

Foreword

By Joe Bryant and David Dodds

Welcome, Footballguy!

If you're reading a book foreword, you're our kind of guy—the kind who wants to know everything. You're going to **love** this book. Daily Fantasy Sports (DFS) is the biggest thing to hit fantasy football since, well, fantasy football.

DFS has exploded in popularity and has everyone in our vibrant community talking. It's clearly no longer the new game in town; it's the preferred way to play fantasy football for a growing number of people.

And Footballguys is here to give you the edge you need to dominate. In many ways, DFS is complementary to season-long fantasy football, as detailed and accurate statistical projections are the foundation for both. That's great news, as Footballguys has a proven track record of accurate projections, but there's much more to consistently winning DFS than just good projections.

Just like with the season-long game, it's not only about the projections; it's about what you do with them. And as the game becomes more popular, the competition becomes more intense. Now, more than ever, you need an edge to win.

With this book, we're giving you that edge. We're going to tell you in detail what we've done to consistently win in Daily Fantasy Football.

But first, let us tell you how we got here. Since 2000, Footballguys has been instrumental in helping our subscribers win their leagues. From local leagues with modest entry fees to the highest of high-stakes leagues with hundreds of thousands of dollars on the line, Footballguys has been the go-to secret weapon for winners.

When DFS came onto the scene a few years ago, we quickly realized it was here to stay. Two years ago, one of us, David Dodds, deposited \$50,000 of his own money into FanDuel and set out to learn the ins and outs of DFS, knowing he'd accelerate the learning curve with skin in the game.

David documented his thoughts and processes along the way on his blog: <http://50percentds.blogspot.com>. To say David has been successful is an understatement. In his first two years, he earned more than \$63,000 in profit from FanDuel's daily fantasy football contests.

Now we're ready to share what we've learned with you—and not just David's lessons.

The strength of Footballguys has always been our team. Our staff boasts some of the best DFS minds in the game, including five more staffers added this year dedicated to the Daily games. This book is a collaborative effort from the Footballguys team, putting our heads together with one goal in mind: delivering you the keys to help you consistently dominate DFS football.

Most sections were written by two-man teams of staffers with input from another 20 staffers along the way. Two heads are better than one. In our case, 22 heads are better than two as we've cracked the code for winning and we're sharing it with our subscribers.

Why share? It's a fair question. Will we win less playing DFS ourselves by sharing our secrets? Probably. By the same token, however, we'll be smiling ear to ear when we hear one of our subscribers just cashed for \$100,000 in a big guaranteed prize pool.

Our business at Footballguys is helping our customers win. Period.

So rest assured that nothing is held back as we're laying everything we have on the table to help you win.

That's the Footballguys way.

And it'll get even better with your help. Just as we collaboratively created the content here, I have no doubt we'll refine it further. You can help by submitting feedback and criticism at <http://footballguys.com/fdbook.php>. We welcome disagreement and discussion.

Footballguys has always been about our community, and many of our best features over the years have evolved from discussion and feedback from our subscribers. This book will be no different, so let us know what you think.

With all due respect to the other books out there, we think this is the best book ever written on DFS. With your help, it can be even better. Let's hear it.

And with that, let's jump in. Good luck and may all the bounces go your way!

Joe Bryant & David Dodds
Owners, Footballguys.com

1. Introduction



1.1. Fantasy Football

By Joe Bryant

“What a long strange trip it’s been...”—The Grateful Dead

The year was 1988. Ken Griffey Jr. was called “The Kid” not because it was a catchy nickname. But because he was 19 years old. The top NFL quarterbacks looked like a CBS set with Boomer Esiason, Dan Marino, and Phil Simms atop the leaderboards. Yes, those guys played. And pretty well. Rob Gronkowski, Andrew Luck, and Russell Wilson hadn’t been born yet. Neither had the World Wide Web. On the familiar side, Chris Berman was already at ESPN. And his hair was glorious.



Fantasy Sports was clawing its way out of the primordial soup with an estimated 500,000 people participating in 1988.

The exact origins of fantasy sports are a bit murky. For me (and a great many others) the work of Daniel Okrent and his *Rotisserie League Baseball* book was the gateway down the rabbit hole. They made popular the concept of drafting players and managing a team. Finally we had an answer to “Could you run a team better than Marge Schott? ”



And let me tell you something else. Fantasy sports weren't quite as cool back then. Neither was being an entrepreneur. And that was me on both counts. In 1988, fantasy sports had almost as much in common with *Dungeons & Dragons* as they did SportsCenter. And the guys becoming entrepreneurs were the guys who couldn't land jobs at IBM. Today, fantasy sports have been featured on the cover of *The Wall Street Journal*; and TV shows like *Shark Tank* top the ratings by glorifying small businesses. I like to say it just took a while for society to catch up.

Today there are more than 57 million people playing fantasy sports in North America, according to the Fantasy Sports Trade Association. And that number is growing.

Why? Because of people like you. And me. And pretty much most everyone you know. Playing fantasy sports is fun because it scratches the itch most of us have—calling the shots. We've all felt the sting as our favorite team lets its best player get away. Or pays way too much for the washed up has-been. Or passes on the hidden-gem rookie to draft the combine star who we know will be out of the league in three years. With fantasy sports, for better or for worse, we are the Decider.



We make the calls, get the glory when we're right, and blame unforeseen forces when we're wrong. Pretty much like real NFL Owners and GMs.

As the hobby grew, fantasy football owners would gather in the summer and draft their teams. Once the season was underway, they'd scour the waiver wire trying to separate the one-week wonders from the developing trends. All the while trading players with as much deception, cunning, and deceit as their morals could stand. And it was good.

Variations of the season-long format inevitably developed, most notably through the use of different scoring systems. Basic leagues would award points to players for just actual scoring plays. Then came more performance-based scoring systems where players could earn points for yards gained or receptions or fumbles recovered. Or pretty much anything you liked.

Along with the evolution in scoring systems came changes in roster requirements. Some leagues liked to start two wide receivers. Some preferred three wide receivers. Some leagues loved a flex player who could be WR or TE. Of course, some then pushed the flex even further to include RB/WR/TE. And when fans of defense felt left out, leagues adopted rules to include Individual Defensive Players (IDP).

Not to mention the variations for assigning players. Most leagues preferred a draft system. But many leagues swore by an auction format. And both formats would allow some degree of dynasty-building where players are carried over from year to year.

The beauty of fantasy sports soon became evident in that your league could create whatever system you wanted. This was *your* league and that meant *you* built it the way *you* wanted. And that was good too.

Even with all the variations in scoring and format, the common factor remained that the fantasy season mirrored the NFL season for the most part. The fantasy season started with Week 1 of the NFL season and finished usually in Week 16 or 17 of the real season.

Then came the rub that often rears its head: sometimes bad things happen. If you spent a ton on Tom Brady in 2008, Jamaal Charles in 2011 or Adrian Peterson in 2014, your season was in serious trouble nearly before it started. And that was not so good.

Fantasy owners began to ask if there weren't a better way to play.

FanDuel offered a compelling answer.

With the advent of the daily format, fantasy owners were no longer saddled for an entire season with a poor draft choice. And owners were never sniped by a rival stealing a coveted player before their draft turn. FanDuel set salaries each week for every player and it was up to each owner to craft a lineup under the salary cap. And owners could play as much or as little as they wanted.

Was it successful? FanDuel started in the summer of 2009 and had only a few thousand active users up until 2011. By the end of 2011, the paid active users had grown to just over 17,000 and they eclipsed \$1 million in revenue. Today, FanDuel has millions of active users.

I'd say it was successful. And continues to be.

This past December, 120 qualifying finalists caught passes from Joe Montana and Dan Marino at the FanDuel World Fantasy Football Championship in San Diego. Roman "Longbottoms" Edmund took home the \$3 million top prize.

And it doesn't look like the momentum is slowing anytime soon. The daily space continues to grow as more people jump both into fantasy sports as a whole and specifically into the daily-game format. If you've read this far, I'm assuming you're one of those. Welcome and let's get busy.



1.2. What is DFS?

By Mark Wimer and Justin Bonnema

Readers new to daily fantasy sports (DFS) are encouraged to skim the glossary beginning on page 133 before continuing. We've tried not to litter this book with unnecessary jargon, but the regular use of certain terms specific to this hobby proved unavoidable.

Daily fantasy sports are a spin-off of traditional fantasy sports, but each competition lasts somewhere between a few hours and a few days rather than a whole season. And instead of using a snake or auction draft to allocate players, DFS owners select any combination of players they want so long as they fit under the salary cap.



Salary cap is the key concept. All owners have full access to the same pool of players, meaning multiple teams may, as an example, select Antonio Brown (the number of times a given player is selected in a contest is referred to as ownership percentage or exposure, which we'll discuss in later chapters). FanDuel NFL contests have a \$60,000 salary cap and require nine starters: one quarterback, two running backs, three wide receivers, one tight end, one kicker, and one defense. Your goal is to build a competitive lineup without exceeding the cap.

As you can imagine, star players cost a lot more than average players. What makes DFS so much fun is finding a balance between the two. FanDuel generates salaries that make it impossible for anyone to build of lineup of only star players. Skillful contestants excel at bargain hunting and finding value.

On a macro level, DFS is not all that different than season-long leagues. While the end goal of season-long is to be champion come season's close, it's still a series of weekly games. Now imagine if every week your league released all players into a pool and redrafted, using the parameters described above. That's the spirit of DFS. All fantasy players have the same opportunity, with winners decided by the total points each lineup generates, and are awarded a predetermined prize.

So how much does it cost to play?

Technically, nothing. There are free play contests almost every week open to all users. But if you want to convert your favorite hobby into a potential stream of income, you'll need to make a deposit and play in real-money contests.

How much to invest is entirely up to the user. Some may play with \$100, others \$10,000 or more. Most sites have a minimum deposit amount, anywhere from \$5 to \$10, but after that it's whatever you can afford and whatever you're comfortable with.

What's more important than how much you deposit is how you manage that deposit to get a return on your investment. We'll cover bankroll management in Section 5.3. For now, all you need to know is daily sports works like a small business where you are the CEO and CFO. You decide how much to invest, where to invest, and when to cash out.

So how do you make money playing DFS?

That is a great question—and it's what this book is primarily about. Honestly, you are probably not going to become a millionaire, and you'll likely have to keep your job no matter how good you are at fantasy football. But the great thing is that DFS provides an opportunity to convert fantasy football from just a hobby into a profitable venture, possibly even into a career.



Profiting in DFS is a complicated business. It's more than just selecting the best players and throwing out a bunch of lineups each week. Several factors play a strategic role, including salary allocation, game selection, and bankroll management. And as the industry grows—as it surely will—the competition will get tougher. Reading the pages that follow will go a long way toward staying ahead of the curve.

1.3. Advantages of DFS Over Traditional Leagues

By Austin Lee

We love playing season-long fantasy football, especially when it's with a group of people who are competitive, fun, and enjoy the same league setup as we do. Even in our ideal league, however, there are several aspects of traditional fantasy leagues that bug us. The terrific thing about Daily Fantasy Sports is that it gets rid of almost all of those annoyances without sacrificing the aspects of the game we love. DFS offers immediacy, simplicity, and flexibility that year-long leagues can't compete with.

The immediate gratification of daily fantasy is easy to identify. You can go from buy-in to winner in a single three-hour game slate on Sundays. The longest game slates usually max out at 100 hours from the start of Thursday Night Football to the completion of Monday Night Football. You're beholden to each team you create for less than five days, and then you toss it aside without thinking twice about it. Injuries and underperforming players are wiped clean from your slate instead of being a year-long drain. DFS is a big win when it comes to short commitments and quick payouts.



Daily fantasy also simplifies the annoying logistics, which you'll especially appreciate if you've ever been the commissioner of a season-long league. You don't have to create a league constitution, pester people for money, or chase down deadbeat managers who start bye-week players. Fighting about collusion, vetoes, and fairness all disappear because the DFS host site handles all of the commissioner duties for you. Their rules are fair, clearly explained, and have been perfected over many years. DFS clears the way so that the only drama you face is on the football field.

The biggest area where daily fantasy shines is in its flexibility. You have to always be on your toes to win your season-long league, beating your competition to the latest news, the best trades, and the hottest pickups. You and your competition constantly fight to beat each other to the punch.

Conversely, with DFS you can play on your schedule. If you like, you can completely ignore football from Tuesday to Saturday and do all of your preparation on Sunday mornings. There's no rush because everyone can own the same player. You're no longer a slave to the waivers schedule or timed trade responses.



Have a remote weekend getaway planned? Skip a week. When you're ready to join a contest, you don't have to coordinate with anyone. It's easy to find a game, and you don't need an even number of teams. You can play against one opponent or 100,000 opponents. It's your choice.

With daily fantasy you never feel "out of it" with a year-long team that has a terrible first half of the season. You don't argue about the lopsided ratio of *points for* to *points against* and its impact on your league standings. You don't get burned by a bad playoff matchup on your epic championship run.

DFS is the faster, simpler, more flexible version of the fantasy football game that you've loved for years. It doesn't have to replace your season-long leagues, but it offers welcome variety.



1.4. FanDuel History and Position in the Industry

By Kyle Wachtel and Austin Lee

In January of 2008, the team behind FanDuel originally created Hubdub.com, which essentially turned news into a game by allowing users to predict future events. At the 2009 South by Southwest Festival in Austin, Texas, the founders chose a new direction: daily fantasy sports. Backed by Series A funding of \$1.2 million from Pentech Ventures and Scottish Enterprise, FanDuel was born, launching in June of 2009.



FanDuel founder and CEO Nigel Eccles

While FanDuel was not the first daily fantasy site, it has been the true pioneer, leading the charge in one of the fastest growing areas of fantasy sports. Nigel Eccles, FanDuel's CEO, has been referred to as the "Godfather of Daily Fantasy Sports."

FanDuel is an official partner of the National Basketball Association and has exclusive alliances with 16 NBA teams and 15 National Football League franchises.



With its rapid growth, the prize pools for FanDuel's premier tournaments have skyrocketed. The live final for the inaugural FanDuel Fantasy Football Championship (FFFC) in 2010 offered \$50,000 in prizes, while the 2015 FanDuel World Fantasy Football Championship (WFFC) awarded a whopping \$12 million in prizes, including \$3 million to first place alone.