
League Managers must be made should owners wish to see their charming, fragile, transitory World endure.

In just a few short days, the appointed hours – 2:30 PM on Sunday, August 28 – will arrive, yes. And only then can the incantations be made, and the Fragrant Candle be ignited, and the draft board be filled. And only through these actions can the Coming Darkness be kept at bay, through the sweet mercies of the League Managers.

On arrival, the faithful are instructed to firmly rap upon the threshold and utter the Ancient Words of Entreaty for Admittance: “O, forgiving League Managers, we humble supplicants beg entry. Y'hah ph'ehye nach' lw'nafh, gof'nn ph'bug.”

Snacks there might be, and limited beverages of the syrupy and carbonated variety, but devotees must bring their own spirits, and they would be well advised to furnish their own edible offerings to the League Managers as well, for They are most ravenous, yes. If an offering is sufficient, it will be shared among all of the petitioners present, as is Tradition.

Supplicants are advised to bring their own Draft Lists and writing implements, for there will be many present and little time in which to prepare before the Hour of Reckoning is at hand.

If absolutely necessary, and the waning time permits, it is said that, sometimes, the League Managers will provide the worthy with Draft Lists. However, these Lists are rumored to be deficient, as the League Managers can be cruel and capricious; and Witnesses would better curry the favor of the League Managers if each were to have a sufficiently different list such that none shall know the mind of their fellow supplicants.

The League Managers will reward those who are prepared. It is Known.

Devotees are encouraged to arrive some thirty minutes to one full hour before the Hour of Reckoning, so that all can be made ready ere the ritual is to begin. The League Managers look most disapprovingly on tardiness, yes. Tardiness without warning is especially disfavored. From time to time, the League Managers have been known to do what They can to delay the Hour of Reckoning, but once the stars are aligned, there is little recourse that can be taken to postpone the inevitable.

Should a participant expect that they will be delayed, they are encouraged to contact the League Managers in an expedient fashion. This is Right and Respectful.

Owners are permitted to bring guests to the proceedings, but these guests are cautioned to be silent and still once the ceremony commences, lest the League

Managers' ire be raised. Unannounced guests attend at their own risk, for the League Managers are often ill-tempered and weary upon the onset of the Yearly Observances.

The rites are expected to last some three to four hours, so Witnesses are counseled to prepare for an extended ritual, yes. Those who leave before the cessation of the formalities are likely to risk the wrath of the League Managers, and jeopardize their ability to thrive in the upcoming Season. They will lament their impatience when the nights become long and cold, and their rosters prove unworthy.

Brothers Colin, Eric, and Zachary will be unable to attend, most distressingly. Brother Colin has arranged to fulfill his ceremonial obligations via cellular projection and remote viewing. The Others have not.

The League Managers demand that proxies take the places of Brother Eric and Brother Zachary. If this is not done, the Sublime Dodecagon will be incomplete, and the Coming Darkness cannot be prevented. All shall suffer and be lost, yes.

Brethren and Sistren are permitted to remain after the culmination of the services, to replenish themselves and to mingle with their fellows. This is satisfactory to the League Managers. However, once the hour reaches eight of the clock, the remaining supplicants are to depart immediately, or risk seeing the League Managers in Their true, glorious Wrath.

The League Managers have authorized this humble servant to convey Their bestowal of good luck upon those who carry out these, Their directives, with diligence and fidelity, yes. ★

DRAFT PREVIEW: WIDE RECEIVERS

Projecting the Most Dominant Position in the League of Doom

By ALCYBONE BALFOUR, Contributor

DOUCHELAND – In the four seasons since the League of Doom initially went PPR, just under a third of all players in the top-10 fantasy scorers have been wide receivers, a remarkable feat considering that wide receivers touch the ball far less than quarterbacks and running backs.

Moreover, the most successful teams over that period have always had one of the top tier wide receivers on their rosters. Ned, the 2012 Gumby Bowl winner, had Calvin Johnson, the top wide receiver that year. In 2013, Gumby Bowl runner-up Eric had the number two and three wide receivers, Demaryius Thomas and Josh Gordon. (That year's champion, Chris, does not believe that wide receivers exist, is morally opposed to the forward pass, and had a losing record that season, anyway.) The champion in 2014, Colin, had the number two receiver, Demaryius Thomas, on his roster. Other Sam, the 2015 champion, took the number one wide receiver, Antonio Brown, into his Gumby Bowl matchup against Chris, who had the number two wide receiver, Julio Jones.

Long story short, wide receiver may be *the* most important position in the League of Doom. Unfortunately, they can also be highly unpredictable, many are self-centered prima donnas, and their performances are inextricably intertwined with those of their quarterbacks and offensive lines. Owners need a reliable guide to make well-informed selections.

Look no further. This year, there are two distinct tiers among the top echelon wide receivers: the top three, followed by the next seven. Another tier begins after the tenth ranked wide receiver, but we are not concerned with that. Here are your top ten wide receivers:

1. Antonio Brown, Pit (1st in 2015; Week 8 Bye)

Brown may well be the first overall pick in PPR format leagues, and is likely the best pure receiver in football today. Some mitigating factors to take into account, however: Brown has not played well with quarterbacks other than the oft-injured Ben Roethlisberger; he has to play the Bengals twice per season, and they seem to want

to kill him; and he is a member of the Steelers, who are all terrible people. The Steelers' number two receiver, Martavis Bryant, is suspended for the entire 2016 season; how that affects Brown is unclear, as he should get more attention from opposing defenses, but he should also see a higher number of targets. Either way, he should be the first receiver off the board. We project him to get 123 receptions for 1,656 yards and 10 touchdowns, scoring 287.1 fantasy points.

2. Julio Jones, Atl (2nd in 2015; Week 11 Bye)

Jones was targeted an absurd, league-leading 203 times in 2015, and his prototypical speed and size allowed him to take full advantage of those looks. However, Atlanta didn't win when they went pass-wacky. They want to establish more of a ground game this year, and they brought in a more legitimate number two receiver in Mohamed Sanu, so it is doubtful that Jones will see the magnitude of success he did last season. Nevertheless, he is still as sure a thing as you can get. We project him to make 113 receptions for 1,595 yards and nine touchdowns, scoring 278.7 fantasy points.

3. Odell Beckham Jr., NYG (5th in 2015; Week 8 Bye)

Despite missing five games between 2014 and 2015, Beckham holds the record for most receiving yards in a player's first two seasons. He is an aggressive, resilient player, and he has fantastic hair. However, he's also a bit of a hot head, and has shown that it's not too hard to get under his skin; he was suspended for fighting cornerback Josh Norman last season. Assuming he can keep himself together, especially now that he'll have to face off against Norman twice a year, we project him to make 100 receptions for 1,478 yards and 11 touchdowns, scoring 265.1 fantasy points.

4. DeAndre Hopkins, Hou (4th in 2015; Week 9 Bye)

Hopkins is at the top of the second tier of wide receivers. He had a monster season in 2015 despite the carousel of shame that was Houston's quarterback position, with appearances from luminaries such as Brian Hoyer, Ryan Mallett, Brandon Weeden, and T.J. Yates, demonstrating that his talent can overcome even the least effective arms. This year, the Texans hope to see a modicum of competence and consistency at quarterback from Robert Pattinson-impersonator Brock Osweiler. On the other hand, they also brought in Lamar Miller and drafted Will Fuller to serve as their second option at wide receiver, so Hopkins may not see as many targets this year. Plus, he held out for a whole day over the summer, because he is selfish.

Nevertheless, we project him to make 92 receptions for 1,300 yards and nine touchdowns, scoring 230.0 fantasy points.

5. A.J. Green, Cin (8th in 2015; Week 9 Bye)

This offseason, the Bengals lost number two and three wide receivers Marvin Jones and Mohamed Sanu to the Lions and Falcons, respectively. Newcomer journeyman Brandon LaFell (who recently tore a ligament in his hand, and may miss some time as a result) and second round draft pick Tyler Boyd are unlikely to replace their production, at least not right away, and top tight end Tyler Eifert's early season is in jeopardy due to offseason ankle surgery. Green (and his fantasy owners) should be the primary beneficiary of all of this turmoil, seeing a career-high in targets this season. We project him to make 87 receptions for 1,256 yards and 10 touchdowns, scoring 227.1 fantasy points.

6. Allen Robinson, Jac (6th in 2015; Week 5 Bye)

Robinson and Jags quarterback Blake Bortles (Bortles – that's a funny name) established a fantastic connection in their mutual sophomore seasons, with Robinson nearly tripling his receiving yards and increasing his touchdowns sevenfold from his first year. Twelve of his touchdowns occurred in the red zone, with Robinson targeted on almost one out of every four red zone passes. The Jags brought in red zone touchdown hog Chris Ivory in the offseason, though, so Robinson's touchdown total is likely to decline – especially if tight end Julius Thomas figures out how to play football when Peyton Manning isn't throwing to him. Still, Robinson is Bortles' top guy, and we project him to make 79 receptions for 1,231 yards and nine touchdowns, scoring 216.6 fantasy points.

7. Dez Bryant, Dal (81st in 2015; Week 7 Bye)

Bryant missed seven games with a foot injury last year, and had to deal with a bunch of mooks (hey, look, Brandon Weeden again!) throwing him the ball for six of the games that he did play. He's been a top-seven fantasy receiver for the three seasons prior, though. His owners need to keep their fingers crossed, because the Cowboys refuse to acquire a real backup for their injury-prone, 36-year-old quarterback. Jerry Jones should probably fire his GM. Bryant also recently suffered a concussion, so be aware of that. We project Bryant to make 82 receptions for 1,138 yards and 10 touchdowns, scoring 214.8 fantasy points.

8. Jordy Nelson, GB (Did not play in 2015; Week 4 Bye)

In his last three full seasons as a starter, Nelson was the number two, number 12, and number three receiver, respectively, making him one of the most consistently outstanding receivers in the league. He tore his ACL 12 months ago, however, and missed all of his 2015 season. He suffered a “hiccup” (i.e. tendonitis) in his *other* knee this July, and only came off of the PUP list on August 16th. He’s also 31, so his ability to rebound from the ACL tear is a major question mark. Still, even if he’s not back to full strength, he should be a borderline top-tier fantasy receiver. We project him to make 82 receptions for 1,185 yards and nine touchdowns, scoring 213.7 fantasy points.

9. Brandon Marshall, NYJ (3rd in 2015; Week 11 Bye)

Marshall – whose middle name, it should be pointed out, is Markeith – had a career year in 2015, despite having Ryan “The Amish Rifle” Fitzpatrick throwing him the ball. Marshall successfully lobbied hard to get the Jets to bring back Fitzpatrick this season. However, the Jets also replaced bruising runner Chris Ivory with adept runner/receiver Matt Forte, so Marshall may see less targets this year – and regression due to age is always a possibility. We project him to make 89 receptions for 1,211 yards and eight touchdowns, scoring 211.6 fantasy points.

10. Alshon Jeffery, Chi (45th in 2015; Week 9 Bye)

Jeffery had a breakout season in 2013, and followed that up with another doozy in 2014. Last year was a bust, though; he missed seven games due to soft tissue injuries. When he did play, he played exceedingly well, with six receptions, 89.7 yards, and 0.44 touchdowns per game. He is still young – just 26 – and Smokin’ Jay Cutler’s next two most frequent receiving options, Matt Forte and Martellus Bennett, left for the Jets and Patriots, respectively, so Jeffery should see an uptick in targets. He’s also entering a contract year, so he has every reason to play hard. We project him to make 84 receptions for 1,211 yards and eight touchdowns, scoring 211.3 fantasy points.

And there you have it. Ten juicy, enticing wide receivers, all waiting for you. ★

DRAFT PREVIEW: RUNNING BACKS

The Most Coveted, Least Abundant Position in the Draft?

By COACH CLYDE RALEIGH, Contributor

THE LOCAL VFW – The blistering run through the secondary. The ankle-breaking cuts. The leap over the pile at the goal line. The bowling ball scattering linebackers. Regardless of your preferred flavor, there is really nothing more exciting than a running back at his best. Fantasy football and misguided NFL rules changes may have diminished their importance, but nothing can reduce their unique combination of power, quickness, and grace.

As the resident expert on running backs, I have been called on to preview the top ten running backs of the draft. As any bona fide fan of football understands, the only numbers that matter for running backs are touches, yards, and touchdowns; all of that next generation statistical analysis is just nonsense to make nerds feel better about not getting any. So here are my rankings, based on the things that actually matter.

1. David Johnson, Ari (3rd in 2015; Week 9 Bye)

Johnson was eighth in rushing touchdowns and fourth in receiving touchdowns in 2015. He wasn't the starter in the desert until week 13, making his numbers even more impressive. He should be the sole starter in 2016, although Cards' head coach Bruce Arians has made some ominous noises about not running Johnson into the ground, going so far as to say that, while David Johnson is the better receiver, David and backup Chris Johnson are of equivalent running ability.

2. Todd Gurley, LA (8th in 2015; Week 8 Bye)

Gurley was ninth in carries, third in yards, fifth in rushing touchdowns, tied for eighth in yards per rushing attempt, and third in rushing yards per game in his rookie season – and all of that after he missed his first two games and didn't start until week four. Despite being the sole weapon on the anemic Rams offense, he was the third-highest scoring running back on a per-game basis.

3. Lamar Miller, Hou (6th in 2015; Week 9 Bye)

Miller was seventh in rushing touchdowns and ninth in receptions in 2015, on a miserable Dolphins offense that was dead last in rushing attempts – he’s never had more than 13 carries a game over a season. Now he’s with the Texans, who were fourth in the league in rushing attempts, so he’s set to explode this season, and he isn’t injury prone like his predecessor, Arian Foster. Look out for red zone specialist Alfred Blue taking some of Miller’s carries near the goal line, though.

4. Adrian Peterson, Min (2nd in 2015; Week 6 Bye)

First in carries, first in rushing yards, tied for first in rushing touchdowns, and first in rushing yards per game in 2015, Peterson seems not to be effected by age, injury, or suspension. This is especially surprising considering his heavy usage and punishing running style. Of slight concern is the fact that the Vikings have said that they want to incorporate more a shotgun spread attack that fits QB Teddy Bridgewater’s skill set, and Peterson has historically struggled when running out of the shotgun.

5. Jamaal Charles, KC (53rd in 2015; Week 5 Bye)

Charles only played five games in 2015, tearing his ACL for the second time in his career. In those five games, though, he accounted for 541 total yards and five touchdowns. The last time he returned from a torn ACL, Charles had a career year, so expect him to come back with a vengeance. Charcandrick West was a serviceable runner for the Chiefs last year, so there is some concern that West will leech carries from Charles, although reports say that the Chiefs don’t intend on limiting a healthy Charles.

6. Ezekiel Elliott, Dal (Rookie; Week 7 Bye)

Elliott, as a rookie, is a bit of an unknown, although he’s about as safe a bet for an unknown player as one can want. Dallas was 18th in rushing attempts in 2015, but they were third in rushing attempts the previous season, when they had a viable starter. They have one of the best run-blocking lines in the NFL, and Elliott, as the most talented back on the team, looks to step in right away and be the workhorse back the Cowboys were looking for. He has been accused of domestic assault, though, so anyone who takes him should keep an eye on that.

7. Devonta Freeman, Atl (1st in 2015; Week 11 Bye)

Fourth in carries, seventh in yards, tied for first in rushing touchdowns, third in receptions, ninth in receiving touchdowns, and eighth in rushing yards per game, Freeman seemingly came out of nowhere in his sophomore season to lead all running backs in fantasy points. The Falcons added three-time Pro-Bowler Alex Mack at center this offseason, so their run game may get even better. Unfortunately for Freeman's owners, however, the Falcons have indicated that they want to split carries more this year, and give backup running back Tevin Coleman more carries, so he's unlikely to see the same kind of numbers this season.

8. Le'Veon Bell, Pit (48th in 2015; Week 8 Bye)

Bell played only six games last season due to a suspension and injury, but he tied for fifth in yards per rushing attempt. The Steelers were 24th in rushing attempts, but Bell averages over 18 carries and nearly 80 yards per game on his career, and he may be the best pure runner in the league today, as long as he has recovered from his knee injury sufficiently to display his trademark quickness and agility. As of August 19, he had a four game suspension to start the season reduced to three games, so expect him to be drafted later than he normally would be; his owners should look to take his extremely capable backup, DeAngelo Williams (fifth in fantasy points in 2015), as well.

9. Mark Ingram, NO (12 in 2015; Week 5 Bye)

Ingram managed 212 touches for 1,172 all-purpose yards and six touchdowns in 2015, despite only playing 12 games. His talent is undeniable, both as a runner and a pass-catcher, he is in an offense that has demonstrated an affinity for receiving running backs, and he has no competition for the starting job. Unfortunately, his injury history is a problem; he has only played a full 16-game season once in his career, in 2013, and the Saints had multiple other backs (Pierre Thomas, Darren Sproles, Chris Ivory) to share the burden with him that year. It remains to be seen whether he can make it through a full season getting featured back level wear and tear.

10. Doug Martin, TB (4th in 2015; Week 6 Bye)

The self-proclaimed Dougernaut was second in carries, second in yards, tied for fifth in yards per rushing attempt, and second in rushing yards per game last season. Unfortunately for Bucs fans and potential fantasy owners, however, Martin has a

history of injuries that has decimated half of his seasons as a pro, and he may have been playing out of his mind because 2015 was a contract year for him. He also has talented backup Charles Sims eating into his carries.

Remember: draft running backs with your first, second, and third picks, and nothing can possibly go wrong for you this season. ★

GOING DEEP: THE ART OF THE FANTASY TRADE

Looking at the Intricacies of Trading in Fantasy Football

By PROF. DR. DOUGLEEM XANDOPHER, D.TH., PH.D., Contributing Editor

PARIS, FRANCE – Welcome to “Going Deep,” a new semi-regular column exploring a particular aspect of fantasy football with considerable depth. For our inaugural column, will we be discussing the much-maligned, often underused fantasy trade, a weapon that should be part of every fantasy owner’s arsenal.

Arguably the two most successful owners in the League of Doom, Chris (first in playoff wins, second in playoff win percentage; tied for second in playoff appearances; tied for first in Gumby Bowl appearances; one Gumby Bowl championship) and Ned (first in total wins and total win percentage, regular season wins and win percentage, playoff win percentage, and Gumby Bowl championships; tied for first in Gumby Bowl appearances; second in playoff wins) have both been extremely active with trades. And yet, many owners ignore, or at best neglect, their trading games.

There are two primary factors that an owner should take into consideration when deciding to look for a trade: first, their roster deficiencies, and second, their roster surpluses. One or the other should be sufficient to contemplate a trade; if an owner has both, they should immediately look to trade.

Roster deficiencies are spots where an owner is incapable of fielding the kind of team that they want. Every team ought to have a top-tier player at quarterback and each skill position (running back, wide receiver, and tight end). Ideally, teams should have a second wide receiver who is near the top tier, and either a third close-to top-tier wide receiver or a second close-to top-tier running back for the flex.

Anything less than this means that the team has a roster deficiency. It’s always nice to have those one or two superstar players, but one cannot rely on those players to produce every single week, and one bad injury can ruin one’s season if a team lacks depth.

Teams have **roster surpluses** when there are one or more top-tier or near-top-tier players sitting on the owner’s bench every week. These players don’t do the

owner any good, and just waste roster space and potential. For example, at the beginning of the 2012 season, Ned had both Matt Ryan (the number six quarterback) and Robert Griffin III (the number seven quarterback). He couldn't start them both, obviously, as there is only one quarterback position among the starters; he had a roster surplus.

When looking for roster deficiencies and surpluses, owners should keep certain additional considerations in mind. Does the team have two or more players on the same bye week that will leave that owner scrabbling for a replacement? Does the (fantasy) team have two or more starting players at the same position from the same (real life) team, competing for touches? These considerations can create what we call **hidden roster deficiencies or surpluses**.

Once an owner identifies these factors, they should look for the *same* factors on other owners' teams. Often, this means that they must look at each teams' rosters and pay attention to deficiencies and surpluses. (Do they have three high-quality running backs for only two spots? Only one top-tier wide receiver? Two top-tier quarterbacks? And so on.) If the owner looking to make a trade is lucky, their potential trade partners already set up their trading blocks, on which more later.

If the owner looking to trade has a deficiency at, for example, wide receiver, and a surplus at quarterback, and they find another owner with a deficiency at quarterback, and a surplus at wide receiver, they've identified an ideal trade partner.

After the owner identifies their own roster deficiencies and surpluses, and finds a potential partner (or partners) with whom to trade, the owner seeking to trade should make a trade offer. It is recommended that the offeror make the initial offer via text, Facebook Messenger, or email, rather than through the ESPN website or app. This permits negotiation, and is more likely to result in a quick response.

When practical, the owner looking to trade should identify multiple potential trade partners, so as to get the best possible deal. If three teams have a wide receiver surplus, an owner should offer all three of them a trade. In this scenario, the offeror should make it clear that they are shopping around for the best deal, so the offerees know that they are in competition with one another.

The initial trade offer should be for the best player on the offeree's team at the desired position, unless the offeror is certain that the offeree wouldn't be interested in making that trade. It is easier to negotiate down than it is to negotiate up, and aiming high should mitigate some of the inherent disadvantage with which offerors initially find themselves.

When making an offer (or considering one), owners would be well advised to look out for certain red flags. They should always keep bye weeks in mind – no one wants to be burned by creating a new hidden roster deficiency or surplus. They should also pay attention to the opponents that their trade target has played against, and will play against in future. If the targeted player has played against weak opponents, his numbers will be inflated; if he has played against particularly strong opponents, his numbers will be deflated.

One also should pay attention to the player's history. Websites like Pro Football Reference (pro-football-reference.com) and Fantasy Football Today (fftoday.com) can provide owners with comprehensive information on a player's past fantasy performance, including gamelog statistics for multiple seasons, injury history, and so on. Owners should find out if the player they want is over- or under-performing relative to his career, or has a questionable injury trend, for example. It is best not to be seduced by a one-week wonder or a glass cannon.

Owners should sell the trade to their potential trade partner. They should explain how the player or players they are offering are worthwhile, and how the desired targets are merely taking up space on the offeree's team. Owners can point out all the research they've done that led them to make the offer. If an owner makes an offer with no explanation whatsoever, and the offeree cannot immediately see the value of the offer, the offeree will often balk and refuse the trade due to mistrust or confusion.

In fact, as a general rule, it is best for an owner to be honest and fair in trade dealings. If an owner gets a reputation for frivolous or unbalanced offers, or repeatedly burns trade partners, then future partners will be significantly less likely to entertain trade offers from that owner in the future.

Regardless of how the trade plays out, even if all offers are rejected, an owner should always remain polite and respectful. Smack and trash talk are for the smack boards, not trade offers. In the words of Arthur Schopenhauer, “[I]t is a stupid thing to be rude. To make enemies by unnecessary and willful incivility is just as insane a proceeding as to set your house on fire.” If one unnecessarily offends another owner, that offense becomes more memorable than all the good turns previously done. The discourteous owner will have potentially cut off a valuable trade partner for no adequate reason.

A note on arranging the trade itself: ESPN does not permit a trade to exceed roster limits, however temporarily. If an owner wants to trade one player for two, the offeror is going to have to either throw in a second player, or drop a player as part of the trade. This can be done via the ESPN website when a trade is finalized.

Trades can be vetoed by the League Managers, who have two days from the time that the trade is officially offered on the ESPN website in which to review the equivalence of the players involved. Historically, the League Managers have not vetoed a trade unless They find that it is badly misbalanced such that one owner is taking advantage of another, or when They believe that two owners are in collusion.

Owners are unable to rescind a trade once it has been accepted. However, the League Managers have the power to reverse trades after the fact, so owners are recommended to contact the League Managers should they wish to invalidate a trade.

Finally, a word on the trading block. This woefully underutilized tool is invaluable to those looking to make a trade. It is, unfortunately, somewhat difficult to find. One can either access it through the “My Team” tab, or follow a direct link to the block (like this one: <http://games.espn.com/ffl/tradingblock?leagueId=174944>).

From the trade block, an owner can set their own needs, place players on the block, designate certain players as untouchable, and write notes about what they are looking for. They can peruse other owners’ trading blocks as well, and from there, denote players in which they are interested, offer trades, and email the other owners. For the avid trader, the trading block is a smorgasbord of possibilities, one which should not be overlooked by owners seeking to perfect their rosters.

And there you have it: the art of the fantasy trade. Go forth and achieve your potential, owners. And if you have tips and techniques about trading that you’d like to share, please post them on the message boards or email them to lodtcp@gmail.com, attention “Going Deep.” Until next time, may the gridiron favor you, fair readers. ★

DRAFT PREVIEW: TIGHT ENDS

All of Your Tight End Prediction Problems Are Solved

By SYNERGY COCHRAN, Contributor

FIVE MINUTES FROM THE SINGULARITY – Tight end performance, beyond a small handful of the very best at the position, is difficult to predict from one year to another with any precision. One season, a given tight end might be the top receiver on his team, and the next he could fall to third or fourth option. Scheme has a bigger impact on tight end play than it does on nearly any other position. Just ask Jimmy Graham. Especially good quarterback play can also make big-bodied tight ends look much better than they really are. Look at Julius Thomas.

Here at the Statistics Department of *The League of Doom Times-Chronicle Picayune*, we wanted to develop a statistical model that would predict tight end play with some reliability. After a significant amount of hard work and data analysis, we are proud to present our solution to the tight end prediction problem: YaRHeGSS.

YaRHeGSS, which is short for Yards per Reception, Height, and Games Started per Season, is the product of countless hours of number crunching by our data analysts, and we believe that it may be the most reliable statistic for predicting tight end fantasy performance that has ever been developed.

In developing YaRHeGSS, we compiled statistics on the most recent five seasons of tight ends who regularly run receiving routes. We decided to only look at the last five seasons because of the changing rules when it comes to defending the pass. We also thought it best to weight things towards recent performance. We felt that fantasy points per game was the best statistic to look at to represent good tight end play. This would demonstrate a tight end's value without penalizing that player due to injuries, illness, or suspension.

We compared the players' fantasy points per game with a variety of secondary statistics that we thought might have even the slightest chance of demonstrating some correlative value. The statistics we looked at included 40-yard dash times at the combine, age, bench press reps at the combine, experience in the NFL, games started per season played, height, and yards per reception, among others.

Our analysis made use of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (denoted as r) to measure the linear correlation between the two variables at play –

both fantasy points per game, and the secondary statistic we were assessing. The Pearson's correlation coefficient looks at a pair of variables by dividing the covariance of the variables by the product of their standard deviations. The resulting correlation coefficient ranges from -1.0, a strong negative correlation, to 1.0, a strong positive correlation.

We also looked at the coefficient of determination (denoted r^2), which indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be predicted from the independent variable. (In this case, the independent variable was the secondary statistics we were analyzing, and the dependent variable was the player's fantasy points per game (FP/G). The coefficient of determination is helpful in prediction of future outcomes. The closer the r^2 value is to 1.0, the better the regression line fits the data.

Finally, we analyzed the p value, or calculated probability of our outcomes in order to determine the probability of a result that is more extreme than, or equal to, the observed results when the null hypothesis is true. We used a $\alpha = 0.05$ cutoff to determine statistical significance, although we've included the p values of less significant variables below for transparency. The lower the p value, the more likely that the data point is statistically significant.

Here is a quick look at some of the independent variables we tested, and the results we achieved:

40-yard Dash Time (40YD): $r = 0.201$; $r^2 = 0.0404$; $p = 0.633153$. Weak positive correlation; statistically insignificant.

Age: $r = -0.1955$; $r^2 = 0.0382$; $p = 0.564557$. Weak negative correlation; statistically insignificant.

Bench Press Reps (BR): $r = -0.0923$; $r^2 = 0.0085$; $p = 0.862389$. Very weak negative correlation; statistically highly insignificant.

Experience (XP): $r = 0.0695$; $r^2 = 0.0695$; $p = 0.839098$. Very weak negative correlation; statistically highly insignificant.

Games Started per Season (GS/S): $R = 0.3449$; $r^2 = 0.119$; $p = 0.298917$. Moderate positive correlation; statistically somewhat significant.

Height (Hgt.): $r = 0.3514$; $r^2 = 0.1235$; $p = 0.289289$. Moderate positive correlation; statistically somewhat insignificant.

Yards per Reception (Y/R): $r = 0.6568$; $r^2 = 0.4314$; $p = 0.02813$. Strong positive correlation; statistically significant within α cutoff.

We were pleased to find the statistically significant, strong positive correlation between Y/R and FP/G. However, we wanted to see whether we could lower our p values further. Science is about pushing boundaries, after all. Our statisticians created a proprietary aggregated score combining Y/R, Hgt., and GS/S, which they dubbed YaRHeGSS, and ran the correlation coefficient numbers once more. This time, they were pleased to find an r value of 0.7156, an r^2 value of 0.5121, and a p value of 0.02813. This was an even more statistically significant, stronger positive correlation. We were quite thrilled with the result.

Here, then, for the very first time, we present the top ten fantasy tight ends, sorted by YaRHeGSS:

1. Rob Gronkowski, NE (1st in 2015; Week 9 Bye)

Missed one game in 2015. 40YD = 4.68; Age = 27; BR = 23; XP = 6; FP/G = 12.94; GS/S = 11.5; Hgt. = 78"; Y/R = 14.6.

2. Antonio Gates, SD (12th in 2015; Week 11 Bye)

Missed five games in 2015. 40YD = N/A; Age = 36; BR = N/A; XP = 13; FP/G = 8.14; GS/S = 13.54; Hgt. = 76"; Y/R = 12.6.

3. Jimmy Graham, Sea (17th in 2015; Week 5 Bye)

Missed five games in 2015. 40YD = 4.53; Age = 29; BR = N/A; XP = 6; FP/G = 10.5; GS/S = 10.167; Hgt. = 79"; Y/R = 12.3.

4. Coby Fleener, NO (19th in 2015; Week 5 Bye)

New team in 2016 (with Indianapolis in 2015). 40YD = 4.51; Age = 27; BR = 27; XP = 4; FP/G = 11.25; GS/S = 11.25; Hgt. = 78"; Y/R = 11.8.

5. Greg Olsen, Car (5th in 2015; Week 7 Bye)

40YD = 4.51; Age = 31; BR = 23; XP = 9; FP/G = 7.58; GS/S = 12.89; Hgt. = 78"; Y/R = 11.6.

6. Jason Witten, Dal (11th in 2015; Week 7 Bye)

40YD = 4.65; Age = 34; BR = 25; XP = 13; FP/G = 7.12; GS/S = 15.5; Hgt. = 77"; Y/R = 11.0.

7. Travis Kelce, KC (9th in 2015; Week 5 Bye)

40YD = 4.63; Age = 26; BR = N/A; XP = 3; FP/G = 7.3; GS/S = 9; Hgt. = 77"; Y/R = 12.5.

8. Martellus Bennett, NE (23rd in 2015; Week 9 Bye)

Missed five games in 2015. New team in 2016 (with Chicago in 2015). 40YD = 4.68; Age = 29; BR = 18; XP = 8; FP/G = 6.5; GS/S = 11.0; Hgt. = 79"; Y/R = 10.3.

9. Delanie Walker, Ten (4th in 2015; Week 13 Bye)

Missed one game in 2015. 40YD = N/A; Age = 32; BR = N/A; XP = 10; FP/G = 5.94; GS/S = 7.5; Hgt. = 73"; Y/R = 11.8.

10. Zach Miller, Chi (21st in 2015; Week 9 Bye)

Missed five games in 2015. New starter in 2016. 40YD = N/A; Age = 31; BR = N/A; XP = 4; FP/G = 3.4; GS/S = 4.75; Hgt. = 76"; Y/R = 11.5.

In future, we would like to look at more independent variables to determine if there are any other statistically significant factors. We would also like to create WYaRHeGSS, which will be weighted for greater accuracy. If possible, we want to find a way to take into account scheme and team changes, aging, and injuries, among other things. Still, we are excited about a real time test of YaRHeGSS, and we hope it is useful to you. ★

TIMMY O'BRIEN PASSES AWAY

Questions Surround Valued Intern's Death

By HAMRINK ZINK, Contributor

THE BOILER ROOM – Long-time Times-Chronicle Picayune intern Timmy O'Brien passed away in the early afternoon Monday, August 22, 2016. He was 34 years old. He is survived by his mother, Courtnelia O'Brien, in whose basement he lived. Our condolences go out to his friends and family.

O'Brien's body was found by the Times-Chronicle Picayune's janitorial staff early Tuesday morning. He had apparently been inadvertently locked in the boiler room, which doubled as his office, over the long Russian National Flag Day weekend.

Preliminary examinations indicate that O'Brien died due to starvation and dehydration, although an autopsy has yet to be performed. Investigators are baffled as to how O'Brien managed to suspend himself from the ceiling in a position resembling that of the Hanged Man tarot card. Also unclear is why O'Brien had lit so many black and red candles in the room.

"Mr. O'Brien was a surpassingly passable and punctual intern, and his presence will be missed, until such time as we can find an adequate replacement," said Zippy Toadelbow, Times-Chronicle Picayune Editor in Chief.

Mr. Toadelbow declined to comment regarding rumors that O'Brien's heart and eyes had been removed. He also refused to address reports that O'Brien's death was directly related to the errors that he allegedly made in his recent article profiling the different divisions of the league.

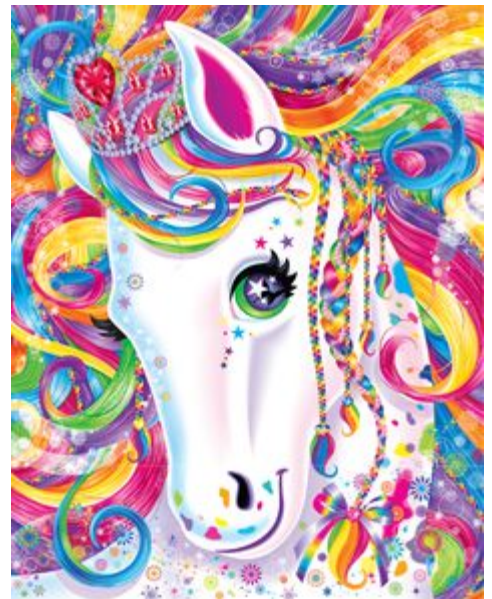
The Times-Chronicle Picayune is accepting applications for a new intern at this time. ★

OPINION: EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU IS MAGICAL

Magic Is as Valid a Solution to the Equation of Nature as Science

By SAMUEL MANLEIGH, Op-Ed Columnist

After the staff at *The League of Doom Times-Chronicle Picayune* extended their gracious offer to provide the league owners with the opportunity to use this periodical as a platform to spout our vile rhetoric, I had one overwhelming thought – I should do that. And here I am, doing that. No topic related to fantasy football, *The League* (the TV Show), Doom (the doctor), Times (we had some good ones), Chronicle (the movie), or Picayune (no clue) really speaks to me. In keeping with my character for this season, I'd like to use this platform to expound upon the things about which I, a unicorn, for all you know, have opinions (and editorializations).



Pictured: The author.

I love rainbows. Have you ever just watched a rainbow? Start out, as you would any day, by hoping that it rains. Now, temper your expectations and remember that you have to have just the right amount of rain and just the right amount of sunlight and just the right angle. Let's say that all of these things magically line up for you and you can see a rainbow. What are you really seeing?

Some people would say that a rainbow is just "a meteorological phenomenon that is caused by reflection, refraction and dispersion of light in water droplets resulting in a spectrum of light appearing in the sky," but those people would have just copied and pasted that from Wikipedia. And maybe they spent 14 seconds removing hyperlinks. Those people would be right in one sense, and wrong wrong wrong in every other sense.

You see, a rainbow is proof of Magic.

Science would have us believe that everything you see, no matter its alchemical composition, is not comprised of five primary elements, distributed in exceedingly precise and often confusing ratios, but a combination of some 118 (though the number is always changing) elements. But wait, those elements are then made of something in this grand shell game of creation. Atoms, as they're called, are made of protons, electrons, and neutrons in varying proportions. But wait, those things in the atom, fermions, are in turn made of something smaller and so on. Clouds all the way up, turtles with clouds for bellies all the way down.

This is where things get funky. There is space between all of these little doodads and whatchamacallits that make up "elements", or so Science would have you believe. In this model of the cosmos, there is actually more empty space than there is filled-up space and that's not just a universal average, but it holds true locally. Look at your hand. Mostly empty space. Like, the preponderance of you hand isn't there. So, according to Science, it's now all about quantum superpositions and probability fields. So says Science.

Of course, I'm paraphrasing, since Science is never very clear.

But, it's as clear as the magical horn on my forehead that this model of the universe is deeply flawed. Sure, I'm empty inside, but the side, respective of which my emptiness is "in," is made of stuff and that stuff is not empty in my mystical worldview. That stuff, of which we're all made, is magical.

You see, I'm magical and you're magical and yes, even Other Sam is made of magic (But his magic is the bad kind, like the bed-jittering fingers that we've all come to expect from cheap motels. Thanks, Movies.). When we accept that the explanations of Science are based on faith, things don't come out much more intelligibly than if we were to rely on the explanations of Magic. We have to have faith that Science is right and that Magic is wrong. I'm in the other camp on this one. Like any antivaxxer, or climate-change denier, or flat-earther, or any of the other anti-science people out there, I'm convinced that I know better than doctors, or scientists, or astronauts. My explanation for the world around you and for Other Sam winning last season is simple, concise, digestible, and Magic.

As the equine embodiment of purity, chastity, and stabbing things with my forehead-horn, I'm writing to tell you that Magic is as valid a solution to the equation of nature as Science; better, in fact. How else could you explain people like Chris, Collin, Ned, and Other Sam each winning at least one season of fantasy football? Magic.

How do you explain magnets? You can't, but Magic might.

So, from each of me to each of you, have a happy and safe time and I'll see most of you at the draft. The ones that I don't see will be using invisibility spells, I presume.

As this piece winds to a close, you may be asking yourself or anyone else who's around, "What did I just read?"

The answer, dear subscriber, is that I don't know. I wrote this several times, with topics ranging from glittery helmets to praise for all that you are and do, but I've decided to pontificate on Magic because you are magical. Each and every one of you is magical. And I'm Fucking Magical this season. ★

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Dire warnings about the Coming Darkness.

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Assessing 2016's top ten wide receivers.

PAGE FOUR**Draft Preview: Running Backs**

A look at this season's top ten running backs.

PAGE EIGHT**Going Deep: The Art of the Fantasy Trade**

The inaugural "Going Deep" column, dissecting the intricacies of fantasy football. This week: fantasy trades.

PAGE TWELVE**Draft Preview: Tight Ends**

Introducing YaRHeGSS, the definitive tight end performance prediction statistic.

PAGE SIXTEEN**Timmy O'Brien Passes Away**

Long-time intern Timmy O'Brien has tragically become post-living.

PAGE TWENTY**Opinion: Each and Every One of You is Magical**

Fascinating cosmological and metaphysical op-ed from Samuel Manleigh.

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