



2008 Auction Strategies for Experienced Players

Written by

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Think of this tool as an in-depth plan that you may follow. You might disagree with some of the values I put on certain players and that's okay, we all value players differently. However, this is how I will attack an auction league draft in 2008. This is how I feel I can be successful and win my leagues. Everyone has different strategies and plans and processes, but through my experience with mock drafts so far this season and other leagues I am currently participating, this plan will give you the best "bang for your buck!" Values used in this draft tool are values that I have seen/bid on myself in this pre-season. These are not made up values. Keep in mind that we are talking about a normal, 12 team, 23 man roster, \$260 budget, \$1 min. bid, 5x5, Roto league, 2C, 1B, 2B, 3B, SS, MI, CI, 5OF, 1DH, 9P

The Big Picture: The main idea for an auction draft for experienced players is to find good values at a price that is much cheaper than it should be. Basically, you want to find players who have the potential to put up similar numbers to a superstar for half the price. At the same time, if you know how much cheaper you could possibly get certain players for, you can comfortably bid big on the superstars you really want. The following plan is not a real auction draft. This is a plan I put together you can follow for your real draft. I plan to do an auction soon by following this exact plan, and I will post the results here.



The other trick is knowing what to spend and when to spend it. With a \$260 budget and 23 players to bid on, the average player costs \$11.30. Before the draft, I like to pick out as many \$1 type players that I feel are good enough to perform at the same level or provide quite a bit of upside as a players you'd normally spend more money on. For example, I know that I can draft Barry Zito, Randy Johnson, John Lester, and Kevin Slowey for \$1 at the end of an auction draft. That's 4 starting pitchers I am comfortable

with that I feel either have upside or are good enough that they won't kill my team on an everyday basis. You can even throw in Tom Gorzelanny, Andy Pettitte, Shawn Hill, Ian Kennedy, and Jeremy Guthrie as fall backs in case you get outbid. Those 9 pitchers probably won't be great all together, but 4-5 of them with 2 closers and 2-3 top-notch starting pitchers will give you enough potential upside and the opportunity of a great staff. So from here, let's assume we can get 4 of these guys at \$1 for the back end of your staff.

Now, back to the \$11.30 average per player..... $\$11.30 \times 4$ pitchers is \$45.20, which is what 4 pitchers at average price should cost. Now subtract \$4 (total spent from the 4 pitchers each at \$1) and you have 41.20. Take that \$41.00 (since min. bid is \$1.00) and you can split that up or spend it all on one top notch player. \$40 could net you a Miguel Cabrera, David Wright, Prince Fielder, Ryan Howard, etc. When ever you plan to draft a player under the \$11.30, you can add the difference onto another player that you want to bid big on. For additional strategies like this, try the "Control the Draft" Strategy, visit Lenny Melnick's web site at www.lennymelnickfantasybaseball.com. Lenny's strategy is a little more in-depth, I like to keep it simple. Doing mock drafts is the best way to understand player values. You can certainly spend time writing out what you'd spend on every player out there, but I don't bother. Mock Auctions allow me to understand trends and give me a great sense as to who slips, who goes for bargains, and who usually gets over paid. Then, I make a list of the exact players I want with a couple of fall backs and I draft my team with the values I feel they will go for, give or take a few bucks. 9 times out of 10, I get all the players I want at prices that are close to what I predicted. Of course, any draft can turn in the wrong direction at any moment, but if you stick to your plan, you'll be fine.

My personal strategy, and it's the first thing I do before a draft is to see how many \$1 players I can be comfortable with and feel have enough upside that I can win with. I like to make a list of each position and I fill in the players I feel I can get for \$1. Then I start to plan my attack. The more players I know I can get for \$1, the more top notch players I can spend big on or outbid people for. The trick is determining which \$1 players are right for you and how many. Of course, there are always a few players, maybe with some hype, that will command a few extra bids like Jeremy Hermida for example. Hermida hit .330+ in the 2nd half of 2007 and if anyone in your league realizes that, you could be in for a small bidding war. So for this tool, I'm predicting you'd have to pay \$5 or less.

Follow me here.....

Hermida had a promising 2nd half and he's still young. You can also look to J.D. Drew, Coco Crisp, and Melky Cabrera as cheap fallbacks with some upside for close to a buck. Nate McLouth is another guy the experts like. Has 15+HR/30+SB upside with 500+AB but a full season could prove something like 20+/40+, in a dream world. It's up to Pittsburgh to finally let this guy run wild. A fall back on McLouth could be Jayson Werth who has 20/20 potential with 500+AB if he can keep Geoff Jenkins on the bench in Philadelphia. Kurt Suzuki and Ramon Hernandez are under \$3 catchers. Suzuki is young with .275/15/75+ potential and Hernandez has 20HR potential but was hurt last year. Both are "good enough" options at catcher. Others cheapies (\$3 or less) at catcher

with upside could include John Buck, Geovany Soto and J.R. Towles. I have found 3B Kevin Kouzmanoff to be a cheapie in drafts as some managers are still taking chances with Eric Chavez, Scott Rolen, Joe Crede and Troy Glaus, all players with risk you can get for \$3 or less. I did a mock in the beginning of January where Stephen Drew wasn't even drafted. I feel he has monster upside along with his youth, quality team, and a sweet showing in the post-season, so I see \$1 for Drew as a fantastic value. A fallback \$1 guy instead of Drew would be Khalil Greene who has 30/100 potential but comes with a low batting AVG. To me, that's a great value for \$1 at a weak position...a weak position you can wait until the end of the draft to fill for \$1. J.J. Hardy can also be had for under \$5 as a fall back. These players should give you solid all around numbers. I put Willy Tavares at \$5 because stolen bases are always tough to get in an auction, but, assuming Tavares is the CF starter in Colorado, he should provide a .300AVG with 35+SB. When we are projecting our teams like this, we want to make sure we are covering our categories even though we will be concentrating on loading up on categories later with our big time players. Let's say we can get Tavares at \$5 although you can certainly get him for \$1. Lastly, Lyle Overbay, whom everyone has written off, was hurt last year and never got on track but he certainly has .300/20/100/100 potential at \$1 and looks to be ready and healthy for 2008. With all of that being said, below is what your team could potentially look like before your draft even starts and it will only cost you \$24...

C – Kurt Suzuki \$2
C – Ramon Hernandez \$3
1B –
2B –
3B – Kevin Kouzmanoff \$2
SS – Stephen Drew \$1
MI –
CI – Lyle Overbay \$1
OF –
OF -
OF – Willy Tavares \$5
OF – Nate McLouth \$1
OF – Jeremy Hermida \$5
DH –

P –
P –
P –
P –
P -
P – Tom Gorzelanny \$1
P – John Lester \$1
P – Barry Zito \$1
P – Randy Johnson \$1

You now have \$236 to spend on 11 players which gives you an average of \$21.45

Hanley Ramirez vs. B.J. Upton

Both Ramirez and Upton have showed they can hit for a high AVG (.320+), both have 20+HR/80+RBI power, run potential of 100+, and while Hanley is a solid 50+ stolen base guy, Upton over a full and healthy season should rack up no less than 30 with potential for 40+. The trick here, Hanley will cost you \$45+ at the auction while Upton will cost \$25 - \$32. So for close to \$15-\$20 less, you can have the same player minus just a couple of stolen bases. Also, this year, Hanley might move into the 3rd spot in the order, which could easily knock off 10-15 SB's but could increase his power to 25-30/HR and 100+RBI making Upton a more comparable talent. Yes, Hanley is worth the \$45+, but why not save \$15-\$20+ and take a player like Upton who has similar potential. Take that \$20 and save it for a minute. Let's say, in this case, you steal Upton for \$28, and stick him at 2B.

C – Kurt Suzuki \$2

C – Ramon Hernandez \$3

1B –

2B – **B.J. Upton \$28**

3B – Kevin Kouzmanoff \$2

SS – Stephen Drew \$1

MI –

CI – Lyle Overbay \$1

OF –

OF -

OF – Willy Tavares \$5

OF – Nate McLouth \$1

OF – Jeremy Hermida \$5

DH –

P –

P –

P –

P –

P -

P – Tom Gorzelanny \$1

P – John Lester \$1

P – Barry Zito \$1

P – Randy Johnson \$1

You now have \$208 to spend on \$10 players at an average of \$20.80

Derek Jeter(No Risk) vs. Orlando Cabrera(Low Risk) vs. Felipe Lopez(High Risk)

Everyone knows that I have a man-crush on Derek Jeter, some will even poke fun at me if I pick Jeter and call it s “homer” pick. Fact is, you can spend 75% less money and get somewhat comparable stats. Jeter is a solid and durable .320/15/75/15 player who you’ll have to spend \$25 on at the draft. Yankee fans will certainly over bid a few bucks. Jeter can go anywhere from \$20 – \$30. But, what if I told you that you can steal a guy who can hit .300/15/80/20, a little less average but a few more stolen bases for \$8-\$10? That’s what you could get with Orlando Cabrera who was traded to the White Sox and is hitting in front of one of the best offensive lineups in the league. Most people don’t believe that Cabrera has much more upside, but I feel he could at least be the same player. If so, \$8 as opposed to \$25 is much more attractive and cost effective. You can also take this a step further and take more of a risk on a comeback player like Felipe Lopez for \$1 and get .275/15/75/30+. Lopez turns 27 this year, and we all know that age 27 is a possible “break out” year. I don’t mind sacrificing some AVG from Jeter because I am tacking on potentially 20+ SB’s with the same possible power output. Since I am “new school”, I am going to take the risk. I feel if I know I can go cheap here, I can spend bigger on a better hitter earlier when the big names are called out for bid. The more big time hitters I have, the less risky these cheapies become. You need 2-3 top notch, 1st-3rd round type hitters to compete in all hitting categories.....we’re going to have three 1st Rounders!!!

C – Kurt Suzuki \$2
C – Ramon Hernandez \$3
1B –
2B – B.J. Upton \$28
3B – Kevin Kouzmanoff \$2
SS – Stephen Drew \$1
MI – **Felipe Lopez \$1**
CI – Lyle Overbay \$1
OF –
OF -
OF – Willy Tavares \$5
OF – Nate McLouth \$1
OF – Jeremy Hermida \$5
DH –

P –
P –
P –
P –
P -
P – Tom Gorzelanny \$1
P – John Lester \$1
P – Barry Zito \$1
P – Randy Johnson \$1

You now have \$207 to spend on 9 players with an average of \$23.00

\$30 Relief Pitching

Normally, I like to reserve \$30 for relief pitching and I usually aim for two solid top tier to middle tier types and a third to either trade when value is high or to over take the saves category early. You could legitimately grab Bobby Jenks at \$13 and Mariano Rivera at \$12 (Valverde and Wagner at \$12 and Saito at \$11 as a fall back) and save yourself \$5. Then, you can draft a third closer and take a chance on a guy like Brad Lidge for \$5. In most 12 team auctions, there are a bunch of closers available late for \$5 or less. Most low-end closers are there for cheap like Joakim Soria, Tony Pena, Rafael Soriano, Eric Gagne, Brian Wilson and Troy Percival but I personally like to draft two top guys who I can trust and then one of these guys for cheap later on. I like Soriano the most as a third option. Pray that you catch lightning in a bottle with one of these low-end guys....like we did with Jose Valverde last season. In this case, let's take a guy like Lidge who has star potential and new upside with the Phillies at \$5, who has slipped for less in some auctions. As a fall back, look at Wilson and Joakim Soria as your third. So here, let's say we go with Jenks, Rivera, and Lidge. That's at least 100+SV, close to 200K, and ERA/WHIP should be under 2.50/1.20 depending on Lidge. All together you've spent \$30.

C – Kurt Suzuki \$2

C – Ramon Hernandez \$3

1B –

2B – B.J. Upton \$28

3B – Kevin Kouzmanoff \$2

SS – Stephen Drew \$1

MI – Felipe Lopez \$1

CI – Lyle Overbay \$1

OF –

OF -

OF – Willy Tavares \$5

OF – Nate McLouth \$1

OF – Jeremy Hermida \$5

DH –

P –

P –

P – **Bobby Jenks \$13**

P – **Mariano Rivera \$12**

P – **Brad Lidge \$5**

P – Tom Gorzelanny \$1

P – John Lester \$1

P – Barry Zito \$1

P – Randy Johnson \$1

You now have \$187 to spend on 6 players with an average of \$31.17

Top Starting Pitchers

The average top notch starting pitcher costs about \$20 give or take a few bucks. Outside of Johan Santana (\$30-\$35) and Jake Peavy (\$27-\$32), I'm talking about Brandon Webb, Josh Beckett, John Lackey, Carlos Zambrano, Justin Verlander, Cole Hamels, Erik Bedard, Scott Kazmir, Felix Hernandez, C.C. Sabathia, Aaron Harang, Chris Young, Dan Haren, Roy Oswalt, Roy Halladay, in no particular order. Daisuke Matsuzaka and Fausto Carmona seem to fall just out of this group, which is a good thing because they are undervalued. So let's say here we steal two of these guys for \$20 each. You need at least two of these guys to assure yourself a decent staff assuming the back end you end up with turns out decent. Let's go with Carlos Zambrano \$20 and Justin Verlander \$20. Webb, Lackey, and Beckett can all land at \$20-\$25 but it all depends on the pitcher run. For the most part, you can get two top guys for \$40. If you take Beckett at \$23, you can usually get Verlander, Kazmir or Hamels for \$17

C – Kurt Suzuki \$2
C – Ramon Hernandez \$3
1B –
2B – B.J. Upton \$28
3B – Kevin Kouzmanoff \$2
SS – Stephen Drew \$1
MI – Felipe Lopez \$1
CI – Lyle Overbay \$1
OF –
OF -
OF – Willy Tavares \$5
OF – Nate McLouth \$1
OF – Jeremy Hermida \$5
DH –

P – **Carlos Zambrano \$20**
P – **Justin Verlander \$20**
P – Bobby Jenks \$13
P – Mariano Rivera \$12
P – Brad Lidge \$5
P – Tom Gorzelanny \$1
P – John Lester \$1
P – Barry Zito \$1
P – Randy Johnson \$1

You now have \$147 to spend on 4 players at \$36.75

Let the fun begin - Top Hitting on the Cheap

Right off the bat, understand that Lance Berkman, Justin Morneau, Carlos Pena, Magglio Ordonez and David Ortiz can be had cheaper than usual or will be somewhat undervalued at the auction. Ortiz is a .300/45/120 talent you can get for \$30 - \$34 while a Pujols who will hit .320/45/120 costs \$45-\$50+. The same goes for Lance Berkman who can be as cheap as \$26-\$30 who could hit .300/40/120. Why bid big bucks on Pujols when you can get comparable stats in cheaper players? Obviously, Pujols has an AVG advantage over Berkman, but if you plan effectively you'll notice that we already have 5 other cheap hitters who have .300+ AVG potential which means you can opt for the cheaper Berkman at a potential .300 AVG instead of the more expensive Pujols with .320+ potential. Let's put it this way, .320/40+/100+/20+ is worth \$40. Anything close to that, give or take a few stats for \$15-\$20 cheaper in some cases is worth it. Then, you can go out a steal Alex Rodriguez or Hanley Ramirez for whatever they cost. This of course is if we assume Pujols plays well the entire season and his elbow holds up.

For this plan, let's start the fun with Alex Rodriguez and let's spend \$48 on him for the DH spot, giving us \$99 left to spend. We now have 1B and two OF spots to fill. The four best OF's out there are Matt Holliday, Alfonso Soriano, Carl Crawford and Grady Sizemore. We could use a stolen base guy and we can use power. Best bet is to take care of both and pay \$38 for Alfonso Soriano. Worst case scenario is Soriano goes .280.30/30 which paying \$38 for 30/30 is over paying (when you can get Chris Young for \$20 but have to deal with a low AVG) but what you are actually paying for is the potential of .300/40/40 with Soriano. That now leaves us with \$61. Let's take \$40 more and spend that on Matt Holliday. Holliday provides 35+/120+ power with 10+SB and a .330+ AVG. That leaves us with \$21 for a 1B or \$21 for a CI and we move Overbay to 1B. Who would you pick as the best \$21 option at 1B/CI??? I'm going with Carlos Pena! BOO-YAH!!!! You can usually steal a Carlos Pena somewhere in the \$20 range as most people wonder if he is for real or not. I tend to think he is. Worst case scenario, Pena hits .270/35/120, and that's worth well beyond \$21 making his normal \$20 price a nice value!

C – Kurt Suzuki \$2
C – Ramon Hernandez \$3
1B – **Carlos Pena \$21**
2B – B.J. Upton \$28
3B – Kevin Kouzmanoff \$2
SS – Stephen Drew \$1
MI – Felipe Lopez \$1
CI – Lyle Overbay \$1
OF – **Alfonso Soriano \$38**
OF – **Matt Holliday \$40**
OF – Willy Tavares \$5
OF – Nate McLouth \$1

OF – Jeremy Hermida \$5
DH – **Alex Rodriguez \$48**

P – Carlos Zambrano \$20
P – Justin Verlander \$20
P – Bobby Jenks \$13
P – Mariano Rivera \$12
P – Brad Lidge \$5
P – Tom Gorzelanny \$1
P – John Lester \$1
P – Barry Zito \$1
P – Randy Johnson \$1

So there you have it, that's what a potential 12 team, 23 man roster, 5x5, mixed league auction draft could realistically look like.

Now, usually you need approximately 300 HR, 160 SB and .280 AVG to compete in all hitting categories and a 3.90 ERA, 1.30WHIP, 1000+K, 70+SV to compete in pitching categories. Let's see what we have...

C – Kurt Suzuki \$2	.275/15/75/0
C – Ramon Hernandez \$3	.275/20/80/0
1B – Carlos Pena \$21	.275/40/120
2B – B.J. Upton \$28	.320/25/100/30
3B – Kevin Kouzmanoff \$2	.300/20/100/0
SS – Stephen Drew \$1	.285/15/90/15
MI – Felipe Lopez \$1	.275/15/80/30
CI – Lyle Overbay \$1	.300/20/100/0
OF – Alfonso Soriano \$38	.300/40/80/40
OF – Matt Holliday \$40	.330/35/120/10
OF – Willy Tavares \$5	.300/5/60/40
OF – Nate McLouth \$1	.275/15/80/30
OF – Jeremy Hermida \$5	.300/20/90/15
DH – Alex Rodriguez \$48	.300/50/140/20

P – Carlos Zambrano \$20	17W/3.50ERA/1.20WHIP/200K
P – Justin Verlander \$20	20W/3.20ERA/1.20WHIP/200K
P – Bobby Jenks \$13	35SV/2.50ERA/1.20WHIP/75K
P – Mariano Rivera \$12	35SV/1.90ERA/1.00WHIP/60K
P – Brad Lidge \$5	35SV/2.50ERA/1.20WHIP/90K
P – Tom Gorzelanny \$1	15W/3.70ERA/1.25WHIP/140K
P – John Lester \$1	14W/3.90ERA/1.30WHIP/150K
P – Barry Zito \$1	13W/3.80ERA/1.35WHIP/170K
P – Randy Johnson \$1	13W/3.70ERA/1.20WHIP/170K



We're certainly in the .280-.290 range for AVG, 325HR, and 230 SB according to my projections. So it appears we have enough stats to cover hitting with some extra just in case I over-valued a player here or in case of injury or slump. As for pitching, we'd be competitive in Wins, if not the leader, ERA/WHIP could be under 3.90/1.25 but that will depend on Gorzelanny/Lester/Zito/Johnson. We have 3 players with 120+RBI potential, 6-8 players with 100Run potential and I certainly undervalued K's for those last 4 cheap pitchers. If Johnson and Zito make comebacks, this team is a superstar team. The upside players are the key here, the cheapies.

If you notice, every cheap player I picked has some kind of potential or comeback possibilities. Zito and Johnson on comebacks and better or healthier than how they performed in 2007. Lester was once thought of as having a higher ceiling than Papelbon and looks to be fully recovered from being diagnosed with Cancer. Tom Gorzelanny could potentially be the ace over Snell and is still under 27 years old. Lidge can certainly have a great year in Philly if he gets his act together and has 90-100K potential. Rivera, Jenks, Zambrano and Verlander are obviously the horses. A-Rod, Holliday, Soriano are obvious 1st rounders. Hermida hit .330+ after May, McLouth had 13 HR and 22 SB in only 329 AB so potential for 20/40 is there with a full season, even though that might be dreaming, Suzuki and Hernandez have solid potential as Suzuki is young and performed well in the minors while Hernandez is looking for a comeback season. I believe B.J. Upton is a poor man's Hanley Ramirez but with potential to put up numbers close to what Hanley did in 2007 minus a few SB's while people are still unsure whether to trust Carlos Pena or not as I feel at least 35HR is possible even if he comes back to earth a bit. Then to round out some of these players, Tavares has .300+/35+SB potential, Lopez is still young enough to kick it up a notch, Overbay is cheap because he is coming off an injury, Drew had a terrible average but showed in the playoffs that he has talent and Kouzmanoff was a .300+ hitter in the minors and the second half of 2008! Please notice that as you look over this team, there is not much injury risk. Overbay is healthy as last year was a freak thing, B.J. Upton just had some quad soreness, Hermida had a bruised knee to start

the season, and Soriano also had quad problems. Other than that, everyone else seems pretty healthy and durable. I don't see Soriano and Upton suffering from these same problems, I see Overbay over his injury, obviously, Hermida is healthy and Hernandez might be the only risk, but he was always a pretty durable catcher until last year, so I see him staying relatively healthy.

It's all in the planning. Obviously, there are some things you'll need to make sure you understand.....

Never throw out a player to bid that you are targeting. Why throw out a player you want too early and risk having to bid higher than you plan to? Throw out players you know you don't want. For me, I always throw out J.D. Drew, Pat Burrell, Hideki Matsui and guys like that that I know I won't be bidding on but that other people will bid on. Let everyone else spend their money and over pay for players early. Always try to throw out overly-hyped players that you don't plan to overpay for like Francisco Liriano, Delmon Young, Chris B. Young, Adam Dunn, etc. These are quality players, but only for the right prices. The longer you can hold off for your players, the cheaper they will be.

Keep in mind that any of the values above could be off by a few bucks. It all depends on the managers in your league. In the beginning of the auction, managers will throw out all the big players. If people are bidding over \$50 on 1st round type players, that means there will be major bargains at the end of the draft. If it seems that every player is being over paid, and by that I mean excessive amounts over \$30, just sit back and rake up when everyone else doesn't have any money left. An example.... I did an auction recently where Chris Young, one of the top notch pitchers I mentioned above went all the way to the end of the draft before someone finally threw him out. He still went for \$15 when only two people had enough money to bid. In this case, there was still a top notch guy available who you'd be able to grab for a \$5 discount. Young will put up \$20+ value in 2008, so getting a guy like this at \$15 is a huge bargain!

Remember, building a great team at the auction takes patience and a little bit of luck. Throwing players out too early can change your plan in a heart beat. Always have additional cheap players available in case the players you pick out and want most are over bid on. Keep in mind that you shouldn't chase. Never pay \$6 for that \$1 Barry Zito, just sit back and take Kevin Slowey for a buck, and then send me an email thanking me at the end of the season!

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