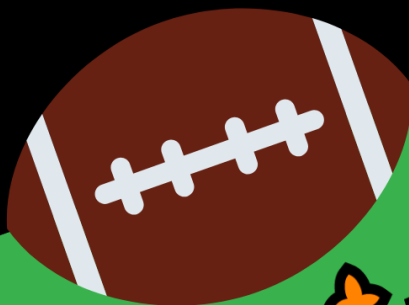ESTABLISH THE RUN

2022
DFS
STRATEGY GUIDE

FANDUEL

DRAFT KINGS

INCLUDES:

GAME SELECTION: WHICH CONTESTS TO PLAY

HOW TO WIN DRAFTKINGS' MILLY MAKER

NFL SHOWDOWN LARGE-FIELD GPP STRATEGY

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Levitan's DFS Game Selection 2022: Which Contests To Play

IMPORTANT: If you want to take your DFS game to the next level this season, check out our In-Season Package. It contains our base projections, ceiling projections, ownership projections, shows, Silva's Matchups and tons more.

At least 90% of the analysis you'll read about NFL DFS discusses picking the right players.

Almost all of it will ignore game selection.

The easiest and fastest way to increase your ROI is through game selection. I believe it's the most important factor in our success, which is why I dedicated roughly half my book to it.

That said, I understand game selection is a complicated topic because everyone reading this should have different goals. The overwhelming majority of people should be playing DFS football for pure fun. A small percentage can treat DFS as a side job, looking to generate a modest amount of extra income. And a tiny, infinitesimal percentage of the player pool is trying to play for a living.

The goal of our In-Season Package is to give you all the information and tools you need to win in DFS — regardless of what your personal goals are.
But if you simply blast off your entire bankroll into the DK Milly Maker each week, it's going to be difficult to sustain that roll.

And I get it, I know that everyone wants to take $20 and turn it into $1 million. Some people are perfectly fine with having a negative expectation through the season, exclusively playing the extreme top-heavy massive-field tournaments. And quite frankly there's nothing wrong with that. Again, most people should be playing for fun.
But this article is for people who are interested in giving themselves a ***positive expectation*** each week. That means adding cash games*, smaller-field tournaments and spending time each week identifying the contests you want to play. It often ignores the "lottery style" extreme large-field GPPs.

As you'll see below, focusing on smaller fields, 20-max entries or smaller, and being rake-conscious must be the priority.

Again, if you want more on game selection, I spent two chapters in my e-book talking about it. In-season subscribers to Establish The Run get the book for free here.

Cash games refer to any contest in which roughly 50% of the field gets paid out, such as head-to-heads, double ups and 50/50s.

ETR

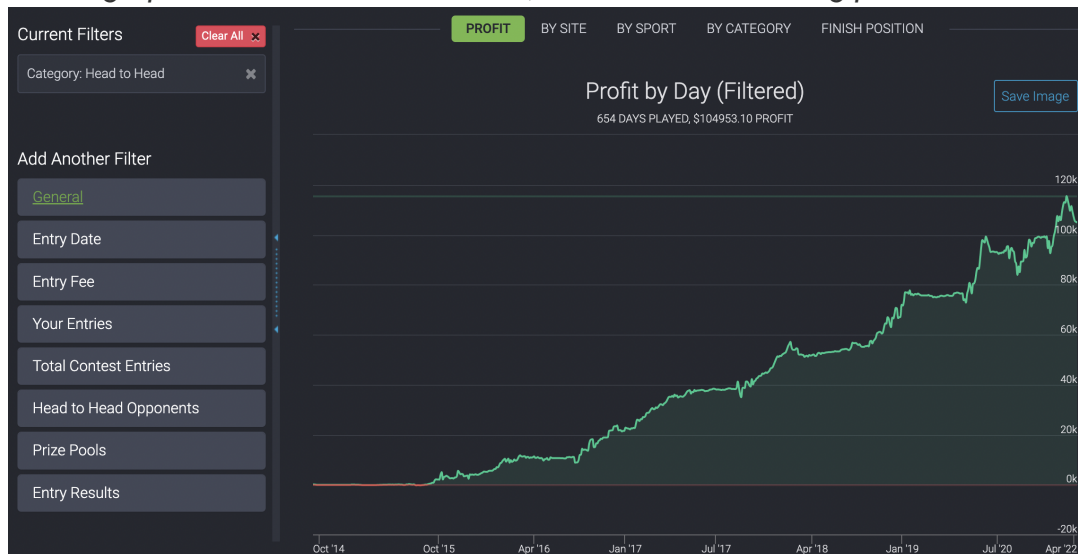**IF YOU WANT TO PLAY $100 IN A WEEK ON DRAFTKINGS (44% cash, 56% tournaments)**

1. Create one cash lineup. This lineup does not worry about ownership at all.

2. Create 20 large-field tournament lineups. These lineups should be correlated and have thoughtful leverage against the field. Can either use optimizer or hand-build. Read this article for more trends to be aware of when building these lineups.

3. Create one single-entry, medium-size field tournament lineup.

4. Create three 3-max, medium-size field tournament lineups.

5. Enter the 3-max lineups into the $5 buy-in Nickel. Total $15. This tournament has 11,890 entries and is a 3-max. We will not need the absolute stone nuts to win it. The min-cash on this tournament is also 2x ($10) and 10th is 10% of first. The rake is high in this (15.9%) but otherwise the structure is what we are seeking.

6. Enter the 3-max lineups into the $3 buy-in Triple Option. Total $9. This tournament has 15,854 entries and is a 3-max. The min-cash is only 1.67x which is not ideal, but the payouts up top are flat ($4k to first, 1k to third, $400 to 10th).

7. Enter the 20 large-field tournament lineups into the $1 buy-in First Down. Total $20. This is a 20-max large-field tournament (297,265 entries). We can either hand build or use an optimizer. We can use the principles outlines here for roster construction. It is a soft tournament that is good practice for those who eventually want to move up to the Milly Maker.

8. Enter the single-entry tournament lineup into the SMALLER $12 buy-in Fair Catch. Total $12. We know that in single-entry tournaments, many of our opponents will use their cash roster. The "best plays" will see bloated ownership. Work on creating leverage against this 4,901-entry field.
Note that there are two single entry Fair Catch tournaments. I prefer the 4,901-entry field over the 29,411-entry field.

9. Enter the cash lineup in the largest-field $2, $5, and $10 Single-Entry Double Ups. Total $17. These Double Ups contain 8,620, 22,988, and 8,620 entries respectively. They are also raked around 13%, which is tolerable for low stakes. Since they are single-entry, they will be far softer than the multi-entry double-ups. There simply aren't 8,000+ competent players on the site.

10. Enter the cash lineup into 27 $1 H2H Games. Total $27. Create the head-to-head contests yourself, do not "scoop" people that are already posted in the H2H lobby. Be

sure to click the box that limits the number of times one person can play against you to one.

The best players on DraftKings are not allowed to play in games below $5. But if you notice any "pros" or good players regularly scooping your games, add them to your block list. You can do this by going to Account Information, Preferences, Head-to-Head Settings. FanDuel does not have this blocking functionality.

Note that if you want to reduce variance, you can play more head-to-heads instead of double ups. Head-to-head results aren't binary, some weeks you'll win 60% and others 30% and others 90%. Double up results are simply win them all or lose them all.

Here's a graph of my H2H results so you can visualize what it looks like to grind a lot of them. These graphs come from Rototracker, a DFS results tracking platform.

Current Filters — Clear All ✕

Category: Head to Head ✕

Add Another Filter
- General
- Entry Date
- Entry Fee
- Your Entries
- Total Contest Entries
- Head to Head Opponents
- Prize Pools
- Entry Results

PROFIT | BY SITE | BY SPORT | BY CATEGORY | FINISH POSITION

Profit by Day (Filtered)
654 DAYS PLAYED, $104953.10 PROFIT

Save Image

And here are my H2H results by buy-in level so you can get an idea on realistic ROIs.

Current Filters — Clear All ✕

Category: Head to Head ✕

Add Another Filter
- General
- Entry Date
- Entry Fee
- Your Entries
- Total Contest Entries
- Head to Head Opponents
- Prize Pools
- Entry Results

SITE | SPORT | CATEGORY | SIZE | FEE | WEEKDAY | STYLE ⊕ | SEASON ⊕ | PRIZE POOL ⊕

Showing all **10** fees that match your filters.

Download ⬇ | Group | All

Fee ▾	Contests	Entries	ITM	ROI	Av Score	Av Win Scr ?	Wagered	Profit
$1000+	110	110	61%	16.93%	142.5	148.0	$169,325	$28,675
$216 - $999	371	371	59%	8.74%	227.8	240.3	$131,275	$11,475
$110 - $215	232	232	60%	10.88%	146.5	151.0	$49,785	$5,415
$56 - $109	1422	1422	61%	10.82%	179.1	190.6	$154,843	$16,757
$28 - $55	2098	2098	61%	9.30%	169.5	180.0	$104,900	$9,760
$12 - $27	4662	4662	63%	13.11%	162.9	172.4	$103,850	$13,614
$5.50 - $11	8514	8514	62%	11.32%	160.7	169.8	$85,140	$9,639
$3 - $5	18840	18840	61%	8.76%	157.2	166.2	$82,742	$7,251
$2	14711	14711	61%	7.93%	169.1	180.0	$29,422	$2,332
$1	315	315	62%	11.43%	206.2	211.8	$315.00	$36.00

4

ETR

IF YOU WANT TO PLAY $500 IN A WEEK ON DRAFTKINGS (57% cash, 43% tournaments)

1. Enter all the contests above. Total $100.

2. Enter the cash lineup into the largest-field $25 Single-Entry Double Up. Total $25. This Double Up features 9,195 entries — again, there simply aren't that many solid cash players on the site.

3. Enter the cash lineup into 20 more $1 H2H Games, 40 $2 H2H Games and 40 $3 H2H Games. Total $220. Posted head-to-head games under $5 will be some of the softest action we can find. It also smoothes out variance due to the non-binary outcome of high-volume head-to-head action.

4. Enter the 20 large-field tournament lineups in the smaller (19.8K field size) $3 Play Action. Total $60. We now have a total of $4 on each of the 20 large-field tournament lineups. Again, this is a good chance to work on your optimizer skills at a low cost. If you're interested in our optimizer deal add-on through FantasyLabs, click here. If you sign up this way, the optimizer will come pre-loaded with our continuously updating projections and ownership projections.

5. Enter the three 3-max lineups in the $15 Screen Pass (7,843 field size). Total $45. This does have 15% rake sadly, but 10th place ($1000) wins 10% of 1st place ($10,000) and a min-cash ($30) is 2x the buy-in. No matter what site you're playing on or what contests you're looking at, this is the stuff I'm looking for. Be rake-conscious, look at payout structure, understand field size.

6. Create a new small-field, single-entry tournament lineup. Enter it in the smaller (2,272 field size) $50 Red Zone. Total $50. A big advantage of getting more money in play is having access to the lower-rake contests. This smallish-field GPP has just 11.97% rake, a big difference off the 15%-16% we find at low/micro stakes. It also has the 2x min-cash and 10th place earns 10% of 1st.

NOTE: The above is specific to DraftKings and NFL. But the principles outlined can be applied to any site or any sport:

1. A) Be rake-conscious and seek out the smallest rake.
2. B) Understand field size and adjust your lineups for it.
3. C) Examine the payout structure — ideally we find flatter payouts up top (10th place is 10% of 1st place) and 2x buy-in min-cash.
4. D) Find the softest opponents — Playing winning DFS is a cut-throat game. Do not feel guilty about finding opponents who are not working as hard as you are.

Levitan: How to Win DraftKings' Milly Maker in 2022

***IMPORTANT: If you plan to play DFS this season, we have everything you need to win. Projections (base, ceiling ownership), shows, and context around each main slate. Click here** for details.*

You want to win $1 million playing fantasy football? So do I.

DraftKings' weekly NFL Milly Maker remains the flagship DFS tournament. It's a unique event because it often has more than 200,000 entries, roughly 30% of the prize pool goes to first place, and someone becomes a millionaire off of a $20 buy-in.

This "put up a little to win a lot" model is always going to be incredibly popular. It attracts tons of unsophisticated and casual players, making the Milly Maker a very +EV tournament for thoughtful and sharp players. Of course, we need to be aware that realizing the positive expectation is very difficult at these massive field sizes.

So how do we win it? By picking the right players, dummy! Of course, that is first-level thinking and not a real or thoughtful strategy. We are not nearly as good at picking the "right" players as we think we are. So while much of the field is just selecting players they like, we should optimize for first place through other strategies.

That means thinking about lineup construction, salary allocation, flex usage, correlation, ownership leverage, and more. If we can understand what wins this tournament, we can build a repeatable process that raises our chances of shipping.
The data you see below was compiled by Mike Leone, our Director of Analytics.

* Note — this data is from the top 100 teams and the field in main slate DraftKings Milly Makers in 2021 AND 2022 Weeks 1-16. That's 3,234 teams, including ties.

WHAT WE FOUND

1. Double stack your quarterback with WR-WR or WR-TE

"Double stack" means rostering a QB with exactly two of his teammates at any position. For example, **Joe Burrow** with **Ja'Marr Chase** *and* **Tee Higgins**. Or **Josh Allen** with **Stefon Diggs** and **Dawson Knox**. Even though it's smaller than it used to be, we still gain the most leverage on the field with this construction.

Single stacks (a QB with one pass catcher) are a neutral bet. Naked QB (no pass catchers) is a losing bet. Stacks with three or four pass-catchers are bad bets, as we need everyone in our lineup to hit their ceiling.

Data: The field played double stacks 30.6% of the time. But double stacks finished in the top 100 35.7% of the time. ... The field stacks with an RB 16.5% of the time, but top-100

teams do it 13.9% of the time. … The field stacks with TWO WRs 12.1% of the time, but top-100 teams do it 16.2% of the time.

2. Use a "bring-back"

A "bring-back" means rostering a player on the opponent of your QB stack. For example, if the Bengals are playing the Ravens and we have the Burrow/Chase/Tee stack, then we also should include a Raven. The idea is to increase correlation — if Burrow hits Tee for a 60-yard TD (what we need to win), then the Ravens will play faster, more pass-centric, and more aggressive.

Note that bringing it back with an RB is slightly negative leverage, but still in play. But bringing it back with a WR or TE showed solid positive leverage over the field. The best leverage is bringing it back with exactly one WR.

Data: The field used a bring-back 35.3% of the time. But top-100 teams did it 46.0% of the time. … The field used a single WR bring-back 29.5% of the time, but top-100 teams did it 40.9% of the time.

3. Use all or most of your salary cap

Leaving salary space on the table is not the way to get unique. It causes us to lose too much equity in projection. Note that the field used an average of $49,874 of their $50,000 cap and top-100 teams were at $49,894.

4. Lean toward WR in the FLEX

DraftKings is full-PPR with a bonus for 100 yards rushing or receiving. This format lends itself to WR-heavier lineups for tournaments because the position has the most volatility.

Using RB or TE in the FLEX has been a slightly negative-EV bet over the last two years. The field played RB in the FLEX 38.7% of the time, but top-100 teams did so just 36.0% of the time. The field played TE in the FLEX 13.2% of the time, but top-100 teams did so just 10.7% of the time.

Data: The field used WR in the FLEX 48.2% of the time. However, top-100 teams did it 53.3% of the time.

5. Lean toward spending up at QB and spending down at RB

As we've talked about plenty on the season-long side, the quarterback position has changed. There is now far more separation and predictability at the top than there ever

was before. That's due to more elite dual threats emerging, and more raw pass volume for teams which are aggressive.

That flows through to DFS, where paying the price for strong quarterbacks gets us some leverage on the field. Note that the field paid $7,000+ for QB 35.8% of the time. But top-100 teams paid $7,000+ a whopping 45.6% of the time.

Meanwhile, most running backs don't have the same ceiling in full-PPR as their wide receiver counterparts. Trying to spend a bit less at RB to find a similar ceiling to expensive RBs earns us some leverage.

Data: The field spends an average of $6,570 at QB. But top-100 teams spend an average of $6,719 at QB. … The field spends an average of $6,324 at RB. But top-100 teams spend an average of $6,170 at RB.

6. Keep product ownership low

"Sum" or "cumulative" ownership simply means adding up each player in your lineup's ownership to get a total. The average sum ownership of top-100 teams (113.4%) was nearly identical to the field (113.9%).

However, *the average product ownership of top-100 teams was almost half the average product ownership of field teams*. "Product" ownership means multiplying each player in your lineup's ownership to get a total.

Think about this example: If you have six players on your team each owned at 20%, your sum ownership is 120%. If you have six players on your team at these ownerships: 40%, 40%, 10%, 10%, 10%, 10%, your sum ownership is also 120%.

But now let's look at product ownership: In the first example, your product ownership is .0064%. We get here by multiplying .2*.2*.2*.2*.2*.2.

In the second, your product ownership is .0016%. We get here by multiplying .4*.4*.1*.1*.1*.1.

So these are two lineups with the exact same *sum* ownership. But the second lineup is far better because it has one-fourth of the *product* ownership.

7. It's OK to eat some chalk, especially at RB

Note that top-100 teams averaged 16.8% average ownership at RB. That's far higher than QB (9.1%), TE (9.5%), and D/ST (9.9%).

Fantasy scoring at the RB position is largely opportunity-based, not talent-based.

Therefore, it is more predictable by the field. Grossly underpriced RBs can be fine plays even at very high ownership, as long as we're keeping our cumulative ownership in check.

8. Use more players in the 5-10% ownership bucket

The field uses 5-10% players an average of 2.27 per lineup. But the top-100 teams were at 2.43 per lineup.

In other words, we want to avoid that 15-25% range more often and take more shots in the 5-10% range. This gives us good leverage against the field as those 15-25% players are often overrated in tournaments.

Data: The field uses an average of 1.98 players per lineup owned 15-25%. But top-100 lineups use an average of 1.76 players per lineup owned 15-25%.

9. Get weird at D/ST

The most unpredictable position (by a lot) is D/ST. The correlation between ownership and D/ST points is a pathetic 0.165. Compare that to all other positions, where the correlation between ownership and points is at least 0.427.

So we want to take shots on low-owned defenses as often as we can — the field is simply bad at picking them.

10. Use our projections (shout out to us)

Our projections are significantly better than the field. We have proof!

At quarterback, our projected value (salary-adjusted) had a 0.561 correlation to actual value. Ownership value (what the field did) had a 0.350 correlation to actual value.

At running back, our projected value (salary-adjusted) had a 0.490 correlation to actual value. Ownership value (what the field did) had a 0..347 correlation to actual value.

At wide receiver, our projected value (salary-adjusted) had a 0.353 correlation to actual value. Ownership value (what the field did) had a 0.250 correlation to actual value.

At tight end, our projected value (salary-adjusted) had a 0.345 correlation to actual value. Ownership value (what the field did) had a 0.250 correlation to actual value.
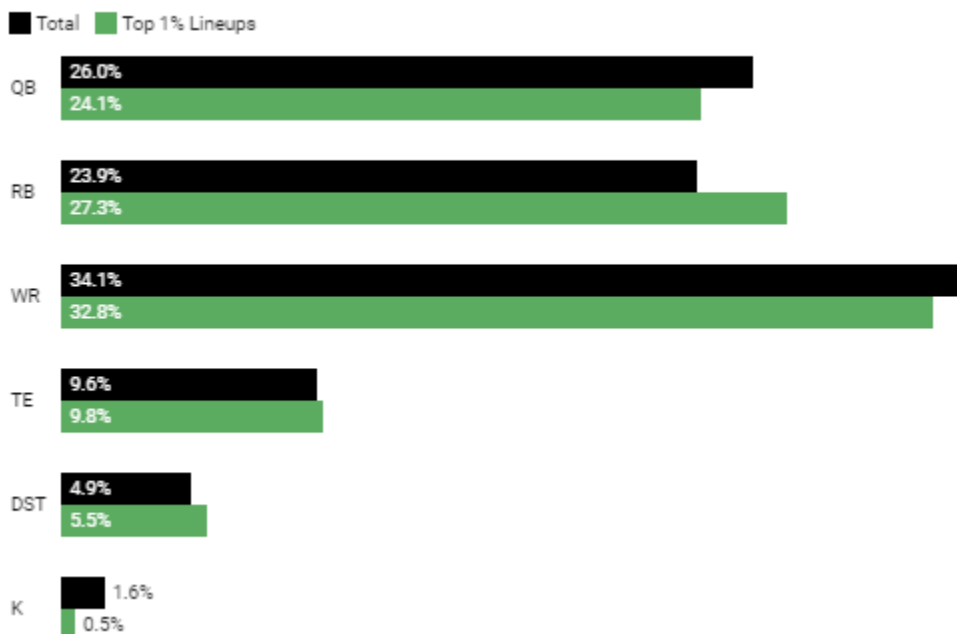
Cody Main: NFL Showdown Large-Field GPP Strategy

IMPORTANT: If you want to take your DFS game to the next level this season, check out our In-Season Package. It contains our base projections, ceiling projections, ownership projections, shows, Silva's Matchups and tons more.

DraftKings and FanDuel's single-game showdown format has continued to grow rapidly after they were introduced a few seasons ago. Since the format's inception, I've been compiling a database of every lineup entered in the DraftKings flagship GPP to get a better understanding of what our opponents are doing compared to what's actually winning. Heading into the 2022 season, we can leverage this information to create more profitable tournament lineups.

Captain Selection
The biggest differences between the traditional fantasy formats we're all accustomed to and showdown are the introductions of complete positional flexibility and the addition of a Captain roster spot. On DraftKings, the Captain position scores 1.5x the standard fantasy-point value for each statistic but will also cost 1.5x more salary than if they're rostered in the FLEX. Given its significance, selecting the right CPT becomes the foundation upon which the remainder of our lineup will be built.

DraftKings Large-Field GPP CPT Ownership

■ Total ■ Top 1% Lineups

Position	Total	Top 1% Lineups
QB	26.0%	24.1%
RB	23.9%	27.3%
WR	34.1%	32.8%
TE	9.6%	9.8%
DST	4.9%	5.5%
K	1.6%	0.5%

At least at the positional level, the field is making very few mistakes when selecting their CPT. As you can see above, each position is rostered virtually as often as it appears in

top-1% finishing lineups, with few instances where a single position is over- or under-owned relative to how often they're optimal.

By process of elimination, we can start to whittle down the 30+ player pool into a succinct group of options that have the ceiling to finish as the slate's optimal CPT. We can start by removing kickers, given the unlikelihood that they'll propel our lineups to the top of the leaderboards as our Captain. Particularly in contests where salary is at a premium and expensive skill-position players are plentiful, a strong median projection on a sub-$4000 kicker can result in them finding their way into the CPT spot more often than they should. Look no further than last year's Super Bowl where **Evan McPherson**'s ($4000) 8.1 DraftKings-point projection led to 2.7% CPT ownership as a way for the field to fit **Cooper Kupp** ($11600), **Ja'Marr Chase** ($10400), and Co. In these spots, I'd rather remove them from my CPT player pool entirely.

Similarly, though CPT D/ST has outperformed the field's expectation over the previous two seasons, I rarely target defenses for my Captain spot. Our collective inability to accurately project D/ST performance has been on display in classic contests for years and we haven't suddenly improved with the introduction of showdown. Since 2020, the r-squared between CPT D/ST ownership and CPT D/ST DraftKings points is a meager .09. In other words, there's virtually no relationship between increased ownership and fantasy production. Because D/ST scoring is so volatile and we're generally unable to identify outliers, the best times to use this position at CPT is when it won't come with ownership.
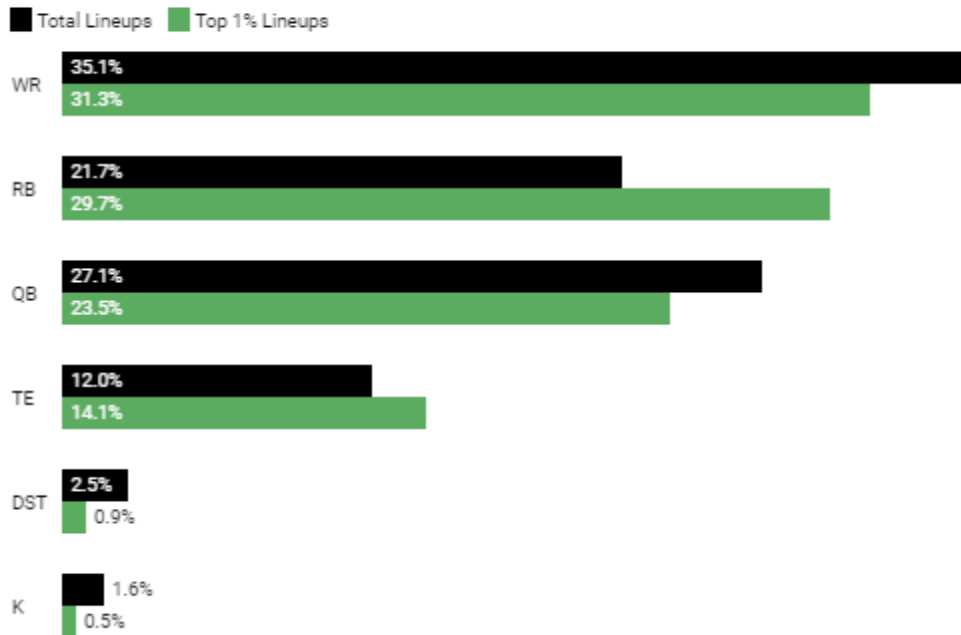
The dismissal of both the kicker and D/ST positions will leave us mostly exposed to the four offensive options that have accounted for 94.0% of the CPT selections in top-1% finishing lineups since 2020, led by wide receivers soaking up a whopping 32.8% exposure. Running backs present the largest delta between winning lineups and the rest of the field, as 27.3% of top-1% finishing lineups were anchored with CPT RB compared to just 23.9% of the field. Even on PPR-friendly sites like DraftKings, bellcow back ceilings offer slate-winning upside. CPT QBs have been rostered slightly more often than they've been optimal in the past, but they are still represented in 24.1% of top-1% lineups.

Now that we know how to attack our Captain spot positionally, we can further subset our player pool by looking at salary, ownership, player archetype, and Vegas data. Being mindful of these additional variables will help strengthen our CPT player pool for each slate.

Using Vegas information at its most basic level, we can see the field is rostering favorites at CPT (62.3%) at a virtually identical rate as top-1% lineups (61.7%). Of course, players from teams that are favored are likely to score more fantasy points, but can we learn more about our opponent's tendencies as we dig further into spreads and game totals?

DraftKings Large-Field GPP CPT Ownership

In Games with a Total of 51.5 Points or Higher

■ Total Lineups ■ Top 1% Lineups

WR
- 35.1%
- 31.3%

RB
- 21.7%
- 29.7%

QB
- 27.1%
- 23.5%

TE
- 12.0%
- 14.1%

DST
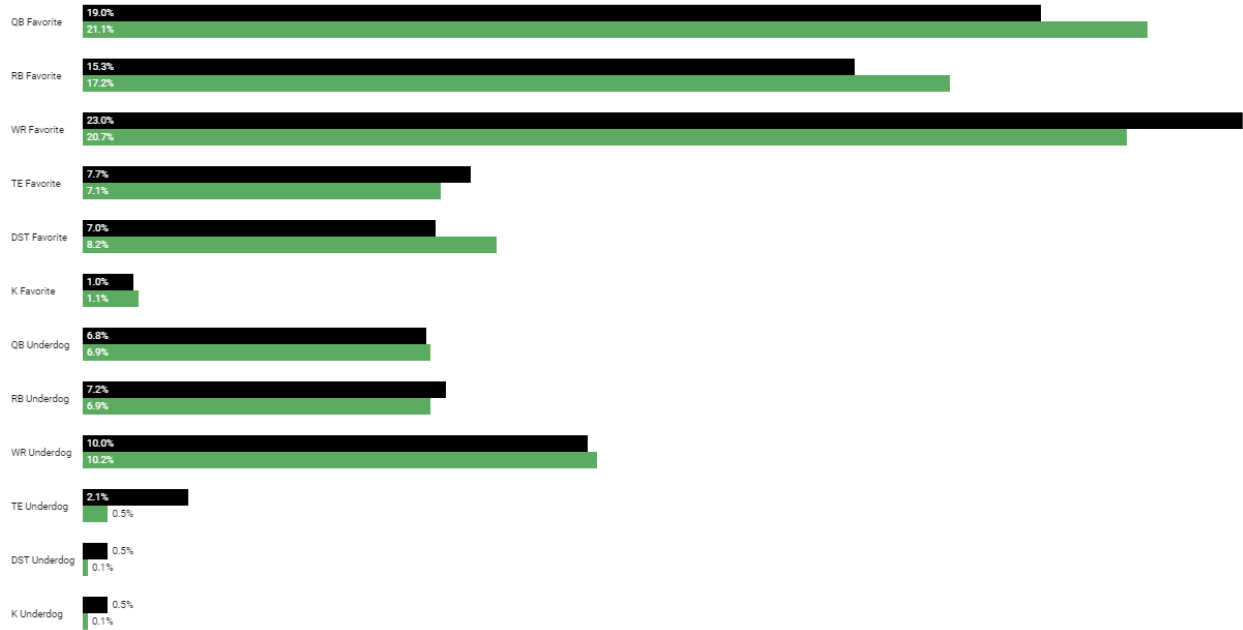- 2.5%
- 0.9%

K
- 1.6%
- 0.5%

Since 2018, average NFL game totals have hovered around 46.5 points. That means we can consider games that have a total north of 51, or at least one standard deviation above average, *high-scoring*. Conversely, games with a total shy of 42, or one standard deviation below average, could be considered *low-scoring*. Using historical contest data, we can see how ownership, and results, shift by total. In projected high-scoring game environments, we see wide receivers remain king, accounting for 31.3% of the CPT ownership for all top-1% finishing lineups. However, it's the running back group that once again provides the biggest delta between field exposure and top-1% exposure. If a game matches or exceeds an already lofty total, running backs are more likely to be optimal Captains as a result.

Similarly, we can see how the field's CPT usage changes based on spreads. The average closing spread for NFL games since 2003 is 5.3 points. Let's look at CPT usage in games with a spread at least one standard deviation higher than average and identify possible Captain options in games that are more likely to be a blowout with closing lines of nine or greater.

DraftKings Large-Field GPP CPT Ownership
In Games with a Spread of 9 Points or Higher

■ Total Lineups ■ Top 1% Lineups

	Total Lineups	Top 1% Lineups
QB Favorite	19.0%	21.1%
RB Favorite	15.3%	17.2%
WR Favorite	23.0%	20.7%
TE Favorite	7.7%	7.1%
DST Favorite	7.0%	8.2%
K Favorite	1.0%	1.1%
QB Underdog	6.8%	6.9%
RB Underdog	7.2%	6.9%
WR Underdog	10.0%	10.2%
TE Underdog	2.1%	0.5%
DST Underdog	0.5%	0.1%
K Underdog	0.5%	0.1%

In games with a closing spread of at least nine points, Captains from the favored team accounted for 75.4% of the exposure on top-1% lineups. Unsurprisingly, underdog wide receivers were most likely to overcome the scoreboard disadvantage, thanks in part to the DraftKings scoring format, finding their way into the CPT spot of top-1% lineups at a 10.2% clip. It's worth noting that lineups that rostered an underdog CPT in games with a spread of at least nine points were 39.9% less duplicated on average.

As a result of the 1.5x salary multiplier for the Captain position, one of the most common misconceptions I encounter with showdown is the idea that we can simply roster a strong pt/$ value at CPT in order to fit more expensive options in the FLEX. In large-field tournaments, our focus should be less on the top value and more on the top overall scorer. As a result, options at the top end of the salary range are going to make up a majority of our CPT player pool. The average Captain salary in top-1% lineups since 2020 is $13,012, boasting an average ETR CPT projection of 23.6 DraftKings points.

Distribution of CPT Salary in Top 1% Lineups
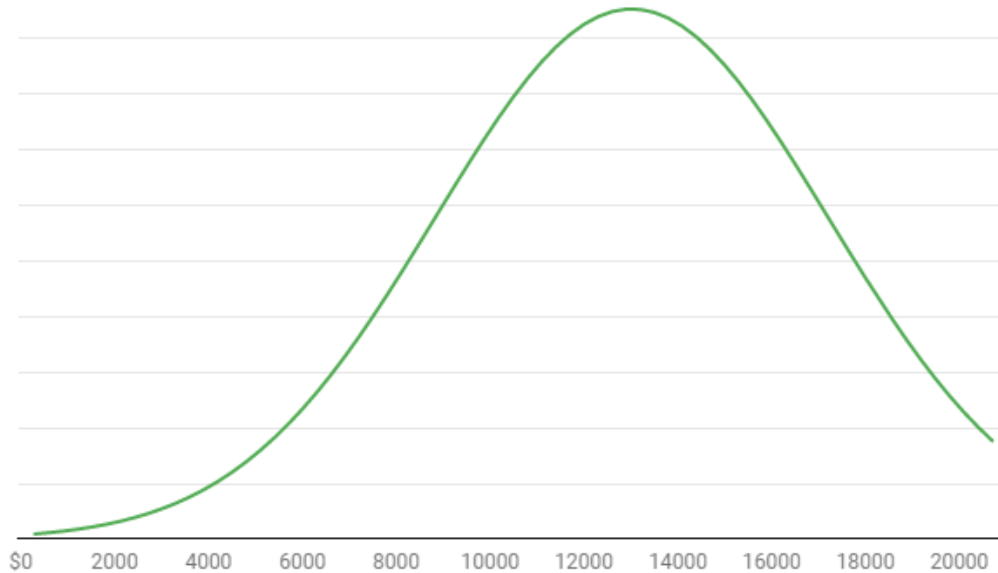
Even when Captains at the lower end of the salary spectrum finish in winning lineups, it isn't enough for them to simply reach 'value'. Players priced $7500 and below that finished in top-1% lineups, for example, beat their median CPT projection (9.9) by more than 2.6x, scoring 26.4 DraftKings points on average. *If* we choose to spend down, it should be for a player with paths to not only beating their median projection but also challenging the slate's most expensive options for the top overall scorer crown.

CPT Ownership in Top 1% Lineups
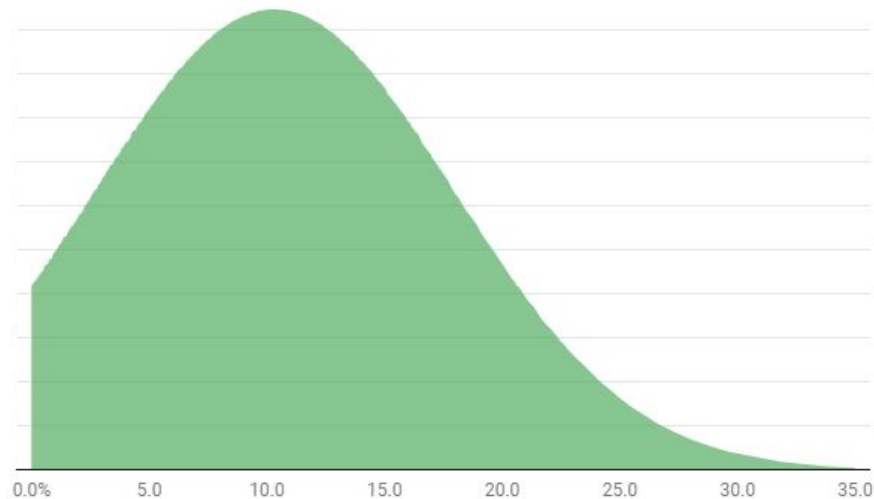
Just as we shouldn't be surprised to see the slate's most expensive players finish as the optimal CPT more often than their bargain-bin counterparts, it's no shock to see

higher-owned CPTs frequently finding themselves in top-1% finishing lineups. The average CPT ownership for winning lineups is a healthy 10.3%, suggesting there's little need to stray too far from the field when constructing our CPT player pool. More importantly, there's minimal correlation between CPT ownership and the number of duplicates. In other words, as long as you're being mindful of the remainder of your roster construction, a popular CPT by itself isn't likely to result in heavily duplicated lineups.

Correlation
Now that we have a firm grasp on how to attack the CPT position, it's important we take time to understand how to properly construct the remainder of our lineups around the format's most important roster spot.

Appearing in 32.8% of top-1% lineups, CPT WRs have been a consistent theme on winning lineups in recent years. We can understand how to optimally play CPT WR by reviewing historical data.
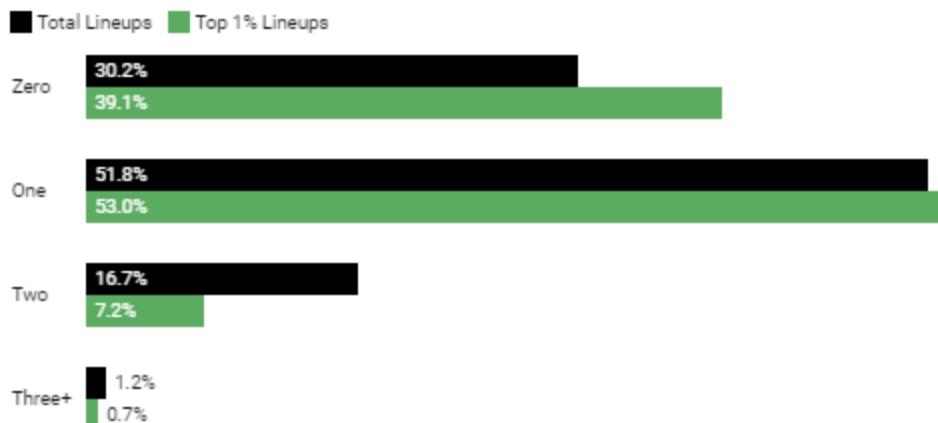

CPT WR Stacking in Large-Field GPPs on DraftKings

Top 1% finishing lineups paired their CPT WR with his QB 8.7% more often than the field

■ Total Lineups ■ Top 1% Lineups

CPT WR + QB
76.7%
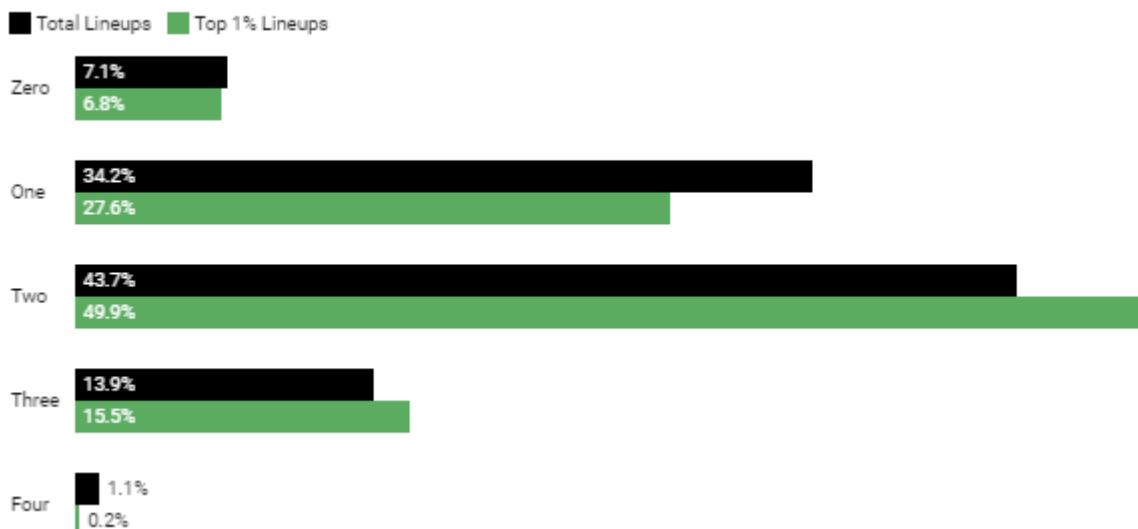85.4%

CPT WR Unstacked
23.3%
14.6%

This one also seems rather intuitive, but whether it be due to user error with optimizers or as an intentional way to get unique, the field is not pairing their CPT WR with his QB at a high enough rate. While we should most often be stacking CPT WR + QB, there are a few instances where avoiding it can result in winning lineups. Look no further than last year's Super Bowl where CPT **Tee Higgins** *without* **Joe Burrow** took home top honors with just *ten* duplicates. The $7600 price tag on Higgins and his proximity in DraftKings scoring to top overall scorer **Cooper Kupp** ($11600) propelled the unstacked Higgins lineup above the CPT Kupp + **Matthew Stafford** teams that finished 1.35 points short.

CPT WR + Same Team Pass Catchers

■ Total Lineups　■ Top 1% Lineups

	Total Lineups	Top 1% Lineups
Zero	30.2%	39.1%
One	51.8%	53.0%
Two	16.7%	7.2%
Three+	1.2%	0.7%

Another fairly straightforward concept that remains underutilized by the field, is when rostering a wide receiver at Captain, we should most often pair them with fewer than two additional pass catchers from their team. If a wide receiver produces a slate-winning score, it's less likely multiple teammates can do enough to also find winning lineups.

CPT QB + Pass Catchers

■ Total Lineups　■ Top 1% Lineups

	Total Lineups	Top 1% Lineups
Zero	7.1%	6.8%
One	34.2%	27.6%
Two	43.7%	49.9%
Three	13.9%	15.5%
Four	1.1%	0.2%

The field has also lagged on double stacking with their CPT QB. Outside of quarterbacks who capture some of their ceiling with rushing upside, rostering just one pass catcher with CPT QB introduces a scenario where we need a majority of the receiving production to funnel to our lone receiver, but not so much so that he outscores his QB. By including two or even three pass catchers, we're expecting the production to be more

evenly distributed in a way that will result in our CPT QB outscoring his pass-catching corps as a whole.

With some of the basic correlations out of the way, we can begin to explore more micro player pairings and how groupings can increase — or decrease — our expected win rate. An often overlooked aspect of showdown lineup constructions, kickers have landed in top-1% finishing lineups at a 33.7% clip. However, when we roster a CPT QB, the kicker from his team lands in top-1% lineups at just a 19.2% rate. Because we need our CPT QB to score touchdowns and our FLEX kicker to hit field goals, we cannibalize some of our upside by rostering them together.
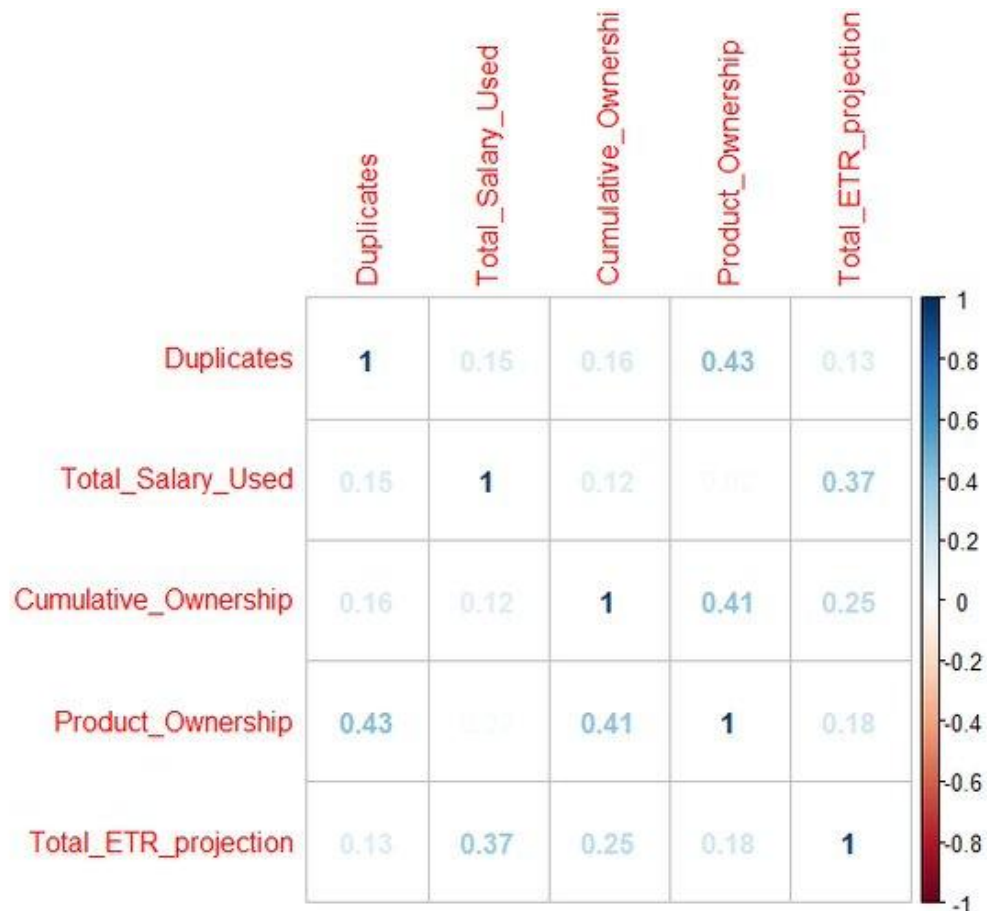
What about pairings that are negatively correlated such as CPT QB + Opposing D/ST? The field has been basically correct in avoiding a Captain from one team vs. the opposing defense, rostering this grouping at a 6.1% clip compared to 5.4% for top-1% finishers. However, of the 5.4% that successfully pulled off the negative correlation, they were rewarded with lineups that were duplicated 5.6x on average compared to 15.7x for all other top-1% lineups. Given the increased likelihood that lineups featuring these types of pairings are unique, I try not to actively group them out.

Being Unique

Up to this point, our focus has been on building the best lineups possible with minimal attention paid to ensuring our lineup is not duplicated. Unlike classic slates where there are hundreds of legitimate players to roster each week, single-game contests present an entirely new challenge with at most 30 options on a given slate. Because our lineup's expected value is directly impacted by how often it is entered by our opponents, it's important to build teams that not only have paths to tournament-winning upside but are unique once there.

Total Salary Used in DraftKings Large-Field GPP
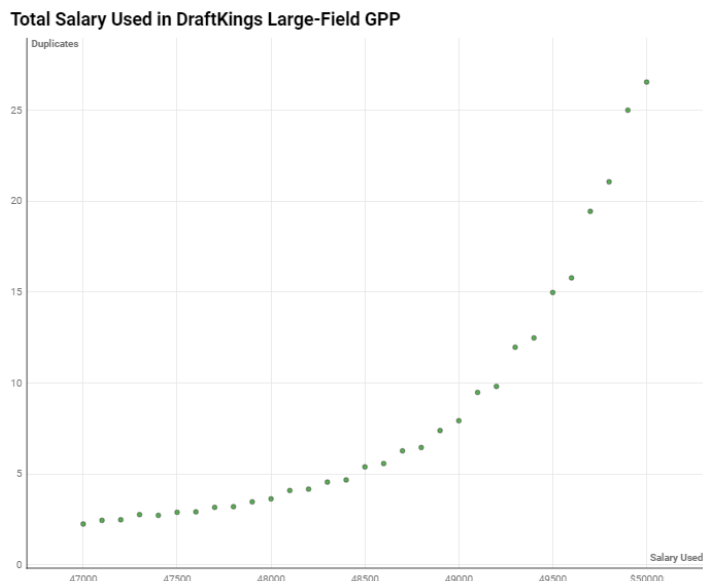
Whether you're using an optimizer or sitting on a toilet building by hand, one of the easiest ways to reduce the number of expected duplicates is to limit the total salary of your lineup. Executed quickly by setting a max spend on the optimizer or simply viewing the salary remaining on the DraftKings app, reducing our overall salary spent has shown a positive correlation with fewer duplicates. As with most topics discussed in this article, salary spent should be adjusted on a slate-by-slate basis, and I don't recommend setting hard-and-fast rules for each showdown slate.

	Duplicates	Total_Salary_Used	Cumulative_Ownership	Product_Ownership	Total_ETR_projection
Duplicates	1	0.15	0.16	0.43	0.13
Total_Salary_Used	0.15	1	0.12		0.37
Cumulative_Ownership	0.16	0.12	1	0.41	0.25
Product_Ownership	0.43		0.41	1	0.18
Total_ETR_projection	0.13	0.37	0.25	0.18	1

While cumulative ownership gets the spotlight and is easier to manipulate for those using optimizers, reducing our product ownership has proven more useful in attempting to limit duplicate lineups. Just as we can calculate our lineup's cumulative ownership by adding up the ownership of each individual roster spot, product ownership can be found by multiplying each spot. As an extreme example, a two-player pairing that consists of 20% owned **Kyler Murray** + 20% owned **Zach Ertz** is far more likely to be duplicated than 39% owned **DeAndre Hopkins** + 1% owned **Eno Benjamin** despite identical 40% cumulative ownership. Since most optimizers aren't designed to help us limit our product ownership, we're best served setting groups or rules to include 'at least one player sub x% ownership' in our large-field GPP lineups, though we should approach this on a slate-by-slate basis and avoid rigid rules. The .43 r-squared between product

ownership and the number of duplicates is the highest correlation of any single variable that I've tracked. When we can lower our lineup's product ownership without making significant sacrifices to our lineup's projection, we drastically increase our lineup's expected value.

While understanding correlation and how it impacts roster construction is an important component to being successful at showdown, football is a high-variance sport and the event-based scoring of this format will often produce winning lineups that seem counterintuitive. Those 'random' lineups that appear to ignore correlation or even embrace anticorrelation are generally rewarded with fewer duplicates. We can look at a few pairings to see how expected duplicates are impacted when certain players are, or aren't, rostered together and determine how that might affect the rest of our roster construction.

Average Duplicates for CPT WR Lineups in DraftKings Large-Field GPP

CPT WR + QB	10.1
CPT WR No QB	5.1

Remember that note from the correlation section where I suggested the field still wasn't stacking their CPT WR with his QB enough in large-field tournaments? I still agree with that, but this illustrates that when we *do* complete the CPT WR + QB stack, our expected duplicates increase from 5.1 to 10.1 vs. non-stacked lineups. In lineups that have two or more players who are more likely to be owned together, we need to be even more aggressive in limiting our product ownership, salary, etc. Conversely, if we're actively avoiding the CPT WR + QB combo, we've already taken a significant step in lowering our expected dupes and can instead include players with higher projected ownership or use more of our total salary.

Similarly, lineups that rostered two running backs from the same team were duplicated on average 6.6x compared to 8.5x for lineups that rostered just one. While there are countless examples of inversely or weakly correlated player combinations we could examine here, let these two serve as a reminder that cumulative and product ownership numbers are not created equal. We should always go one step further to try and determine how often certain combos are rostered together and how that changes what else we need to do to be unique.

Just as inversely correlated player pairings can improve our chances of being unique, roster constructions that are heavily weighted in favor of one team, typically underdogs, have consistently been underutilized by the field and offer significant positive leverage. While 2-4 roster constructions still offer the most leverage, utilized by just 16.1% of the field on average, even 5-1 builds have been used less often than they've won.

Groups and Rules to Consider

I steer clear of rigid rules and groups when optimizing showdown lineups, not only because of the inherent randomness of a single NFL game, but also because the rules that are required to create +EV lineups are fluid based on all of the variables discussed above that impact a single lineup's usability. With that in mind, I'll share a few that I consider on most slates that I think can provide guardrails for better long-term roster construction.

Max (2) K/DST in the same lineup:

The combination of cheap salary and fair median projection for kickers and defenses as a whole makes it more likely that optimizers will force them into lineups, particularly when the skill-position players they're priced around project poorly. Don't let the strong median projection fool you; 3+ kickers and/or D/ST have landed in top-1% finishing lineups at a paltry 1.1% rate.

Max (1) WR/TE from the same team as CPT WR:

As noted above, just 7.9% of top-1% finishing lineups rostered more than (1) additional WR or TE in FLEX with a CPT WR from the same team. While I understand I'll miss outlier situations where CPT WR + two pass catchers are optimal, I think there are diminishing returns when including pass catchers in the flex of CPT WR teams because it becomes more likely that team's QB is the optimal CPT as you add more pass catchers.

If rostering a D/ST, max (3) players from the opposing team:

You could easily extend this to four players from the opposing team when rostering a D/ST, but 88.8% of top-1% lineups have paired their D/ST with three or fewer players from the opposing team. Exceptions can be made, but in lineups with a D/ST, I'm most likely restricting my exposure to the opposing team to three players.

ETR

Thank you for reading!

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