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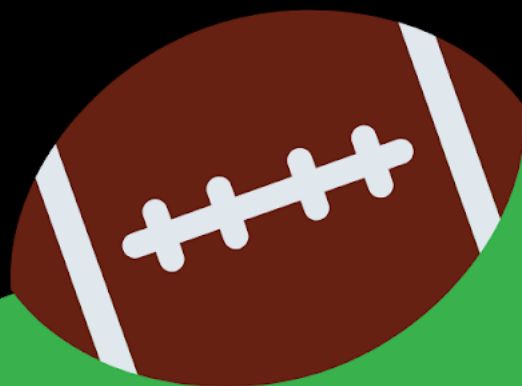# 2022
FANTASY FOOTBALL
STRATEGY GUIDE

REDRAFT & BEST BALL

INCLUDES:
HOW TO DRAFT FROM EACH SPOT
HOW TO WIN ON UNDERDOG FANTASY

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ETR

ETR's 2022 Fantasy Football Strategy Guide
featuring content by Jack Miller

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REDRAFT: GENERAL TIPS

1. You want upside in the final rounds. Players who will actually crack your starting lineup if they hit. And if they don't hit, no biggie, you can just drop them for another player. In fact, it's probably easier mentally to drop a high-upside player who didn't pan out than a floor play who produces a negligible-but-not-zero amount every week.

2. Some platforms force you to pick a defense and kicker, but you can drop them right after the draft for more fliers at RB and WR. Then you can just pick up a D/ST and K before Week 1. That way, you have more roster spots for high-upside fliers.

3. The timing of information is a factor to consider in normal redraft leagues. Someone like William Fuller is tough to trust in best ball because we don't even know whether he'll play this season. In redraft, taking a shot on Fuller has minimal downside because you can drop him before the season if he hasn't signed anywhere yet.

4. If you need to draft a K and/or D/ST at the draft, we have K tiers and D/ST tiers to help you with that.

5. Grinding the waiver wire is paramount. Guys like Elijah Mitchell and Rashaad Penny were critical pieces of many championship teams last year. Part of the reason we go light at RB is that there are usually a few contributors who emerge from the ashes.

REDRAFT: HOW TO DRAFT FROM PICKS 1-4

Draft season is officially upon us — which means there will be heaps of fantasy draft strategy articles from every sports website on the planet. However, there is no one-size-fits-all draft strategy, as your plan of attack should vary wildly based on what pick you have.
Let's get right into how you should draft if you pick from 1.01-1.04 in a 12-team league.

ROUND 1 STRATEGY

There are a consensus top four players by ADP this season in most formats: Jonathan Taylor, Christian McCaffrey, Cooper Kupp, and Justin Jefferson. Taylor is the reigning RB1 coming off a 2,200-yard season with 20 total touchdowns. He was undeniably prolific in 2021, but his 22.0 PPR points per game were the lowest mark by an overall RB1 since 2015 (Devonta Freeman, 21.1). Still, Taylor's rushing volume is matched only by Derrick Henry, and his serviceable usage in the passing game — he had 40 catches for 360 yards and two touchdowns on 51 targets last year — entrenches him as a top-tier RB.

McCaffrey is the only other back in the conversation with Taylor. He's played a combined 10 games over the past two seasons, but his production when on the field is among the best of all time. In four games with above a 50% snap share last year, he averaged 25.9 points. Two years ago, he averaged 30.1 points across three games. And in his historic 2019 campaign in which he played every game, he scored 29.5 points per outing. Simply put, there is no one in fantasy that can compete with a healthy McCaffrey. There's room for McCaffrey to fall from his 2019-2021 per-game production and still be worth the 1.01, so he can pay off his ADP even if the Panthers scale back his workload to keep him healthy. The ankle and hamstring issues that have plagued him over the past two years could arise at any point, but we view CMC as the most valuable asset in fantasy in half-PPR and full-PPR. His dual-faceted skill set and elite pass-game usage are unmatched. In standard leagues, Taylor is likely the safer pick given he's a sure bet for 300+ carries.

Next up are the two receivers. Kupp is coming off arguably the best individual wideout season of the century, which culminated with a championship ring and Super Bowl MVP honors. The Rams are in largely the same spot they were last year — just replacing Robert Woods/Odell Beckham with Allen Robinson — so Kupp is poised to post high-end WR1 numbers again. He's sure to take a step back from 2021 simply because what he did last year was so unbelievable, but there's no reason to expect a stark drop-off for the 29-year-old. Matthew Stafford is reportedly dealing with bad tendinitis in his throwing elbow, which adds some risk to Kupp's profile, but all indications are that L.A. is on top of the situation and has minimal concern about his 2022 outlook.
Justin Jefferson finished third in the NFL in target share in 2021 and remains the alpha pass catcher in the Minnesota aerial attack. New head coach Kevin O'Connell is reportedly

implementing a pass-heavy offense with the Vikings; Jefferson himself remarked that "it's not a run-first offense anymore." For reference, Minnesota ranked 20th in Pass Rate Over Expectation last year. Behind Jefferson, the Vikings only have soon-to-be 32-year-old Adam Thielen and serviceable role player K.J. Osborn. Thielen has seen his yards per route run fall in four consecutive seasons, while Osborn doesn't project as much more than a solid WR3. That means Jefferson should get all the targets he can handle in the new-look Minnesota offense. Still only 23 years old, Jefferson is an ascending superstar who has a strong argument to be the first WR drafted in fantasy leagues this season. You can't go wrong with either Kupp or Jefferson with the third overall pick. At 1.04, we suggest taking whichever wideout falls in leagues that give at least a half-point per reception.

In standard leagues, we have six running backs ranked ahead of WR1 Kupp. Derrick Henry, Austin Ekeler, Dalvin Cook, and Joe Mixon warrant legitimate consideration in early Round 1 in standard formats (and you could even make a case for Ekeler in PPR due to his insane receiving volume). However, the vast majority of leagues are at least half-PPR at this point, so we think some combination of Taylor, McCaffrey, Kupp, and Jefferson should be the first four selections most of the time. Ja'Marr Chase's name is worth mentioning after he posted one of the greatest rookie WR seasons of all time. We don't recommend taking him over Kupp or Jefferson, but you could definitely make an argument for it.

ROUNDS 2 & 3

Now that you've locked up one of the most valuable players in fantasy, it's time to shift your focus to the 2-3 turn. Rounds 2 and 3 are stocked with talent as expected, making it difficult to go wrong with anyone in this range. I asked ETR dynasty guru Anthony Amico how he typically plays these rounds when he has an early pick. His response:

The 2-3 turn is a verifiable gold mine in 2022 drafts, leaving fantasy gamers once again in dominant position with an early pick. There is typically an opportunity to wind up with an elite TE. Mark Andrews is someone who could compete for the overall TE1 after an excellent finish to 2021, and he is typically available late in Round 2. If you can't get Andrews — or elect to pass — Kyle Pitts has tantalizing upside in Round 3 as someone who is ostensibly a WR with TE eligibility.

This is also a good spot in the draft to buy the dip on Alvin Kamara. There is still some suspension risk, but that appears to be waning by the day. Kamara could create some dominant teams this year.

After that, there are three core WRs worth building around — though certainly others to consider. They are Mike Evans, Tee Higgins, and A.J. Brown. Evans has always been

remarkably consistent, and is sure to be a fixture yet again for Tom Brady and the Bucs. Higgins we have well ahead of ADP, and he has a similar range of outcomes to his star (and first-round) teammate Ja'Marr Chase. Brown is not incredibly sexy given the pass game he is attached to, but he could snag a dominant share of the targets and has TD upside for at team that lacks big red-zone targets.

As Amico says, Andrews and Pitts both offer legitimate overall TE1 upside in Rounds 2 and 3. Andrews' numbers may dip slightly as the Ravens will likely transition back to a run-heavy attack, but he was so amazing last year that he can afford to fall and still be worth a second-round pick. Pitts frequently drops into the back half of the third round, but he deserves to be in this conversation considering he posted 1,026 yards as a rookie.

Kamara is someone I have been heavily targeting over the past month. The suspension risk is real — he's facing a battery charge stemming from a nightclub incident over last Pro Bowl weekend — but his court date was recently pushed back to late September. That was the third time his legal proceedings have been postponed. The NFL typically likes to wait for legal situations to play out before issuing a suspension, so it seems likely Kamara is available for Week 1. Our Evan Silva notes in his Top 150 that he is "[increasingly] optimistic AK will avoid suspension after the off-field incident [in 2022]." The wild card here is that there's a video of the incident which is not yet public; if the video leaks, the public outcry may force the league to act. He's a bigger gamble than most because of the uncertainty, but the juice is likely worth the squeeze in this instance, as Kamara is a top-12 player in fantasy without the suspension risk.

Saquon Barkley, Leonard Fournette, and Javonte Williams are worth a look, too. All three project for the multi-faceted workload needed to finish as a top-three running back.
And as usual, the 2-3 turn is stacked with wideouts. Evans, Higgins, and Brown are strong options as Amico mentioned. Keenan Allen, D.J. Moore, Tyreek Hill, Michael Pittman, and Mike Williams all go in this range in sharper best ball lobbies. If you were lucky enough to nab Taylor or McCaffrey in Round 1 and are playing in half-PPR or full-PPR, it's easy to forget about RB for a while and use Rounds 2-5 to bulk up at other positions.
With Kupp or Jefferson, you have a tougher decision: Do you embrace Zero RB, or take one of the RBs mentioned above? Both are viable options, and it likely comes down to which particular players are available and your personal preference.

QBs like Josh Allen and Patrick Mahomes may come off the board here in some leagues — especially more casual leagues — but we don't think it's worth paying that much of a premium for a quarterback in 1-QB formats. You'll likely want to go RB or WR at this turn with Andrews and Pitts warranting consideration as well.

ROUNDS 4 & 5

Rounds 4 and 5 are the heart of the "running back dead zone" — a moniker given to Rounds 3-6 because of how unkind they've been to RBs historically. On the converse, wide receivers in this range have typically thrived. With that in mind, it's no surprise that our Evan Silva finds himself preferring wideouts at the 4-5 turn. In his words:

My five favorite draft-day targets going around the fourth-/fifth-round turn all happen to be receivers. I expect Broncos top downfield threat Courtland Sutton to instantly riff with Russell Wilson, arguably the NFL's best deep passer of the past 10 years. Terry McLaurin was quarterback-proof for the first three seasons of his career; Carson Wentz will be the best passer of McLaurin's life. Matthew Stafford is a wide receiver elevator and the best quarterback of Allen Robinson's football-playing career. Gabriel Davis looks locked in as Josh Allen's No. 2 receiver behind Stefon Diggs. Entering his age-29 campaign, Brandin Cooks has plenty in the tank after banking 2021 career highs in targets (134) and catches (90).

You don't want to pigeonhole yourself into only looking at one position, but it's likely wise to focus on WRs with these two picks, and the five Silva named are great options. Darren Waller and George Kittle are in play, too, as they mark the end of the second tier of TEs. Overall, I'm mainly just looking at positions besides RB here.

For fantasy gamers who went WR-heavy in the first three rounds and can't afford to forgo running back with these selections, Jets second-round rookie RB Breece Hall is a candidate to slip a little bit in home leagues. J.K. Dobbins is also undervalued according to our rankings, as he's now a year removed from last summer's ACL tear and should spearhead a prolific Ravens rushing attack.

ROUNDS 6 & 7

Rounds 6 and 7 are probably where you want to start considering taking a quarterback. While the late-round QB strategy has dominated the past half-decade of fantasy football drafts, times are changing as the market catches on to the power of rushing ability and youth at the position. Gone are the days of drafting profiles like Year 2 Patrick Mahomes and Lamar Jackson in the double-digit rounds; Trey Lance's ADP exemplifies how the public is no longer letting high-upside dual-threat QBs fall simply because they haven't proven their talent yet. Sharp Football's Rich Hribar highlighted that the correlation between QB ADP and end-of-year fantasy output has strengthened in the past two years:

"Last year, positional ADP among the top 24 quarterbacks carried an r-squared correlation to fantasy points per game of .5826 after a .4995 r-squared in 2020 … From 2010-2019, that correlation was just .2194."

In simple terms, we used to be pretty bad at predicting which QBs would score the most fantasy points, but that has changed in recent seasons. With only a handful of QBs offering legitimate overall QB1 upside, it makes more sense to pay up for a top-10 QB. Kyler Murray and Jalen Hurts are passable options in Round 6, particularly the former. In Round 7, Hurts becomes a smash if available.

At this point, you may also be lacking at RB relative to your league-mates. That's by design since Rounds 3-6 are widely regarded as the "dead zone", as we discussed. RB is consistently the position we are worst at projecting in the preseason, so it's alright to go into Week 1 without a solid every-week RB2. Rather, we should aim to assemble a stable of high-upside backs in hopes that one or two break out during the season.

Rounds 6 and 7 are roughly the part of the draft where we want to shift our focus back to running back. Since RB scoring has been relatively flat from Round 4 to Round 10 historically, we are getting comparable production at a much cheaper cost by loading up in the later single-digit rounds, while ensuring superiority over our league-mates at wide receiver.

The Establish The Run rankings can help you figure out which specific players to target, plus we have an article on RBs in Round 6 or later to draft. Generally, we are looking for backs with some type of Week 1 role who have the potential to grow into a larger role with the chaos of the NFL season. A perfect example is someone like A.J. Dillon, who should see double-digit touches early on and boasts legitimate league-winning upside if something happens to Aaron Jones.

It's also fine to take a WR in these rounds — especially if you have more of a balanced build through five rounds rather than WR-heavy. There are plenty of young emerging wideouts in line for significant volume this year, such as Darnell Mooney, Elijah Moore, Drake London, and DeVonta Smith. As usual, ETR's rankings are your best resource for deciphering which particular players to pick.

ROUNDS 8-11

By Round 8, your starting lineup is really starting to take shape. How you draft in Rounds 8-11 depends heavily on what your build looks like through seven rounds. If you've followed this guide to this point, you will most likely be focused on running backs in this part of the draft. The archetype we're looking for is the same as it was in the last section: players who can contribute in some manner in Week 1 but have the upside to smash over the second half of the season. So many RBs fit that mold in these rounds, but some of my personal favorites are James Cook, Devin Singletary (don't draft both Bills backs on the same team, as they cap each other's upside), Chase Edmonds, and Melvin Gordon.

There are also a number of viable receivers here, but you probably don't need to take one unless they fall past ADP, as we want to load up on WRs in the first six rounds or so. With that being said, it's your team, and there's nothing wrong with taking a WR if you feel strongly about a player. It's just that we are probably playing catch-up at RB in these rounds and wideouts have been a slightly worse investment in this range historically.

You can also consider taking a QB and/or TE in Rounds 8-11. The Trey Lance, Russell Wilson, Tom Brady, or Dak Prescott QB tier is arguably the latest group with true top-three positional upside, so they are all strong options in Round 8. You don't need to draft more than one QB and one TE since you can use the waiver wire to fill those spots if the guy you draft doesn't work out.

ROUND 12+

Fill out your roster! I recommend only drafting one QB and one TE in most cases. The one exception would be if you want to use your last-round pick on someone like Deshaun Watson and see if there's a chance he plays this year. There's a decent chance Watson doesn't see the field in 2022, but I have no problem forgoing an RB6 or something to secure league-winning upside with Watson. Otherwise, there's no need to take a second QB because you can just pick one up on waivers if your guy gets hurt or has a difficult matchup.

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REDRAFT: HOW TO DRAFT FROM PICKS 5-8

Fantasy draft season is upon us, and many fantasy players are beginning to dig into draft strategy now that the calendar has flipped to August. Your strategy, of course, depends on what pick you have. Today, we'll dig into how ETR believes you should draft if you pick between 1.05-1.08 in a normal 12-team league. Let's get right to it.

ROUND 1 STRATEGY

As discussed in the Picks 1-4 section, there is a consensus top four this year in leagues that give at least a half-point per reception: Jonathan Taylor, Christian McCaffrey, Cooper Kupp, and Justin Jefferson. If you're playing half-PPR or full-PPR and one of those guys falls to you, you have a simple decision.

Otherwise, there are a host of viable options in the middle of the first round. Widely regarded as the WR3 after Kupp and Jefferson, Ja'Marr Chase is a common selection at 1.05. The No. 5 pick in the 2021 NFL Draft finished fourth in the league in receiving yards as a rookie and posted a ludicrous 11.4 yards per target. He also found the end zone 13 times, eight of which came from 30+ yards out. For reference, no other player had more than four receiving touchdowns of at least 30 yards. Chase is almost certain to not have as many long-range house calls in 2022 — which will also lower his yards per target — but his outlandish rookie production in combination with his pristine prospect profile nearly guarantees last season wasn't a fluke. Tee Higgins matched Chase in volume when both were healthy in 2021, but it's reasonable to believe Chase distances himself as Cincinnati's WR1 with another year of pro experience under his belt. If you're looking for a WR in the middle of Round 1, you won't find a better option than Chase.

Austin Ekeler is Chase's primary competition for the fifth overall pick. Ekeler led all running backs with 94 targets a season ago (Najee Harris also had 94) and posted 1,558 total yards en route to an overall RB2 finish. Notably, he found the end zone 12 times on the ground after never having more than three rushing touchdowns in a season before 2021. The difference: Brandon Staley entrusted Ekeler with the goal-line role, which no previous Chargers coach had done. Ekeler had 12 carries inside the 5-yard line last year, more than doubling his previous career-high. While it's unlikely he has 20 total touchdowns again in 2022, the type of touches Ekeler is getting — receptions and goal-line touches — are the most valuable kind for fantasy purposes. The Chargers drafted Texas A&M's Isaiah Spiller in the fourth round of the 2022 NFL Draft, but he should simply fill the RB2 role that Justin Jackson, Joshua Kelley, and Larry Rountree occupied last year. If you want a running back with the fifth or sixth pick, Ekeler is a sensical choice, especially if your league gives at least a half-point per reception. In half-PPR and full-PPR, we have both Ekeler and Chase as top-six players.

Things get muddy after that; the seventh and eighth picks are difficult this year. You could realistically make a case for five or six players: Stefon Diggs, Dalvin Cook, Davante Adams, Derrick Henry, and even Najee Harris and Travis Kelce are all in the conversation.
Diggs quietly posted 103 catches for 1,225 yards and 10 scores last season, finishing as the PPR WR7 in fantasy. His yards per target dipped to 7.5, a far cry from the 9.2 mark he posted

in 2021 and his 8.5 career average. Considering his aDOT actually increased from 2020 to 2021, this is likely a noisy result that'll correct itself in 2022. Diggs also caught deep balls at a below-average rate last year, which we shouldn't expect to happen again considering his talent and the ability of Josh Allen. Diggs finished second in the NFL in red-zone targets and targets inside the 10-yard line and remains the alpha WR1 in one of the league's best aerial attacks. With Emmanuel Sanders and Cole Beasley gone, the Bills are turning to Gabe Davis, Isaiah McKenzie, and Jamison Crowder behind Diggs. While Davis has flashed home-run upside, he's unproven coming off a 549-yard sophomore campaign and has a wide range of outcomes. There's a chance Diggs simply goes nuclear as a target hog in arguably the NFL's best passing offense. Especially in PPR, he's in line for another monstrous fantasy season.

The downside of drafting Dalvin Cook is well-known at this point: He's never played more than 14 games in a season and has dealt with an ACL tear, soft-tissue injuries, and recurring shoulder issues. With that being said, a healthy Cook is among the most valuable assets in fantasy. Last year, he only scored six touchdowns in 13 games after posting 30 TDs in his previous 28 games and still averaged 16.4 points per game. Kevin O'Connell is reportedly bringing a pass-heavier attack to Minnesota, which may ding Cook's rushing volume slightly, but that also means he could push for a career-high in targets if he stays healthy. If he stays healthy, Cook could be a league-winner from his current ADP, but "if healthy" is a big caveat for someone with his injury history.

Adams has been one of the most reliable options in fantasy over the past few seasons, but he holds some uncertainty in 2022 now that he's with the Raiders. Darren Waller and Hunter Renfrow are stronger target competition than he dealt with in Green Bay, plus Derek Carr is a downgrade from Aaron Rodgers. Adams is still likely the best real-life receiver in the NFL entering his age-29 season, but he's not as much of a fantasy slam dunk as he has been in previous years. Still, he's a fine pick in the back half of the first round.

Henry was leading all running backs in fantasy points last year before a foot injury stole the second half of his season. Now 28 years old with nearly 1,500 career touches, one has to wonder how long The Big Dog can hold up with his massive rushing workload. The Titans' offense as a whole could take a step back this year after losing A.J. Brown, which bodes poorly for Henry considering his one-dimensional usage and reliance on positive game script. In standard leagues, Henry's rushing volume vaults him into the top half of Round 1, but he's a risky proposition in leagues that reward pass-catching.

Harris and Kelce make more sense at the end of Round 1, but both offer enough to be mentioned here. Harris tied Ekeler as the RB target leader (94) as a rookie and also saw 300 carries. That workload is legitimately absurd. Unfortunately, the Steelers have the worst offensive line in the league according to ETR O-line guru Brandon Thorn. Harris will also have to deal with a QB carousel of Mitchell Trubisky and Kenny Pickett, although it's fair to question whether that's actually a downgrade from 2021 Ben Roethlisberger. Harris' volume should be among the league's best, but his path to a league-winning season is murky due to factors out of his control. Mark Andrews snapped Kelce's five-year run as the fantasy TE1, but the latter still posted 1,125 yards and nine touchdowns. With Tyreek Hill in South Beach, Kelce could post a gaudy target share in his 10th NFL season. His advanced age is a

concern, but the prospect of getting Patrick Mahomes' undisputed No. 1 option is intriguing enough to warrant consideration in the middle of the first round.

ROUND 2

Fantasy players with a middle pick will have a bounty of riches available to them in Round 2. The question then becomes: How does my strategy change based on which position I selected in Round 1? Zero RB is certainly a viable option in PPR leagues that have three starting WR spots, but it's often more comfortable to take a running back here, especially since Rounds 3-6 are a friendly range for receivers (more on this in the next section). ETR Projections Lead Mark Dankenbring agrees, and he highlighted three particular running backs he's targeting:

Picking 5-8 in the first round lands you in the 17-20 range in the second, so my initial thought when drafting from this spot is to swoop up any value if someone from the top 12-14 players in ETR rankings drops to me. I'd run the card up if Travis Kelce somehow fell (which he might in home leagues) or snag CeeDee Lamb if he's there and I went RB in the first round.

Overall, though, this is one of my favorite areas to target for running backs in 2022 drafts. Alvin Kamara, Aaron Jones, and Saquon Barkley all currently have ADPs between 18 and 23, so at least one should be available at this range in every draft. In PPR leagues especially, I love the pass-catching upside these backs provide, and think Barkley specifically has the RB1 overall ceiling available to him in the second round.

Kamara still carries some risk of suspension this season as his trial for alleged battery continues to get pushed back, so I might opt for Jones given his upside as a pass catcher linked to Aaron Rodgers and a Green Bay offense searching for playmakers in a post-Davante Adams world. Plus, he still has three-down upside if anything were to happen to A.J. Dillon. Regardless of how it shakes out, I'd be thrilled with any three of these backs in the middle of the second and would look to target WR heavily in the next 5-7 rounds if I end up starting RB-RB.

Mike Evans and Mark Andrews are worthy of consideration too, but I generally prefer the RBs, and that's especially true if I took a non-RB in Round 1. Barkley, Jones, and Kamara all possess monstrous ceilings that Evans and Andrews simply cannot touch.
In more casual home leagues, QBs may start to come off the board here, but we don't think it's worth spending such high draft capital on the position. Josh Allen and Patrick Mahomes are great, but you can get comparable production rounds later.

ROUNDS 3-6

Many fantasy players refer to Rounds 3-6 as the "running back dead zone" because RBs in this range have generally underperformed expectations historically. Meanwhile, wide receivers in these rounds tend to be better than expected. The graph below demonstrates that the difference in scoring between RBs and WRs is at its widest in this part of the draft.

PPR Scoring by FFPC ADP for RBs and WRs (2017-2021)

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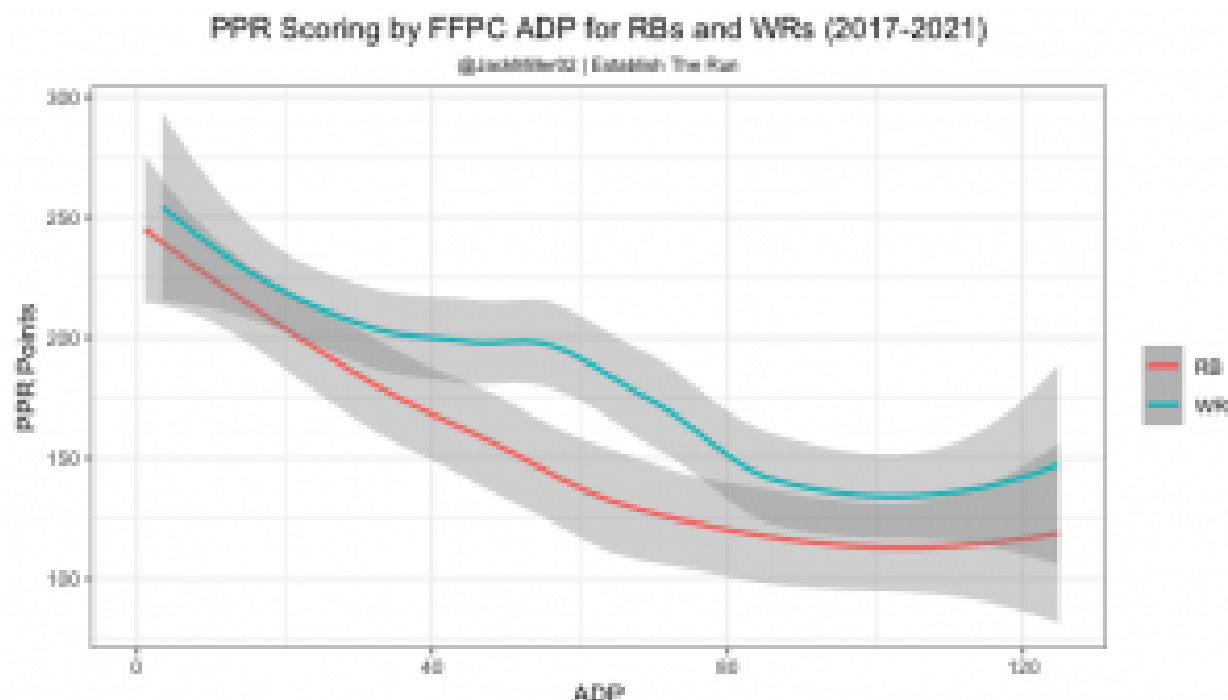
ADP has corrected somewhat on sharper best ball sites, but it still makes sense to lean on historical trends when they are this extreme. Plus, drafts in more casual home leagues likely won't mirror best ball ADP. You don't want to set a hard-and-fast rule to *never* take a running back, especially if one falls past ADP, but you should be cognizant of what past data indicates. If you do take a runner, Breece Hall and J.K. Dobbins stand out as values in our rankings relative to FantasyPros ADP.

Mostly though, we want to focus on positions besides RB in Rounds 3-6. For fantasy players who didn't take Kelce or Andrews in the first two rounds, Kyle Pitts is a solid option in the middle of Round 3. Pitts set the modern NFL record for most receiving yards in a season by a rookie tight end with 1,026 last year. He only scored one touchdown — an impressive feat given he had 110 targets — but we should expect his TD output to positively regress toward the mean in Year 2. The Falcons' passing offense is one of the worst in the league on paper, but Pitts' combination of talent and projected volume makes him a sound choice in Round 3. As we talked about, these rounds are a fantastic time to load up on wide receivers — and there are a ton of good options this year. You've got D.J. Moore, Michael Pittman Jr., Mike Williams, and Jaylen Waddle all going smack in the middle of Round 3 in sharp best ball drafts. Guys like Tee Higgins, A.J. Brown, and Keenan Allen are also candidates to slip a few spots from their early Round 3 ADPs.

In the fourth round, Jaylen Waddle, Marquise Brown, Terry McLaurin, Courtland Sutton, Jerry Jeudy, and Diontae Johnson all possess elite target ceilings. In Round 5, DK Metcalf, Brandin Cooks, JuJu Smith-Schuster, Chris Godwin, Darnell Mooney, Rashod Bateman, Amon-Ra St. Brown, and Michael Thomas are viable options. Round 6 is home to numerous young breakout candidates, such as Elijah Moore and Drake London. Many of the guys mentioned

here will likely go even later in home leagues, but this is where they are currently being drafted in sharper best ball formats. You'll need to read the draft room to tell exactly how heavily your league is targeting WRs and when you'll need to make your move to get a few of these guys. The larger point though is that Rounds 3-6 have historically been a gold mine for receiver production, and there's no reason to expect that to change in 2022. The Establish The Run rankings are your best resource for figuring out which specific players to target, but you can't go wrong with anyone named above.

You can also start thinking about taking a QB in Rounds 5 and 6. The late-round quarterback strategy dominated the past half-decade of fantasy analysis, but things are shifting as the league gets an influx of talented QBs (and dual-threat QBs) and fantasy managers catch on to the value of rushing in fantasy. Sharp Football's Rich Hribar noted the correlation between QB ADP and end-of-year fantasy scoring has strengthened in the past two years:

"Last year, positional ADP among the top 24 quarterbacks carried an r-squared correlation to fantasy points per game of .5826 after a .4995 r-squared in 2020 … From 2010-2019, that correlation was just .2194."

Essentially, we are getting better at predicting fantasy QB scoring now that the value of rushing and upside is better reflected in rankings. With only a handful of players offering true overall QB1 upside, paying up at QB (to a point) is back en vogue. There's nothing wrong with taking Patrick Mahomes, Justin Herbert, Lamar Jackson, or Kyler Murray in Round 5. In Round 6, Murray and Jalen Hurts are both solid options as high-upside multi-faceted QBs. You don't *have* to take a QB here — there are still solid options later on — but it's far more appealing now than it was a couple of seasons ago,

ROUNDS 7-11

If you hammered WRs in Rounds 3-6, you'll probably enter Round 7 lighter at RB than your league-mates. That's by design since RB scoring in Rounds 3-10 is flatter than it is for wideouts, so we can get semi-comparable production at a much cheaper cost by waiting until the end of the dead zone to load up. As mentioned in the previous section, this is also an ideal time to take a signal-caller, as it's worth spending up for a dual-threat QB with top-three positional upside.

I asked our Adam Levitan how he typically likes to approach these rounds. His response:

If I don't have a QB yet and one of Jalen Hurts or Trey Lance is available, I'm prioritizing them. The drop-off after that to the pure pocket passers such as Joe Burrow and Tom Brady really caps the upside.

My favorite RB target in this range is Tony Pollard. Roughly 99% of the time, I ignore the "RB is going to play WR" nonsense, but Pollard has a legit shot to be the 1%. Dallas is desperate for WR help, Pollard is learning to play the slot and wide, and he is their second-best

playmaker behind CeeDee Lamb. He must be on the field if Dallas is going to play efficient offense. There are also paths to him getting a feature back role at some point if Ezekiel Elliott is as bad as he was last season.

Other RBs I target in this range are Chase Edmonds, Rhamondre Stevenson, and Miles Sanders. And in full-PPR, the roles of James Cook and Rachaad White are worth taking fliers on. I'm looking for RBs in good offenses who can catch the football.

Note that I'm mostly passing over the TEs in this range. If I don't have one of the difference-makers that go in the first 4-5 rounds, I'm fine punting the position down to guys like Albert Okwuebunam, Pat Freiermuth, Gerald Everett, and others way later.

If you left Round 6 with a more balanced build, it's okay to take WRs in this range too. But generally, we think it's optimal to go WR-heavy in Rounds 3-6 before stocking up on runners in Rounds 7-11. With that being said, it's still your team, so feel free to take a wideout if you feel strongly about someone or if a guy falls past ADP.

ROUND 12+

Fill out your roster! I recommend only drafting one QB and one TE in most cases. The one exception would be if you want to draft someone like Deshaun Watson and see if there's a chance he plays this year. There's a decent chance Watson doesn't see the field in 2022, but I have no problem forgoing an RB6 or something to secure league-winning upside with Watson. Otherwise, there's no need to take a second QB because you can just pick one up on waivers if your guy gets hurt or has a difficult matchup.

*For full access to our 2022 rankings, analysis, and strategy articles, [purchase our Draft Kit Pro](#). Make sure to use promo code **GUIDE** for 10% off any of our products.*

REDRAFT: HOW TO DRAFT FROM PICKS 9-12

Fantasy draft season is upon us, and many fantasy players are beginning to dig into draft strategy now that the calendar has flipped to August. Your strategy, of course, depends on what pick you have. Today, we'll dig into how ETR believes you should draft if you pick between 1.09-1.12 in a normal 12-team league. Let's get right to it.

ROUNDS 1 & 2 STRATEGY

Fantasy players picking at the end of Round 1 have myriad passable options regardless of what happens in the first eight picks, but it's difficult to outline an exact strategy without knowing exactly which players are available. Still, let's run through some of the names that warrant consideration at the 1-2 turn.

Stefon Diggs may not make it to the end of the first round, but he's a strong pick if available. Buffalo's top wideout finished as the WR7 in fantasy in 2021 with a 103-1,225-10 line. He only averaged 7.5 yards per target, a stark decrease from the 9.2 mark he posted in 2020 and his 8.5 career average. His aDOT actually went up from 2020 to 2021, so we shouldn't expect Diggs' middling efficiency to repeat itself. Diggs also caught deep balls at a below-average clip last year, likely an aberration given his individual talent and Josh Allen's big arm. The Bills also lost Emmanuel Sanders and Cole Beasley, leaving unproven (although highly intriguing) Gabe Davis as Diggs' primary target competition. In all likelihood, Davis is ready to step into a true WR2 role, but there's still a possibility that the vacated targets simply lead to a Diggs explosion in 2022. He's a great pick late in Round 1.

Davante Adams isn't as valuable in Vegas as he was in Green Bay — both because of increased target competition and the QB downgrade from Aaron Rodgers to Derek Carr — but we're still talking about a player who many consider to be the best receiver in football. Adams will immediately assert himself as Carr's top target and should see plenty of targets in a fantasy-friendly AFC West. There's certainly more risk with Adams than there has been in previous years, but he's still a fine option in the back half of Round 1.

CeeDee Lamb ascended into the WR1 role for Dallas last season and could go berserk in 2022 with Jalen Tolbert as the presumed Week 1 WR2. Michael Gallup will return at some point — likely closer to November — but Lamb will be Dak Prescott's alpha receiver all year long. The top dog in a high-volume passing attack with minimal target competition, Lamb has overall WR1 upside in his third professional season.

Travis Kelce is the last non-RB to consider with these picks. While his advanced age (he'll be 33 in October) is a concern, Kelce will dominate targets now that Tyreek Hill is in Miami. JuJu Smith-Schuster, Marquez Valdes-Scantling, Skyy Moore, and Mecole Hardman are serviceable, but Kelce will be Patrick Mahomes' most trusted target by far.

Otherwise, we're looking at a tier of RBs at the 1-2 turn. We rank Dalvin Cook near the top of this group. The risk in drafting Cook is well-known: He has never played more than 14 games in a season and has dealt with soft-tissue injuries, an ACL tear, and recurring shoulder problems. However, he's absolute dynamite when on the field. Last year, Cook ran into

negative touchdown variance, scoring just six times in 13 games after hitting paydirt 30 times in his previous 28 outings. He still averaged a robust 16.4 points per game. Kevin O'Connell is bringing a pass-happier offense to Minnesota, which may detract from Cook's rushing workload slightly, but he should flirt with a career high in targets if he can stay healthy. He has league-winning upside at the end of the first round.

Najee Harris posted a position-high 94 targets as a rookie (Austin Ekeler also had 94) along with 300 carries. That volume is simply absurd. However, Pittsburgh's QB carousel and an O-line that our Brandon Thorn ranked last in the league raise questions of whether Harris has true overall RB1 upside in the Steelers' offense. The concerns pushing Harris into late Round 1 are no fault of his own, and at some point, the workload becomes too lucrative to pass up.

Derrick Henry is a potential top-five pick in standard formats, but his one-dimensional workload drops him to the 1-2 turn in PPR leagues. The Big Dog was leading all RBs in fantasy points last year before a foot injury prematurely ended his regular season. Now 28 years old with almost 1,500 touches in his career, it's fair to question how long King Henry can maintain his top-flight fantasy RB status. An uninspiring offensive environment also threatens Henry's fantasy value in 2022, as he has been a script-dependent back throughout his career due to his reliance on a massive rushing workload.

Joe Mixon is another back whose pass-catching role (or lack thereof) caps his PPR upside, but the rushing work is as good as anyone in the league. Mixon scored 16 touchdowns in 16 games in a much-improved Bengals offense in 2021, and his role as Cincinnati's bellcow on early downs and in short-yardage situations solidifies him as a Round 2 pick, even in PPR. In standard leagues, Mixon is worth a first-round pick.

D'Andre Swift and Aaron Jones both offer tantalizing upside in PPR formats but lack the rushing volume necessary to be a viable option this early in standard formats. Jones has averaged 6.7 targets per contest in games without Davante Adams the last three seasons and could be Aaron Rodgers' highest-volume pass catcher with such a weak Green Bay receiving corps. Swift was pacing for 114 targets before getting injured midway through last year, and he should flirt with triple-digit targets once again.

You could make an argument for Saquon Barkley at the 1-2 turn as well, as he's now almost two years removed from the devastating knee injury he suffered at the beginning of the 2020 campaign. Much healthier and in a new-look Giants offense under Brian Daboll, Barkley should regain his status as an every-down workhorse. He has an overall RB1 ceiling if he can regain his form from his first two years in the NFL.

With so many viable options, the Establish The Run Rankings can help you parse through which particular players you should draft.

ROUNDS 3 & 4

Teams with a late pick won't get their third pick until the end of Round 3. That lands these 3-4 turn picks firmly in the "running back dead zone" — a moniker given to Rounds 3-6 because RBs in this range have underperformed expectations historically. On the other hand, receivers

in these rounds tend to do better than expected. You can see in the graph below that the scoring gap between RBs and WRs is at its widest in Rounds 3-6. WR scoring also torpedoes around pick 60, so we want to pack in as many wideouts as possible before the decline.

PPR Scoring by FFPC ADP for RBs and WRs (2017-2021)
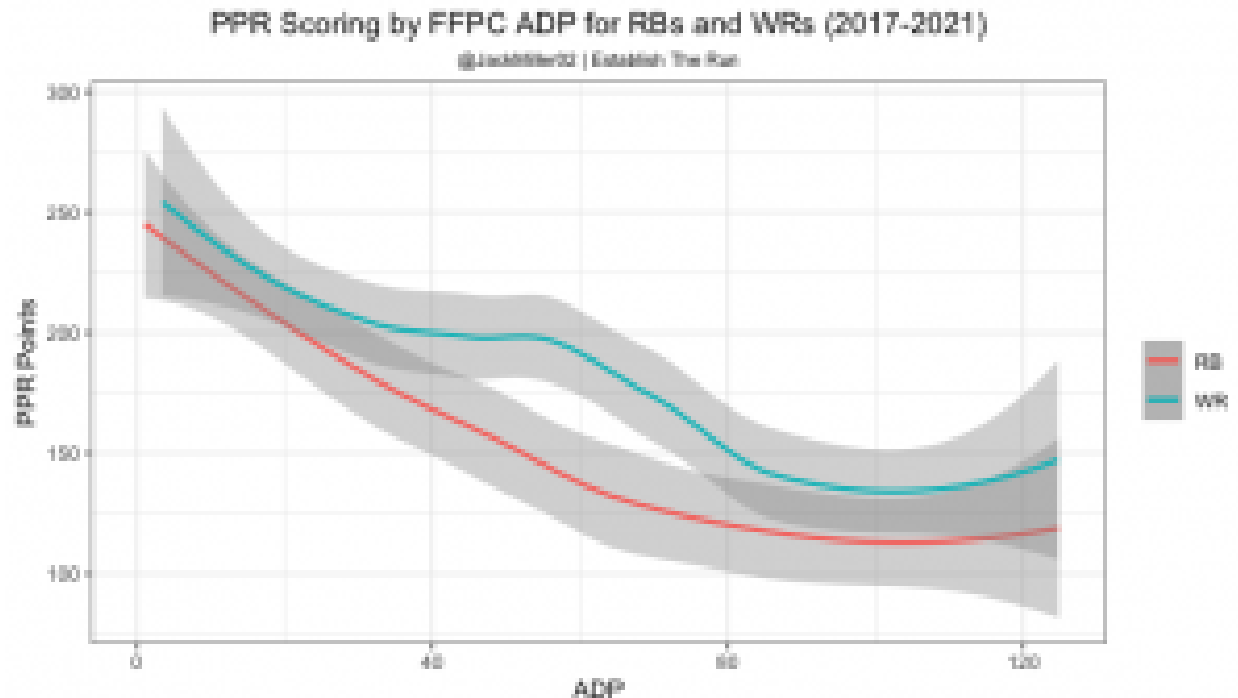
ADP has corrected on sharper best ball sites so that wideouts go earlier than they did in past seasons, but most home leagues likely won't have the same WR fervor. You don't want to set a hard rule for yourself to never take a running back — especially if you started with Travis Kelce and CeeDee Lamb in the first two rounds — but we generally want to focus on the WR position with these picks. If you got at least one runner in the first two rounds, WR-WR is a strong play at the 3-4 turn.

D.J. Moore has been one of the most dependable WRs in the league over the past few seasons and now gets the best QB of his young career in Baker Mayfield. He's never scored more than four touchdowns in a season, which is slightly concerning despite the volatility of TDs, but the target volume and yardage are so lucrative. Moore never had a week with fewer than seven targets in 2021.

Jaylen Waddle topped the triple-digit mark in receptions as a rookie and should have plenty of engineered touches with Mike McDaniel at the helm. While Tyreek Hill offers strong target competition, Waddle is talented enough to carve out a sturdy target share as the WR2. Mike Williams is the type of big-bodied receiver Justin Herbert can trust in the red zone, and Keenan Allen's advanced age and declining efficiency metrics could signal a shift toward Williams as the WR1. If Williams can seize the WR1 crown, he'll crush ADP in one of the pass-heaviest offenses in the league. Even as the WR2, Williams can pay off ADP.

Michael Pittman Jr. broke out as a sophomore and now has Matt Ryan throwing him the rock instead of Carson Wentz. The Colts did little to upgrade WR in the offseason, and Pittman has only Parris Campbell and Alec Pierce as target competition at WR. He should operate as the clear alpha for the Colts' passing game once again.

Both Courtland Sutton and Jerry Jeudy got a massive QB upgrade with Russell Wilson coming to town. It's an ambiguous situation regarding who will emerge as the WR1 — early camp reports favor Sutton — but both should see triple-digit looks in a much-improved Denver aerial attack.

If you're lucky, one of Tee Higgins, Keenan Allen, or A.J. Brown could slip toward the end of Round 3. If any of them fall to the 3-4 turn, that's a smash pick. As always, the Establish The Run rankings are your best friend for deciphering which particular player(s) you should pick, but there are so many viable WR options at this turn. I find myself doubling up at receiver most of the time when I have a late pick.

Kyle Pitts is another option for fantasy gamers who missed out on Kelce but still want that elite tight end. Pitts had the most receiving yards of any rookie TE in the modern NFL era in 2021. He should be the focal point of the (admittedly bad) Falcons' passing offense, and that merits a look if he falls to the back half of Round 3.

For teams that can't afford to pass up on RB with these picks — maybe if you had the aforementioned Kelce-Lamb start — we have Breece Hall and Travis Etienne as values in our rankings in PPR formats. Both were high-level prospects who could fall in casual leagues simply because they haven't proven their talent in the NFL yet. In standard leagues, J.K. Dobbins becomes intriguing as the clear lead RB in a run-heavy Baltimore offense, even though the 3-4 turn would be at the higher end of his range.

ROUNDS 5 & 6

The 5-6 turn is still firmly in the dead zone, so we still generally want to focus on WRs over RBs with these picks unless a runner falls past ADP. JuJu Smith-Schuster, Brandin Cooks, Rashod Bateman, Michael Thomas, Darnell Mooney, and Amon-Ra St. Brown are all the locked-in WR1 for their respective teams and should see triple-digit targets (or more in some cases). All are viable options if they make it to the end of Round 5, as are Chris Godwin and DK Metcalf.

Darren Waller and George Kittle don't usually make it to the back half of Round 5, but they are solid options if you don't have one of Kelce, Mark Andrews, or Pitts. After Kittle, there's a fairly sizable drop-off at TE before you get to Dalton Schultz, so locking in a top-five TE is difficult to pass up if the opportunity presents itself.

We can also start thinking about QBs for the first time at the 5-6 turn. Late-round QB dominated the past half-decade of fantasy analysis, but times are changing as the league gets more dual-threat QBs and fantasy gamers realize the value of rushing in fantasy. Sharp

Football's Rich Hribar noted the correlation between QB ADP and end-of-year fantasy scoring has strengthened in the past two years:

"Last year, positional ADP among the top 24 quarterbacks carried an r-squared correlation to fantasy points per game of .5826 after a .4995 r-squared in 2020 … From 2010-2019, that correlation was just .2194."

Basically, QB ADP has gotten sharper over the past two seasons as fantasy players catch on to how important rushing is for fantasy production. Gone are the days of getting Year 2 Patrick Mahomes or Lamar Jackson in the double-digit rounds; Trey Lance is a seventh-round pick (rightfully) after only starting two games as a rookie. Paying up for Jackson, Mahomes, Justin Herbert, or Kyler Murray at the end of Round 5 is a worthwhile investment because there are only so many guys with legitimate top-three positional upside. Jalen Hurts becomes interesting in Round 6 simply because his legs give him such an incredible fantasy ceiling. You don't want to force a QB with one of these two picks — you can get guys like Lance, Russell Wilson, and Dak Prescott later on or just punt quarterback — but the elite dual-threat options deserve real consideration.

ROUNDS 7-10

If you targeted WRs heavily in Rounds 3-6, you probably are entering Round 7 weaker at RB than your league-mates. That's okay; RB scoring between Rounds 3-10 is flatter than it is for WRs, so we minimize opportunity cost by targeting wideouts first before switching to RB at the end of the dead zone. However, that does mean we need to hit on some breakout candidates in Rounds 7-10. Generally, we are targeting backs who have some sort of Week 1 role but could grow into a heavier workload by the end of the season. A.J. Dillon is a good example, as he's in line for double-digit touches right from the get-go but could turn into a league-winner if something happens to Aaron Jones.

I asked our Adam Levitan what he likes to do in these rounds. His response:

If I don't have a QB yet and one of Jalen Hurts or Trey Lance is available, I'm prioritizing them. The drop-off after that to the pure pocket passers such as Joe Burrow and Tom Brady really caps the upside.

My favorite RB target in this range is Tony Pollard. Roughly 99% of the time, I ignore the "RB is going to play WR" nonsense, but Pollard has a legit shot to be the 1%. Dallas is desperate for WR help, Pollard is learning to play the slot and wide, and he is their second-best playmaker behind CeeDee Lamb. He must be on the field if Dallas is going to play efficient offense. There are also paths to him getting a feature back role at some point if Ezekiel Elliott is as bad as he was last season.

ETR

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ROUND 11+

Fill out your roster! I recommend only drafting one QB and one TE in most cases. The one exception would be if you want to use your last-round pick on someone like Deshaun Watson and see if there's a chance he plays this year. There's a decent chance Watson doesn't see the field in 2022, but I have no problem forgoing an RB6 or something to secure league-winning upside with Watson. Otherwise, there's no need to take a second QB because you can just pick one up on waivers if your guy gets hurt or has a difficult matchup.

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BEST BALL: UNDERDOG FANTASY STRATEGY GUIDE
HOW TO APPROACH EACH POSITION, STACKING & OTHER TIPS

Picking the best players is hard, but it takes quite a bit more than player rankings to give yourself your best shot at winning a best ball tournament. Today, we're going to review everything we know (or think we know) about how to optimally draft best ball tournament teams on Underdog — besides which players to pick. Think of this as a one-stop shop for Underdog best ball strategy. *If you don't have an Underdog account yet,* **use promo code ETR** *for a first deposit match up to $100.*

PART 1: POSITION-BY-POSITION BREAKDOWN

It's important to remain fluid when drafting and play the board as it falls, but you should go into a draft with a general idea of positional strategy. Let's first take a look at all builds that were used at least 1,000 times in Best Ball Mania II, sorted by Advance Rate.

Overall Roster Construction

RosterConstruction	Points	Advance Rate	Top 1 Percent	Top 10 Percent	Top 30 Percent	Count
2 QB, 5 RB, 8 WR, 3 TE	1548	19.65%	1.36%	12.33%	33.47%	13288
2 QB, 6 RB, 7 WR, 3 TE	1550	18.60%	1.05%	11.10%	34.29%	6016
3 QB, 6 RB, 6 WR, 3 TE	1542	18.45%	1.08%	11.11%	31.95%	6960
2 QB, 4 RB, 9 WR, 3 TE	1539	18.27%	1.34%	11.55%	31.81%	6470
2 QB, 7 RB, 6 WR, 3 TE	1545	17.53%	1.00%	10.14%	33.24%	1095
3 QB, 5 RB, 7 WR, 3 TE	1541	17.52%	1.19%	10.75%	31.65%	13159
2 QB, 5 RB, 9 WR, 2 TE	1536	17.09%	1.12%	10.59%	30.45%	24554
2 QB, 7 RB, 7 WR, 2 TE	1543	17.05%	1.08%	10.17%	31.23%	4169
2 QB, 6 RB, 8 WR, 2 TE	1541	17.05%	1.09%	10.08%	30.97%	13757
3 QB, 7 RB, 6 WR, 2 TE	1535	16.21%	0.54%	8.67%	30.10%	2030
3 QB, 6 RB, 7 WR, 2 TE	1534	16.01%	0.79%	9.37%	29.33%	9104
2 QB, 4 RB, 10 WR, 2 TE	1529	16.00%	0.84%	9.33%	28.92%	9545
3 QB, 4 RB, 8 WR, 3 TE	1526	15.94%	1.16%	9.84%	27.95%	5428
3 QB, 5 RB, 8 WR, 2 TE	1531	15.67%	0.79%	9.26%	28.72%	17031
3 QB, 4 RB, 9 WR, 2 TE	1515	13.71%	0.64%	7.81%	25.15%	8088
4 QB, 5 RB, 7 WR, 2 TE	1518	12.91%	0.75%	7.67%	25.82%	1069

Now, we'll go one position at a time.

QUARTERBACK

Right off the bat, it sticks out that four of the five best constructions last year had only two quarterbacks. Of the eight builds with two QBs and at least 1,000 total teams, seven of them were at least average in Advance Rate, Top 1% Rate, Top 10% Rate, and Top 30% Rate. Conversely, only two of eight builds with 3+ QBs were better than par, per our metrics. This isn't just a one-year thing, as 2-QB teams also performed strongly in 2020.

Total QBs Drafted

QB	Points	Advance Rate	Top 1 Percent	Top 10 Percent	Top 30 Percent	Count
2	1539	17.5%	1.11%	10.6%	31.2%	82752
3	1532	16.1%	0.91%	9.6%	29.2%	65764
4	1513	13.4%	0.64%	7.0%	24.7%	5160
1	1497	11.5%	0.22%	6.0%	23.2%	905
5	1469	8.4%	0.27%	3.6%	16.6%	752

You're not dead in the water with three QBs, but it's usually better to stop after two. But knowing how many QBs to draft is only half the battle. We also need to consider when we should target the position. Over the past few years, the widely accepted strategy in redraft has been to wait on QB. That may be suboptimal for BBM3 given the recent infusion of rushing talent into the league, as well as Underdog's half-PPR best ball model. Gone are the days of getting Year 2 Patrick Mahomes and Lamar Jackson in the double-digit rounds; the market is now better at pricing young, high-upside QBs.

Still, that doesn't mean you want to spend your earliest picks on a QB. Drafting one in the first five rounds was still slightly -EV last year. With this data, keep in mind it's really describing a small number of individual player seasons. For example, the table below basically just tells us how Mahomes, Jackson, Josh Allen, Kyler Murray, and Dak Prescott did in 2021 since no other QBs went in the first five rounds.

Was a QB drafted in the first 5 rounds?

QB Early?	Points	Advance Rate	Top 1 Percent	Top 10 Percent	Top 30 Percent	Count
No	1533	16.8%	1.07%	10.2%	30.0%	102039
Yes	1537	16.4%	0.87%	9.6%	30.0%	53336

Rounds 6-10 were the sweet spot for drafting your QB1 last season. That makes sense looking at this year's ADP, as it's the range where cheaper rushing QBs — Jalen Hurts, Trey Lance, etc. — and QBs with massive passing efficiency ceilings — Tom Brady, Justin Herbert — are drafted.

First QB Taken in Rounds 6-10

First QB Mid?	Points	Advance Rate	Top 1 Percent	Top 10 Percent	Top 30 Percent	Count
Yes	1537	17.3%	1.10%	10.5%	31.0%	62738
No	1533	16.2%	0.93%	9.7%	29.3%	92637

This is typically where I look to draft my first QB. Partly because there are some strong options there, but also partly because waiting until Round 11+ has been a death sentence. The table below only looks at last year, but Mike Leone had similar findings when he dug into 2020 data last offseason.

First QB Taken after Round 10

First QB Late?	Points	Advance Rate	Top 1 Percent	Top 10 Percent	Top 30 Percent	Count
No	1539	17.4%	1.07%	10.5%	31.1%	136256
Yes	1504	11.8%	0.48%	6.8%	22.5%	19119

RUNNING BACK

Determining your RB strategy to draft is a little trickier. In 2020, teams with 3-5 RBs shined — ETR's Justin Herzig won the inaugural Best Ball Mania with only four runners. As a result, drafting fewer running backs became the norm last year as drafters embraced a more fragile style. Case in point: In 2020, 6.2% of Best Ball Mania teams had four RBs. Last year, that number jumped to 16.8%. The frequency of 6-RB teams fell from 42.1% to 28.0%. The average number of RBs per team dropped from 5.67 to 5.29. That led to an interesting dynamic where it became preferable to draft 5+ RBs because you could scoop strong running back value as drafters fled toward WRs.

Total RBs Drafted

RB	Points	Advance Rate	Top 1 Percent	Top 10 Percent	Top 30 Percent	Count
5	1537	17.1%	1.08%	10.5%	30.6%	72649
6	1540	17.1%	0.98%	10.1%	31.0%	38442
7	1537	16.3%	0.88%	9.5%	30.4%	8635
4	1526	15.6%	0.94%	9.3%	28.0%	32032
8	1523	14.2%	0.54%	7.2%	27.2%	1286
3	1508	13.3%	0.41%	7.5%	24.1%	1949

It could be more of the same in 2022, as RBs are going nearly a round later than last year across the board:

There's a saying: You can draft RBs early. You can draft RBs often. But you cannot draft RBs early and often. Robust RB has consistently been a poor strategy for the entire lifespan of the best ball format, and there's no reason to expect that to change in 2022. Part of this is that RBs in Rounds 3-6 — known by many as the "running back dead zone" — have historically underperformed expectations drastically. It's typically savvy to load up on WRs in those rounds, so we mostly recommend taking an RB or two very early in Rounds 1-3 and then waiting until Rounds 7-8+ to start loading up on the position. Teams that took more than two runners in the first five rounds have not had great results. That doesn't mean you should completely ignore RBs in Rounds 3-6, as value may present itself sometimes, but it's a good idea to be aware of the risks. If you're looking for specific RBs to target late in drafts, we'll be updating this article throughout the summer with our favorite targets.

WIDE RECEIVER

The past two seasons at wideout were basically the opposite of what they were for RBs, which makes sense considering you are usually sacrificing one to draft the other. In 2020, teams with 9-10 WRs had strong metrics, but the WR thirst last summer led to teams with fewer receivers performing better in 2021.

Total WRs Drafted

WR	Points	Advance Rate	Top 1 Percent	Top 10 Percent	Top 30 Percent	Count
6	1537	17.3%	0.93%	10.0%	30.7%	13890
7	1539	17.0%	1.02%	10.2%	31.1%	35448
8	1537	17.0%	1.06%	10.3%	30.4%	51228
9	1532	16.5%	1.04%	10.1%	29.4%	40573
10	1525	15.3%	0.77%	8.8%	28.1%	11221
5	1509	12.6%	0.60%	6.8%	24.1%	2004

We recommend taking 7-9 WRs most of the time, although you can get away with six if you go super WR-heavy early and you might need 10 if you wait on the position. As mentioned above, Rounds 3-6 have been a strong range for wideouts in the past. There's a common misconception that you can scrounge WR points with late-round spike weeks because your highest scorers automatically go in the starting lineup in best ball, but basically every piece of data we have indicates you don't want to get left behind at WR.

Number of Total WRs	Number of Early WRs	Number of WRs in RB Dead Zone	Win Rate	Advance Rate	League Top 3 Rate	Top 1% Rate	Average Points	Count
8	0	4	0.132	0.229	0.309	0.016	1565.32	2436
6	0	3	0.115	0.225	0.325	0.019	1561.61	1799
9	0	4	0.112	0.214	0.309	0.017	1555.72	2383
8	0	3	0.111	0.207	0.298	0.019	1554.78	8143
7	0	3	0.110	0.212	0.307	0.017	1558.30	5134
9	0	3	0.110	0.205	0.296	0.014	1550.75	7451
10	0	3	0.101	0.191	0.276	0.014	1543.55	2252
7	1	3	0.100	0.191	0.279	0.015	1548.48	2921
7	0	2	0.099	0.187	0.278	0.012	1547.42	6973
9	0	2	0.097	0.181	0.271	0.011	1541.07	6702
8	0	2	0.095	0.180	0.268	0.013	1543.94	8090
6	0	2	0.095	0.178	0.259	0.013	1542.25	3040
8	1	4	0.094	0.180	0.272	0.014	1543.94	1377
8	1	3	0.092	0.188	0.273	0.011	1542.75	6586
9	1	3	0.084	0.165	0.246	0.010	1533.52	5708
6	1	2	0.083	0.170	0.250	0.006	1537.62	2659
8	1	2	0.081	0.167	0.250	0.009	1534.89	9933
10	0	2	0.080	0.160	0.253	0.009	1530.91	2349
9	1	2	0.080	0.159	0.234	0.010	1527.69	7717
7	1	2	0.075	0.157	0.249	0.010	1536.41	6882
6	1	1	0.073	0.151	0.223	0.005	1523.88	2403
10	1	3	0.072	0.159	0.236	0.005	1521.18	1294
9	1	4	0.071	0.147	0.245	0.010	1523.59	1195
8	2	2	0.069	0.145	0.228	0.006	1525.84	2121
7	1	1	0.067	0.143	0.221	0.005	1526.47	5187
7	0	1	0.065	0.153	0.230	0.007	1529.92	2177
10	1	2	0.065	0.137	0.216	0.006	1520.56	1785
8	0	1	0.062	0.145	0.216	0.006	1519.27	2504
8	1	1	0.061	0.135	0.211	0.005	1522.45	5456
9	2	2	0.060	0.122	0.190	0.005	1507.01	1308
8	2	3	0.059	0.119	0.196	0.002	1512.41	1084
7	2	2	0.058	0.156	0.235	0.003	1530.15	1216
9	0	1	0.058	0.130	0.216	0.007	1517.41	1971
9	1	1	0.058	0.123	0.193	0.008	1511.09	3552
6	0	1	0.056	0.125	0.220	0.004	1513.88	1056
7	2	1	0.052	0.112	0.193	0.002	1509.33	1376
8	2	1	0.041	0.096	0.163	0.002	1500.64	1699

While early-round WRs underperformed last year to a historic degree, there's no reason to expect that to continue in 2022, so taking a pass catcher in Rounds 1-3 is also viable. With that being said, it's a good idea to grab at least one runner early because the position has fallen off a cliff after the first two or three rounds in recent seasons.

TIGHT END

The optimal number of TEs depends on when you draft your first TE. Because of the wide range of the position (the first TE usually comes off the board in Round 1, while TE12 Pat Freiermuth has an 11th-round ADP) and the small sample of individual seasons in our data set, it's less helpful to look at the zoomed-out data in this instance. For example, early-round TE would look abysmal if you looked at last year's data because the three highly drafted options — Travis Kelce, Darren Waller, and George Kittle — underperformed expectations. That's just a one-year sample of three unfortunate individual player outcomes and hardly predictive of the viability of early-round TE in future years. For the most part, you don't need more than two TEs if you get one of the high-end options, but you'll often want three if you miss out on the elite guys in the early rounds.

TAKEAWAYS:

1. Teams with two QBs have been better than those with three in consecutive seasons. Sometimes the board will force your hand — for example, if you keep getting sniped on QBs and don't end up with a top-12 guy — but you usually want to be finished with the position after you take your QB2.

2. Taking a QB in Rounds 4-5 isn't a terrible strategy, but it's typically better to wait until Rounds 6-10 simply because those guys often have similar upside to the early-round QBs at a cheaper price tag. Waiting until the double-digit rounds has been a poor strategy in recent seasons as QB ADP sharpens and the community wisens up to the value of rushing and youth at the position.

3. In 2020, lighter RB builds smashed, which led to a dramatic ADP shift last summer that has continued into this season. In turn, teams with 5-7 RBs performed well last season. Typically, you'll want 4-6 RBs on your roster depending on how heavily you attack the position early.

4. Rounds 3-6 have been a graveyard for RBs since best ball's inception, so we recommend taking RBs either very early or relatively late. In other words, grab an RB or two in the first couple of rounds and then wait until Rounds 7-8+.

5. Rounds 7-9 are the sweet spot for WRs on your best ball teams, and it again depends on how hard you target wideouts early. Overall, you'll usually want 13-14 combined RBs and WRs on your squad.

6. If you take an early TE or double-dip in the middle rounds, you can get away with two TEs. If you wait on your TE1, 3-TE is likely a wiser move.

PART 2: STACKING STRATEGY

At this point, stacking is a requirement for anyone hoping to compete in large-field best ball tournaments. With more than 400,000 entries in Best Ball Mania III, adding correlation to your roster to increase your odds of hitting a high-end outcome is a necessity. The logic behind stacking is obvious: If a QB outperforms expectations, his pass catchers are more likely to outperform ADP as well. This is also true on a weekly basis — DFS players have been stacking for years — which is super important considering the tournament rounds in Weeks 15-17.

Over the past two years, stacking a QB with an RB has had a negligible effect. That doesn't mean you shouldn't do it if the opportunity presents itself since any correlation is helpful, but it's not something you should be reaching way past ADP to accomplish. Stacking your QB with his WRs and/or TEs, on the other hand, is much more lucrative.

All Teams

WR Stack?	Advance Rate	Top 1 Percent	Top 10 Percent	Top 30 Percent	Count
No	15.69%	0.82%	9.20%	29.37%	27443
Yes	16.89%	1.04%	10.17%	30.13%	127932

All Teams

TE Stack?	Advance Rate	Top 1 Percent	Top 10 Percent	Top 30 Percent	Count
No	16.40%	0.93%	9.77%	29.78%	93229
Yes	17.11%	1.10%	10.34%	30.32%	62146

91.9% of the field had at least one stack last season, so you aren't gaining a massive edge simply by introducing mild correlation into your roster. One way to manufacture a legitimate advantage for yourself is to take stacking one step further and either stack multiple QBs and/or create larger stacks. Only 32.3% of the field used a 2-QB strategy with both quarterbacks stacked, but those squads advanced at a 17.71% clip.

Teams With Exactly 2 QBs

	Advance Rate	Top 1 Percent	Top 10 Percent	Top 30 Percent	Count
QBs Stacked					
0	16.39%	0.89%	9.74%	30.46%	6747
1	17.30%	1.06%	10.56%	31.42%	25875
2	17.71%	1.16%	10.77%	31.19%	50130

Just 33.9% of the field stacked a QB with two WRs on the same NFL team, but those rosters moved on 17.51% of the time. And teams with two double stacks — which only 6.1% of the field had — had a 17.77% Advance Rate. You can certainly go overboard stacking — I broke down the data on that and explained how the BBM3 tournament structure factors into the equation here — but we see no problem pairing multiple pass catchers with a QB.

All Teams

	Advance Rate	Top 1 Percent	Top 10 Percent	Top 30 Percent	Count
Multiple WR Stacks					
0	16.26%	0.93%	9.64%	29.67%	102686
1	17.51%	1.16%	10.60%	30.62%	42794
2	17.77%	1.11%	11.29%	31.08%	9532
3	11.29%	0.55%	5.79%	22.87%	363

However, you have to remain cognizant of ADP when stacking. Reaching far past ADP to complete a stack is a -EV play. This is especially true given the number of entries in BBM3 this year. Think about it: If you reach to get a stack, there are probably hundreds, if not thousands, of other teams out there with the same stack at better value. Using last year's data, we can imperfectly approximate a stack's "value" by adding up the difference from ADP for all players involved in the stack where:

- Positive = ADP value > 0

- Neutral = 0 < ADP value < -16 (i.e. a minor reach overall)

- Poor = ADP value < -16 (major reach)

The data illustrates that reaching too far for a stack is a suboptimal move.

StackBucket	playoff_team	Top 1 Percent	Top 10 Percent	Top 30 Percent
Neutral	16.91%	1.00%	10.20%	30.09%
None	15.62%	0.81%	9.15%	29.19%
Poor	15.15%	0.82%	8.93%	27.60%
Positive	18.09%	1.19%	10.98%	32.19%

TAKEAWAYS:

- Stacking is a critical part of building a competitive Best Ball Mania III roster, and you generally want to stack as many of your QBs as possible.

- Stacking with WRs and TEs is intuitively more beneficial than stacking a QB with an RB, and the data agrees.

- Building larger stacks — stacking a QB with multiple pass catchers — was a major Advance Rate helper last year.

- Stacking is a desirable strategy, but you don't want to completely throw ADP out the window. Reaching too far past ADP eliminates any edge you gain from building a stack.

PART 3: OTHER TIPS AND TIDBITS SPECIFICALLY FOR TOURNAMENTS

- Weeks 15-17 — the tournament weeks — are so insanely important relative to the regular season that it's worth taking steps to optimize for that time, even if we're bad at predicting events so far in advance. If we happen to be right, the payoff has the potential to be massive. That means we should be looking to draft players who are likely to improve throughout the season — rookies, suspended players, injured guys with definitive timelines and low re-injury risk, etc.

- In a similar vein, we can look at best ball playoff schedules to see which teams have an easy road during the most important part of the season. While so much will change during the season, the payout structure of Best Ball Mania III makes it worthwhile to keep these things in mind as a tiebreaker.

- Game stacking has become the best ball craze of the summer — for good reason. Stacking players on the same team is a mainstream idea across platforms now, but we can also increase correlation for playoff weeks specifically by drafting players whose teams oppose each other in Week 17. Game stacking is common practice in DFS, as the correlation between two players in the same game is intuitive, and we can apply that idea to best ball.

- With upwards of 400,000 entries in BBM3, we should always be looking for ways to gain leverage on the field. One method is to dig a little deeper in Rounds 17 and 18 and draft someone who isn't at the top of the ADP list. Underdog's Hayden Winks wrote about manufacturing uniqueness in best ball tournaments recently, and the easiest way is to scroll down further at the end of drafts. You're not sacrificing that many points because those players have such low expectations anyway, and the

payout if a less-drafted player hits gives you immense leverage on the field. Just ask anyone who had Cordarrelle Patterson (drafted in 5.3% of leagues) or Elijah Mitchell (5.5%) in 2021. The hit probability is small, but it's small for anyone with an ADP in Round 17 or later, so you might as well draft someone who actually gives you a huge leg up on the field as a whole if they do break out.

- ADP may be at its softest early in the offseason, but teams drafted later last year actually scored more points and hit upper-percentile outcomes at a higher rate. This may be because we have more information later in the summer or face softer competition as the season nears and more casuals draft, but it's interesting regardless of the cause. RotoViz's Michael Dubner has done research on Fanball best ball leagues and came to a similar conclusion. This doesn't prove that drafting later in the summer is optimal, but it's something to keep in mind when thinking about how to allocate your 150 bullets for Best Ball Mania III.

From a roster construction perspective, this is our ULTIMATE guide on how we like to build our Best Ball Mania III teams. Thanks for reading!

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