

MASTERSBALL

FANTASY POINTS LEAGUES: Valuation and Strategies

By Todd Zola

Largely as a result of fantasy football enthusiasts bridging over into our neck of the woods, the popularity of fantasy points leagues is growing. Instead of scoring rotisserie style, each player's statistic is converted into a fantasy point, with the winner accruing the most fantasy points over the course of the season. There are infinite systems, but most award a point for a single, two for a double, etc. as well as points for RBI, runs, SB and BB amongst others. Some leagues subtract points for K or AB. On the pitching side, positive points are earned for such stats as wins, saves and innings pitched while points are lost for hits and walks allowed, runs allowed, etc. Certain leagues will include extra points for grand slam homers and hitting for the cycle while pitchers get credit for holds, shutouts, complete games and the like.

Valuing players in points leagues is straightforward, as fantasy points are the common denominator. You do not have to balance speed versus power, you solely need to convert everything to points and compare. The same goes for pitching, although points leagues are more prone to requiring a set number of starting pitchers and a set number of relievers.

The most common mistake made in fantasy points leagues is to look at raw point totals and not adjust to replacement level at each position. More often than not, pitchers are perceived to be more highly valued than hitters, suggesting they should be targeted over hitters in drafts. But after subtracting out the points earned by the last player at each position, often the most valuable hitters overtake the most valuable pitchers. But even after adjusting for replacement, there is still some finesse to drafting in points leagues, as not everyone values players properly. The key is to balance drafting the players you value higher with timing when you can draft them for optimal return, based on the trends of your competitors. That is, you don't always want to just take one off the top, as you may lock up positions, preventing you from getting an even better value later.

In addition, you really need to be aware of your reserve rules, as streaming pitchers in points leagues is often a more helpful strategy than in roto leagues because you are not as concerned about blowing up your ratios. This is another reason to sometimes knock pitchers down your draft list - you can stream in a marginal two-start option that is likely to score as many points as a better starter scheduled for only one game that week.

POINTS LEAGUES AND THE CVRC

With some fairly simple Excel manipulations, rankings for points leagues can be easily generated. The process entails determining the fantasy points each player scores and pasting that total into one of the standard categories in the CVRC and treating it as a one-category league by setting all of the other weights to zero. You can then use the same positional adjustments described in the CVRC tutorial.

For those needing a little Excel assistance, here is a step-by-step procedure to rank players on points leagues via the CVRC. As a reminder from grade school, the hierarchy of the algebraic functions is multiplication and division take priority over addition and subtraction.

Let us use the following points scoring system:

1B=1, 2B=3, 3B=3, HR=4, BB=1, R=1, RBI=1, SB=2, CS=-1, AB=-.5, K=-1

In cell V2 on the players page, type =L2+M2+N2+O2+2*Q2-.5*G2-P2-R2 (note - the individual hits can be summed as total bases and the asterisk is the x sign)

Click and hold on cell V2, drag down to highlight all the cells in column V corresponding to a player, then hit

CTRL D (for fill down)

Hit CTRL C (for copy) and click and release into cell K2 (home runs)

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Right click into cell K2, choose paste special, then choose values and click OK

You have now entered the fantasy points into the HR column. Treat the league as a HR-only league by changing the weights of everything but HR to zero, putting HR to one. Follow the CVRC tutorial with respect to positional adjustments.

NOTE – after you have done step 4, you have permanently lost the HRs. If you want to do other calculations, you will need a new CVRC or if you want, you can store the HR in column W via copy and paste and paste it back into column K if necessary.

If you need help deriving the formula for your league, please post the scoring system in the forum and we can help you out. If your league uses a stat we do not project, you can import it from another source into any of the empty columns to facilitate the calculation. And again, feel free to ask for help in the forums.

With the pitching CVRC, you use the same procedure, using column O to do the computation. In this case, you must paste the points into column L, the strikeouts column. You then zero out the others with respect to category weights. It is necessary to use column L as the replacement for the wins and saves is a little different for mixed leagues and the process will not work for fantasy points, but it will be just fine using the strikeouts column.

Many points leagues use pitching categories we do not project like holds and quality starts. If this is the case, you can import them from another source and utilize that for the points calculation. Please ask on the forum if you need some excel assistance. For categories such as complete games and shutouts, it is likely best to not even worry about those, with the possible exception of someone like Roy Halladay, Tim Lincecum or CC Sabathia, three starters that historically complete a few games. Do not worry about actually incorporating the points in the projection, just bump them up a few spots on your cheat sheet. That said, it would not be too surprising if Lincecum and Sabathia had their innings tempered after their heavy workloads last season. Questions? Please post them on the forum.