



Vagrant League

Fantasy Baseball



Volume 3, Issue 3

October 2005

NATURAL RIVALRIES

It Happens in Roto Too

Barry Greenberg

Team Owner

Reading through the back and forth banter contained on the league stat sites message board recently triggered a memory of a conversation I had with two other fantasy league members about fifteen years ago. The stat site banter I am referring to was that in which Jim, owner of Comfortably Numb, criticized another team for trading with Craig, owner of the Mutts. The criticism, to paraphrase, essentially accused the other team of "turning to the dark side" in trading with Craig.

Now one can certainly understand why Jim was upset about the trade, being that he was in a tight battle for first place at the time, and that the dumping style trade to Craig would hurt Jim's chances.

However, the commentary seemed to strike a note of hostility towards another team owner, beyond that expected to emanate from a disadvantage in competitive standing, albeit one stated tongue in cheek. In fact, Craig had at one point stated on the same message board, "I know no one wants me to win this, but..."

The memory this triggered from long ago involved me

Continued on page 2 – Rivalries

The Reviews Are In

More On Than Off?

Doug Drotman

Team Owner

After a stellar season of predicting big steals and bad draft day deals in 2004, I put my reputation on the line, and in print, by analyzing the 2005 draft.

The good news is that as a team, it appears that Double D had a pretty good 2005. I only was wrong on one Steal (injuries notwithstanding) but a few of my Busts turned out better than expected.

The top line is what I wrote in April. The bottom line is my analysis as of Sept. 27

BARGAINS

Omar Vizquel - \$10 (especially compared to the other SS)

He hit .270 and stole 23 bases. CORRECT

Luke Scott - \$5 (maybe not this year but in 2006)

I was right about not this year but we'll have to wait until next year. – NO DECISION

Mark Mulder - \$29 (better than Hudson, Prior, Wood)

Not a bargain at \$29. But he was better than Prior, Wood and Hudson – CORRECT

Eric Young - \$1 (more steals than Lofton)

He got hurt but did earn \$. A he stole 7 bases in just 135 AB – CORRECT

Xavier Nady - \$5 – (a bargain for years to come)

.265 with 13 HR and he pushed out Nevin --- CORRECT

Darryl Ward - \$1 – (a perfect \$1 gamble)

As expected he won the 1B job for a few months – CORRECT

Continued on page 3 - Reviews

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 [Natural Rivalries](#) | [The Reviews Are In](#)
- 2 [Thank You](#)
- 3 [Third By A Hair](#) | [Website Links](#) | [Calendar of Events](#)
- 4 [To The Last Man](#)
- 5 [New Records](#)
- 6 [Suggested Rule Changes For 2006](#)
- 7 [Did You Know...](#)

Rivalries

Continued from page 1

and a second league member discussing which other team owners we were rooting against, and the reasons why. A third owner then chimed in, stating to the effect, "why would you care who else wins or loses; I only root for myself to win."

True enough, ones own victory should be the paramount consideration in ones efforts, and it should make no difference who you beat, or who may finish ahead of you, as long as you have a successful season. However, in reconsidering this matter, it seems that rooting against ones opponents is not only appropriate, but is indeed firmly based in that finest of American sports traditions: Rivalries.

Look no farther than the New York metropolitan area. We have two teams in every major league sport.

Mets-Yankees, Giants-Jets, Knicks-Nets (although does anyone really care about the Nets?), Rangers-Islanders (at least when they play hockey), all staunch rivals, provoking loyalty from their fans, together with the torrents of abuse directed at each others fans. And there is no need to mention the rivalries with out of town teams such as the Red Sox. So why can't a roto league develop rivalries as well?

Having said that, lets take a look at three teams in our league whom may have had others rooting against them during the course of this season just completed, and some reasons why.

Craig/Mutts. This four time league champion just shouldnt be allowed to win any more. Always seems to find a way to coerce another team in to making a trade he shouldn't make, often at the deadline. In April of this year, with an early lead, he had the audacity to announce, "best of luck next year guys, I am the winner this year." Who wants him to win? - he should wait a few years before he wins again.

Jim/Comfortably Numb. An early-mid 1990s roto powerhouse and former league champion, he quit the league after failing to finish in the money for a few years in a row. Then he rejoins the league this year, only after being assured that his expansion team is loaded with values and primed for success this year. He brings a copy of the stats to show all at social events, but only

when he is in first place. Who wants him to win?-he should wait a few years before he wins again.

Barry/Barbarryans. Current defending champion. Got into a dispute with the Commissioner's office immediately prior to the draft this year over the eligibility of a player sent to the minors, insisting that the player's ineligibility would ruin his meticulously laid out draft scenario. Thus, he managed to make excuses in case he has a bad year, before the first game is even played.(uh, did I just say that last one out loud?).

Anyway, a look at these three owners indicates that they were the three fighting for first almost all year long, until the final day. So it is understandable for anyone else to root against these three, whether it be based on the fact that they needed to pass them to succeed this year, or be it based on any rivalry.

Clearly, though, I was rooting against two of them.

All in fun though. Enjoy the off season, guys.

▼

Thank You

It Was A Great Season

Barry Greenberg
First Place Champ

Thanks everyone for making this year the most entertaining and competitive season in memory. We had a spirited battle for all positions from 1st through 8th place, and at least five teams had a realistic chance to win it all going into the final month.

Hopefully the league can be as competitive every year, although if I am involved in too many late season squeakers like this year, I will be dead from the stress before I'm 55! The skeptic may say that my enthusiasm comes only from having won, but I hope all will agree that this was a great year.

Also thanks to all who read and comment on the articles contained in this publication. Particularly to those like Doug and John who thanked me for writing less than glowing analysis of their teams in the June issue, thereby motivating their players to improve. I am always happy to provide bulletin board material for my roto competitors.

▼

Third By A Hair

That's Gotta Hurt

Jim Cortazzo
Team Owner

No one wants to hear anymore of my bitching. Only negative, hateful words would be uttered from my mouth so I'll pass on the newsletter thing. I'm trying to forget the horror but I just can't seem to drink it off my mind! I know, I know...quit yer bitching. See y'all next year.

MORE MUSINGS.....

On Sept 3rd I emailed Ed To add Brian Jordan and drop Nate Mclouth. By Sunday I realized that Jordan was not going to be playing much and that Mclouth was a good speed guy who should score runs so on Tuesday morning I emailed Ed to void my Saturday move. The problem was I didn't actually email until after the deadline so Ed would not accept (rightfully so) the move. If I emailed in a timely manor I would have won the league. I didn't think it would matter much at the time but it sure did. My absolute stupidity cost me 1st place and \$850. I don't know how I can possibly come back and play next year with this horror in my brain!!!! Congrats to Barry as he is the recipient of my foolishness.

▼

WEBSITE LINKS

[Vagrant League Fantasy Baseball](#) (Our home page)

[USAStats](#)

[Major League Baseball](#)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

15 MAN PROTECTED ROSTER

TIME: TBD

About 5 days before the auction (Most likely date, 3/29)

AUCTION

TIME: TBD

First weekend of the MLB Season. (Most likely date, 4/3)

▼

Reviews

Antonio Alfonseca - \$1 (cheap saves)

Got hurt. He may have been Todd Jones if he was ready – NO DECISION

Salomon Torres - \$1 (Mesa insurance)

Didn't get the closer job but definitely earned \$1 – CORRECT

Russ Ortiz - \$9 (fool me twice?)

Yep...he fooled me again. WRONG

BUSTS

Kenny Lofton - \$14 (\$1 per SB...too much)

I was pretty close about the SB totals but wrong about this ageless wonder – WRONG

Brian Giles - \$29 (he's 34 ... not getting better)

He finished with nice numbers but not at \$29. The good news is that he was excellent for me down the stretch. – CORRECT

Willy Tavares - \$9 (yes for \$5 no at \$9)

I knew one Houston rookie would hit it. I just did not think it would be him – WRONG

Craig Wilson - \$17 (I refuse to believe he's more than a platoon player)

Even before the injury he was not really hitting much. – CORRECT

Yhency Brozoban - \$7 (I better hope this was too much)

I was wrong about both Gagne and Brazoban. Although he did blow a lot of saves, lost the closers job and had horrible ERA/WIP. Earned \$7 this year but no bargain going forward – WRONG

Chris Burke - \$10 (no value in '05 but will earn \$10 in '06)

I was on target for this year and the decent second half with 11 SB's has 2006 looking good too – CORRECT

▼

To The Last Man

There must be no course but to fight it out

Barry Greenberg

Combatant

"There must be no course but to fight it out. Every position must be held to the last man. There must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause each one of us must fight to the end."

- Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig, Commander in Chief, British Expeditionary Force, April 12, 1918.

While military analogies are rife and perhaps overblown in sports discussions, this one, borne out of the at that time unprecedented level of death and horror of World War I, is fitting to describe the conclusion of this season, at least to the extent that such was ultimately determined by which teams both prevailed in crucial last day showdowns, and which were able to best weather a heretofore unheard of level of attrition.

To the last man, or rather, to the last game, is how and where this year's winners were determined. By now, the details have been documented of how a run scored or driven in here, or a few strikeouts there, would have resulted in either the Mutts or Comfortably Numb, instead of the BarBarryans prevailing. However, and particularly for those who were involved in the events of the final day and who anxiously followed the progression to a conclusion by watching the actual games, tracking via real time stats, or both, some of these details bear repetition.

Consider that on the final day, the odds favored Craig, who started the day with leads of one point over Jim, and two points over Barry. Craig was tied with Barry in runs, and tied with Red Storm in wins.

Barry was two Ks behind Craig, but Craig had a crucial advantage; he had two accomplished starters going, Maddux and Webb, compared to one each for Barry

(Willis) and Howie (Duke).

This chronology is described in essentially real time order, or as best as I can remember and reconstruct.

Willis goes out and strikes out 12 before departing the stage. Maddux starts an hour later but only strikes out two. Brad Lidge then comes in for Craig to close Houston's wild card victory, but only manages one K, despite going up two strikes on at least one other batter. It was then up to

Webb, a strikeout pitcher, in the late afternoon game, who needed to notch eight Ks for Craig to tie or retake the lead.

Alas, Webb only managed five Ks and Barry remained ahead of Craig in Ks, resulting in a two point swing between Craig and Barry, and an overall tie between all three teams.

Furthermore, neither Maddux nor Webb was successful in winning that afternoon, while the heralded rookie Zach Duke did win for Red Storm, resulting in a net loss of ½ point for Craig. Howie thus emerged as a spoiler.

Meanwhile, in the early afternoon, Barry had broken a tie with the Marauders in HRs, resulting in a 1/2 point swing in his favor, meaning that Barry held first place, at least momentarily, by 1/2 point over Jim, and one point over Craig.

However, this did not doom Craig, who held the head to head tiebreaker advantage over Barry, and also quickly made up a full point in RBIs, when he went on a 10 RBI tear and passed Chris. Thus Craig and Barry were again tied, but Craig, with the tiebreaker advantage, would have won had the season ended an hour before it did.

Now it was Chris who would enter the arena in the final hours and determine the winners. First, David Ekstein drove in a run for Chris in the bottom of the seventh inning of the Cards game, resulting in a RBI tie with Craig. Then, in the last game of the regular season, Eric Young drove in a run for the Padres, allowing Chris to again pass Craig in RBIs, by one RBI, thus giving Barry a full point lead over Craig.

Craig, though had one last gasp in that same game.

Craig and Barry remained tied in runs, and Craig improbably had Jason Phillips pinch hit for the Dodgers in the eighth inning. Phillips then singles.

If Phillips scores, Craig wins. But again, no luck for Craig, Phillips is left stranded, and Barry wins the Championship in the closest, most dramatic finish our league has ever seen.

Yet there was still one last bit of drama unfolding.

In the final act of a thrilling, and for some heartbreaking roto season, Trevor Hoffman comes in to close the game for the Padres and Chris. In so doing, Chris ties Jim in

Continued on next page – Last Man

Last Man

saves, forcing Jim into a tiebreaker with Craig, which he loses. Game over, season over. Championship, second, and third places determined.

Consider, though, that the last man analogy also applies to the entire season and not just the final games. Whether it be injury, ineffectiveness, or other reason, just about every team faced shortfalls as player after player went down in unprecedented numbers. Just look at some of the hurdles that the top four teams faced but were nevertheless able to overcome.

Double D, Doug, finished in fourth place despite losing Eric Gagne, his \$28 stud closer, for almost the entire year. Furthermore, Corey Patterson, a player who reasonably could be expected to at least approach 25/25, if not 30/30, actually got demoted to the minors.

Jim paid \$19 for Barry Bonds. For this significant investment, he received exactly 0 return. That's right, nada, zero, zilch. Yet Jim finished in 3rd, actually a breath away from winning, despite this.

Such things tend not to occur in typical seasons.

Craig lost both Jim Thome and Jeff Bagwell early in the year, and neither came back to make any significant contribution. Normally, this loss of two blue chip studs would mean disaster, but Craig persevered and fought to the bitter end. Actually, it may have been the loss of Ben Sheets for the final weeks that cost Craig the Championship, as a healthy Sheets would at a minimum have protected Craig's lead in Ks.

Finally, the BarBarryans had a string of injuries that, while not involving long term losses of studs, were in their totality debilitating. Of the fourteen primary offensive players on the BarBarryan roster, seven, or one half, spent time on the disabled list.

This resulted in the BarBarryans totaling approximately 900 less at bats than the Mutts. Yet, the BarBarryans prevailed over the Mutts in three offensive categories and tied in a fourth. Similarly, whether by design or accident, the BarBarryans pitching staff logged the fewest innings of any team, yet won Ks, a cumulative category.

Other teams had even more significant injury problems, and for this and other reasons, did not finish in the money. Still, though, this year will likely be remembered for the

closeness of the final finish and how the top teams prevailed over circumstances that ordinarily would spell disaster.

▼

New Records

The Best & Worst

Ed Feldman
Statistician

It is that time of year where I look to see what teams showed their hitting and pitching prowess by setting new VLFB single season bests. Of course when looking at the best, the worst must also be examined. Here's how it turned out.

Hitting

There were no new 'best' hitting records set. With the number of juicers dwindling, not just in size but in quantity too, the beginning of the end of the steroid era may spell the demise of any new hitting records for quite a while.

There were two ignominious records set on the offensive side of the ledger (or lack of offense depending on your point of view), the first by the KrackerJacks. The offending category was batting average where he compiled a .2527 batting average for the season. This was good for 2nd worst all time knocking the Flatulators out of the second spot with their 1993 batting average of .2543. Better luck next year Frank.

The second low-baller was Shu's Crew with a mere 37 steals on the season. This lead-footed ineptitude is good for worst ever, eclipsing the previous exercise in futility set in 2003 by Eight Men out with 52 swipes. Shu's Crew clearly does not have the abundance of speed he once had, but c'mon, 37? Whoa. Much better luck next year Ron.

Pitching

There were no new records set, for good or ill, this year. With the aforementioned steroid era hopefully coming to an end maybe some of the good pitching records will be broken in the coming years.

▼

Suggested Rule Changes for 2006

Any Worth Implementing?

Ed Feldman
Commissioner

The following are rule changes suggested by you, the owners, during spring training '05 that I recorded. I want to get them out there for possible discussion this winter. Most of them are tweaks but there is one that is revolutionary and is near and dear to my heart that I would love to try for at least one season. Figure out which one it is, it shouldn't be hard. Of course all rules must pass with a majority of seven votes (except the ones I don't like, they need 12 votes). Feel free to let the banter fly, it is better to discuss this while the most exciting season ever played is still fresh in our minds.

1. We should be allowed to protect roster players sent to the minors before the lists are due. If someone really wants to protect a player sent down, let them. Most of the time those players would be overpriced or would just plain suck.
2. The Utility player can be either a hitter or pitcher once the season begins. The utility player **MUST** be a hitter for the auction. This rule would allow greater flexibility in trading and would let you tweak your roster just as MLB teams do; they do not all have the same number of hitters and pitchers.
3. Get rid of the current long-term contract formula. In its place, after the 3rd season you can keep a player for one more season at double his contract plus \$2. After this 4th season the player must be thrown back in. If this does not pass just get rid of the long term contract since it is never used; it will help simplify the rules a little.
4. When a bench player is on the DL, sent down, etc., that bench spot should be freed up to allow another player to be placed on the bench. When the DL'd, etc, bench player is activated by his MLB team, the VLFB owner must either put him on his bench or waive him. If his bench is already filled with two MLB active players and the VLFB owner wants to keep him then one of the two 'MLB active' bench players must be waived. Under no circumstances can a bench player that becomes active by his MLB team be placed in the VLFB active roster except through a normal roster or free move. Technically the MLB DL'd player never leaves the VLFB bench.
5. During the all start break week, Roster moves do not have to be submitted until noon on the Thursday of all star week. The moves would be retroactive to the Tuesday of the all star week (two days before) but since MLB teams put off many moves until after the all star game it negatively affects our moves. Since no MLB games are played before this new reporting deadline no decisions are impacted by on field results.
6. Players can be traded directly from the bench to another teams active roster, and visa versa, as long as position eligibility is maintained.
7. Allow any player traded to or signed as a free agent by an American League team during the off-season to be kept by his roto team, much like we do during the season. At the conclusion of the year, he then gets thrown back, even if in the interim he is traded back into the NL.

▼

Did You Know...

Some Interesting Facts

Ed Feldman

Elias Sports Bureau

- ...That the Master Blasters recorded his lowest finish in their 15 years in the league? His 11th place finish eclipses his ineptitude from the inaugural season of 1991 where he finished ninth out of ten teams. 15 years, not bad.
- ...That the KrackerJacks recorded his lowest finish in his 6 years in the league? His 12th place finish eclipses his ineptitude from his inaugural season of 2000 where he finished eleventh thus ending his streak of rising every year.
- ...That the Marauders recorded his highest finish in his 4 years in the league? His 7th place finish surpasses his 2004 previous high finish of tenth. Jump up three in the standings again and you are a money team.
- ...That with the Mutts second place finish and the Master Blasters eleventh place finish, the Mutts have now finished in the money more than any other team in the history of the league? His 11 times passes the Master Blasters 10.
- ...That the 2005 champion BarBarryans finished the season with the lowest point total (85.5) since the league expanded to twelve teams back in 2000? The previous low was the 2004 champion BarBarryans with 97.0 points.
- ...That the 2004 and 2005 seasons are the only years in which the winner had less than 100 total points since expanding to 12 teams in 2000?
- ...That the 2005 BarBarryans won the league with lowest percentage of total points in league history? His 85.5 total points accounted for 71.25% of the total 120 points available. This mark eclipsed the previous 1995 mark set by the champion Futurians, 75% of the total 100 points available. A win is a win though.
- ...That with exception of one season (2003), the total points for the champion since 2001 went down every year? Starting in 2001 the total points by the champion was 115.0, 100.0, 111.0, 97.0 and 85.5 this year. Welcome to parity. I would expect the total points to go up slightly next season, to about 93.
- ...That there were 360 roster transactions and 20 trades during the season?
- ...That I am done writing this article and newsletter?

