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# The League of Doom Times - Chronicle Picayune

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## THIRD SEXIEST NFL KICKER RELEASED

*Travis Coons Cut by  
Browns, Replaced by  
Some Uggo*

By BRITNEY TOADELBOW,  
Contributing Niece



*Pictured: Travis Coons, prime specimen of manhood.*

THE FACTORY OF SADNESS – Beautimous piece of man-meat and third finest NFL kicker Travis Coons was released by the idiot Cleveland Browns Monday, August 29.

Look at his hair. Imagine running your hands through it, grabbing it and pulling him in for some swap-spit. Think about

*Continued on Page Four*



*The League of Doom owners assemble before the commencement of the draft ceremony.*

## RECAP OF THE 2016 DRAFT

*Impending Horrific Apocalypse Appears to Have Been Averted*

*League of Doom Owners Undergo Annual Hours-Long Ceremony Dedicated to Pain, Suffering, and Humiliation*

By SIMON X. TANTALUS,  
Special Contributor

AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION – My flight is delayed. We’re just circling endlessly, waiting for the go ahead from flight control, I suppose. I’m getting tense. I’m sweating, my mouth is dry. My head is throbbing.

I have to piss, but the “fasten seatbelts” light is on and the stewardess is giving me the evil eye. She looks like she pulled back her hair just enough to make it hurt, and then lacquered it in place. She gives off the air of a villainous, spinster elementary-school teacher from a Roald Dahl novel. I flash

her a smile that could be mistaken for a grimace, or a grimace that could be mistaken for a smile, too much tooth and gum and no reciprocity in the eyes. She finally looks away, and the tension rises in my gut again. Or maybe it’s the

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## Very Late Edition

It’s too dark to say for sure. It’s definitely warm though, but you knew that. It doesn’t seem like there are any storms or anything on their way. Who really cares? Go to bed.

## NFL CHANGES INJURY REPORT RULES

*A Fantastic Idea That Will  
Not Mess with Fantasy  
Football in Any Way*

By ALCYONE BALFOUR,  
Contributor

NEVER PAST BEDTIME LAND – In a brilliant move that will not backfire in any way, the NFL Competition Committee has revised its Injury Report Policy for

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An examination of potential malfeasance involving proxy drafting.  
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Eric Millbrook provides a response to rumors about foul play among proxy drafters.  
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## PROXY DRAFT IMPROPRIETY

### *An Investigation of Mounting Evidence of Misconduct Among Proxy Drafters*

By **HAMRICK ZINK,**  
Contributor

A SHADOWY PARKING GARAGE – Anonymous sources have levied accusations of wrongdoing against the league’s proxy drafters and the League Managers Themselves.

For those who are unaware, the League of Doom employs so-called “proxy drafters” when one of the owners cannot attend the draft (either physically or remotely). Traditionally, the absent owner provides a ranked list of

players and a general draft strategy, known as a “draft board,” and one of the owners who is present is selected to draft in the absent owner’s place using that draft board. This is known as “proxy drafting.”

This year, for example, Emily, Eric, and Zakk were all unable to attend the draft, and Meredith, Sam Manleigh, and Jaime, respectively, served as their proxy drafters. Eric and Zakk have used proxy drafters before, as has Colin. The process seems innocent enough, and no one

has openly complained about the results (so far), but a closer look at the results raises some questions.

Eric and Zakk, the two most frequent victims of proxy drafting, have the two worst overall records among the Original Ten teams. The year that Colin, arguably the second most successful owner in the league, was subjected to a proxy draft, 2013, he had by far his worst season, going 4-9 and finished dead last.

Official league spokespeople declined to comment when asked why those who had proxy drafters seemed to do so poorly. However, a handful of brave whistleblowers came forward in order to reveal the horrible truth.

“Proxy drafters absolutely do not make selections with the best

interests of their proxy draftees in mind,” said one anonymous source close to the League Managers. “At best, they pay insufficient attention to the proxy draftees’ needs; at worst, they actively manipulate the proxy draftees’ picks in order to improve their own selections. At some point or other, every proxy drafter has skipped over their proxy draftees’ desired player at a specific spot in the hopes of acquiring that player himself.”

When asked if they had any hard evidence of these accusations, the anonymous source simply replied, “Yes. But if I gave it to you, They would come for you.”

It certainly seems reasonable to expect that proxy drafters will subconsciously allow their advantageous position to affect

their drafting strategy: not only are they able to alter the trend of the draft more than any other player, given their ability to make two picks per round, but they can also see the draft list of one of their opponents, and adjust accordingly. This is an unavoidable side effect of using a proxy draft. However, intentional foul play is something else entirely.

“No, this is definitely on purpose,” said another informant who wished to remain anonymous. “It’s all about giving yourself every possible advantage you can during the draft. The more information you have, the better your draft is going to go. Why do you think Hackerman (*A name by which*

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## DRAFT GRADES

### *From Antonio Brown to the Baltimore Ravens: A Comprehensive Analysis*

By **SYNERGY COCHRAN,**  
Contributor

A MYSTERIOUS SERVER FARM – Every year, League of Doom owners look for immediate feedback after the draft. Given that the games won’t start for several days, at best, they are forced to resort to self-criticism and gossip. The *Times-Chronicle Picayune*’s annual draft grades provide some modicum of relief from the burning need for validation of one’s own picks and disparagement of one’s opponents’ selections.

This year, the *Times-Chronicle Picayune*’s statisticians are proud to introduce a new draft grading artificial intelligence, DAGGA 5000 (short for DrAft GradingG Algorithm 5000). DAGGA 5000 is fed a steady diet of player projections from numerous fantasy football experts, and then weights those projections based on the accuracy of each expert’s projections in seasons past. DAGGA 5000 then produces its own proprietary ranking of every fantasy-eligible NFL player, both overall and by position.

Following the draft, engineers provide DAGGA 5000 with every owner’s drafted team. Using this data, DAGGA 5000 provides draft grades for every owner.

DAGGA 5000 grades on a curve. Once it determines the best performance in a given category, DAGGA 5000 assigns that performance a number grade of 100. It then assigns the worst performance in the same category a number grade of 59, and it proceeds to distribute the remaining grades between those two extremes, and then converts the number grades to letters. This season, DAGGA 5000 graded 10 categories, and then provided an aggregated overall grade. The 10 graded categories are divided into two groupings: combined grades and position grades. The combined

grades include starters (the overall grade of projected starting players, weighted by position); backups (the overall grade of projected backups); and value (where the owner took their players relative to projected overall rank; a high value grade means that the owner took players close to or after their projected draft position, while a low value grade means the owner frequently reached for players, taking them too early). The position grades, which look only at projected starters, grade quarterback, running back, wide receivers, flex, tight end, defense, and kicker. The aggregated overall grade is a weighted combination of the starters and backups grades.

Below are DAGGA 5000’s grades for the 2016 draft. The grades are presented as they were

provided by DAGGA 5000, with additional comments from *Times-Chronicle Picayune* staff, in order from highest to lowest overall grade.

**Will Shannahan**

**Overall:** A+

**Starters** A+; **Backups** A; **Value** A+

**Quarterback** C+; **Running Back** A; **Wide Receivers** C+; **Flex** B-; **Tight End** A; **Defense** B-; **Kicker** A+

**Best Position:** Kicker (Steven Hauschka, Sea)

**Worst Position:** Wide Receivers (Jordy Nelson, GB; Doug Baldwin, Sea)

**Best Value:** Derrick Henry,

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## ***SAM DENISCH: EXTREMELY SELF-CONFIDENT, POSSIBLE SUPER VILLAIN***

### ***An Exclusive Interview with the Enigmatic Gumby Bowl V Champion***

By WINSTON "BUG" BUFFERS, Contributing Editor

WESTERN NEW YORK – Sam Denisch is the reigning league champion, and he's a very trying man to get to. You must travel to Buffalo, New York – he adamantly refuses to come to you - and wait impatiently for his taciturn and imposing driver to pick you up. Then his putative "driver"

blindfolds you and drive you to an unknown location along a meandering, circuitous route. When they let you out of the automobile, you're inside some sort of unidentifiable, cavernous space, and there is a far-off roar, as if from a river or waterfall, that can just be heard in the distance, somewhere seemingly high in the yawning facility above you. His guards, who have remarkably

voices and an undifferentiated look about them, thoroughly search you and bring you to a pristine conference room where you are offered a seat and told to wait for "Mr. Denisch." You are permitted to take photographs, but only of this one room, and your camera is subject to a search before you are allowed to leave. Sam himself doesn't appear until you've been sitting there, alone, for a quarter of an hour or so.

He is the reigning league champion, and he won't let you forget it. He explicates the bizarre lengths to which he goes in the name of discretion and security by saying, "Look, I'm the champ. You can never be too careful these days. You tell someone where you are and then all they want is autographs, photos, or tips on how

to be awesome and win like me."

When conscientiously deliberating what aspect of his game most needs improvement, he says, "I don't know . . . I mean, I'm already the champ, but, maybe, picking defenses – I feel like have had issues over the years with them."

On not paying overly much attention to bye weeks during the bedlam of the draft, he says, "[I]f the right guy is there, who cares if I took a loss one week because I don't have anyone. I'll still be champ!"

When ruminating on his highly successful 2015 season, he says that he pulled off such an unusually dominant campaign because, "Well, not to sound like a douche, but . . . I'm the best!"

Regarding the constant,

unpredictable changes to league rules, he says, "I'm fine with the league changing. I'll still win anyway because I'm the best around."

About whether he considers Ned and Will to be his rivals, he says, "No, they are all peons beneath me. I am the champ! All will bow before me!"

Reflecting on how the tedious draft often takes too long, he says, "Some of these guys take forever dicking around with themselves, and feel the need to make a show of it for some reason. I guess they feel inferior? I don't. I'm the best, so I don't do any of that BS."

And so on.

He's not all bravado and disdain, though; he also really likes

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## ***OPINION: PROXY DRAFTING ENSURES FUTURE PROSPERITY***

### ***Hamrick Zink Is Planting False Rumors in Order to Create Chaos and Mistrust***

By ERIC MILLBROOK, Op-Ed Columnist

In order to facilitate a worthy – nay – an *exceptional* draft, one must have participation from all parties. If even one owner is excluded from the process, it causes generations of hardship to that owner's teams and those teams' descendants. Let me paint you a picture, or rather, draw you a crayon-based scribble of the consequences of destroying our time honored tradition of

"Proxianism."

Owner B cannot draft. His people are starving, his military is on the brink of a coup, and outside forces seek to tear his little slice of the world apart as he desperately grasps at the restraints keeping it all contained. So, Owner B contacts owner A, and requests foreign aid, in the form of Supreme Agency over his most important decisions: his draft selections. Owner A graciously accepts, but Owners Q and P cry "Foul!" They believe

owner A will selectively draft players for Owner B outside of his fiduciary duty, perhaps currying favor with other owners and sabotaging owner B's team in relation to its future games with these now-related parties. After much posturing and economic sanctioning, Owner A's duties are stripped, and Owner B has no representative at the great Drafting Conference.

***"The League of Doom will not be based on legacies of privilege built on the downtrodden."***

Owner B scrambles to put together some kind of list of draftees, but cannot possibly account for the myriad of unpredictable circumstances that can arise during "The Draft" and his conscripts are chosen by fiat rather than strategy. He ends up

with a team far below the margin of relevance. Each owner that faces Owner B has a distinct advantage in the conditioning and overarching strategy for their team. Owner B's prospects are destroyed, and as the people rail against this international slight, vulture Owners Q and P soak up the unbalanced trades and Hail Mary waiver wire picks, laughing at Owner B's misfortune.

Owner B's misfortune continues into future years, as a lack of confidence in the leader destroy the peoples' hopes and dreams, and military and economic weakness reduce all other owners' respect for Owner B. He can no longer broker advantageous trades;

he can no longer afford to apply newer and more advanced drafting strategies, clinging to what has worked in the past because to change could make the world even worse. For generations his ability to properly compete is stymied.

I, therefore, say that *you*, Señor Hamfist Fink, are in fact guilty of impropriety, as you seek to cause this strife on any and all owners who happen to fall on hard times! It is *you*, Hamfist Fink, that seeks to take advantage of allegations of collusion and corruption by your loathsome masters so they can benefit from pain and suffering! The League of Doom will *not* be based on legacies of privilege built on the downtrodden, so crawl back to the rock out from which you crawled. ★

## THIRD SEXIEST NFL KICKER RELEASED

*Continued from Page One*

tugging those locks while he gives you a lickjob. Hnng.

Think he's just hair? Check this out:



*Pictured: Travis Coons, scorching even when his hair is covered.*

Picture the rippling muscles in his 6'2", 200-lb. bod. He's a kicker, for fuxache. Visualize those thighs, that tight ass.

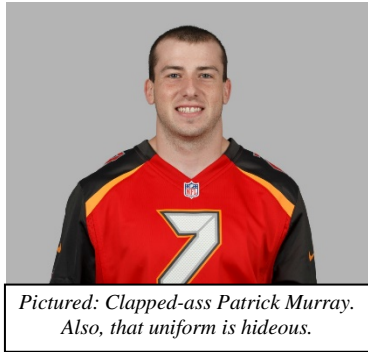
Look at this man's smile, and those soulful brown eyes. Can't you just see him giving you that smile, gazing down at you with those glazzies? You're all hot, sweaty, and spent, and he says, "Hey," and then he cuddles, and then he kicks stones, because he's just a guybrator, but he's down.

Apparently, the heartless Browns held some sort of "camp competition" for kickers, and they brought in this guy, Patrick Murray, who used to play for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, but then he was injured or something, and he didn't play last year, and apparently this Patrick dude was outplaying my boy in camp, which sounds kinda cute, because it's like a summer camp.

And Travis was like,

"Everything is positive. [Murray] is doing good things. I'm doing good things. It's all fun. It's all good," because he's totally smoochy.

This is what clapped-ass Patrick Murray looks like:



*Pictured: Clapped-ass Patrick Murray. Also, that uniform is hideous.*

Yeah, I know, right? Absolutely busted. And he's only, like, 5'7", so he's too short to ride.

When reached for comment, an imaginary spokesperson for the Cleveland Browns probably said, "Concerns about kicks from 50 yards out and about missed extra points led us to sign Patrick Murray, who has never missed an extra point and who is five-of-six on kicks over 50 yards, to compete for the kicker position in camp. After a very solid preseason in which he did not miss any field goals or extra points and averaged 65 yards on kickoffs, we made the difficult decision to keep Patrick for the regular season and let Travis go. We here at the Cleveland Browns appreciate the work that Travis did for us last year, and wish him well on his continued NFL career. We are all stupid, our uniforms are stupid, and we suck." I promise you that I will keep you updated on Travis, and my Uncle

Zippy isn't going to stop me from sharing with you. TravisWatch 2016 begins! ★

## NFL CHANGES INJURY REPORT RULES

*Continued from Page One*

2016.

Veteran fantasy owners will remember the venerable injury categories provided in the weekly Game Status Report: "Out," "Doubtful," "Questionable," and "Probable." The Competition Committee, in its infinite wisdom, has decided to eliminate the "Probable" category, because nothing could possibly go wrong with that.

Per the 2015 Injury Report Policy, the different categories were defined as follows:

"Out: Definitely will not play.

"Doubtful: At least 75% chance will not play.

"Questionable: 50-50 chance will not play.

"Probable: Virtual certainty player will be available for normal duty."

This categorization system left something to be desired. What if there was between a 51% and 74% chance that a player would not be able to play? Based on a literal interpretation of the rules, this player was neither Questionable, which covered *only* players with a 50% chance of not playing, nor Doubtful, which applied to players

with a 75% or higher chance of not playing. What if a player had a 49% chance of not playing? Were they Probable or Questionable? Why did each category seem to use a different system of measurement? ("Definitely," "at least 75%," "50-50," "virtual certainty.")

Now that the old system has been replaced with the flawless new categorization system, everything will be completely transparent, and there will be no more questions about the nature of injuries.

Per the Competition Committee's official release, the rules have "been modified to eliminate the 'Probable' category and redefines [sic] the 'Doubtful' and 'Questionable' categories. As amended, Questionable means it is uncertain as to whether the player will play in the game; Doubtful means it is unlikely the player will participate; and Out means the player will not play." Naturally, the use of the terms "uncertain" and "unlikely" completely clarifies the issue and leaves absolutely no vagueness or room for interpretation whatsoever.

The Competition Committee will also punish teams that deactivate players who are not listed on the injury report. NFL insiders say that it is not possible that teams will end up placing players with wholly insignificant injuries on the injury report to avoid the league's draconian disciplinary process, because there is no place for cynicism in today's NFL.

Critics who suggest that coaches will use the alleged

ambiguity of the new categorization system in order to conceal the likelihood of certain players starting so as to create an advantage over their opponents are clearly misguided. That is an unfortunate, pessimistic attitude towards NFL coaches, who are known for their honesty and integrity, and not at all for their obfuscation or gamesmanship.

The league revealed that "the 'Probable' category was eliminated from the Game Status Report because approximately 95 percent of the players who were listed as 'Probable' in prior years did in fact play in the game." This is a completely reasonable explanation; a 95% probability rate fits no conceivable definition of the terms "probable" or "virtual certainty."

Teams will be required to place injured players in the appropriate categories no later than 4:00 pm the day before Thursday or Saturday games, or two days before Sunday or Monday games. Away teams will have to designate players who do not travel with the team as Out. Home teams do not have to designate players as Out until 90 minutes before kickoff.

This scenario creates an exciting new element of suspense for fantasy football owners. Is your Questionable superstar merely suffering from a minor bruise, or is he experiencing potentially debilitating back spasms? Now, you have to wait until the very last minute to find out.

When you combine this

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## NFL CHANGES INJURY REPORT RULES

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scenario with Thursday Night Football games – themselves a fantastic innovation answering fans’ calls for more football by providing only the best commentary and matchups – things become even more random and fun. If you have two quarterbacks, a superstar and a journeyman, and the superstar, who plays on Sunday, is designated as Questionable, should you start your journeyman, who plays on Thursday, or gamble and hope that your superstar can play come Sunday? Eliminating the Probable designation and expanding the Questionable designation ensures that decisions like this will be made blindly, and create nail-biting tension for several days.

Many fantasy owners are looking forward to this additional unpredictability, reports indicate. Anything that increases insecurity and confusion can only make fantasy football more entertaining.

It is recommended that those who stubbornly insist on ruining the suspense keep track of the daily Practice Reports issued by each team, which will helpfully indicate whether players Did Not Participate, were restricted to Limited Participation, or were able to Participate Fully during that day’s practice. This should create some clarity about injuries, but

fantasy experts suggest that this is no fun at all, and that these Practice Reports should be avoided at all costs in order to create more stress for fantasy owners.

In other news, Bill Belichick has announced that Tom Brady will be designated as Questionable with a right shoulder injury for the duration of the 2016-2017 regular season, and possibly the postseason as well. ★

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## PROXY DRAFT IMPROPRIETY

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*several owners refer to Sam Manleigh. – Ed.)* jumps on the chance to proxy for someone every year?

“There’s also this convenient ability to adhere to the *letter* of proxy draftees draft boards, without making real-time course corrections as one would their own draft,” the informant went on. “That way, if the proxy drafter intentionally makes horrible picks – failing to adjust for recent injuries, for example, or ignoring unexpected runs on certain positions, or reaching for a sub-par player, they can just claim that that’s what the proxy draftee’s board *told* them to do – or, that it was an accident. Either way, it’s not like the other owners can actually *see* the proxy draftee’s board to double check. Only the proxy drafters and the League Managers see that.”

Even worse, the sources indicate that the League Managers may be complicit in all of this. Oftentimes, the League Managers, along with the proxy drafter, receive a copy of the proxy draftee’s draft board; sometimes, the League Managers receive the *only* copy, and then disseminate it, permitting Them the chance to alter the list however They see fit, with none the wiser.

They have also been known to provide owners who allegedly forgot to bring their own draft lists with printed lists. There is no oversight which prevents the League Managers from modifying these draft lists as well. Between the proxy draft boards and the draft lists, the League Managers have more than ample opportunity to manipulate the draft rankings of a plurality of the owners. Even if one discounts the possibility of malfeasance by the League Managers, one must admit that, at minimum, They possess extensive knowledge about a good portion of the owners’ draft strategies before the draft even begins. Do they feed this knowledge to their preferred owners? It is impossible to verify without someone coming forward.

“[The League Managers] certainly encourage people to utilize proxy drafters,” said another inside source. “They want as much participation as They can get, so They ensure that people never consider leaving the league – but They don’t want to be bothered conducting the draft on someone else’s behalf. Also, when people need a proxy drafter, They always provided a very limited list of

individuals to choose from, guaranteeing that the draft will go the way They want.”

When asked for the names on that list, the source refused to divulge anything: “I can’t tell you. They know who knows. It’s too risky; I have a family.”

It must be pointed out that, in a pre-draft statement issued earlier this season by the League Managers’ spokes-homunculus, Cho’Thugh the Obedient, threats were issued should proxies not volunteer: “If this [proxy drafting] is not done, the Sublime Dodecagon will be incomplete, and the Coming Darkness cannot be prevented. All shall suffer and be lost . . .,” it warned. (*See the article “The Draft is Nigh” from our August 24, 2016 issue for more. – Ed.*)

Every indication is that the League Managers not only endorse proxy drafting, but demand it. They have within Their power the ability to permit live online drafting, or even to conduct an auto-draft where every owner ranks their preferred players and then the draft is conducted by computer algorithm. They could even simply fill all absent owner’s rosters themselves. There is clearly some reason that They insist on live offline drafting with proxy drafters. Given the historical outcomes of the proxy drafts, one inevitably is led to suspect that the League Managers are attempting to manipulate the results of the league for some unknown, perverse purpose.

When approached, several of the affected owners provided

insight into their feelings on the proxy draft process. “We at Fucking Magical have several comments, as follows: the sky is blue, the air is sweet, and we could all probably stand to drink more water,” said frequent proxy drafter Sam Manleigh. “Regarding impropriety in proxy drafting, we can only hope that all drafters and draftees are happy with the teams on the 29th. As a proxy drafter myself, I can say that my intention is to execute the draft not as I would my own, but as I believe, based on available instruction and information, Eric would. And any allegations of impropriety should be referred to our press agent, Ms. Glittercunt Thunderhoof. Additionally, USA, USA, USA!”

Zakk, often a proxy draftee, noted, “Proxy drafters are a necessary evil. Besides, it is called the League of Doom, not the League of Kitten Farts. A little corruption is implied.” This is essentially a tacit admission of foul play among the proxy drafters; one can only wonder how Zakk has been paid off to continue to allow himself to be the victim of proxy drafts.

When asked about corruption at the proxy draft, Colin said, “Ha! No comment.” It should be noted that Colin has a league-leading four playoff appearances, and that the only season he missed the playoffs was the year that Sam Manleigh proxy drafted for him. There are also rumors that Colin has personally known the League Managers longer than any other

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## PROXY DRAFT IMPROPRIETY

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owner in the league, which should place him squarely under suspicion.

It is yet to be seen what the effect of the proxy draft was this season; only time will truly tell. However, all owners should remain vigilant and take a stand against corrupt proxy drafting if they want to ensure the integrity of the League of Doom. That, or people could just show up and actually make their own picks.

*For Eric Millbrook's take on the proxy draft scandal, turn to page three.* ★

## SAM DENISCH: EXTREMELY SELF- CONFIDENT, POSSIBLE SUPER VILLAIN

*Continued from Page Three*

comic books. Both of his team names have been comic book references: first, from 2011 through 2014, he had the Knowhere Cosmos, a reference to the base of operations of the Guardians of the Galaxy, Knowhere – which is the giant severed head of a godlike being known as a Celestial – and its chief

of security, the psychic Soviet space dog, Cosmo. The nickname for that team was “GOTG,” another Guardians of the Galaxy reference. Then, in 2015, he switched to the Moon Knights, with the nickname “MARC,” short for Marc Spector. This is a reference to the fictional superhero Moon Knight, whose alter ego is Marc Spector and who is the avatar of an ancient Egyptian god of the moon (and, in the comics, a god of vengeance).

He says he selected those specific names based on “inspir[ation or] by how I feel, or what’s lying around. I choose comics because it’s fun. It seems to lull everyone into the false sense that they can beat me. I changed [the team name] as part of my final training, since I have other personalities . . . I mean, my [fantasy football] guru said that, as part of finishing my training, I would need a new name.” He did not elaborate on that last comment, instead saying that he’s “a big fan of *Saga* and *Descender* right now. They are awesome sci-fi comics.” He is correct in that assessment.

He’s also an unrepentant Bills fan, and he virulently *hates* their rivals – especially the Patriots. He has a consistent habit of drafting Bills, which he flippantly rationalizes by saying, “You know your favorite team better than others, so I know how good they can be. Has it bit me in the ass before? Sure, but sometimes you got to ride it out. I don’t think my fandom is affecting my decisions, but I probably draft guys earlier than I should.”

When smugly describing his

greatest fantasy football strengths, he credits “[n]ot drafting dirty, cheating Patriots, and avoiding Dolphins and Jets players as much as possible.” He makes a point of bringing up his unmitigated glee at Tom Brady’s suspension, saying, “Also, I want to mention that I love that Brady is out the first four years. I’ve spent years trying to get him bust – I mean, tell everyone he is a damn dirty cheater.” When discussing quarterbacks, he joyously proclaims, “Again, I love that Brady is suspended and it hurts his draft value.” He even, and somewhat unnervingly, goes so far as to say that he’ll do “[w]hatever it takes to *destroy* the Patriots.”

He also has a bit – and that is an understatement – of a problem with Ravens fans, to the point that he cruelly picked up Justin Forsett off the waiver wire in 2014, when Forsett was the eighth-ranked fantasy running back, just to mercilessly stick it to all of the Ravens fans among the owners in the league. “There are so many [Ravens fans] in the league,” he complains. “It’s sickening. I must, just because you live in Maryland doesn’t mean you have to be a Ravens fan. There are 31 other teams for crying out loud!”

“Of course,” he goes on, “[Ned] is also a Tampa Bay fan, so that’s cool and sad at the same time. It means at least another team is talked about during the draft.”

Strangely enough, he says that his goals for this season include “finish[ing] my Tom Brady Destruction Ray [and] complet[ing] the Dolphins-Jets humiliation spell.”



*Pictured: The conference room in Sam's compound.*

Despite his possibly-delusional levels of self-confidence, even Sam will admit that he has not always been such a dominant fantasy owner. In his first three campaigns in the League of Doom, 2011 through 2013, he never had more than seven wins, he consistently hovered near the bottom of the league in scoring, and he pathetically failed to make the playoffs.

Why did he do so poorly those first three seasons? “Well, I wasn’t the master magician just yet,” he jokes. “Ha! The look on your face, like, ‘Magic is real, please!’ What I mean is, it takes time to be a champ. You’ve got to learn from your mistakes and plan better each year.”

He was able to direct his vexation with losing into something more productive, though. “You know, I try not to get frustrated by [losing,] but sometimes you just channel that frustration somewhere else, like building tech to help destroy your opponents or whatever,” he jokes

again. “Ha! Once, again, the look on your face! I’m just messing with you – like I am some kind of mad genius! The cave is just for looks and to throw people off.”

Between the 2013 and 2014 seasons, Sam sought out a mysterious fantasy football guru, and underwent esoteric training in ancient, hidden, and potentially dangerous techniques in order to achieve total mastery over his mind, body, and fantasy football abilities.

Upon returning from the remote, inaccessible destination where he underwent his grueling training with this cryptic guru – who he obstinately refuses to name – Sam threw himself headlong into the league, which expanded to 12 owners that season, with great gusto. Using his recently developed, enigmatic skills, he was able to pull off his best-ever season, going 9-4, becoming the first winner of the new Zombies Division, and securing a week one

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## **SAM DENISCH: EXTREMELY SELF- CONFIDENT, POSSIBLE SUPER VILLAIN**

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For Sam, the 2015 season was a tour de force. Perhaps he reached his full potential with the primordial, eldritch fantasy football techniques he had learned, or perhaps he transcended the false notion that all things are separate and was able to use his newfound state of enlightenment in order to achieve oneness with fantasy football itself. In any event, he went 9-4, scoring the most points in the league in the process. He won the Zombies Division championship again, securing another first round bye on the way. He won the Glass Half Full trophy, awarded for being in first place halfway through the year, in the middle of the season, and then he won the Glass Totally Full trophy (for having the best regular-season record) at the end of the year.

He did all of this despite also having the most points scored against him that year, a stunning achievement; no previous owner who had the most points scored against them had ever had more than seven wins in a single season, and certainly none had ever won a division. It would be excessively disingenuous, therefore, to chalk up any of his success to mere chance.

This time, his regular season success would carry into the playoffs as well. He effortlessly trounced fellow Zombies Division owner Meredith 134.7 to 105.7 in the second round of the playoffs, easily making his way into the Gumby Bowl. He then went on to have a truly legendary performance, defeating Gumby Bowl III champion Chris 134.9 to 75.8 in the biggest blowout in Gumby Bowl history.

“[I]t’s incredibly satisfying to be so dominant,” he said about his remarkable 2015 season. “I’m the best and I’ve got to prove it. You’ve got to leave your opponent dead and bloody to prove you’re the best. Or make them look like cheaters, whatever works.”

Sam has some interesting insights into how to excel at fantasy football. He avoids reaching for top tier quarterbacks. He goes for running backs and wide receivers first, and he uses the basic ESPN list to help him make his draft decisions. When setting his lineup, he sticks with his stud players, and plays the matchups over the rest of his roster. Sometimes, when he has his opponent’s quarterback’s top receiving option on his roster, he will start that receiver in order to profit off of his opponent’s success.

He thinks that the league has become more “pass happy” and that “the quality of running backs is down these days, so you need a committee with different guys used for different roles.” As a result, he intentionally seeks to pick up running backs who are also receiving threats, or running backs who are red zone specialists.

“That’s where the points are,” he says matter-of-factly.

He’s very active on the waiver wire. He checks out the available players every week, typically on Tuesday mornings. He looks to pick up anyone who had a good game or has a good matchup. “Of course,” he says, “I’m usually winning, so chances are low I’ll get the guys I really want.”

He’s a fervent believer in the value of trades: “Trades are for winners. If you don’t trade, you’ve got an ego problem.” He feels that trades help to rectify drafting errors, which he thinks everyone makes on occasion. Anyone who doesn’t trade, he believes, is simply afraid of losing. When it comes down to it, though, he says it all quite simple: “Just pick the right guys each week and make sure you score more than the other guy. As the great god of football, John Madden, would say, ‘You’ve got to score more than your opponent to win.’”

Sam is riding high right now, still basking in the glow of his championship. And he feels he has few, if any rivals. The only one that he does recognize as a rival is his arch-nemesis, Sam Manleigh. “There can be only one!” he says. “The rivalry is fun, although I see Sam is trying to kill us with kindness this year and that never works. You must be brutal to win.”

When it comes to games against his wife, Stef, Sam says there isn’t much in the way of argument around the Denisch/Andrews compound. “She knows I’m the champ. She mostly stays out of my way and makes

sure the staff and robots are clean – I mean, the toilet. Whatever is dirty in a normal house. There is this eye twitch, though, probably from how awesome I am.”

Beyond those two, Sam sees his other opponents as largely insignificant. Two, in specific, he finds to be far beneath his attention: Chris, against whom he is 7-2, and Eric, against whom he is 4-1. Why is he so good against the two of them? “Because they suck. That’s the honest truth. They don’t know how to draft or set a lineup. Chris got lucky last year to get to the final, or everyone else just sucked so badly that he was better, which is possible.”

There is something a little off about Sam, though, something vaguely ominous. His talk of magic, advanced technology, destruction rays and humiliation spells, robots, and so on are more than a little unusual.

When discussing how some of the players who had been on his team in the past were only good for the duration of the season when he had them (for example, Tim Tebow and Colin Kaepernick), he inexplicably muttered something to himself about how “maybe my powers are working on others” before trailing off.

At one point, he mentioned “the year I invented the Air-Removal Nanobot. It’s great at taking air out of things and blaming other people for it.” Later, he said that if smack talk gets too vicious, his “mind control spells are working . . .” and then changes the subject.

Most curiously of all, he

briefly lets slip that he will “destroy my opponents, or my name isn’t Doctor . . .,” before cutting himself off with a deep breath and an awkward, forced laugh.

There are rumors about a dastardly, villainous sorcerer and super-scientist known as Doctor Deflator, who secretly rules over Buffalo, New York and has put a hex on the Dolphins, Jets, and Patriots. When asked whether he knows anything about these puzzling tales, Sam seems to undergo some sort of sudden panic attack. “What do you know?” he screams. “Who told you about that?” He breathes deeply again, and regains his composure. “My phone was ringing.” (It was not.) “Have you been drinking the tap water? I – I think there is something in the tacos,” he sputters. “I’m a fan of anyone who hexes those teams and helps the Bills. I also hear [Doctor Deflator is] a pretty awesome dude who loves to win, like me, so maybe we have something in common. We could be, like, friends, or something.”

He looks around, his eyes shifting uncomfortably, and suddenly gets up to leave. “Sorry if I sounded crazy anywhere,” he apologizes. “It’s been a crazy month, really stressful and stuff, so if you need anything clarified, please submit it in writing. I may need to send you through the lawyer depending on the question.”

And then he is gone. One is left to wonder: how much is known about Sam Denisch, really? He has

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## SAM DENISCH: EXTREMELY SELF- CONFIDENT, POSSIBLE SUPER VILLAIN

*Continued from Page Seven*

gone from being something of a laughing stock to one of the best owners in the League of Doom, seemingly overnight. He is second in total wins, total win percentage, and trophy stars, and he is tied for second in regular season wins, regular season win percentage, playoff win percentage, and division championships. Where did this sudden improvement *actually* come from?

And who is Doctor Deflator? ★

## DRAFT GRADES

*Continued from Page Two*

Ten RB (157th pick)

**Biggest Reach:** Dak Prescott, Dal QB (185th pick)

Will lacks any serious standout players, but DAGGA 5000 likes the fact that six out of his eight starters are ranked in the top 10 at their positions, and none of his backups are ranked any lower than 42nd at their position. Moreover, it thinks that eight of Will's 12 offensive picks were taken after they were projected to be drafted, giving him a fantastic value score. It really likes his

kicker, but his tight end, Jordan Reed, is a close second when it comes to its favorite players on his team. It believes that Will had the best draft in the league and, by extension, the best draft in the Pirates Division.

**Chris Baskerville**

**Overall:** A

**Starters** A; **Backups** C; **Value** B

**Quarterback** B+; **Running Back** A+; **Wide Receivers** B; **Flex** A; **Tight End** C; **Defense** A; **Kicker** A-

**Best Position:** Running Back (David Johnson, Ari)

**Worst Position:** Tight End (Tyler Eifert, Cin)

**Best Value:** Travis Benjamin, SD WR (148th pick)

**Biggest Reach:** Jimmy Garoppolo, NE QB (189th pick)

It is a little unclear why DAGGA 5000 graded Chris' draft so highly; it might need to be reprogrammed, or it might see something that others don't. The truth should be apparent by the end of the season. Other than his top pick, David Johnson, and injury prone quarterback, Ben Roethlisberger, Chris did not select any offensive players who ranked in the top 10 at their positions. Both of his tight ends start the season rehabbing from ankle injuries. His top tight end, Tyler Eifert, is targeting a week four return, and his second tight end, Ladarius Green, Pit, is on the PUP list, making him unavailable for at least six weeks, meaning that Chris is already going to have to pick up a tight end in free

agency. Moreover, his number three running back, Kenneth Dixon, is suffering from a torn MCL, making his selection a bizarre one, considering the premium on running back roster space. Similarly bizarrely, his backup quarterback, Jimmy Garoppolo (who DAGGA 5000 identified as a major reach, which, considering where Garoppolo was taken, means that DAGGA 5000 projected him to go undrafted) is essentially wasted. Garoppolo is only expected to start for the first four weeks of the season, at which point Tom Brady will return from suspension. Roethlisberger's bye week is week eight, so Garoppolo will not be a useful bye week option for Chris. It is unclear why Chris even bothered selecting a backup quarterback, as he will have to drop Garoppolo and find another player to make any use out of him. Nonetheless, DAGGA 5000 inexplicably really liked Chris' draft.

**Emily Greene**

**Overall:** A-

**Starters** A; **Backups** B-; **Value** B

**Quarterback** C+; **Running Back** B; **Wide Receivers** C+; **Flex** A+; **Tight End** B-; **Defense** B+; **Kicker** A-

**Best Position:** Flex (LeSean McCoy, Phi)

**Worst Position:** Quarterback (Philip Rivers, SD)

**Best Value:** Dorial Green-Beckham, Phi WR (190th pick)

**Biggest Reach:** Virgil Green, Den TE (162nd pick)

Emily, who may or may not actually exist, as far as most owners are aware, had Meredith act as a proxy drafter for her. She has no obvious weaknesses among her starters; all but one, Jordan Matthews, Phi WR, are in the top 10 at their position. Even Philip Rivers, her "worst" starter, is ranked 10th, and that's coming off of a year where his team was decimated by injuries. Overall, DAGGA 5000 doesn't think that Emily has any starting position with below-average players. It thinks that Emily had the best draft in the Zombies Division.

**Zakk Bailey**

**Overall:** B

**Starters** B-; **Backups** A; **Value** A

**Quarterback** A+; **Running Back** D+; **Wide Receivers** C+; **Flex** C+; **Tight End** B; **Defense** C+; **Kicker** A

**Best Position:** Quarterback (Cam Newton, Car)

**Worst Position:** Running Back (Carlos Hyde, SF)

**Best Value:** Frank Gore, Ind RB (104th pick)

**Biggest Reach:** Jameis Winston, TB QB (93rd pick)

As has become tradition, Zakk did not come to the draft. This year, Jaime acted as his proxy drafter. As usual, he nabbed a quarterback in the first round, and DAGGA 5000 is highly appreciative of that fact: he selected Cam Newton, the consensus number one quarterback, and DAGGA 5000 weights quarterbacks more highly than any other position. A good set of backups offsets relative

weakness at running back and mediocrity at wide receiver, flex, and defense; DAGGA 5000 thinks that, even if a couple of the starters do poorly, Zakk should be able to find some viable options on his bench. It does believe that both Newton and Jameis Winston, Newton's backup, were taken about two rounds too early, but it is not programmed to adjust to the tendencies of the League of Doom's owners, and quarterbacks are often taken fairly early in this league. In the end, DAGGA 5000 thinks that Zakk had the best draft in the Ninjas Division.

**Meredith Boram**

**Overall:** B

**Starters** B-; **Backups** A; **Value** A

**Quarterback** F; **Running Back** B; **Wide Receivers** A-; **Flex** B; **Tight End** A-; **Defense** A; **Kicker** C

**Best Position:** Tight End (Travis Kelce, KC)

**Worst Position:** Quarterback (Andy Dalton, Cin)

**Best Value:** Tyler Boyd, Cin WR (192nd pick)

**Biggest Reach:** Andy Dalton, Cin QB (80th pick)

Meredith had the best draft among all of the proxy drafters, and her proxy draftee, Emily, had the best draft among the proxy draftees, so Meredith must be doing something right. DAGGA 5000 is highly enamored with Julio Jones, Atl WR, which brings up her wide receiver rating despite her number two, Julian Edelman,

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**DRAFT GRADES***Continued from Page Eight*

barely qualifying as starter-worthy, at 21st among wide receivers. Her starter grade – and by extension, her overall – is dragged down by the selection of Andy Dalton at quarterback, however. When Meredith took Dalton at pick 80, Blake Bortles, Tyrod Taylor, Derek Carr, Kirk Cousins, Matt Stafford, and Jameis Winston, all of whom DAGGA 5000 likes more, were still available. DAGGA 5000's reasons for disliking Dalton are a little unclear, though; the Red Rocket ranked 18th among quarterbacks last year, despite missing three games and most of a fourth with a broken thumb.

**Bobby Marshall****Overall:** B**Starters** A; **Backups** D+; **Value** C+**Quarterback** B-; **Running Back** A; **Wide Receivers** B; **Flex** B; **Tight End** B+; **Defense** B+; **Kicker** B**Best Position:** Running Back (Adrian Peterson, Min)**Worst Position:** Quarterback (Eli Manning, NYG)**Best Value:** Matt Jones, Was RB (118th pick)**Biggest Reach:** Richard Rodgers, GB TE (174th pick)

Bobby, who is not, in fact, a ghost – or at least was in a corporeal form during the draft – did reasonably well for his first draft in

the League of Doom. DAGGA 5000 likes all of his starters at least a little bit, with his “worst” starter, Eli Manning, still ranking eighth among quarterbacks. What DAGGA 5000 *doesn't* like are his backups: it doesn't see any of them as worthy replacements for starters and it doesn't even like half of them as bye week fill-ins. Bobby's quarterback, defense, and kicker selections also put him in a bind: all three have a week eight bye, essentially forcing him to draft a backup kicker to stash on his bench in order to avoid having to drop two players that week. This means that a full third of Bobby's bench slots consist of players who will likely only play for one week. DAGGA 5000 also *really* doesn't like the selection of Richard Rodgers, who it thinks should have been undrafted; it believes that Rodgers benefitted from injuries to Jordy Nelson, GB WR, and Andrew Quarless, GB TE, last season. With the addition of Jared Cook at the position, DAGGA 5000 projects Rodgers to be the number two tight end in Green Bay, at best.

**Stef Andrews****Overall:** B-**Starters** B; **Backups** B-; **Value** C+**Quarterback** C; **Running Back** A-; **Wide Receivers** B-; **Flex** C+; **Tight End** D+; **Defense** B; **Kicker** A+**Best Position:** Kicker (Stephen Gostkowski, NE)**Worst Position:** Tight End (Martellus Bennett, NE)**Best Value:** Dwayne Allen, Ind TE (156th pick)**Biggest Reach:** Martellus Bennet, NE TE (69th pick)

There's a lot to take issue with when it comes to DAGGA 5000's grades for Stef. From the top: DAGGA 5000 ranks Tom Brady as the 11th best quarterback, which is absurd; it is a little ridiculous to project last year's number two fantasy quarterback to score so low. Yes, he is suspended for the first four weeks, but it's not like Stef isn't going to start a quarterback for those four games; in fact, she has Joe Flacco as her backup, and he plays against Buffalo, Cleveland, Jacksonville, and Oakland over that stretch, none of whom are known for their formidable pass defenses. Next, DAGGA 5000 seems to be a little confused about Duke Johnson Jr., Cle RB, Stef's top flex option. Johnson was already very good in 1/2 PPR formats, and now his coach is Hugh Jackson, who made excellent use of similarly-skilled Giovani Bernard as offensive coordinator of the Bengals. Add in the fact that Johnson hasn't posted any photos of police officers being stabbed in the neck, unlike backfield mate Isiah Crowell, and it seems as if DAGGA 5000 has criminally underrated two of her positions. It also can't quite get a grasp on her tight ends; it sees them both as fringe TE1s, nearly interchangeable in value, so it thinks one was a reach and the other was a steal.

**Sam Denisch****Overall:** B-  
**Starters** B+; **Backups** D+; **Value** C+**Quarterback** A; **Running Back** F; **Wide Receivers** C+; **Flex** B; **Tight End** A; **Defense** C; **Kicker** A**Best Positions (tie):** Quarterback (Aaron Rodgers, GB), Kicker (Justin Tucker, Bal)**Worst Position:** Running Back (DeMarco Murray, Ten)**Best Value:** Tavon Austin, LA WR (126th pick)**Biggest Reach:** Reggie Bush, Buf WR (155th pick)

DAGGA 5000's grade for Stef's lesser half is much more defensible. Beyond Aaron Rodgers, GB QB, Allen Robinson, Jax WR, Greg Olsen, Car TE, and Justin Tucker, Bal K, it doesn't think that Sam has any players in the top 10; it weights kickers (the second-lowest scoring fantasy position) and tight ends (the lowest-scoring fantasy position) quite poorly, and it is only the increased weight on quarterbacks that saves Sam's starter grade. It utterly despises DeMarco Murray as a top running back, and thinks that Reggie Bush was undraftable. It also thinks that Derek Carr, Oak QB, is Sam's only starter-quality backup, and then only barely, hence the poor backup grade.

**Jaime Richardson****Overall:** C+**Starters** C-; **Backups** A+; **Value** B-**Quarterback** C-; **Running Back** C; **Wide Receivers** A+; **Flex**B; **Tight End** C; **Defense** F; **Kicker** B-**Best Position:** Wide Receivers (Antonio Brown, Pit; T.Y. Hilton, Ind)**Worst Position:** Defense (Baltimore Ravens)**Best Value:** Theo Riddick, Det RB (168th pick)**Biggest Reach:** Antonio Gates, SD TE (56th pick)

It's a tale of two drafts when it comes to DAGGA 5000's grade for Jaime's selections. Aside from wide receivers – it thinks Jaime has the best starting receivers in the league – DAGGA 5000 really couldn't stand Jaime's starters, even though it only projects one, the Baltimore Ravens team defense, to be outside of the normal starter range for their position. The probably is that it thinks all of the others are at the *bottom* of the viable starter range, ranked between 10th (Antonio Gates, SD TE) and 20th (Giovani Bernard, Cin RB, in her flex spot) at their positions. On the other hand, it *really* likes her backups, to the point that it thinks they are the best in the league, with two thirds of them (Jimmy Graham, Sea TE; Tyler Lockett, Sea WR; Theo Riddick, Det RB; and Willie Snead, NO WR) worth starting in the flex. As an aside, it looks like Jaime overcompensated after drafting a Steeler first overall, selecting over 30% of her remaining players from teams that she likes (Baltimore, San Diego, and Seattle).

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**DRAFT GRADES**

*Continued from Page Nine*

**Ned Richardson**

**Overall:** C+

**Starters** B+; **Backups** F;

**Value** D+

**Quarterback** B; **Running Back** B+; **Wide Receivers** F; **Flex** A-; **Tight End** B; **Defense** A+; **Kicker** A

**Best Position:** Defense (Denver Broncos)

**Worst Position:** Wide Receivers (Jarvis Landry, Mia; Emmanuel Sanders, Den)

**Best Value:** Philip Dorsett, Ind WR (158th pick)

**Biggest Reach:** Kenny Britt, LA WR (151st pick)

DAGGA 5000 believes that Ned absolutely face-planted at the second highest-weighted starting position, and perhaps the most important position in 1/2 PPR fantasy football, wide receiver. It projects major declines for Jarvis Landry, Mia WR (from seventh last season to 19th this season), and Emmanuel Sanders, Den WR (from 17th last year to 30th this year). It basically thinks that all of Ned’s backups are terrible, especially at, you guessed it, wide receiver, with Kenny Britt, LA, and Ted Ginn Jr., Car (who it projects to fall from 28th last season to 70th this season), graded as undraftable and Philip Dorsett, Ind, graded as a borderline bye week spot player. It also doesn’t quite understand the pick of Alex Smith, KC, as the

backup quarterback, because it doesn’t account for the fact that Smith plays against Jacksonville, last year’s 28th-ranked fantasy defense against quarterbacks, in starter Carson Palmer’s bye week. Nonetheless, DAGGA 5000 thinks that Ned had the worst draft in the Pirates Division, and he can only hope that his selections perform consistently with their past instead of dropping like DAGGA 5000 thinks they will.

**Sam Manleigh**

**Overall:** C

**Starters** B; **Backups** D+;

**Value** F

**Quarterback** D; **Running Back** B-; **Wide Receivers** A; **Flex** A; **Tight End** D-; **Defense** D+; **Kicker** A

**Best Position:** Kicker (Dan Bailey, Dal)

**Worst Position:** Tight End (Jason Witten, Dal)

**Best Value:** Rashad Jennings, NYG RB (137th pick)

**Biggest Reach:** Jason Witten, Dal TE (81st pick)

Beyond DeAndre Hopkins, Hou WR – who DAGGA 5000 thinks Sam reached for – and Dan Bailey, Dal K – who DAGGA 5000 also thinks Sam reached for – DAGGA 5000 more-or-less thinks that Sam performed passably-to-awfully when drafting starters; it does not project his starting quarterback, tight end, or defense to be starters at their positions, and it thinks that his starting running back is borderline. It thinks that C.J. Anderson, Den RB, is an acceptable

flex player, though. Likewise, it was disheartened by Sam’s backups; finding Rashad Jennings, NYG RB, to be the only pick with value. It is deeply confused about why he selected the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, who it projects as the 23rd fantasy defense, when his starting defense, the 16th-ranked Oakland Raiders, are not worth protecting in its estimation. It also thinks that Sam reached with nearly all of his picks: it thinks that Mark Ingram, NO RB, Demaryius Thomas, Den WR, and Jennings are the only players that Sam managed to get with good value.

**Eric Millbrook**

**Overall:** C-

**Starters** D+; **Backups** B+; **Value** A

**Quarterback** A-; **Running Back** D-; **Wide Receivers** B+; **Flex** D+; **Tight End** A+; **Defense** A+; **Kicker** D+

**Best Positions (tie):** Tight End (Rob Gronkowski, NE), Defense (Seattle Seahawks)

**Worst Position:** Running Back (Thomas Rawls, Sea)

**Best Value:** Melvin Gordon, SD RB (103rd pick)

**Biggest Reach:** Brock Osweiler, Hou QB (159th pick)

Eric has the worst overall win percentage in the history of the League of Doom, and it doesn’t look like DAGGA 5000 thinks he will do any better this year: his draft grades out as the worst in the Zombies Division. Sam Manleigh (see immediately above) was Eric’s proxy drafter; Eric may want to

rethink who he selects to draft for him in future. DAGGA 5000 grades Eric’s starters as the third-worst in the league, and that’s without taking Tony Romo’s injury into account for Eric’s top wide receiver, Dez Bryant. It does not think that Thomas Rawls, Sea RB, and Roberto Aguayo, TB K, are starter quality, and although it thinks he has the best tight end and kicker in the game, it weights those positions as worst and second-worst in the fantasy football, respectively. On the other hand, DAGGA 5000 thinks Eric’s backups are passable, for the most part, and it doesn’t think he reached significantly, other than taking Brock Osweiler almost three rounds early. *(For more on the proxy drafting scandal, see “Proxy Draft Impropriety,” page two, and “Opinion: Proxy Drafting Ensures Our Future Prosperity,” page three. For a breakdown of the controversy over Sam drafting DeAngelo Williams on Eric’s behalf, see “Recap of the 2016 Draft,” page one. – Ed.)*

**Colin Lidston**

**Overall:** C-

**Starters** D; **Backups** A+; **Value** A+

**Quarterback** A-; **Running Back** C; **Wide Receivers** A; **Flex** B+; **Tight End** C+; **Defense** B; **Kicker** F

**Best Position:** Wide Receivers (Odell Beckham Jr, NYG; Sammy Watkins, Buf)

**Worst Position:** Kicker (Robbie Gould, Chi)

**Best Value:** Vincent Jackson, TB WR (139th pick)

**Biggest Reach:** Jordan Cameron, Mia TE (170th pick)

As has been emphasized before, Colin may be one of the two most successful owners in League of Doom history, with more playoff appearances than any other owner. However, DAGGA 5000 thinks he whiffed pretty badly on the draft this year, and his distaste for trades puts him in a difficult spot. DAGGA 5000 likes his wide receivers, especially Odell Beckham Jr., and is not particularly down on his quarterback, Andrew Luck, Ind, who it thinks was a value pick at the end of the fourth round. Other than those two, it is wholly unimpressed with Colin’s starters, finding most of them to be borderline at best – and Robbie Gould, his kicker, to be the third worst in fantasy football. This starter grade drags down a fantastic crop of backups, all but one (Steve Smith, Bal WR) of whom it thinks are borderline starters either at their own positions, or in the flex. In addition to the backups he selected, DAGGA 5000 really likes the value at which Colin made his picks, finding only four reaches, and even then, with none tkane more than 10 picks early.

**Jason Vicks**

**Overall:** F

**Starters** F; **Backups** B; **Value** C+

*Continued on Page Eleven*

## DRAFT GRADES

*Continued from Page Ten*

**Quarterback A; Running Back A+; Wide Receivers C; Flex F; Tight End F; Defense A-; Kicker B**

**Best Position:** Running Back (Toddy Gurley, LA)

**Worst Positions (tie):** Flex (Josh Gordon, Cle), Tight End (Eric Ebron, Det)

**Best Value:** Jeremy Langford, Chi RB (87th pick)

**Biggest Reach:** Josh Gordon, Cle WR (54th pick)

DAGGA 5000's grades for Jason are a little mystifying. It thinks that he had the worst draft in the Ninjas Division (and the league overall), the worst starters, the worst flex position, and the worst tight end. And yet, he also received four A- or B-range grades at other positions. DAGGA 5000 thinks that he has three top-five starters: Russell Wilson, Sea QB; Todd Gurley, LA RB; and the Houston Texans defense. On the other hand, it thinks that his flex, Josh Gordon, Cle WR, and his tight end, Eric Ebron, Det, are not viable starters, and it sees his WR2, Kelvin Benjamin, Car, and his kicker, Graham Gano, Car, as borderline. But there are some serious question marks when it comes to DAGGA 5000's projections for several players. In Kelvin Benjamin's rookie season – the only season he has played – he had 73 receptions for 1,008 yards and nine

touchdowns, leading the NFL in red zone targets; DAGGA 5000 sees him as the 26th-ranked receiver. And Josh Gordon, who is admittedly a risk due to his history of suspensions, led the league in yards in his sophomore season, the last time that he played the majority of a season, despite appearing in only 14 games. Even Eric Ebron has some serious upside: he is in only his third season, and between his freshman and sophomore campaigns, Ebron more than doubled his yardage and fantasy points, increased his yards per reception by 1.5 yards, and quintupled his touchdowns. He also had all five of his touchdowns in the red zone last year, and with Calvin Johnson gone, Matt Stafford is likely to go to the 6'4" Ebron near the end zone even more. Despite all that, DAGGA 5000 sees him as the 16th-ranked tight end, not a worthy starter.

Did DAGGA 5000 grade correctly? Let the *Times-Chronicle Picayune* know what you think. Towards the end of the season, DAGGA 5000's grades will be revisited to make a critical assessment of how it did. ★

## DRAFT RECAP

*Continued from Page One*

Scotch; I think it was Cutty Sark, all ammonia and sweetness, thin and insubstantial.

I still have to piss, but Mrs. Bulstrode over there probably won't have it. Around and around we go; when we land, nobody knows. All I can think about are the dire warnings against tardiness that the League Managers issued. I'm not one of the owners, obviously, but I don't want to miss this thing. No journalist has ever been invited to the annual draft ceremony before, and I very much doubt that I'll be allowed in if I show up late. Thanks to American Airlines, this once-in-a-generation opportunity is in jeopardy. The *Times-Chronicle Picayune's* editors are too cheap to book Emirates. Instead, I get the airline with the logo that looks like the plane is flying backwards and the tail is peeling off.

The sun gradually expands. The seas dry up, the atmosphere boils off, and the last vestiges of life on earth turn to dust in the unrelenting heat. We continue to circle above the ruins of this world that birthed us all. I am in serious danger of dying from a ruptured bladder, and my head feels like my brain is attempting to abandon ship and evacuate through my eyebrows, but all they have on this flight is Tylenol, and I'm fairly certain that my liver won't be able to handle that right now. I wonder whether I can find any Roxycodone in the carcass of civilization below us. I may have wondered aloud, because Mrs. Bulstrode is eyeing me through those full metal rimmed eyeglasses of hers.

The plane finally, finally, finally lands.

I am an unacceptable 23 minutes late, or perhaps I am 11 hours and 37 minutes early, and I have grown confused and disoriented during the interminable flight. I'm wearing an analog watch – a Seiko, stainless steel, two tone, with a black finish and gold trim. It's one of their kinetic models, so I don't need to wind it, and it doesn't even have a battery. I'm told that it powers itself through the movement of my arm. It's also supposed to be water resistant to something like 300 feet, although I'm not in the habit of wearing dressy watches while bathing, so I can't be sure about that. It definitely *doesn't* tell me whether the time is ante meridiem or post meridiem. I refuse to carry a cellular phone, on account of the cancer risk; if I'm dying of cancer, it'll be on my own terms, and I don't want a GPS device on me anyway. The sky, given the time of year, is uncooperative, adamantly refusing to assist me in determining what time of day it is with its flat, gray grayness.

I light a Dunhill Top Leaf and experience the brief euphoria of relief from having to breathe pure, noncarcinogenic air. I tuck the crimson divided hard pack back in my pocket and luxuriate in the leaf just long enough to start enjoying it before the damn driver pulls up. "Mister Tant-lus?" "Close enough," I say. "You're late." I get in the black full size sedan that *should* be an Audi or a Cadillac but *is* a Buick LaCrosse, and I can tell it's a Buick, regardless of their ad campaign,

because of the faux wood trim and the overabundance of plastic and the Buick marque. My driver obviously chews his nails, so I refuse to speak to him. At this point, I am reasonably sure that it was 23 minutes late, not 11 hours and 37 minutes early. I pop some methylcybin to take the edge off, swallowing it dry and hard, and wait, in awkward, burdened silence, to arrive at my destination.

Despite the devastated wreckage of his fingernails, my driver makes good time, and I arrive before the ritual begins. The building is not nondescript, but I am going to say it is, because I have been advised not, under any circumstances, to give away the location of the draft. The building is nondescript. I enter alone, as I and all of you entered this world, and as we all will inevitably exit it. I am sufficiently credentialed for the listless flesh golem in the lobby, and I ascend in the too-small elevator that I'm pretty sure was talking to me. "Going up?" Insistently. "Going up?" I manage to escape from the elevator ("Ninth floor."), sanity barely intact, and I lurch down the hall, off balance in my mad flight. "Going down?" the elevator implores behind me. "Going down?" as the doors close and it goes down.

I try to gather my wits about me in the still, hushed space, now mercilessly free of the possessed elevator. I think I see Van Gogh's sunflowers, and a lemon, a paper

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**DRAFT RECAP***Continued from Page Eleven*

frog on a door, a miniature stone dragon wearing what appear to be child's trainers. I smell garbage and damp carpet. The air is thick, heavy, moist. There are no windows. I may have traveled back in time to a hotel hallway in the 1950s; time, in fact, is wholly without meaning in this horrible place. I am cut off from the outside world, from the intimacy of human contact and affection. I begin to feel a pleasurable, soft, warm, tingling sensation; I see bright colors, intricate patterns. I hear jazz music from the 1930s or 1940s. I stagger down the hall for several hours or days or maybe half a minute, it's hard to say, but the hall is curving on forever and I cannot see its end. I feel the profundity of the music; the layers of intricate improvisation wash over me, envelop me, like cool rain and flickering stars in a place where there is no light pollution.

I totter to the antechamber, which stubbornly drifts away from me. I yawn compulsively, and fumblingly grasp at the doorknob to steady myself. I hear what sounds like faint chanting within, although it is hard to tell given the sublime jazz that slinks across the hall and calls so sweetly to me. I prepare to knock, and suddenly remember the entry instructions, so I stare down my knocking hand, a faceoff for the ages, and ultimately glare it into

submission and grope in my pocket for my notebook. Then I reach up to knock, and remember that I have written directions on how to gain admission, and I focus long enough to rummage through my jacket and recover my notebook, which is a black Moleskine with ivory pages and a ribbon bookmark and elastic band. It occurs to me that I ought not to have worn a jacket, given the heat, but style comes before substance, because substance is illusory and carries only that meaning which we grant it. Style is transcendent. The instructions instruct me to "firmly rap upon the threshold" and intone "O, forgiving League Managers, we humble supplicants beg entry. Y'hah ph'ehye nach' lw'nafh, gof'nn ph'bug." They appear to be scrawled in my own handwriting.

I prepare to knock, and then I knock, and I hesitantly but confidently say, "O, forgiving League Managers, we humble supplicants beg entry. Y'hah ph'ehye nach' lw'nafh, gof'nn ph'bug." This seems mildly inappropriate, because there is only one of me. (There is only one of us?) I am grammatically mortified, and I consider whether I have the time to beat a hasty retreat back down the hall, but I fear the verbose elevator and, anyway, the door is opening. I infer that it was not locked based upon the notable nonappearance of the sound of a deadbolt being turned.

And so I enter this most sacred of places, the tabernacle of League of Doom, the Temple of the Draft. I

stand in a vestibule, and what appears to be one of the League Managers homunculi sits before me, squawking or whining like some defective wildfowl. It is orange and white, and I back step around it gingerly. I do not know by what hand the door was opened, but it shuts behind me. I do not look back. The chamber is darker and cooler than it was in the hall outside. The curtains are partially drawn. I am struck by the many screens that light up the room, laptops and tablets, netbooks and cellular phones, their blue light bathing all present in a sickly glow. We all look dead, appropriate given our numb worship of our digital gods. One central screen, brighter than all the rest, sits waiting, perched and primed like some primordial predator, watching us as we watch it, anticipating the hunt, the strike, the kill. It fills me with dread. Distracted, I am startled when I am offered a seat, which I accept absent-mindedly. After making the appropriate inquiries, I hurtle across the chamber and outside into the cruel heat.

My hands are shaking and the balcony is drifting off into the horizon. I slump heavily into a waiting seat and yawn. I am dimly aware of the presence of another, but my fear, my sense of novelty, and the rising pleasurable sensation that is likely the result of the methylcybin are battling in my mind, so I fail to correctly acknowledge his or her presence and instead I just yawn. I light a Dunhill Top Leaf and sit for a time,

lost in thought. Everything is green or gray, verdant or oppressive. I am struck by the effluvium of human incursion into the unforgiving wild as I sit high above, and I note that the wild seems here to resist our encroachment. I have seen the time to come, and I know that all of it, human and wild alike, will inevitably be reduced to mere dust and heat and light, as my plane slowly, lazily circles ceaselessly above. Hours pass, or maybe a few minutes. I relax a little. My companion is gone. I head back inside.

Once my eyes adjust to the darkness, I realize that they are all present, or at least most of them are: the owners. Legendary figures, many of them. Here is Sam Denisch, the reigning league champion. Two-time champion Ned Richardson, now disgraced and desperate. Jason Vicks, the only reason this isn't a *Seinfeld* episode. Will Shannahan, the league wildcard. Stefani Andrews, unabashed fan of Dick Grayson. Sam Manleigh, who some inexplicably call Hackerman, shorn of his once-majestic beard, but still quite distinguished. Jaime Richardson, barricaded in a fortress of soft, enveloping plush. Also, some guy named Bobby Marshall, whoever that is. And then I notice the Gumby itself, that chalice of enormous consequence, the vessel of all our aspirations, the ampule of our greatest triumphs and most traumatic and disastrous failures. Its psychic heft calls to me, draws me in. Its presence is, perhaps, too

much for my mind to compass, and I take the seat that I had been offered. There is no Scotch, but I accept some Rivers Royal Grenadian 69 in an inexplicably green plastic cup. "We are still waiting for Meredith and Chris to arrive. And, uh, Colin to call, or maybe I'll just call him. Let me text him."

The time-until-draft clock ticks down to nothing, and then less than nothing, threatening to destroy us all in this collapsing envelope of time, trapped forever, invisible, forgotten. I take an unsuspecting gulp of the Rivers Royal Grenadian 69, and the rum hits me like eighteenth-century grapeshot, which, I now believe, is its primary ingredient. I am overwhelmed; I smell lemon grass, sugar cane stalks in the Caribbean breeze, smoky charcoal, and a fiery warmth from 300 years ago courses through me. The bottle says it is 138-proof, but that it is a dirty lie, a filthy lie, a positively loathsome lie, and I am prostrated before this Holy Grail of rum. This might not agree with the methylcybin, though.

Meredith Boram, Meredith Rambo, arrives, last year's most improved player. She has ample materials prepared, and appears poised, imperturbable. Then Chris Baskerville, Gumby Bowl III champion and breakout star of *Serial*, shows up. He has no draft list. Finally, after some mysterious rituals involving technology, cursing, and some extended

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**DRAFT RECAP***Continued from Page Twelve*

banging and thumping and crashing from the deeper bowels of these chambers, Colin Lidston, Gumby Bowl IV champion and supposed Zen master of fantasy football, appears, in voice at least. I cannot identify the origins of his disembodied speech; it seems to come from inside me, or beyond me somehow, or perhaps the speakers on the table over there. Everyone is ready; it seems that Jaime, Meredith, and Sam Manleigh will channel Zakk, Emily, and Eric, respectively, acting as mediums in order to facilitate their compatriots' drafts.

"Om Gan Ganapatayē Namaḥ." The mantra of Ganesh, whose idol overlooks the room. The elephant-headed Hindu god of beginnings, remover of obstacles, patron of letters, deva of intellect and wisdom. It has begun.

Names spring forth, and I am hard-pressed to keep track of them. Antonio Brown. Odell Beckham Jr. Tod Gurley. DeAndre Hopkins. Julio Jones. A sea, a torrent, of names, invoked to fulfill the owners' arcane purposes and to appease the League Managers, whose presence I can scarce help but feel, gnawing at the splinters in the edges of my mind, the rum and methylcybin and fear acting as a siren's call to Their distant perceptions. They are probing for weakness, vulnerability, lack of

discipline. I feel nauseous. Le'Veon Bell, then Amari Cooper, and Greg Olsen. I am lost; I may be missing some time as I barely keep Them at bay. I call on my extensive training with the White Lotus Society to resist Their incursion. I am centered, finally, and They move on. I take another blistering draught, and hesitantly totter back outside for another Top Leaf.

I reenter sometime before I exited. No one knows that draft order, and tempers flare as no one wants to look it up despite virtually all present having internet access. Sam Manleigh, channeling Eric, selects first Rob Gronkowski, then Dez Bryant, whose quarterback recently broke his back, which should be no obstacle, but the flesh is weak. Ned takes Jarvis Landry when Brandon Marshall, Alshon Jeffery, Eric Decker, and more are still available, and we are all startled at his apparent obtuseness. Everyone is trying to get Will to draft Calvin Johnson, which is bizarre, because he is retired.

Following the selections of Thomas Rawls and then Jeremy Maclin, Eric takes Jason's soul. It is quite some time since I bore witness to a soul-taking. Kolkata in 2013, I believe, a typically scorching summer in the unauthorized slums, a rakshasa preying on the Dalits. A supplication to Durga, goddess of victory of good over evil, did the trick there, but the ley lines are not appropriately aligned here for such an intervention, and I get the feeling my companions would frown upon such an action. Even Jason seems

not to lift a finger in defense of his Ātman. I have never seen a soul-reaving done as subtly as it was here, and certainly not by one who is not actually present, but is channeling through another. It is remarkable how matter-of-factly Jason announces that his soul has been taken. Then he complains about how those who are not present keep taking the players he wants, and everyone moves one. I am forced to wonder whether these owners often barter with souls, and whether soul-stealing is just another mundane occurrence to them.

We take a break after four rounds. "Excuse me, but can you direct me to the, ah, facilities?" I am sent to a room at the end of a dimly-lit hall, alone and wary. There is a creature there, waiting in the black. It is one with the umbral gloom; I cannot distinguish its shadow-clad form from the surrounding darkness. I see only its golden eyes, glowing menacingly. The walk down the hall takes an eternity, and the creature watches me, its luminous gaze transfixing me, measuring me, considering my potential worth as a meal and weighing it in the balance against the minor inconvenience of having to hunt me down. I must not appear appetizing, for it eventually looks away and, its lambent eyes no longer visible, fades entirely from my sight.

Nearly overwhelmed by panic, I careen wildly into the lavatory. It's disgusting. Everyone else's bathroom is always repulsive: when the personal hygiene products

strewn about, the random tissues and cotton swabs that missed the trash, the foul-scented, grimy towels, the muck-encrusted grout, the dust and stray hairs everywhere, the ectoplasmic yellow-orange leaching surfactants on the ceiling, and the barely-masked, pervasive smell of mildew belong to *me*, in *my* bathroom, I don't really notice, or I do, but I just *know* I'm cleaner than everyone else. But everyone else's bathrooms, including this one, are so revolting and gruesome that I can barely tolerate being in them, and I go about my business with an unusual efficiency, avoiding any prolonged contact with any surfaces. I can't help but wonder how *this* bathroom's proprietors can stand disrobing under that bare, garish, disparaging and honest light, and "bathing" in here: How can they even consider themselves to be clean afterward? I retch, kneeling over the filthy toilet, which is filthy. Brownish black mold, some stray pubic hairs, possible vagrant urine splatters on the tiled floor and the back of the toilet rim, behind the seat cover. Of course, no one ever cleans up after themselves in *someone else's* bathroom. The nausea hits me in continued waves; whether because of the methylcybin, the rum, or the fear, I am not sure. The nausea is why I came back here, but the feculent mien is not helping. Eventually, unable to purge myself of whatever gastric demon ails me, I achingly, falteringly pull myself to a semi-standing position and turn to

leave this chamber of obscenities, when the door opens.

One of the league owners enters. I am sworn to secrecy regarding his identity. He did not knock. He gives me a brief, dismissive nod, and then pushes past me, approaching the toilet. I am trapped in a moment of unendurable social awkwardness, all niceties of normal human interaction having been trampled upon. Do I run for it? My legs are shaky and weak from the retching, the door is closed, and I very much want to wash my hands. Plus, I don't want to seem rude or dismissive. I'm afraid that my reaction – or even my indecision – will draw attention to myself, and this anonymous owner will either become unnecessarily self-conscious, or will smell blood in the water, so to speak. I don't want *my* soul on anyone's dinner plate. I mentally prepare King Solomon's 10th seal, and decide to wash my hands and act naturally, although I am well aware that I've been standing there like a dullard for far too long. The sink is too small and too low. "Uh, hey . . ." I begin, and then trail off. "Hi. Simon, is it?" He is pissing now. I don't look. I very much do not look. "Pretty wild so far, huh? We're really burning through this one, though." "Sure, I guess. I have no basis for comparison." I turn off the sink and start to dry my hands, which is awkward because the towel, and the toilet, are both to my right, and I

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**DRAFT RECAP***Continued from Page Thirteen*

don't want to look. I blindly grope for the hand towel while pretending to admire the medicine cabinet. "Um, are you happy with your picks so far?" He stops peeing, and I am eternally grateful, because I've just been pawing aimlessly at the wall. I turn to look for the hand towel, and there he stands, facing me, pecker out and in hand. The towel is in his other hand, his arm outstretched. "I'm pretty happy. Think C.J. Anderson's gonna have a breakout season, pick up some good, uh, numbers. Real steal in the third."

I run for it. My hands are still wet.

The draft continues, and the anonymous owner, once her rejoins us, makes no mention of our intimate encounter for the remainder of the draft. We left off with the 14th pick in the fourth round, but seem to restart, at least temporarily, at the second pick of the eighth round. I am not sure whether I was briefly unstuck from time or not, but things move forward in the generally accepted chronological order after that. As is tradition, Will is the first to select a player who has already been drafted: this year, it is Russell Wilson at 5.12, even though he had already been taken by Jason at 3.3. Chris finally has a draft list printed out for him at the beginning of the fifth round, so that he can formulate

his plans. I understand that these events – Will drafting either an already drafted, or retired, player, and someone needing a draft list produced for them – are among the symbolic aspects of the ceremony that the League Managers insist on. Everyone is pleased.

More names, a tidal wave of people with real lives, dreams, families, aspirations, playing a violent and brutal sport for the entertainment of millions and the enrichment of a few dozen, destroying their young bodies and minds, damning themselves to brief, painful, senseless half-lives after shining so brightly for a few short years, like a matryoshka doll, remorselessly selected in the fantasy draft today as abstract bundles of numbers to start or sit, the names' possessors' private personas hidden inside public personas hidden inside cold, sterile statistics with which these uncaring owners can engage in weekly struggles to temporarily distract themselves from their hollow, inconsequential existences and appease the insatiable appetites and sadistic demands of the League Managers. No one will remember any of this.

This whole affair is playing out in two connected, but definitely distinct, rooms. I am seated on an incongruous bar stool straddling the indistinct space between the two rooms. To my left, around a table in what I will conveniently refer to as the Western Chamber, sit Sam Manleigh and Bobby. And to my right, in the Eastern Chamber, are

Jason, Ned, Sam Denisch, Stef, and Jaime, all of whom have an excellent view of the ever-changing master draft board and can hear each other, and Colin's disembodied voice, quite well. Will started in the Western Chamber, but occasionally wanders over to the Eastern Chamber to get a better view; conversely, Meredith started in the Eastern Chamber, but, from time to time, meanders over to the Western Chamber to take a seat at the table. Chris stays mostly in the Western Chamber, although he lies prone on the floor before the master draft board every now and again, for reasons that are opaque to me. This setup creates several inconveniences, mostly relating to an inability to hear clearly from one chamber to another, and with those in the Western Chamber having difficulties keeping track of what is going on, seeing as how the master draft board is not easily visible to them. This arrangement, too, seems to be part of the League Managers' stipulations for the ceremony; everyone expected it, and the table in the Western Chamber was clearly moved and prepared in expectation of several people sitting around it. It is all a bit confusing to me, but, despite the inconvenience, the owners all continue, unabated, with their parts in the ritual.

I grow somewhat bored with the tedium, to be honest, as little else of interest happens for some time. Draft picks are made. Some quickly, some slowly, right up to – or past – the wire. More people select players who were already

drafted, although they've all run together for me by now. I keep drinking the Rivers Royal Grenadian 69; the more I drink, the less objectionable it becomes. People take breaks to go outside and smoke their cigarettes and vape rapidly on their vapes. Sometimes, I join them. A few of the owners – I specifically remember Chris doing this at least once, and Eric, as channeled by Sam Manleigh, doing this numerous times – forget how many players they have drafted at each position, and attempt to draft more running backs or wide receivers than are permitted, despite repeated warnings not to do so. This is embarrassing, and, as with many other things that happen during the ritual, results in some good-natured ribbing all around. This is purported to please the League Managers as well.

On and on it goes. I fear that I will never leave, that the Coming Dark will no longer be Come, and will soon be Arriving, and then Present, and overwhelm all things, as the owners will not complete the ceremony in time. I grow weary and ill from fatigue, fear, and too many foreign substances in my system. Someone – Eric, I think, using Sam like a marionette – takes a defense, the Seattle Seahawks, in the seventh round, which creates some minor consternation.

Immediately thereafter, Ned selects the second defense off the board, the Denver Broncos, and there is much gnashing of teeth as a reluctant run on defenses begins. Late that same round, Sam Denisch selects the first

kicker, Justin Tucker, opera singer, Royal Farms pitchman, and board game aficionado, and then there is a run on kickers. I am led to understand that this is a rather unusual situation; defenses and kickers typically go much later in the draft, but this year, they came off the board just halfway through.

Alan Rickman and David Bowie both died this year, both killed by cancer, both aged 69. (An interesting synchronicity with the Rivers Royal Grenadian 69, which is actually somewhere around 138 AD, of course, is the year of the birth of Emperor Zhi of Han, who ascended to the throne when his two-year-old cousin, Emperor Chong, died. Han Zhidi was only seven when he became Emperor, but he was precocious, and a clear threat to his uncle, the powerful, shadowy politician and general, Liang Ji. Liang Ji had the gifted boy-emperor poisoned when Han Zhidi was but eight. Eight is 2<sup>3</sup>, and two and three make five. This cannot be a coincidence; there are no such things as coincidences. There are no accidents, no mere chance. Everything is connected.) There is an original painting featuring the two of them – Rickman and Bowie, that is – flanking a handsome cat, whose name, I'm told, is Finn. Finn was an adventurer, a dignified elderly gentleman cat. He had soft, black and white fur and distinct, striking eyes. He, too, passed away recently

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## DRAFT RECAP

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— as have Gene Wilder, Prince, Muhammad Ali, and so on. It seems that death is in the air; death falls upon the year like a shroud, and that aura of death permeates this agonizingly unhurried draft ceremony, as well. Here is the death of summer, the death of the planning and anticipation going into the draft itself, the death of some owners' hopes. But death is not an end; it is merely a step in Samsāra, the endless cyclic progression of all things. It is changing, but also everlasting and constant. It is a new beginning. It is represented symbolically by bhavacakra, the wheel of life, which is governed by Ganesh, whose icon sits on my right. This metempsychosis, this palingenesis, is encapsulated by the annual renewal of the League of Doom, as proscribed by the League Managers: each year the owners gather, and select their champions, who do battle until only one team remains, and then it, too is dissolved, and eventually will be forgotten, and the owners begin again. The cycle continues.

There is, in the ninth, snaking round, a brief moment of controversy when Eric, through Sam, takes DeAngelo Williams. Ned is angry; he took Le'Veon Bell in the first round, and clearly expected to take DeAngelo Williams. (Bell, possibly the

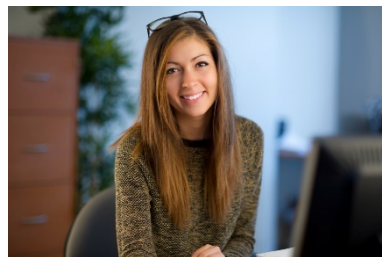
premiere running back in fantasy football, is suspended for the first three games, and Williams, no slouch himself, is his backup.) Ned was picking next. He ends up taking Darren Sproles instead, but his irritation is palpable. Sam attempts to rationalize the choice, saying that he was merely doing Eric's will, and was no more than a puppet, and Ned points out that Eric has two highly suspect running backs already (Thomas Rawls and Melvin Gordon), so a third running back who is only likely to start for three games at the beginning of the season doesn't really do Eric any good, but it is too late, and anyway, Ned is just trying to make Eric's selection look bad in order to hide the real reasons for his ire: jealousy and anger. The moment passes.

The last handful of rounds of the draft pass uneventfully, with owners selecting players who they know with near certainty will not actually be on their rosters in a few weeks. I have lost almost all interest, and conversation is not to be had, and the various substances in my body are very much disagreeing with me at this point, and I just want to leave, but I will not let my employer down, I will see this endless draft through until it is no longer endless but, in fact, ended. And then it does end, with the selection of the Baltimore Ravens defense, and it has only been something like three hours, and not the ten it felt like. And I am free, free of the horrors of that place, and the soul-reaping, and the

cold, dead-eyed owners who play games with mortal men.

I am regurgitated out into the world, exiting in a daze ("Going down?"), not stopping to converse, wandering aimlessly down the street rather than waiting for my driver. I can find another way; I cannot sit in that forsaken Buick and stare at those apocalyptic fingernails any longer. I will summon an Uber driver with a Camry or an Accord and I will flee from the past and into the future, and all of this will be but memory, for a time, and then it will be nothing, and it will never have happened. ★

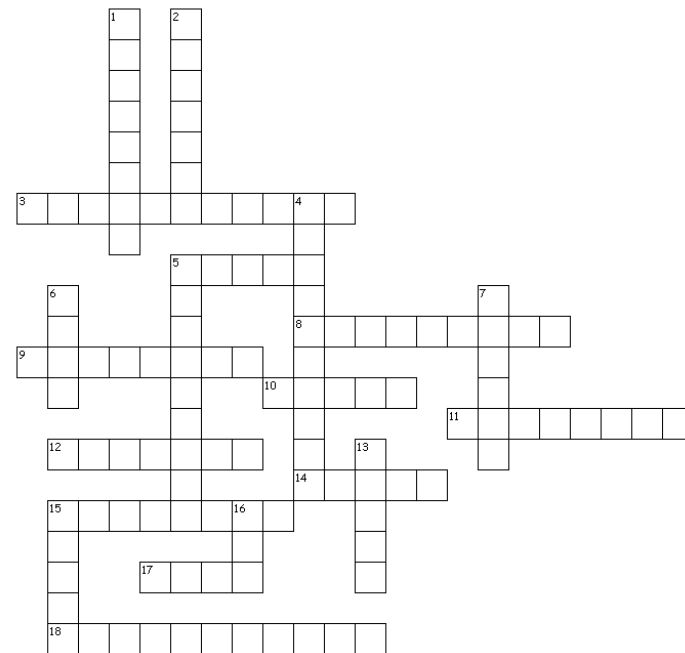
## SAY "HI!" TO OUR NEWEST HIRE



Pictured: Mary Ellen Jones.

The *Times-Chronicle Picayune* is excited to introduce our newest intern, Mary Ellen Jones. Mary Ellen recently graduated *summa cum laude* from Emerson College's prestigious journalism program. She likes art, culture, and, of course, football! Her favorite team is the New England Patriots, and she has a pair of Jack Russell Terriers, Flora and Ruby. Welcome aboard, Mary Ellen!

## WEEKLY FILLER CROSSWORD PUZZLE



### Across

3. The highest scoring fantasy position
5. Anagram for Meredith's last name
8. Worth six points most of the time, but sometimes four
9. The number of roster spots
10. The League championship trophy
11. The only sport that matters
12. Pirates, ninjas, and \_\_\_\_\_
14. A thing more league members should do
15. The Coming \_\_\_\_\_
17. Can be a running back, wide receiver, or kicker
18. Lyra's last name

### Down

1. Home base of the Guardians of the Galaxy
2. "You can't hurt this, I'm a \_\_\_\_\_, jerk."
4. \_\_\_\_\_ the Obedient
5. Half a point per \_\_\_\_\_
6. The League of \_\_\_\_\_
7. Race to the \_\_\_\_\_
13. Sandy \_\_\_\_\_ Hackerman
15. Eat a Bag of \_\_\_\_\_
16. The season which we are on