

# Final Fantasy: One Man's Night of Fantasy Football

## Trauma

-Matt Lieberson

It's addicting. It's confusing. It's thoroughly maddening. And, frankly, it has made me detest the NFL more than I ever thought I would. Yes, it's fantasy football. There was no night of fantasy football in any league that was nuttier than this past Sunday in the MYFFL, the Marblehead Youth Fantasy Football League.

For those who don't know, fantasy football is an online game where participants pick certain NFL players on their team, and get points for their team based on their stats. Each week your team will play against another team in

the league, and whoever has more points gets the victory. It has become a craze that now has pundits predicting stats, websites devoted entirely to it, and football fans across the country in a tizzy.

I have always considered myself an avid fantasy footballer. Since seventh grade I have been helping my dad with his team, but in ninth grade some friends and I created a league of our own. Nine other current MHS seniors and I had our inaugural draft, and the league began. It took time to evolve to what it is today. In the early onset of the league, there were struggles. Some owners never checked their team at all and were playing players who had torn ACLs. But this year, our league hit a new level of competitiveness.

Fast forward to this past Sunday. Two playoff spots were locked up, with Quigley and John Merrigan having clinched their places in our postseason. There were two spots left with five teams in contention. I had to win, and I was in. Seems simple enough, right? Well, not exactly.

I was playing MHS senior and Powderpuff Coach Zach Kovner's team, led by gutsy QB Tim Tebow. My team (aptly named "The Injured Reserves") had faded down the stretch, with four top players on my team out with injuries. But I still had a shot to continue my season. All I had to do was beat Kovner.

At around 7:30 on Sunday night, I was five points down. I had hope, though. My hope rested on the Cowboys (Miles Austin, DeMarco Murray, and the

Cowboys defense) and Jason Pierre-Paul of the Giants. Zach had Ahmad Bradshaw and Hakeem Nicks of the Giants left to play.

With about four minutes left in the Sunday Night Football game, I was losing by 7 still. Pierre-Paul had three sacks, gaining me 10 points, while Austin had done nothing. Living up to the team name was DeMarco Murray, breaking his ankle and leaving the game in the 1st quarter. But then

my luck changed. Miraculously, Miles Austin caught a touchdown pass with three minutes left. I was down by half a point.

The scene that follows caused me more emotional trauma than any computer game ever should. It eerily mirrors the Red Sox' collapse down the stretch

this season. The Giants marched down the field and scored, losing me points because I had the Cowboys' defense. I was down 6 with a little hope. Austin caught another ball, and I was down 5. With 36 seconds left, Miles Austin went deep, and he was wide open. He just flat-out dropped it, and with it fell my hopes of playoff glory. But I had one final outside chance. As the Cowboys lined up for a game-tying field goal, I needed kicker Dan Bailey to make it and the game would go to overtime, leaving me more chances for a comeback. I was down 5. The kick was up, and it was blocked! I was in sheer shock. What added to the pain was that the kick was blocked by Jason Pierre-Paul, which got me 3 points, not the 5 I needed. Pierre-Paul sabotaged his own team (well, not his real team).

Confused? I am too. I realized how impossible it is to watch a game when stats and numbers are all that matter. Yes, it is heartbreaking to not go into the playoffs after I ended up on the short end of a four-way tie. But I can finally watch NFL games that are inconsequential to me without stress.

The MYFFL will live on. The playoffs begin next week, and I wish luck to the teams with more heart than mine. The Injured Reserves will be back with a vengeance for 2012, even if it is unhealthy for me.

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