters far more than his bear-case projection. Leagues are won and lost, not by balanced teams drafting a number of good-to-great ADP-beaters, but by teams who correctly identified a few key league-winners and rode those players all the way to a Championship title.

In other words, our goal when drafting should be trying to correctly identify players with league-winning upside. It’s not easy, but as I showed in [yesterday’s article](#), it’s probably a lot easier than you might think. In that article, we took a look at the top-10 league-winning players over the past three seasons, and after re-examining my pre-season analysis on each player, it was clear that far more often than not I correctly identified the league-winning upside in each player.

In today’s article, we’re going to be doing something similar. We’ll be looking backward at the top league-winners over the past three seasons, but instead of viewing each player through the lens of an *ex-ante* analysis, we’ll be applying an *ex-post* analysis on each position. Essentially, we’re trying to find a common thread that links some or all of these players together. And in so doing, hopefully, identify potential league-winners in 2020 and beyond.

METHODOLOGY

How are we defining league-winners? Rather than merely highlighting ADP-beaters – which as we showed in ‘Upside Wins Championships’ is exactly the wrong way to think of league-winners – we’re defining league-winners by their rate of occurrence on ESPN Playoff teams.

A few things:

1) This means every observation and relevant takeaway must be understood within the context of ESPN’s unique settings. An ESPN standard league is as follows:

- 10 teams
- PPR scoring, 4 points per passing touchdown
- Starting 1QB, 2RB, 2WR, 1TE, 1Flex, 1K, 1DEF
- 7 bench spots

In other words, this is the worst type of league to employ a Zero-RB strategy. Running backs are by far the most valuable position in ESPN standard leagues, and there’s not even really a close second. As for the reason, it has to do with **positional scarcity**, and was explained beautifully and succinctly by Adam Harstad [here](#).

Imagine the same type of league, but with an added Superflex spot. Quarterbacks would become roughly 2X as valuable, and now at least nearly as valuable as running backs. Or, imagine if instead of adding a Superflex spot, the league added another starting wide receiver spot. Wide receivers would become roughly 1.4X more valuable.

2) Why did we choose “rate of occurrence on ESPN Playoff teams” rather than “rate of occurrence on ESPN Championship-winning teams?” Forgive me for going deep into the weeds once again (and we’ll dig deeper into this at the end of the article), but fantasy playoff performance is mostly a function of variance while fantasy regular season performance is far more a function of skill.

Who is the best team in the NFL in any given season? Probably the team with the best record across the largest sample, and not necessarily the team that ultimately won the Super Bowl. Though the team with the best odds of winning the Super Bowl is probably the team with the best regular season record, that doesn't frequently happen (think 2007 Giants/Patriots or 2017 Eagles/Patriots). Essentially, being the best team across 16 games is far more representative of skill than being the only undefeated team through three or four consecutive games. This is true in all games of skill and chance – the smaller the sample, the more variance (the more luck and less skill) at play.

The same thing is true with fantasy football. It's easier to be the best team from Weeks 14-16 than it is to be the best team from Weeks 1-13. And the same thing is true with fantasy football players. Who is most likely to dominate from Weeks 14-16? Probably the players who dominated from Weeks 1-13, though that's not always the case.

3) A three-year sample size is infinitesimally small. I have nothing else to say for myself other than that it was the largest sample I have access to. Nonetheless, *mea culpa*.



EX-POST ANALYSIS

Most Common Players on ESPN Playoff Rosters						
Season	Player Name	Team	Pos	Win%	Round	PPR
2019	Christian McCaffrey	CAR	RB	78.1	1	354.1
2017	Alvin Kamara	NO	RB	77.4	UDFA	247.0
2018	James Conner	PIT	RB	75.9	10	267.6
2019	Dalvin Cook	MIN	RB	69.8	2	269.6
2018	Bears D/ST	CHI	D/ST	69.3	12	143.0
2019	Lamar Jackson	BAL	QB	68.8	11	329.0
2018	Spencer Ware	KC	RB	67.9	UDFA	61.1
2017	Greg Zuerlein	LAR	K	66.2	UDFA	165.0
2018	Tyler Boyd	CIN	WR	65.5	UDFA	199.1
2017	Todd Gurley II	LAR	RB	65.1	2	260.2
2019	Patriots D/ST	NE	D/ST	64.7	12	191.0
2019	Austin Ekeler	LAC	RB	63.9	8	234.8
2019	Darren Waller	OAK	TE	63.4	UDFA	165.2
2018	Phillip Lindsay	DEN	RB	62.7	UDFA	191.6
2019	Michael Thomas	NO	WR	61.5	1	274.1
2018	Nick Chubb	CLE	RB	61.4	11	148.7
2018	Aaron Jones	GB	RB	60.6	12	151.0
2018	Christian McCaffrey	CAR	RB	59.8	2	296.6
2019	Chris Godwin	TB	WR	59.6	5	242.9
2018	George Kittle	SF	TE	59.4	12	172.3
2019	Travis Kelce	KC	TE	59.1	2	184.3
2018	Patrick Mahomes	KC	QB	59.0	10	332.7
2019	Mark Andrews	BAL	TE	58.9	13	162.3
2019	49ers D/ST	SF	D/ST	58.8	UDFA	160.0
2019	DJ Chark Jr.	JAX	WR	58.6	UDFA	198.1
2018	Tyreek Hill	KC	WR	58.0	3	261.7
2019	Derrick Henry	TEN	RB	57.5	3	223.0
2017	Jaguars D/ST	JAX	D/ST	57.4	12	172.0
2017	Carson Wentz	PHI	QB	57.3	11	254.5
2019	Nick Chubb	CLE	RB	57.1	2	209.0

QUARTERBACKS

POSITIONAL ANALYSIS

Most Common Players on ESPN Playoff Rosters						
Season	Player Name	Team	Pos	Win%	Round	PPR
2019	Lamar Jackson	BAL	QB	68.8	11	329.0
2018	Patrick Mahomes	KC	QB	59.0	10	332.7
2017	Carson Wentz	PHI	QB	57.3	11	254.5
2019	Russell Wilson	SEA	QB	56.7	9	267.5
2019	Deshaun Watson	HOU	QB	54.8	4	266.9
2019	Dak Prescott	DAL	QB	54.0	8	261.7
2018	Jared Goff	LAR	QB	53.8	11	258.8
2017	Russell Wilson	SEA	QB	52.9	5	279.4
2019	Josh Allen	BUF	QB	50.9	UDFA	240.6
2017	Jared Goff	LAR	QB	50.2	UDFA	204.9

At the quarterback position, I saw two immediate takeaways:

1- Clearly, you don't need to draft a quarterback high. In fact, it's probably a mistake to do so.

- Eight of our top-10 quarterbacks were drafted in the last five rounds of the draft or not at all.

2- Even if you do hit on a late round gem, it's still not really much of an advantage.

- The No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3 quarterbacks on our list were actually less valuable than the No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3 defenses on our list.

Season	Player Name	Team	Pos	Win%	Round	PPR
2018	Bears D/ST	CHI	D/ST	69.3	12	143.0
2019	Lamar Jackson	BAL	QB	68.8	11	329.0
2019	Patriots D/ST	NE	D/ST	64.7	12	191.0
2018	Patrick Mahomes	KC	QB	59.0	10	332.7
2017	Jaguars D/ST	JAX	D/ST	57.4	12	172.0
2017	Carson Wentz	PHI	QB	57.3	11	254.5

Again, I think this goes back to **our earlier point on scarcity**. Quarterbacks outscore all other positions, but they're the least-scarce (essentially tied with defenses and kickers) and thus the least-valuable position in this format.

In 2018, **Patrick Mahomes** scored the most fantasy points by *any quarterback in any season in NFL history*. In 2019, **Lamar Jackson** averaged the most fantasy points per game by *any quarterback in any season in NFL history*. Both players accomplished these feats with an ADP in the double-digit rounds. And even so, both ranked lowly overall (in terms of helping you advance into the playoffs). In fact, Mahomes ranked only 10th-overall in Win% (aka percentage of ESPN playoff teams rostering this player) in 2018.

Rank	Season	Player Name	Team	Pos	Win%	Round	PPR
1	2018	James Conner	PIT	RB	75.9	10	267.6
2	2018	Bears D/ST	CHI	D/ST	69.3	12	143.0
3	2018	Spencer Ware	KC	RB	67.9	UDFA	61.1
4	2018	Tyler Boyd	CIN	WR	65.5	UDFA	199.1
5	2018	Phillip Lindsay	DEN	RB	62.7	UDFA	191.6
6	2018	Nick Chubb	CLE	RB	61.4	11	148.7
7	2018	Aaron Jones	GB	RB	60.6	12	151.0
8	2018	Christian McCaffrey	CAR	RB	59.8	2	296.6
9	2018	George Kittle	SF	TE	59.4	12	172.3
10	2018	Patrick Mahomes	KC	QB	59.0	10	332.7

Lesson Learned: As ridiculously good as Mahomes and Jackson certainly are, you're still better off leaning towards under-paying rather than overpaying for a quarterback in fantasy.

PLAYER ANALYSIS

Most Common Players on ESPN Playoff Rosters						
Season	Player Name	Team	Pos	Win%	Round	PPR
2019	Lamar Jackson	BAL	QB	68.8	11	329.0
2018	Patrick Mahomes	KC	QB	59.0	10	332.7
2017	Carson Wentz	PHI	QB	57.3	11	254.5
2019	Russell Wilson	SEA	QB	56.7	9	267.5
2019	Deshaun Watson	HOU	QB	54.8	4	266.9
2019	Dak Prescott	DAL	QB	54.0	8	261.7
2018	Jared Goff	LAR	QB	53.8	11	258.8
2017	Russell Wilson	SEA	QB	52.9	5	279.4
2019	Josh Allen	BUF	QB	50.9	UDFA	240.6
2017	Jared Goff	LAR	QB	50.2	UDFA	204.9

- Interestingly, five of our 10 league-winning quarterbacks (including each in the top-three) were entering their sophomore season. Other examples, within a broader sample, might include **Andrew Luck** in 2013 (QB9 ADP vs. QB4 finish) and **Blake Bortles** in 2015 (QB26 ADP vs. QB4 finish). Perhaps current drafters are sleeping on **Kyler Murray** (ADP: QB4), **Daniel Jones** (QB13), **Gardner Minshew** (QB26), or **Dwayne Haskins** (QB31)?

- Six of our top-10 quarterbacks averaged at least 3.0 rushing fantasy points per game. This is no coincidence. Mobile quarterbacks are **basically a cheat code in fantasy football**. Clearly, when 50 rushing yards and one rushing touchdown is equivalent to 175 passing yards and one passing touchdown, **Lamar Jackson** has a massive advantage over a pure-passer like **Drew Brees**.

- In several instances, we might have been underrating the impact of a new offensive play-caller joining the team. This was at least certainly the case with **Lamar Jackson**, **Dak Prescott**, and **Jared Goff** (2018), though several

others might qualify. (As I detailed in my [pre-draft analysis](#), Jackson and Prescott were my two highest-owned quarterbacks last year for this reason, among others.) Perhaps this year, we're sleeping on **Ryan Tannehill** (OC Arthur Smith), **Gardner Minshew** (OC Jay Gruden), **Drew Lock** (OC Pat Shurmur), or **Teddy Bridgewater** (OC Joe Brady). We'll go more in-depth on play-caller analysis later in the season.

- In the case of **Patrick Mahomes**, we also may have been underrating his coaching staff and supporting cast, especially after **Alex Smith** easily hit career highs and led the league in passer rating and AY/A, and then was unceremoniously traded away for the sophomore. Perhaps we might be seeing something similar with **Joe Burrow**, as I argued [here](#).

- Might we be sleeping on **Jared Goff**? He has already twice proven to be a league-winner when overlooked by fantasy drafters, and in 2020 is being overlooked again (ADP: UDFA). He struggled massively last season, but also led the league in pass attempts. Over the prior two seasons, he ranked behind only **Patrick Mahomes** and **Drew Brees** in ANY/A (7.70). And, just one year ago, his head coach – **Sean McVay** – was still being heralded as arguably the greatest offensive mind in football.

RUNNING BACKS

POSITIONAL ANALYSIS

Most Common Players on ESPN Playoff Rosters						
Season	Player Name	Team	Pos	Win%	Round	PPR
2019	Christian McCaffrey	CAR	RB	78.1	1	354.1
2017	Alvin Kamara	NO	RB	77.4	UDFA	247.0
2018	James Conner	PIT	RB	75.9	10	267.6
2019	Dalvin Cook	MIN	RB	69.8	2	269.6
2018	Spencer Ware	KC	RB	67.9	UDFA	61.1
2017	Todd Gurley II	LAR	RB	65.1	2	260.2
2019	Austin Ekeler	LAC	RB	63.9	8	234.8
2018	Phillip Lindsay	DEN	RB	62.7	UDFA	191.6
2018	Nick Chubb	CLE	RB	61.4	11	148.7
2018	Aaron Jones	GB	RB	60.6	12	151.0
2018	Christian McCaffrey	CAR	RB	59.8	2	296.6
2019	Derrick Henry	TEN	RB	57.5	3	223.0
2019	Nick Chubb	CLE	RB	57.1	2	209.0
2019	Aaron Jones	GB	RB	57.1	4	222.2
2018	Melvin Gordon	LAC	RB	56.2	2	251.5
2018	Todd Gurley II	LAR	RB	55.9	1	328.9
2018	Alvin Kamara	NO	RB	55.9	1	288.7
2019	Leonard Fournette	JAX	RB	55.7	3	224.3

Like it or not, the running back position is **THE** most-important position in fantasy.

More so than any other position, running backs make up the far majority of any season's league-winners. And, typically, you're going to have to pay up to acquire them.

Excluding **Spencer Ware** – a late-season pick-up who only started two games – 47% of the running backs on our chart were drafted in the first two rounds. 65% were drafted in the first four rounds.

Over the past three seasons, 10 running backs scored a Win% of at least 60.0%. Over the same span, only two wide receivers, one quarterback, one tight end, two defenses, and one kicker reached that threshold.

Season	Player Name	Team	Pos	Win%	Round	PPR
2019	Christian McCaffrey	CAR	RB	78.1	1	354.1
2017	Alvin Kamara	NO	RB	77.4	UDFA	247.0
2018	James Conner	PIT	RB	75.9	10	267.6
2019	Dalvin Cook	MIN	RB	69.8	2	269.6
2018	Bears D/ST	CHI	D/ST	69.3	12	143.0
2019	Lamar Jackson	BAL	QB	68.8	11	329.0
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2017	Greg Zuerlein	LAR	K	66.2	UDFA	165.0
2018	Tyler Boyd	CIN	WR	65.5	UDFA	199.1
2017	Todd Gurley II	LAR	RB	65.1	2	260.2
2019	Patriots D/ST	NE	D/ST	64.7	12	191.0
2019	Austin Ekeler	LAC	RB	63.9	8	234.8
2019	Darren Waller	OAK	TE	63.4	UDFA	165.2
2018	Phillip Lindsay	DEN	RB	62.7	UDFA	191.6
2019	Michael Thomas	NO	WR	61.5	1	274.1
2018	Nick Chubb	CLE	RB	61.4	11	148.7
2018	Aaron Jones	GB	RB	60.6	12	151.0

Why is this so? Well, because of **scarcity** – as we keep saying. But also, because running backs are typically your high-end producers. Over the past three seasons, all-six of the top-six highest-scoring flex-eligible players (by fantasy points per game) were running backs. As were eight of the top-10.

Rk	Player	Year	Pos	G	PPR/G
1	Christian McCaffrey	2019	RB	16	29.5
2	Todd Gurley	2018	RB	14	26.6
3	Todd Gurley	2017	RB	15	25.6
4	Saquon Barkley	2018	RB	16	24.1
5	Christian McCaffrey	2018	RB	16	24.1
6	Alvin Kamara	2018	RB	15	23.6
7	Michael Thomas	2019	WR	16	23.4
8	Melvin Gordon	2018	RB	12	23.0
9	Le'Veon Bell	2017	RB	15	22.8
10	Antonio Brown	2017	WR	14	22.2

Balancing both points: despite being drafted with a top-three pick in nearly every draft last season, it felt almost impossible to own **Christian McCaffrey** and not make your league's playoffs. This was due in part because he out-scored the next-closest wide receiver by +6.0 fantasy points per game, but also because he out-scored the worst starter-worthy running back (RB20) by +15.2 fantasy points per game. In contrast, **Lamar Jackson** outscored the worst starter-worthy quarterback (QB10) by +8.6 fantasy points per game. **Michael Thomas** outscored the worst starter-worthy wide receiver (WR20) by +8.5 fantasy points per game, and even further behind was Kelce (+4.0).


VALUE OVER REPLACEMENT PLAYER

2019, BY POSITION

QB

LAMAR JACKSON


+8.6



RB

CHRISTIAN MCCAFFEY


+15.2



WR

MICHAEL THOMAS

+8.5



TE

TRAVIS KELCE

+4.0



This discrepancy becomes even more glaring when contrasting to the best-available running back or wide receiver on your waiver wire.

So, should you go out of your way to draft at least two running backs in the first three rounds? Is 'Zero-RB' a suboptimal draft strategy? Yeah, probably.

Again, this is specific to ESPN standard leagues and to our data -- which only goes back three seasons -- but all of these assumptions have certainly held true over that timeframe. Leagues are won and lost at the running back position and league-winning running backs are typically found early in your draft.

Broadly speaking, this has been true and I think this will probably be true again in 2020. But of course, it's not necessarily true, or true in a vacuum. That's because every season is unique in its own way. Would an RB-early approach be optimal if Melvin Gordon, Miles Sanders, Kenyan Drake were being drafted in the double-digit rounds this year? Almost certainly not.

PLAYER ANALYSIS

Most Common Players on ESPN Playoff Rosters						
Season	Player Name	Team	Pos	Win%	Round	PPR
2019	Christian McCaffrey	CAR	RB	78.1	1	354.1
2017	Alvin Kamara	NO	RB	77.4	UDFA	247.0
2018	James Conner	PIT	RB	75.9	10	267.6
2019	Dalvin Cook	MIN	RB	69.8	2	269.6
2018	Spencer Ware	KC	RB	67.9	UDFA	61.1
2017	Todd Gurley II	LAR	RB	65.1	2	260.2
2019	Austin Ekeler	LAC	RB	63.9	8	234.8
2018	Phillip Lindsay	DEN	RB	62.7	UDFA	191.6
2018	Nick Chubb	CLE	RB	61.4	11	148.7
2018	Aaron Jones	GB	RB	60.6	12	151.0
2018	Christian McCaffrey	CAR	RB	59.8	2	296.6
2019	Derrick Henry	TEN	RB	57.5	3	223.0
2019	Nick Chubb	CLE	RB	57.1	2	209.0
2019	Aaron Jones	GB	RB	57.1	4	222.2
2018	Melvin Gordon	LAC	RB	56.2	2	251.5
2018	Todd Gurley II	LAR	RB	55.9	1	328.9
2018	Alvin Kamara	NO	RB	55.9	1	288.7
2019	Leonard Fournette	JAX	RB	55.7	3	224.3

- 10 of the top-11 running backs on our chart were entering their first, second, or third year in the NFL. Excluding **Spencer Ware** (who will also be excluded for the remainder of this article), all 17 running backs were 25 years old or younger, and 14 of 17 were 24 years old or younger. This isn't a coincidence. **Statistically-speaking**, running backs are far more productive much earlier than any other position. Rookie running backs dramatically outperform rookie wide receivers and tight ends, and running backs hit their peak years (Years 2 and 3) and also start to decline much sooner than any other position. Don't be surprised if David Montgomery, Ronald Jones, or another Year 2-3 running back surprises us this year.

- Of the non-rookies, we also see a number of running backs making the list following a play-caller change: 2017 **Todd Gurley**, 2018 **Christian McCaffrey**, 2019 **Dalvin Cook**, 2019 **Derrick Henry**, and 2019 **Leonard Fournette**. In many cases, I don't think this is a coincidence. In 2017 **Sean McVay promised** reporters Gurley would be an every-down bell-cow heavily used in the passing game, and besides, it's hard for any coach not to be a **massive improvement on Jeff Fisher**. Similarly, **Dion Lewis** out-snapped Derrick Henry in 12 of 16 games in 2018. It was hard to imagine Arthur Smith wouldn't remedy that to some degree. For McCaffrey and Cook, the running back resumes of **Gary Kubiak** and Norv Turner speak for themselves. John DeFilippo **also promised** a lot more passing work and a true bell-cow workload for Fournette in 2019, which eventually proved true. This brings us to our next point...

- Perhaps we should pay more attention to what coaches are saying to us, rather than just immediately dismissing it as "coach-speak". In addition to **Todd Gurley** (2017) and **Leonard Fournette**, there are a number of instances where a breakout might have been more obvious had we only listened to a player's coach and/or front office. Savvy drafters could have envisioned 16.5 fantasy points per game or more for a rookie-year **Alvin Kamara** based on the role **GM Mickey Loomis was envisioning for him**. In 2018, both Ron Rivera and Norv Turner (in separate interviews) said 25-30 touches was a realistic expectation for McCaffrey. I'm sure there are other examples we can pull as well.

- The running back position is also **the most volume-dependent position in fantasy**. Therefore it's no surprise that 13 of the running backs on our list ranked top-12 in **weighted opportunity** per game. Compare that to 14 running backs ranking top-12 in fantasy points per game. The outliers were 2019 **Derrick Henry** (just missed the cutoff), 2018 **Phillip Lindsay**, 2018 **Aaron Jones**, and 2018 **Nick Chubb**. So, basically, Lindsay and three of the league's five best and most-efficient runners on the ground. For running backs, volume is far more important, sticky, and predictive than efficiency when it comes to scoring fantasy points, but that also doesn't mean hyper-efficient running backs can't surprise us every now and then. They're just difficult to see coming – essentially variance-driven outliers – and typically not good bets *ex-ante*.

- On that point, some of these breakouts might have been **borderline impossible** to have seen coming in the preseason. Even back when he was going undrafted, **James Conner** was **my No. 1 must-draft handcuff** and a top sleeper, but even I never would have imagined **Le'Veon Bell** would sit out the entire season. **Nick Chubb** was always a bet on talent over opportunity, but surely you didn't envision **Carlos Hyde** getting traded half-way through his rookie season.

- There are only 24 instances of a running back averaging at least 5.5 targets per game over the past three seasons (eight per season), but 10 of our 17 running backs averaged at least 5.5 targets per game. That's no coincidence – for running backs, targets are worth **2.8X as much** as a carry in PPR leagues. This was a much more important factor than gamescript, for instance, as only 9 of our 17 running backs (53%) were on teams that finished above .500.

WIDE RECEIVERS

POSITIONAL ANALYSIS

Most Common Players on ESPN Playoff Rosters						
Season	Player Name	Team	Pos	Win%	Round	PPR
2018	Tyler Boyd	CIN	WR	65.5	UDFA	199.1
2019	Michael Thomas	NO	WR	61.5	1	274.1
2019	Chris Godwin	TB	WR	59.6	5	242.9
2019	DJ Chark Jr.	JAX	WR	58.6	UDFA	198.1
2018	Tyreek Hill	KC	WR	58.0	3	261.7
2017	Devin Funchess	CAR	WR	56.9	UDFA	160.3
2017	Robby Anderson	NYJ	WR	56.9	UDFA	173.9
2018	Adam Thielen	MIN	WR	56.5	3	270.6
2018	JuJu Smith-Schuster	PIT	WR	55.6	5	220.7
2019	Mike Evans	TB	WR	55.1	2	219.6
2019	John Brown	BUF	WR	55.1	UDFA	184.7
2019	Cooper Kupp	LAR	WR	54.7	5	203.9
2017	Tyreek Hill	KC	WR	53.5	5	197.1
2019	Keenan Allen	LAC	WR	53.4	3	194.5
2017	Antonio Brown	PIT	WR	53.2	1	273.6
2019	DJ Moore	CAR	WR	53.0	6	197.0
2019	Kenny Golladay	DET	WR	52.2	5	194.0
2017	JuJu Smith-Schuster	PIT	WR	52.2	UDFA	125.5
2017	Marvin Jones Jr.	DET	WR	51.2	11	178.1

Looking back at our running back chart, you'll see 47% of our sample was drafted in the first two rounds. But in this chart, you'll find only three of 19 wide receivers (16%) were drafted in the first two rounds. Why? Because, again, the running back position is *the* most important position in fantasy. High-end running back production simply matters more than high-end wide receiver production, and if you're drafting a wide receiver early, you're not drafting a running back early (which is where league-winning running backs tend to reside).

Of course, **Michael Thomas** ranks second on our chart with a first-round ADP, but he also just scored the ninth-most fantasy points by any wide receiver ever. In addition to fewer early-round names, you also see a number of UDFAs. However, you barely see any (actually only one) wide receiver selected in Rounds 7-13. Why is that? Well, because wide receiver is definitely the second-most important position in ESPN leagues and because ADP is actually pretty **accurate** with wide receivers (in comparison to the other positions). But also, maybe, don't be surprised to find a gem off waivers early in the year.

PLAYER ANALYSIS

Most Common Players on ESPN Playoff Rosters						
Season	Player Name	Team	Pos	Win%	Round	PPR
2018	Tyler Boyd	CIN	WR	65.5	UDFA	199.1
2019	Michael Thomas	NO	WR	61.5	1	274.1
2019	Chris Godwin	TB	WR	59.6	5	242.9
2019	DJ Chark Jr.	JAX	WR	58.6	UDFA	198.1
2018	Tyreek Hill	KC	WR	58.0	3	261.7
2017	Devin Funchess	CAR	WR	56.9	UDFA	160.3
2017	Robby Anderson	NYJ	WR	56.9	UDFA	173.9
2018	Adam Thielen	MIN	WR	56.5	3	270.6
2018	JuJu Smith-Schuster	PIT	WR	55.6	5	220.7
2019	Mike Evans	TB	WR	55.1	2	219.6
2019	John Brown	BUF	WR	55.1	UDFA	184.7
2019	Cooper Kupp	LAR	WR	54.7	5	203.9
2017	Tyreek Hill	KC	WR	53.5	5	197.1
2019	Keenan Allen	LAC	WR	53.4	3	194.5
2017	Antonio Brown	PIT	WR	53.2	1	273.6
2019	DJ Moore	CAR	WR	53.0	6	197.0
2019	Kenny Golladay	DET	WR	52.2	5	194.0
2017	JuJu Smith-Schuster	PIT	WR	52.2	UDFA	125.5
2017	Marvin Jones Jr.	DET	WR	51.2	11	178.1

- To nearly the opposite effect of running backs, 11 of our 19 qualifiers (58%) were age 25 or older. That makes some sense, as wide receivers do **tend to break out much later** in their careers than running backs. Generally, a wide receiver's breakout year and, actually, peak year is Year 3. Perhaps uncoincidentally, six of the wide receivers on our chart were entering their third year in the league, which was double the next closest year. Could **D.J. Moore, Calvin Ridley, Courtland Sutton, D.J. Chark, or Michael Gallup** finish as elite fantasy options this year? Or, might **Christian Kirk, Anthony Miller, James Washington, or Russell Gage** at least exceed expectations?

- While Year 3 is a wide receiver's breakout year, their best two-season stretch is Years 5 and 6. (In contrast, remember, a running back's best seasons come in Years 2 and 3.) This again showed up in our data, with 12 of our 19 (63%) league-winning wide receivers being somewhere between Year 3 and Year 6 in their careers. There could be some sort of lesson there, and an edge to us – don't give up on wide receivers too early. **Tyler Boyd** who broke out in Year 3 (7.8 to 5.7 to 15.8 fantasy points per game) with second-round draft capital. A more recent example is former first-round draft pick **DeVante Parker** who didn't break out until Year 5 (6.7 to 10.3 to 10.0 to 5.5 to 15.4 fantasy points per game). Are we unfairly sleeping on **Corey Davis, Breshad Perriman, Mike Williams, N'Keal Harry, John Ross**, and others who have disappointed despite good draft capital? Maybe.

- While efficiency outliers (aka regression candidates) should be avoided at the running back position, that's not entirely true for wide receivers. The efficiency numbers aren't repeatable, but high-efficiency seasons do tend to

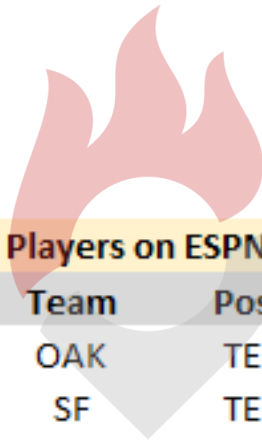
lend themselves towards more volume in the following year, as I proved [here](#). We also saw this play out in our data. 8 of our 16 (50%) wide receivers (three didn't qualify) ranked top-10 in fantasy points per target in their previous season. In the actual season, only 6 of 19 (30%) ranked top-10. What's the takeaway here? Volume is more important than efficiency in fantasy, but efficiency can also do a pretty good job of predicting a future increase in volume. Might **A.J. Brown** (first in fantasy points per target), **Deebo Samuel** (second), **Stefon Diggs** (fourth), or **Calvin Ridley** (10th) be in line for more volume and a breakout season this year?

- 11 of our 19 wide receivers (58%) finished the season top-12 in fantasy points per game, though, only eight wide receivers (40%) finished top-12 by targets per game. And actually, nine (47%) finished outside of the top-20. Wide receiver, like running backs and tight ends, are heavily reliant on volume for fantasy points, but clearly far less so than for running backs. On this point, Washington signing **Antonio Brown** could actually be beneficial for **Terry McLaurin**. His number of routes run would remain unchanged, and while he may see fewer targets (though I'm not even sure that's correct), his efficiency should skyrocket. Washington will likely be able to run more plays, more plays near the end zone, and he'll face softer cornerbacks and fewer double-teams from opposing defenses. Last year, **Julian Edelman** and **Courtland Sutton** were both dominating early in the season before opposing defensive coordinators made them the focal point of their gameplan.

- 10 of our 19 qualifiers (53%) were slot, rather than outside, wide receivers. Over the same span, only 36% of any season's fantasy WR1s were slot wide receivers. It's not obvious to me why, but perhaps fantasy drafters do tend to underrate slot wide receivers by ADP. Perhaps because [they're so much less important](#) than outside wide receivers in real life.

TIGHT ENDS

POSITIONAL ANALYSIS



Most Common Players on ESPN Playoff Rosters

Season	Player Name	Team	Pos	Win%	Round	PPR
2019	Darren Waller	OAK	TE	63.4	UDFA	165.2
2018	George Kittle	SF	TE	59.4	12	172.3
2019	Travis Kelce	KC	TE	59.1	2	184.3
2019	Mark Andrews	BAL	TE	58.9	13	162.3
2018	Eric Ebron	IND	TE	57.1	UDFA	182.1
2018	Travis Kelce	KC	TE	55.2	3	239.2
2019	Austin Hooper	ATL	TE	54.5	10	154.8
2017	Travis Kelce	KC	TE	53.5	4	193.8
2017	Evan Engram	NYG	TE	52.9	11	143.9
2018	Zach Ertz	PHI	TE	52.3	3	226.8

What immediately jumped out to me here was how obvious this list looks both pre- and post-hindsight. All 10 tight ends finished top-six in fantasy points per game, and 8 of 10 finished top-4. Basically, all of the names on this list are all of the names you'd expect to see.

Even pre-hindsight these players were pretty obvious. **Mark Andrews** was [my top tight end sleeper](#) in 2019 and **Darren Waller** ranked [right behind him](#). In 2018, **George Kittle** was Graham [Barfield's top sleeper](#), and **Eric Ebron** was John [Hansen's top sleeper](#). Add in **Travis Kelce**, who made the list all three years and that's 70% (7 of 10) of the list.

Beyond that, ADP was all over the place: 60% of our list was selected in the last four rounds of the draft or not at all, while the other 40% had an ADP in the first four rounds.

Although all of these tight ends finished top-six in fantasy points per game, and although (surprisingly) **Darren Waller** was statistically more valuable than **Michael Thomas** last year, you don't necessarily need an elite tight end to win your league. Tight end is the third-most valuable position in fantasy, but on the whole, is still probably closer to quarterback and defense in terms of value. Over the past three seasons, there are 45 instances of a player finishing with a Win% of 55% or higher. Here's how that composition shook up:

55% Win% or Higher		
Position	Instances	%
K	1 of 45	2.2%
D/ST	4 of 45	8.9%
QB	4 of 45	8.9%
TE	6 of 45	13.3%
WR	11 of 45	24.4%
RB	19 of 45	42.2%

Broadly speaking, this is telling us that high-end running backs are worth roughly 1.7X as much as high-end wide receivers, which are worth roughly 1.8X as much as high-end tight ends, which are worth roughly 1.5X as much as high-end quarterbacks (which are worth the same as high-end defenses). Or, rather, high-end running backs are worth roughly 1.7X as much as high-end wide receivers, 3.1X as much as high-end tight ends, and 4.7X as much as high-end quarterbacks and defenses.

At the very least, this has literally been true of league-winners (defined as narrowly as we have, but which can be used somewhat interchangeably with "high-end producer relative to price") over the past three seasons. And the values here do seem to follow what we'd naturally expect based on Harstad's back-of-the-napkin math on positional scarcity.

PLAYER ANALYSIS

Most Common Players on ESPN Playoff Rosters						
Season	Player Name	Team	Pos	Win%	Round	PPR
2019	Darren Waller	OAK	TE	63.4	UDFA	165.2
2018	George Kittle	SF	TE	59.4	12	172.3
2019	Travis Kelce	KC	TE	59.1	2	184.3
2019	Mark Andrews	BAL	TE	58.9	13	162.3
2018	Eric Ebron	IND	TE	57.1	UDFA	182.1
2018	Travis Kelce	KC	TE	55.2	3	239.2
2019	Austin Hooper	ATL	TE	54.5	10	154.8
2017	Travis Kelce	KC	TE	53.5	4	193.8
2017	Evan Engram	NYG	TE	52.9	11	143.9
2018	Zach Ertz	PHI	TE	52.3	3	226.8

- Without question, **Travis Kelce** has been one of the most underrated players in fantasy for a number of years now. In fact, he's the only player with a Win% over 50% in each of the past three seasons. He posted a 59.1% Win% last year, which ranks third-best among tight ends in our sample, and despite the handicap of an ADP in the early- to mid-second round. And, it appears he's being underrated again, with an ADP in the early- to mid-second round. Over the past four seasons, Kelce has finished first, first, first, and first among tight ends in fantasy points. Among all wide receivers, he would have ranked top-10 in fantasy points in each of the last three seasons. By VORP (Value Over Replacement Player), it was even more obvious he's been worthy of a first-round pick in 12-team leagues, finishing (among all players) sixth, 11th, and 12th. Or, versus wide receivers third, third, and third.

- Waller was another instance of us underrating coach-speak. Coach **Jon Gruden** said all offseason, Waller was one of the NFL's "best-kept secrets" and would be given "the chance of a lifetime" as Oakland's TE1. Just the year prior, in Oakland, **Jared Cook** finished top-five in total fantasy points. We already brought this point up with running backs, though **Patrick Mahomes (2018)** and **Chris Godwin (2019)** also qualify, among others.

- Two sophomore tight ends made this list, and, like with quarterbacks, I don't think that's too surprising. Tight ends typically make a massive **leap from their rookie to sophomore seasons**. And it probably shouldn't be too surprising who these two sophomore tight ends (specifically) were. **Evan Engram** was one of the all-time great outliers, but typically, rookie tight ends rarely finish as fantasy-relevant contributors. While that was true for **George Kittle** and **Mark Andrews**, both did post historically great rookie seasons, finishing with 500-plus receiving yards – something only 16 other tight ends have accomplished over the past 30 seasons.

OVERALL

Most Common Players on ESPN Championship Rosters						Most Common Players on ESPN Playoff Rosters					
Season	Player Name	Pos	Win%	Round	PPR	Season	Player Name	Pos	Win%	Round	PPR
2018	Christian McCaffrey	RB	37.8	2	385.5	2019	Christian McCaffrey	RB	78.1	1	354.1
2018	Patrick Mahomes	QB	35.5	10	417.1	2017	Alvin Kamara	RB	77.4	UDFA	247.0
2017	Todd Gurley II	RB	34.4	2	383.3	2018	James Conner	RB	75.9	10	267.6
2018	Travis Kelce	TE	33.2	3	294.6	2019	Dalvin Cook	RB	69.8	2	269.6
2018	Adam Thielen	WR	33.0	3	307.3	2019	Lamar Jackson	QB	68.8	11	329.0
2018	Nick Chubb	RB	31.8	12	194.5	2018	Spencer Ware	RB	67.9	UDFA	61.1
2018	Saquon Barkley	RB	31.2	1	385.8	2018	Tyler Boyd	WR	65.5	UDFA	199.1
2018	Tyreek Hill	WR	31.0	3	334.0	2017	Todd Gurley II	RB	65.1	2	260.2
2018	JuJu Smith-Schuster	WR	30.8	5	296.9	2019	Austin Ekeler	RB	63.9	8	234.8
2018	Zach Ertz	TE	29.4	3	280.3	2019	Darren Waller	TE	63.4	UDFA	165.2
2018	Alvin Kamara	RB	28.8	1	354.2	2018	Phillip Lindsay	RB	62.7	UDFA	191.6
2019	Breshad Perriman	WR	27.2	UDFA	138.1	2019	Michael Thomas	WR	61.5	1	274.1
2019	A.J. Brown	WR	26.8	UDFA	217.1	2018	Nick Chubb	RB	61.4	11	148.7
2018	George Kittle	TE	25.6	12	258.7	2018	Aaron Jones	RB	60.6	12	151.0
2018	Davante Adams	WR	25.5	2	329.6	2018	Christian McCaffrey	RB	59.8	2	296.6
2019	Christian McCaffrey	RB	25.4	1	471.2	2019	Chris Godwin	WR	59.6	5	242.9
2018	Phillip Lindsay	RB	25.2	UDFA	222.8	2018	George Kittle	TE	59.4	12	172.3
2017	Alvin Kamara	RB	24.1	UDFA	320.4	2019	Travis Kelce	TE	59.1	2	184.3
2018	Melvin Gordon	RB	23.8	2	275.5	2018	Patrick Mahomes	QB	59.0	10	332.7
2017	JuJu Smith-Schuster	WR	23.8	UDFA	197.7	2019	Mark Andrews	TE	58.9	13	162.3
2018	Ezekiel Elliott	RB	23.7	1	329.1	2019	DJ Chark Jr.	WR	58.6	UDFA	198.1
2018	Stefon Diggs	WR	23.2	3	266.3	2018	Tyreek Hill	WR	58.0	3	261.7
2018	Jaylen Samuels	RB	23.0	UDFA	89.5	2019	Derrick Henry	RB	57.5	3	223.0
2018	Michael Thomas	WR	22.7	2	315.5	2017	Carson Wentz	QB	57.3	11	254.5
2017	Dion Lewis	RB	21.4	UDFA	203.0	2019	Nick Chubb	RB	57.1	2	209.0
2019	Tyler Higbee	TE	21.3	UDFA	160.4	2019	Aaron Jones	RB	57.1	4	222.2
2019	Ryan Tannehill	QB	21.2	UDFA	224.2	2018	Eric Ebron	TE	57.1	UDFA	182.1
2019	DeVante Parker	WR	21.2	UDFA	246.2	2017	Devin Funchess	WR	56.9	UDFA	160.3
2018	Brandin Cooks	WR	20.5	5	243.2	2017	Robby Anderson	WR	56.9	UDFA	173.9
2018	Joe Mixon	RB	20.0	3	243.4	2019	Russell Wilson	QB	56.7	9	267.5

- How much overlap was there between these two charts? Very little. Only nine of 30 players (30%) appeared on both charts. As for why this is, this goes back to the point made in our introduction. Fantasy postseason performance is far more a function of volatility than fantasy performance in the regular season, which is far more a function of skill. As for a fantasy-relevant takeaway, it'd be easy for me to say "Don't be afraid to 'stream' your way to a title." Look at what **Breshad Perriman** (UDFA), **A.J. Brown** (UDFA), **Tyler Higbee** (UDFA), **DeVante Parker** (UDFA), **Ryan Tannehill** (UDFA), and **Raheem Mostert** (UDFA) accomplished last year, but, at the same time, that's a lot easier for me to say now in hindsight.

- Across both charts, only 6 of our 60 (13%) league-winners were drafted in Rounds 4-9. Why is the middle-bulk of the draft so under-represented by our data? Well, basically, it's really hard to be a league-winner with a low ADP (expensive price-tag). The players who *were* able to rise above it, were truly dominant, sometimes posting historically great numbers. And the players capable of posting such dominant numbers are typically known names who were already being drafted early.

- But what do these two charts tell us about positional value? Among the top-30 most common players on playoff rosters, we see 4 quarterbacks, 14 running backs, 7 wide receivers, and 5 tight ends. Among the top-30 most common players on championship rosters, we see 2 quarterbacks, 13 running backs, 11 wide receivers, and 4 tight ends. Again, running backs are typically your league winners, followed by wide receivers. And contrary to the Zero-RB theory, league-winning running backs are not easily acquired.

