



2008 Common Draft Strategies

Written by

Mike Kuchera of www.FantasyBaseballExpress.com & Brad Stewart of www.MLBFrontOffice.com

Copyright © 2008, Fantasy Sports Express, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

How Should I use this?

There is no right or wrong strategy; it's all about what you feel comfortable with. But, if you go into your draft without a strategy, you're like a lame duck. If you've read the book *Fantasy Land* by Sam Walker, you probably remember reading about Walker sitting at the table on draft day and analyzing everybody's strategies. Every strategy has its strengths and weaknesses and every strategy can be exploited in some way. No strategy is perfect, but if you can optimize your execution, they can all be very effective. Keep strategy in mind on draft day, not only your own, but the others as well. If you can identify your opponent's strategy early, you can start exploiting its weaknesses. Keep in mind that these strategies work for most league types and drafting formats, but may need to be adjusted depending on your league settings.



The Most Common Strategies:

The Position Scarcity Strategy is one of the most popular strategies in fantasy baseball and also one of the most abused. Essentially, the goal of this strategy is to draft the best players at the scarcest positions early in the draft and fill in the more plentiful positions later on. However, you need to be careful with this one. Often times owners end up reaching well beyond value just to grab a guy at a scarce position. Make sure that the player really is the best value. To do this, you can use a position scarcity adjustment formula, but that's for a different article.

The next strategy may seem a bit contradictory as you are not trying to win any of the categories. **The Balanced Team Strategy's** goal is for you to come in 3rd or 4th in every single category, thus almost guaranteeing you win overall. In the early rounds of this strategy, you try to draft players that will produce in all of categories. These are guys like Hanley Ramirez, Eric Byrnes, Chris Young, Johan Santana, Jake Peavy etc. After the first eight or ten rounds, you need to start filling holes. If you don't have quite enough speed, draft a speedster. If you don't have quite enough win potential, draft a pitcher who plays for the Yankees. With this strategy, never do you draft a player that scores well in only one category. Stay away from the Adam Dunn's of the world.

Punting a category can also be an effective strategy if executed correctly. Punting a category is simply not drafting anyone that would contribute at that category. The most commonly punted category is the saves category, but other categories could be punted as well. If you choose to give up on a category such as saves, spend your last three picks drafting high upside set-up men that could take over the closer role at some point during the season and make sure you keep your eye on the waiver wire. If executed correctly, by mid-season you could have a couple closers and at the end of the year, you will be ahead enough in a couple of categories that you can trade from strength to try and make a late run at saves.

If you are really into pre-draft preparation, but not so into the strategy of drafting, the **Draft the Best Player Available Strategy** may be for you. In this strategy, you simply enough draft the best player available without considering the position they play. The idea behind this is that you will end up with so much talent on your team by the end of the draft; you will be able to trade with the other owners to fill any glaring needs your team has. But be careful, if you get stuck with a stud riding your bench and a nobody at a position, you could be in for a long season.



The Hitter Overload Strategy is often compared to "punting" pitchers. But, it isn't. In this strategy you draft only hitters for the first 10 rounds of the draft. At first focusing on 5-tool players and then focusing on elite players in one category. By round 10, you have easily the best offense and move onto pitchers focusing on

closers and high-upside starters. Starters that have the potential to post good ERAs, WHIPs, and a high strikeout total are the best target. You will end up with an elite offense and an unproven pitching staff. If you plan to implement this strategy, make sure you spend ample time analyzing the pitching sleepers to find the best values.

If you're taking part in an auction draft rather than a snake draft, the **Don't Draft Anybody over \$30 Strategy** can be effective. This is the auction strategy equivalent of the balanced team strategy. It was used by Irwin Zwillig and Lenny Melnick to win LABR two years in a row in 1995 and 1996. Essentially, the idea is that at \$30 there will still be some stud players left and then you round out your roster with high-upside, multi-tool players.

Speaking of Lenny Melnick (two time LABR winner, Tout Wars winner), Tout Wars extraordinaire Ron Shandler devised the **LIMA Plan** in which you spend \$200 dollars of a \$260 budget on hitters. This is the auction draft equivalent of the Hitter Overload Strategy and works only if you really know your pitchers and really know your sleepers. Shandler executed this by devising statistics that would help him identify pitchers that would have success, but rarely anyone had heard of. Shandler has gained a cult-like following due to his success with this plan.

What Now?

Implementing each plan takes a unique approach that some can master easily, and others struggle with. Participate in mock drafts to figure out which strategy works for you. Additionally, each strategy takes unique preparation. For example, the LIMA Plan requires an immense amount of preparation identifying lower-tier pitchers. After you find the strategy that works best for you, stick with it! But, don't stick with it to the point where you lose an immense amount of value. If you plan on using the LIMA plan, but Johan Santana drops to the end of the third, don't hesitate to grab him. Just remember, you will then need to compensate later in the draft.

Written by

Mike Kuchera of www.FantasyBaseballExpress.com & Brad Stewart of www.MLBFrontOffice.com

Copyright © 2008, Fantasy Sports Express, Inc. All Rights Reserved.