WINNING TENDENCIES FOR THE ROTISSERIE PLAYER: A Comprehensive Examination of 2003 Standings

By Todd Zola, Mastersball.com

Introduction

Perhaps the most compelling aspect of fantasy baseball is the abundance of strategies that can be employed to earn the proverbial Yoohoo shower. This is especially true with rotisserie style scoring, as breaking the points into subsets of hitting and pitching avails countless combinations leading to potential victory.

One thing is for sure there is no foolproof strategy, befit for every occasion, guaranteed to succeed. Fantasy enthusiasts each have their own strengths and weaknesses and should scheme accordingly. Each league is unique, differentiated by its rules and the quirks of its owners.

There might be, however, certain tendencies displayed by a majority of winning teams. Obviously, it is quite possible to win by zigging while others zag, but there is something to be said for trusting what is tried and true.

No matter what one's selected course of action is, it is helpful to have an idea of what others are likely to do and then mastermind accordingly. Just remember that each league is different with its own set of rules and owners which leads to unique trends and idiosyncrasies. As such, words like *NEVER* and *ALWAYS* should be used with extreme caution. What works for a certain individual might be detrimental for another. What succeeds in one type of league may fail in another. What triumphs one year may bomb the next.

The Objectives

In order investigate if relevant tendencies shared by winning rotisserie teams exist, five of the most popular style leagues will be studied by generating an average set of standings for each. A series of questions will then be posed and discussed with particular attention paid to the penchants of the winners. Do champions fare better in hitting or pitching? Are there certain categories victors dominate more than others? Is punting a category or multiple categories a recipe for success or a road to disaster?

In addition, these same five leagues will be used to generate another set of data, showing the average category totals at each point in the standings. Again, questions and discussions will ensue, examining pertinent details relating to winning strategies. What target totals should a balanced team strive to achieve? Do these remain consistent from year to year? Are there any categories in which it is easier or harder to gain or lose points? Are there places within an individual category that are more tightly bunched or spread out? Are there any surprises?

After the discussion concludes, the most relevant observations will be summarized and some general tendencies of champions will be highlighted. Finally, some personal remarks and ideas for future investigations will be offered.

Composition of the Leagues in the Study
Each league consists of twelve teams. The quintet of player pools is as follows:

4x4 American League only, (105 leagues sampled)
5x5 American League only, (61 leagues sampled)
4x4 National League only, (103 leagues sampled)
5x5 National League only, (82 leagues sampled)
5x5 Mixed League, (60 leagues sampled)

The standard categories are used: batting average, home runs, RBI, stolen bases, wins, saves, ERA and WHIP for 4x4, with runs and strikeouts added for 5x5. While these represent the most common leagues of their genre, there are countless deviations with respect to the number of teams, the player pool and the number and type of categories, not to mention the bevy of leagues employing some form of fantasy points scoring. Participants in such leagues will need to consider the differences when formulating their plan of attack.

The initial set of data will be displayed in the form of standard rotisserie standings, where the average points earned per team in each category will be presented. The top line will be the average amount of points the first place team scored in each category, progressing down to the last place team.

The only requirement for a league to be included in this aspect of the study is that it contains twelve participants and utilizes the regular scoring categories. There is no differentiation made for draft versus auction, keeper versus redraft, FAAB versus waiver wire, daily versus weekly transactions, positional eligibility requirements, etc. All of these elements have ramifications when it comes to developing a strategy, but delineating the data any further was a project beyond the scope of this study.

Although sample size anomalies are minimized by studying a multitude of leagues, care must be taken to recognize that certain trends or tendencies might be a direct result of occurrences unique to the 2003 season. When such situations are encountered, supporting data from previous seasons will be presented to help decipher whether the conclusions must be tempered due to a one-year phenomena or if they can be considered in a more general sense.

Discussions will lead to the presentation of another set of data displaying the average category totals for each of the five leagues at each point in the standings.

In order to make sure the category totals are representative of the normal 23 man roster most often employed in the standard rotisserie format, this data is subjected to an additional discriminatory condition. A league's data was utilized only if the total amount of stats accumulated in each counting category varied less than 5% from the average of all the accepted leagues for the American and National only leagues, and was within 10% of the average for the Mixed League. A sample of 50 leagues was used to generate each table.

Results

4x4 American League : Average Points per Category

TEAM	HR	RBI	AVE	SB	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	TOTAL
1st	10.3	10.6	9.6	10.2	9.0	9.4	10.0	10.2	79.2
2nd	9.8	9.8	8.5	8.9	9.0	8.4	9.4	9.4	73.0
3rd	8.9	8.8	7.7	8.1	8.4	8.1	8.9	9.1	68.0
4th	7.6	7.9	7.7	7.7	7.4	7.7	8.1	8.2	62.4
5th	7.7	8.0	7.4	7.5	7.4	6.6	6.9	6.8	58.2
6th	6.6	6.6	6.5	6.7	6.7	7.0	6.9	6.9	53.8
7th	6.4	6.7	6.9	6.8	6.4	5.2	5.8	5.9	50.0
8th	5.9	5.5	5.5	5.8	5.7	6.1	5.4	5.3	45.1
9th	4.4	4.3	4.9	4.7	5.8	5.9	5.7	5.4	41.1
10th	4.3	4.1	5.0	4.6	4.5	4.9	4.6	4.3	36.2
11th	3.7	3.4	4.7	4.1	4.0	4.6	3.5	3.5	31.5
12th	2.6	2.3	3.6	2.9	3.8	4.2	2.9	3.0	25.3

4x4 National League
Average Points per Category

TEAM	HR	RBI	AVE	SB	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	TOTAL
1st	10.5	10.6	8.9	9.9	9.3	9.6	10.3	10.3	79.4
2nd	9.6	10.0	8.7	8.8	8.1	8.6	9.2	9.5	72.6
3rd	8.8	9.3	8.7	8.7	8.3	7.8	8.3	8.4	68.2
4th	8.7	8.4	7.9	7.8	8.1	7.3	7.8	7.7	63.7
5th	7.5	8.0	7.6	7.3	6.5	7.5	7.2	7.4	58.8
6th	6.1	6.4	7.0	6.3	6.7	6.6	7.6	7.4	54.1
7th	6.3	6.0	6.3	6.2	6.6	5.7	5.9	6.1	49.2
8th	5.0	5.1	6.4	6.0	5.6	6.0	5.9	5.5	45.4
9th	4.8	4.7	4.7	5.1	5.7	5.7	5.1	5.4	41.2
10th	4.1	3.6	4.7	4.4	5.4	4.9	4.7	4.5	36.3
11th	3.8	3.7	3.9	4.1	4.3	4.8	3.2	3.0	30.9
12th	2.7	2.2	3.0	3.5	3.5	3.6	2.8	2.8	24.1

5x5 American League
Average Points per Category

TEAM	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	R	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO	TOTAL
1st	10.4	10.5	9.4	9.9	11.0	9.3	8.7	9.6	9.7	10.0	98.5
2nd	8.9	9.5	8.5	8.2	9.7	9.1	8.0	9.8	9.7	9.6	91.0
3rd	8.9	8.6	8.5	7.8	8.8	8.3	8.1	8.6	8.5	8.4	84.5
4th	8.1	8.6	7.4	8.6	8.1	8.0	7.1	7.3	7.9	8.4	79.4
5th	8.1	8.4	7.1	6.8	8.1	7.0	6.6	7.4	7.5	7.2	74.3
6th	7.6	7.0	5.9	6.6	7.3	6.6	6.8	6.9	6.9	6.8	68.3
7th	6.4	6.2	5.8	6.3	6.0	6.4	6.3	6.8	6.7	5.4	62.3
8th	5.2	5.0	6.6	5.8	5.3	5.5	6.1	5.8	5.4	5.8	56.5
9th	4.9	5.0	5.6	5.6	4.5	5.4	6.1	5.0	4.9	4.9	51.8
10th	4.3	3.9	5.0	5.7	3.9	5.2	4.8	4.1	4.2	4.8	45.9
11th	3.2	3.0	4.4	4.0	3.1	3.7	5.6	3.8	3.6	3.6	38.1
12th	2.1	2.2	3.8	2.9	2.1	3.4	3.9	3.0	3.0	3.1	29.5

5x5 National League
Average Points per Category

TEAM	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	R	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO	TOTAL
1st	10.1	10.7	9.5	9.5	11.0	9.1	9.0	10.2	9.8	10.2	99.1
2nd	9.5	9.9	8.3	8.7	9.9	8.7	8.3	9.5	9.8	9.8	92.4
3rd	8.9	9.2	8.5	8.6	9.6	8.9	7.5	8.0	8.5	8.6	86.2
4th	8.8	8.7	7.5	8.0	8.6	7.8	7.6	7.4	7.4	8.1	79.9
5th	8.1	8.2	7.1	7.2	8.0	7.2	7.6	6.6	7.0	7.0	74.0
6th	6.8	6.7	7.1	6.4	7.0	7.6	6.8	6.5	6.3	6.8	68.2
7th	6.1	6.3	6.3	7.0	6.0	6.3	6.1	5.9	6.1	6.3	62.5
8th	5.3	5.4	5.7	5.7	5.2	5.6	5.9	5.6	5.7	5.6	55.6
9th	4.4	3.9	4.9	5.1	4.2	5.4	5.7	6.0	5.8	5.1	50.5
10th	3.8	3.8	4.8	4.3	3.5	4.3	5.2	5.1	4.7	4.5	44.0
11th	3.5	3.0	4.6	4.0	2.8	3.9	4.8	3.7	3.8	3.3	37.5
12th	2.7	2.3	3.7	3.5	2.2	3.1	3.6	3.5	3.1	2.7	30.3

5x5 Mixed League
Average Points per Category

TEAM	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	R	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO	TOTAL
1st	10.0	10.6	8.7	9.9	10.5	8.5	9.1	10.0	10.2	9.6	97.0
2nd	9.1	9.5	8.3	9.0	9.8	9.3	8.1	9.1	9.1	9.1	90.3
3rd	8.1	8.3	8.5	7.5	8.9	7.6	8.2	8.6	8.6	9.3	83.6
4th	7.8	7.9	6.6	8.0	8.2	7.2	7.6	7.7	7.4	8.6	77.0
5th	7.9	7.7	6.9	8.1	7.5	7.5	5.8	7.0	6.8	7.3	72.5
6th	7.1	7.2	7.1	6.7	8.0	6.8	6.7	6.4	6.1	6.1	68.2
7th	6.6	6.7	5.8	6.2	6.0	6.4	7.0	6.0	6.6	6.0	63.3
8th	5.5	5.8	6.2	6.2	5.6	5.7	6.5	5.7	5.8	5.4	58.3
9th	4.7	4.4	5.9	4.6	4.9	5.7	5.2	5.2	5.9	5.3	51.8
10th	4.4	3.8	5.4	4.0	3.4	5.1	5.5	5.3	5.0	4.8	46.6
11th	3.7	3.1	4.4	4.9	2.8	4.9	4.3	4.1	3.8	3.6	39.8
12th	3.0	2.9	4.2	3.0	2.4	3.5	4.0	2.9	2.7	2.9	31.6

Analysis

Before we begin addressing questions, some general considerations should be discussed. Different types of leagues will demonstrate their own characteristic standings. The spread from top to bottom in keeper leagues with trading for the future will tend to be broader as the competing teams fatten up on the rebuilding teams. In non-keeper, serpentine draft leagues, the standings might be more bunched. When doing your own analysis, be sure to keep the origin of the data in perspective and in context with your own league.

What percentage of the maximum points does the average winner accrue?

Consistent across the board, the average champion amassed almost 83% of the maximum points, which is equal to a 3rd place finish in each category. This is in tune with data looked at from the 2002 and 2001 seasons, so the 83% threshold can be considered in a general sense and not specific to the 2003 season. Of course, 83% was not needed to win, as the second place finishers totaled about 76% of the maximum points, or roughly a 4th place finish in each category.

Do winners usually fare better in hitting or pitching?

The following is a table showing how all the teams fared in hitting versus pitching:

Percentage of Total Points from the Hitting Categories in 2003

TEAM	AL 4x4	NL 4x4	AL 5x5	NL 5x5	Mixed 5x5
1st	57.1%	46.6%	67.9%	56.1%	53.3%
2nd	51.8%	54.4%	42.9%	41.5%	55.0%
3rd	43.8%	62.1%	57.1%	67.1%	33.3%
4th	48.2%	57.3%	50.0%	61.0%	46.7%
5th	61.6%	56.3%	53.6%	56.1%	55.0%
6th	49.1%	42.7%	51.8%	51.2%	63.3%
7th	60.7%	52.4%	48.2%	59.8%	48.3%
8th	50.9%	47.6%	55.4%	43.9%	50.0%
9th	36.6%	39.8%	46.4%	32.9%	40.0%
10th	49.1%	38.8%	58.9%	41.5%	33.3%
11th	49.1%	45.6%	42.9%	50.0%	40.0%
12th	40.2%	39.8%	39.3%	42.7%	48.3%

In four of the five leagues studied, hitting predominated amongst the champions, 4x4 National League being the lone exception. If the top three places are considered money finishes, then in all five leagues, 67% of the money finishes favored hitting.

It is interesting to note that the hitting concentration rose about 10% from both 4x4 American League to 5x5 American League and 4x4 National League to 5x5 National League. This makes intuitive sense, as the addition of runs for hitting and strikeouts for pitching has a more drastic effect on the pitching player pool. Adding runs does not significantly alter the makeup of the hitting pool, but may redistribute relative values amongst primarily the same group of players. On the other hand, inclusion of strikeouts increases the value of starting pitching while taking away some value from relievers, so the back end of the pitching pool in 5x5 includes more of the risky to project starting pitching. In addition, there is always a plethora of valuable starting pitching available from the free agent ranks each year. It is human nature-- not to mention sage investing--- to pay a premium for what is more reliable.

Is there something inherent to the National League pitching pool in 2003 to make NL, 4x4 the lone exception and have winners favor pitching?

This table exhibits data from 2002, albeit including only twenty samples of each type of league:

Percentage of Total Points from the Hitting Categories in 2002

TEAM	AL 4x4	NL 4x4	AL 5x5	NL 5x5	Mixed 5x5
1st	50.7%	49.0%	50.9%	51.0%	50.4%
2nd	50.6%	52.1%	50.1%	49.8%	47.1%
3rd	47.8%	51.7%	49.2%	50.9%	53.2%
4th	53.5%	44.9%	50.2%	47.3%	51.9%
5th	53.5%	52.2%	55.3%	55.8%	49.5%
6th	44.2%	56.8%	51.1%	52.5%	53.3%
7th	48.7%	48.4%	52.3%	46.5%	48.1%
8th	49.9%	46.5%	52.8%	46.2%	52.1%
9th	56.7%	50.0%	47.2%	46.6%	44.7%
10th	50.4%	52.8%	44.6%	51.2%	45.1%
11th	42.7%	45.9%	38.0%	48.8%	54.6%
12th	48.2%	44.9%	51.4%	52.4%	48.4%

For all intents and purposes, in 2002, not just winners, but every position in all five leagues significantly favored neither hitting nor pitching. The question is whether either year is an exception or is this is exemplary of a trend? More data past and future is needed to satisfactorily address this issue.

Lost in this analysis is how much money was spent on hitting versus pitching or how early pitchers were selected in a draft. While examining allocation of resources with respect to this percentage would provide some very useful data, it is beyond the scope of this particular study, but will be addressed in the future. These results do seem to indicate, especially in the American League, pitchers in 2002 yielded a higher return on their investment than in 2003.

There are other plausible explanations as to why the data from these two years is markedly different. Of course without proof this is nothing but conjecture, but perhaps the soaring popularity of the 5x5 style of play is altering the dynamics. As mentioned, intuitively 5x5 lends itself to favoring hitting. It might just be that people are becoming more in tune with this strategy, and there is some bleeding over to 4x4. Time will tell as the only way this can be investigated is to continue the study in the upcoming seasons and contrast that data with these two seasons and those immediately previous.

The staff at Mastersball.com preaches this hobby is about 75% numbers blended with about 25% scouting and gut instinct. The numbers do not render a definitive answer, but the gut is saying there is something to the results of 2003. If forced to render a recommendation based upon this limited data, the lean is to indeed concentrate on accumulating as many hitting points as possible in 5x5, but in 4x4, try to take advantage of others hitting focus and get some high-end pitching bargains while still paying attention to the batters.

Which individual categories did winners fare better in? Were they the same in all five leagues?

In both single 4x4 leagues, batting average was the weakest hitting category with homers and RBI being the best. Most finished better in the pitching ratio categories than in wins and saves.
In all three 5x5 leagues, stolen bases bring up the rear while runs predominate on offense. The same pitching trend holds true as in 4x4.

The fact that winners paid less attention to stolen bases in 5x5 reflects the reduced risk of dumping a category, as each category contributes 20% as opposed to 25% of the total hitting points they do in 4x4. Steals are easiest to ignore as they do not really correlate very well to the other categories in terms of what types of players generate what stats as homers and RBI usually go hand-in-hand. It is also not surprising that runs were the favored category, as runs are greatly a function of playing time. Sluggers score runs. Speed demons score runs. Basically, those who get at bats score runs.

Comparing the two AL leagues to each other and the two NL leagues to each other yields some interesting pitching observations. In both cases the average winner's placement in saves decreased in 5x5, as did the ratios. Wins remained fairly consistent. Similar to the stolen base analysis, the lower average total in saves

reflects the lessened risk of dumping the category. The lower ratios can be attributed to the need to deploy more (thus less talented) starting pitchers in 5x5.

Some of the above observations have some serious implications in terms of what categories challengers might elect to concentrate upon and which might be paid a bit less attention. As such, similar analysis was done using a somewhat smaller, but still significant amount of leagues from 2001 and 2002.

The major trends hold true. In 4x4, power for hitting and ratios for pitching were favored. Stolen bases and saves were slighted in 5x5. Saves in the 4x4 single leagues exceeded those in the corresponding 5x5 leagues.

The above hints ignoring a category is easier to do in 5x5, is this true?

To study this, a series of tables will be presented. The columnar totals represent the percentage of 2003 championship teams that scored 12 points in the labeled category, then 11 points, etc, all the way down to 1 point. An entry of 0% signifies no team won by scoring that many points in the category.

4x4 American League
Percentage of Championship Teams Finishing at the Designated Level per Category

PTS	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	W	SV	ERA	WHIP
12	33%	38%	24%	37%	20%	27%	28%	28%
11	21%	24%	20%	23%	21%	22%	21%	31%
10	20%	21%	21%	14%	13%	14%	14%	14%
9	9%	8%	10%	9%	10%	9%	19%	11%
8	5%	4%	9%	4%	7%	4%	6%	5%
7	8%	3%	4%	4%	11%	8%	4%	4%
6	4%	2%	8%	4%	9%	3%	4%	2%
5	0%	0%	1%	2%	3%	5%	3%	1%
4	0%	0%	1%	3%	5%	2%	0%	2%
3	0%	1%	3%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%
2	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	3%	1%	2%
1	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%

4x4 National League
Percentage of Championship Teams Finishing at the Designated Level per Category

PTS	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	W	SV	ERA	WHIP
12	40%	45%	18%	27%	23%	31%	39%	33%
11	19%	24%	19%	18%	19%	21%	13%	25%
10	15%	7%	16%	17%	16%	16%	19%	18%
9	13%	10%	9%	16%	10%	9%	13%	13%

PTS								
8	6%	9%	12%	11%	8%	8%	9%	2%
7	5%	4%	9%	6%	11%	3%	5%	3%
6	2%	0%	8%	1%	4%	2%	0%	0%
5	1%	1%	1%	2%	4%	2%	1%	0%
4	0%	1%	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%	4%
3	0%	0%	3%	1%	2%	3%	0%	1%
2	0%	0%	2%	0%	1%	2%	0%	1%
1	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%

5x5 American League
Percentage of Championship Teams Finishing at the Designated Level per Category

PTS	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	R	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO
12	27%	48%	14%	23%	59%	13%	14%	29%	27%	30%
11	27%	13%	20%	23%	20%	25%	23%	20%	16%	25%
10	29%	16%	23%	25%	5%	21%	14%	7%	14%	13%
9	9%	11%	20%	9%	7%	14%	9%	9%	13%	7%
8	4%	2%	9%	9%	5%	7%	14%	11%	16%	9%
7	4%	7%	4%	2%	2%	11%	4%	16%	7%	4%
6	2%	2%	4%	4%	0%	5%	4%	7%	2%	11%
5	0%	2%	4%	2%	0%	0%	5%	2%	4%	2%
4	0%	0%	2%	2%	2%	2%	5%	0%	2%	0%
3	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	2%	4%	0%	0%	0%
1	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%

5x5 National League
Percentage of Championship Teams Finishing at the Designated Level per Category

PTS	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	R	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO
12	30%	30%	26%	30%	48%	18%	32%	28%	37%	32%
11	22%	38%	27%	15%	28%	17%	17%	32%	17%	28%
10	22%	13%	10%	15%	12%	18%	7%	9%	12%	15%
9	5%	13%	12%	10%	5%	11%	11%	11%	6%	7%
8	9%	2%	5%	11%	6%	12%	6%	11%	9%	7%
7	5%	1%	6%	2%	1%	11%	2%	6%	6%	5%

	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	R	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO
6	6%	0%	4%	9%	0%	5%	7%	0%	6%	2%
5	1%	0%	5%	5%	0%	2%	4%	2%	6%	1%
4	0%	1%	2%	2%	0%	1%	4%	0%	0%	1%
3	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%
2	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	7%	0%	1%	0%
1	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%

5x5 Mixed League
Percentage of Championship Teams Finishing at the Designated Level per Category

PTS	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	R	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO
12	28%	42%	17%	37%	42%	17%	28%	25%	35%	30%
11	21%	30%	12%	27%	30%	12%	21%	18%	26%	22%
10	18%	18%	16%	12%	16%	10%	9%	22%	17%	17%
9	12%	5%	9%	7%	9%	11%	13%	5%	9%	9%
8	6%	6%	5%	7%	7%	11%	6%	13%	11%	4%
7	5%	10%	9%	10%	5%	7%	2%	7%	0%	9%
6	5%	2%	5%	5%	2%	6%	6%	2%	5%	2%
5	4%	1%	4%	1%	2%	5%	9%	1%	2%	4%
4	1%	0%	9%	0%	0%	5%	2%	1%	2%	1%
3	0%	0%	5%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%	4%
2	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%
1	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Let us for now define punting as scoring three or fewer points in a category. In the deep single leagues, no team won by scoring fewer than five points in homers which dampers the utility of the Sweeney Plan. Steals was the only hitting category that was successfully punted by champions, and then only around 5% of leagues were won in this manner. Saves were punted by about 6.5% of winners in 4x4 and around 9% in 5x5. Between 2% and 3% of winners punted wins while a very small fraction punted the ratios. Here is the data summed up.

Percentage of Champions Scoring Three Points or Less in a Category

League	at least 1	1 category	2 categories
4x4 AL	14.3%	14.3%	0.0%
4x4 NL	16.5%	14.6%	1.9%
5x5 AL	12.5%	12.5%	0.0%
5x5 NL	22.0%	19.5%	2.4%
5x5 Mix	21.7%	20.0%	1.7%
All 4x4	15.3%	14.4%	0.9%
All 5x5	19.2%	17.7%	1.5%

The differences might be too small to be considered significant, but it appears it is a mite easier to punt in 5x5 as compared to 4x4. The winning teams that punted two categories are extremely minute so even though punting steals and saves individually worked some of the time, punting them simultaneously does not appear to be a wise decision.

OK, so punting may not work. What if I aim little higher?

Three points or less might be too extreme to define punting. Looking at teams that won with scoring six or fewer points in a category, batting average was still the most popular choice to slight, but stolen bases joined the party. Wins joined saves as the pitching categories of choice. Here is a summary of that data:

Percentage of Champions Scoring Six Points or Less in a Category

League	at least 1	1 cat	2 cat	3 cat	4 cat
4x4 AL	56.3%	39.3%	15.2%	1.8%	0.0%
4x4 NL	44.7%	27.2%	16.5%	1.0%	0.0%
5x5 AL	62.5%	50.0%	5.4%	3.6%	3.6%
5x5 NL	65.9%	41.5%	14.6%	8.5%	1.2%
5x5 Mix	71.7%	35.0%	28.3%	5.0%	3.3%
All 4x4	50.7%	33.5%	15.8%	1.4%	0.0%
All 5x5	66.7%	64.1%	31.8%	6.6%	1.5%

It is interesting to note that over 50% of winners finished in the bottom half of at least one category. Not surprisingly, the percentages in 5x5 exceeds that of 4x4, as there are two additional categories in which points can be made up.

It is especially noteworthy that there are more winners that slighted multiple categories in 5x5 as opposed to 4x4. This is anti to the "balanced team" mantra, the implication being a balanced team might be more important in 4x4 than 5x5.

Something to consider with this study is the data undoubtedly includes samples from keeper league, where the champions most likely improved their teams at the expense of their future. It is highly unlikely these teams manage to win by scoring less than 6 points in a category. As such, the percentage of successfully punting categories may actually be higher in redraft leagues. Future studies will discern between the different types of leagues and yield better results.

I like to set category targets during my draft. By the looks of this data, shooting for third place in each category is the optimal strategy. Assuming I play in a league like those that are discussed here, what are the raw totals I should shoot for?

Many people like to track their team's total in this manner. If you have the resources to do so, it is a very sound idea. Please remember the data discussed herein is specific to the styles of leagues previously described. The reader will need to decide if enough data applicable to one's own league can be gathered and if it can be considered to be of ample sample size for one's own purposes.

The average total for each place in the standings per category in the five leagues being studied will now be presented.

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4x4 American League
Average Category Totals

Team	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	W	SV	ERA	WHIP
1st	251	972	147	0.281	95	71	3.70	1.24
2nd	234	939	128	0.277	89	62	3.91	1.28
3rd	225	903	119	0.276	84	57	4.02	1.29
4th	215	881	113	0.274	80	52	4.13	1.31
5th	207	854	105	0.273	77	48	4.21	1.33
6th	200	833	99	0.271	74	44	4.30	1.34
7th	193	808	94	0.270	72	40	4.37	1.35
8th	184	780	89	0.268	69	36	4.47	1.37
9th	176	759	83	0.266	66	29	4.55	1.38
10th	167	719	75	0.264	62	25	4.64	1.39
11th	155	684	67	0.261	58	19	4.77	1.42
12th	136	615	55	0.257	53	11	4.96	1.46

4x4 National League
Average Category Totals

Team	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	W	SV	ERA	WHIP
1st	269	1008	146	0.285	96	92	3.52	1.24
2nd	247	962	132	0.282	91	80	3.67	1.27
3rd	234	932	121	0.279	87	72	3.79	1.29
4th	225	892	112	0.276	84	66	3.88	1.30
5th	215	863	104	0.274	81	59	3.96	1.32
6th	208	835	98	0.272	79	52	4.02	1.33
7th	199	805	94	0.270	77	46	4.10	1.34
8th	191	775	87	0.268	74	40	4.17	1.36
9th	180	749	79	0.267	71	33	4.29	1.37
10th	166	706	70	0.264	68	24	4.38	1.39
11th	150	657	62	0.261	63	16	4.53	1.41
12th	133	584	52	0.257	54	6	4.71	1.45

5x5 American League
Average Category Totals

Team	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	R	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO
1st	252	986	151	0.283	1002	97	77	3.75	1.25	1020
2nd	236	943	132	0.279	967	91	64	3.97	1.28	976
3rd	224	907	121	0.276	935	87	57	4.07	1.30	940
4th	216	884	113	0.274	913	83	52	4.16	1.31	910
5th	210	864	107	0.272	894	81	47	4.22	1.33	887
6th	202	841	99	0.271	869	77	42	4.33	1.34	856
7th	192	809	93	0.269	845	74	39	4.41	1.35	836
8th	187	786	87	0.267	817	71	34	4.49	1.37	813
9th	177	752	80	0.265	792	67	28	4.59	1.39	778
10th	165	720	74	0.264	762	63	23	4.70	1.41	741
11th	153	680	68	0.260	717	58	17	4.84	1.43	707
12th	138	619	55	0.257	657	49	9	5.04	1.46	632

5x5 National League
Average Category Totals

Team	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	R	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO
1st	259	982	144	0.285	1030	100	85	3.58	1.25	1210
2nd	245	941	129	0.281	985	93	75	3.74	1.28	1162
3rd	233	914	120	0.277	958	89	68	3.84	1.29	1116
4th	224	888	111	0.276	925	87	62	3.94	1.31	1070
5th	216	867	104	0.274	902	84	56	4.02	1.32	1043
6th	208	839	97	0.272	881	82	50	4.10	1.33	1016
7th	200	814	91	0.271	853	80	45	4.18	1.36	992
8th	190	788	86	0.269	819	77	40	4.25	1.38	954
9th	181	754	81	0.267	796	73	35	4.34	1.39	926
10th	169	720	74	0.265	754	70	27	4.43	1.40	891
11th	157	687	66	0.262	719	66	18	4.55	1.41	840
12th	138	630	53	0.257	661	57	7	4.77	1.46	733

5x5 Mixed League
Average Category Totals

Team	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	R	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO
1st	333	1220	178	0.291	1235	115	111	3.51	1.21	1334
2nd	320	1177	165	0.287	1201	109	101	3.64	1.24	1267
3rd	308	1149	155	0.284	1179	104	94	3.76	1.26	1228
4th	299	1128	147	0.282	1167	101	88	3.83	1.27	1196
5th	290	1108	139	0.281	1143	98	83	3.92	1.28	1168
6th	282	1084	133	0.279	1125	96	77	3.97	1.29	1145
7th	275	1064	127	0.278	1107	94	72	4.05	1.31	1116
8th	269	1045	120	0.276	1084	91	65	4.12	1.32	1085
9th	261	1021	114	0.275	1065	88	56	4.18	1.34	1046
10th	251	996	106	0.273	1041	85	48	4.27	1.35	1011
11th	239	967	96	0.271	1012	79	35	4.36	1.37	961
12th	222	926	83	0.267	960	72	17	4.52	1.39	893

.It is left for personal discretion whether to target third place or something else, after all, these are the final, year-end totals and most victorious teams will employ some level of roster management whereby improving their team. An interesting study for the future might be to compare the totals winning teams would have garnered if they had their opening day squad active all year so the improvement in each category could be measured. Also, there is no reason why one must target the same standings level in each category.

It is imperative to remember that the category total data was subjected to the constraint where the cumulative category totals from all included leagues must be less than 5% from the average for the accepted single leagues and less than 10% for the mixed league. This is supposed to force the data to represent the standard 23-man roster deployed in most leagues, consisting of 2 catchers, 1 of each infield position, 5 outfielders, a corner infielder, a middle infielder, a utility player and 9 pitchers. Some leagues deviate from this roster, thus the category totals might differ a bit.

How can I be sure that using 2003 data will work in 2004?

In order to investigate this, final results from the past three seasons will be used. The average third place total for each league will be presented
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4x4 American League
Average Third Place Category Totals

Year	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	W	SV	ERA	WHIP
2003	225	903	119	0.276	84	57	4.02	1.29
2002	226	895	114	0.273	84	61	3.94	1.28
2001	226	890	150	0.276	82	67	4.09	1.31

4x4 American League
Average Third Place Category Totals

Year	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	W	SV	ERA	WHIP
2003	234	932	121	0.279	87	72	3.79	1.29
2002	221	879	142	0.273	87	76	3.69	1.28
2001	259	939	134	0.280	85	67	3.90	1.28

5x5 American League
Average Third Place Category Totals

Year	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	RUNS	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO
2003	224	907	121	0.276	935	87	57	4.07	1.30	940
2002	225	900	114	0.272	923	86	61	4.00	1.29	958
2001	233	934	156	0.275	955	86	63	4.06	1.30	1048

5x5 National League
Average Third Place Category Totals

Year	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	RUNS	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO
2003	233	914	120	0.277	958	89	68	3.84	1.29	1116
2002	222	856	140	0.275	912	90	74	3.74	1.30	1149
2001	256	943	134	0.276	985	88	64	3.89	1.30	1166

5x5 Mixed League
Average Third Place Category Totals

Year	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	RUNS	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO
2003	308	1149	155	0.284	1179	104	94	3.76	1.26	1228
2002	297	1102	163	0.280	1143	106	101	3.61	1.25	1280
2001	330	1178	179	0.286	1215	106	98	3.82	1.27	1290

The statistical analysis will not be presented, but there is a moderate amount of fluctuation in some of the categories, making choosing the third place levels from 2003 a somewhat risky proposition.

Is there any way I can obtain more reliable targets?

It stands to reason that if one intends to shoot for preset category goals, one must have a set of statistical projections at one's disposal.   Perhaps they can be used to better set the category total?

To that end, a series of tables will be presented showing the third place category total as a percentage of the entire amount of statistics generated by the entire player pool of each league. The contribution of pitchers to the National League totals will be ignored as they do not count in standard rotisserie baseball.

4x4 American League
Third Place Category Total as a Percentage of the Entire Player Pool Total

Year	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	W	SV	ERA	WHIP
2003	9.0%	8.6%	9.3%	103.0%	7.5%	10.6%	112.7%	107.8%
2002	9.2%	8.6%	9.3%	103.4%	7.4%	11.0%	113.5%	107.8%
2001	9.0%	8.5%	9.1%	103.4%	7.2%	11.4%	109.5%	106.1%
average	9.1%	8.6%	9.2%	103.3%	7.4%	11.0%	111.9%	107.2%

4x4 National League
Third Place Category Total as a Percentage of the Entire Player Pool Total

Year	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	W	SV	ERA	WHIP
2003	8.7%	8.4%	9.4%	103.7%	6.7%	10.9%	112.9%	107.0%
2002	8.6%	8.2%	9.4%	102.6%	6.7%	11.4%	111.7%	107.0%
2001	8.8%	8.1%	9.2%	107.3%	6.6%	10.8%	111.8%	107.0%
average	8.7%	8.2%	9.3%	104.5%	6.7%	11.0%	112.1%	107.0%

5x5 American League
Third Place Category Total as a Percentage of the Entire Player Pool Total

Year	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	RUNS	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO
2003	9.0%	8.6%	9.5%	103.0%	8.5%	7.8%	10.6%	111.3%	106.9%	6.8%
2002	9.1%	8.7%	9.3%	103.0%	8.5%	7.6%	11.0%	111.8%	107.0%	6.8%
2001	9.3%	8.9%	9.5%	103.0%	8.7%	7.6%	10.7%	110.3%	106.9%	7.2%
average	9.1%	8.7%	9.4%	103.0%	8.6%	7.7%	10.8%	111.1%	106.9%	6.9%

5x5 National League
Third Place Category Total as a Percentage of the Entire Player Pool Total

Year	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	RUNS	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO
2003	8.7%	8.2%	9.3%	103.1%	8.2%	6.8%	10.3%	111.3%	107.0%	6.5%
2002	8.6%	8.0%	9.3%	103.3%	8.1%	6.9%	11.1%	110.2%	105.4%	6.6%
2001	8.7%	8.1%	9.2%	103.0%	8.1%	6.8%	10.3%	112.1%	105.4%	6.5%
average	8.7%	8.1%	9.3%	103.1%	8.1%	6.8%	10.6%	111.2%	105.9%	6.5%

5x5 Mixed League
Third Place Category Total as a Percentage of the Entire Player Pool Total

Year	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	RUNS	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO
2003	5.0%	4.7%	5.3%	104.8%	4.6%	3.9%	6.1%	114.7%	109.6%	3.5%
2002	5.1%	4.7%	5.0%	104.4%	4.6%	3.9%	6.4%	116.0%	110.2%	3.5%
2001	5.1%	4.7%	5.4%	104.8%	4.6%	3.9%	6.4%	120.9%	108.7%	3.6%
average	5.1%	4.7%	5.2%	104.7%	4.6%	3.9%	6.3%	117.2%	109.5%	3.5%

Again sparing the statistical analysis, now there exists a nice correlation when looking at the target as a percentage of the overall total. For reasons to be discussed soon, an alternative means of reviewing the data will be offered. This time, the third place category target will be represented as a percentage of the stats earned only by players in the draft-worthy player pool, in other words those earning a positive dollar amount for each league.

4x4 American League
Third Place Category Total as a Percentage of the Draft-Worthy Player Pool Total

Year	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	W	SV	ERA	WHIP
2003	9.6%	9.4%	9.9%	100.6%	10.4%	11.3%	107.6%	103.1%
2002	10.2%	9.9%	10.5%	99.7%	10.7%	11.5%	109.4%	103.7%
2001	10.1%	9.4%	10.3%	99.7%	11.1%	11.1%	109.6%	102.0%
average	10.0%	9.6%	10.2%	100.0%	10.7%	11.3%	108.9%	102.9%

4x4 National League
Third Place Category Total as a Percentage of the Draft-Worthy Player Pool Total

Year	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	W	SV	ERA	WHIP
2003	9.6%	9.5%	10.6%	101.0%	10.6%	12.4%	108.3%	103.4%
2002	9.6%	9.6%	10.3%	100.0%	10.5%	12.0%	110.5%	103.7%
2001	10.2%	9.6%	10.3%	100.0%	11.2%	11.9%	110.3%	103.9%
average	9.8%	9.6%	10.4%	100.3%	10.8%	12.1%	109.7%	103.7%

5x5 American League
Third Place Category Total as a Percentage of the Draft-Worthy Player Pool Total

Year	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	RUNS	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO
2003	9.5%	9.4%	10.1%	100.7%	9.4%	10.5%	9.9%	115.4%	103.8%	9.0%
2002	10.1%	9.9%	10.4%	99.6%	9.9%	10.6%	11.4%	109.2%	104.0%	10.9%
2001	10.3%	10.1%	10.6%	99.6%	9.9%	11.3%	10.5%	108.8%	101.7%	11.5%
average	10.0%	9.8%	10.4%	99.9%	9.7%	10.8%	10.6%	111.1%	103.2%	10.5%

5x5 National League
Third Place Category Total as a Percentage of the Draft-Worthy Player Pool Total

Year	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	RUNS	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO
2003	9.5%	9.4%	10.5%	100.3%	9.4%	10.4%	13.5%	100.1%	101.8%	11.7%
2002	9.7%	9.3%	10.2%	100.9%	9.3%	10.2%	12.8%	105.8%	102.9%	10.6%
2001	10.0%	9.8%	10.3%	98.3%	9.9%	11.2%	11.4%	108.4%	104.8%	11.2%
average	9.7%	9.5%	10.3%	99.8%	9.5%	10.6%	12.6%	104.8%	103.2%	11.2%

5x5 Mixed League
Third Place Category Total as a Percentage of the Draft-Worthy Player Pool Total

Year	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	RUNS	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO
2003	8.9%	8.8%	9.5%	99.3%	8.8%	9.4%	12.6%	109.4%	104.4%	9.4%
2002	9.0%	8.8%	9.1%	99.1%	8.9%	10.3%	10.1%	114.9%	105.9%	10.8%
2001	9.5%	9.0%	8.5%	100.1%	9.1%	9.9%	10.6%	109.3%	105.1%	10.0%
average	9.1%	8.9%	9.0%	99.5%	8.9%	9.9%	11.1%	111.2%	105.1%	10.1%

The fluctuations in the raw data are smoothed once again.

There is a major benefit to having both sets of this data work out in this manner. Specifically, it is advantageous to have your dollar values and your category targets be born out of the same set of data. If your projections are inaccurate, but this inaccuracy is consistent across the board in each category, then the resultant dollar values and category targets are still perfectly usable as they represent a percentage of the pool. By means of example, let us pretend the balls in 2004 are "dead" and home run totals suffer 15%. So long as this 15% decline is fairly consistent amongst all hitters, the amount of value each player earns in the home run category is still the same. Now consider the category target for home runs. It is 15% higher than it should be. But the fact the eventual total is 15% lower than targeted costs you no points, as the total of each standing level up and down is diminished about 15%. If you hit your target based on projections, you still earn that amount of standings points.

Of course, the specific data presented above is only directly useful for those playing in one of the five leagues analyzed. However, the general concept can be carried over to any league, so long as a suitable

history of data is available to generate somewhat consistent and reliable totals. Keeping in mind the purpose is to get approximate drafting targets; it is not worth exhausting one's time just to get a perfect level. Being short by ten home runs does not signal doom. There is six long months of roster maintenance to get that back.

Nevertheless, some may want to employ this strategy so some time will be taken discussing the relative merits of using the entire league playing pool versus just the positive earners.

If you generate your own projections and understand projection and valuation theory, it will not matter, either denominator suffices. This means the entire player pool need not be projected, you can concentrate on the players most likely to be drafted. Using the draft-worthy player's totals is just fine and the contributions of the fringe players are of no concern.

If you deploy a set of commercial projections, be sure to exhibit care as often the associated dollar values are miscalculated, rendering the pool of draft-worthy players suspect, hence the target totals might not be accurate. In this situation, it might be best to use the entire league player pool so dollar values play no part in the determination of the target.

Does this only work with the third place totals?

Although the data will not be presented, the answer is no. You can take any place in the standings and generate a consistent yearly percentage.

Say I play in a different type league than those studied here. Will this still work?

Yes, the method will work just fine. Here is a step-wise procedure to calculate your target.

1. Establish the place in the standings you wish to finish.
2. Gather as many similar leagues as possible from the previous few seasons and express each standings finish total as a percentage of the total pool of stats for your league.

Note: The total pool was chosen as opposed to the pool of draft-worthy players so this initial operation can be conducted without the need for season-end values.

3. Average these yearly percentages together.
4. Using projected statistics, figure either the totals of each categoriy from the entire player pool or those from the draft-worthy players, based on recommendations made earlier.
5. Multiply the average percentage from Step 3 by the total in Step 4 to determine your category target.

Repeating this for all your league's categories should yield a reliable target for each category. Now all you have to do is hit it!!

Looking at the data where the average total for each place in the standings is listed, it is apparent that the gaps between places in the standings are not linear. The differences at the high end and low end are greater than those in the middle. Is there some type of strategy that can be implemented to take advantage of this?

To get a better idea of this effect, a series of tables will be presented. The data will be expressed as a ratio converted into a percentage. The difference between consecutive standing places will be the numerator and the difference from first to last will be the denominator.

4x4 American League
Relative Difference Between Consecutive Standings Places

ST PLACE	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	W	SV	ERA	WHIP
2nd - 1st	14.8%	9.2%	20.7%	16.7%	14.3%	15.0%	16.7%	18.2%
3rd - 2nd	7.8%	10.1%	9.8%	4.2%	11.9%	8.3%	8.7%	4.5%
4th - 3rd	8.7%	6.2%	6.5%	8.3%	9.5%	8.3%	8.7%	9.1%
5th - 4th	7.0%	7.6%	8.7%	4.2%	7.1%	6.7%	6.3%	9.1%
6th - 5th	6.1%	5.9%	6.5%	8.3%	7.1%	6.7%	7.1%	4.5%
7th - 6th	6.1%	7.0%	5.4%	4.2%	4.8%	6.7%	5.6%	4.5%
8th - 7th	7.8%	7.8%	5.4%	8.3%	7.1%	6.7%	7.9%	9.1%
9th - 8th	7.0%	5.9%	6.5%	8.3%	7.1%	11.7%	6.3%	4.5%
10th - 9th	7.8%	11.2%	8.7%	8.3%	9.5%	6.7%	7.1%	4.5%
11th - 10th	10.4%	9.8%	8.7%	12.5%	9.5%	10.0%	10.3%	13.6%
12th - 11th	16.5%	19.3%	13.0%	16.7%	11.9%	13.3%	15.1%	18.2%

4x4 National League
Relative Difference Between Consecutive Standings Places

ST PLACE	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	W	SV	ERA	WHIP
2nd - 1st	16.2%	10.8%	14.9%	10.7%	11.9%	14.0%	12.6%	14.3%
3rd - 2nd	9.6%	7.1%	11.7%	10.7%	9.5%	9.3%	10.1%	9.5%
4th - 3rd	6.6%	9.4%	9.6%	10.7%	7.1%	7.0%	7.6%	4.8%
5th - 4th	7.4%	6.8%	8.5%	7.1%	7.1%	8.1%	6.7%	9.5%
6th - 5th	5.1%	6.6%	6.4%	7.1%	4.8%	8.1%	5.0%	4.8%
7th - 6th	6.6%	7.1%	4.3%	7.1%	4.8%	7.0%	6.7%	4.8%
8th - 7th	5.9%	7.1%	7.4%	7.1%	7.1%	7.0%	5.9%	9.5%
9th - 8th	8.1%	6.1%	8.5%	3.6%	7.1%	8.1%	10.1%	4.8%
10th - 9th	10.3%	10.1%	9.6%	10.7%	7.1%	10.5%	7.6%	9.5%
11th - 10th	11.8%	11.6%	8.5%	10.7%	11.9%	9.3%	12.6%	9.5%
12th - 11th	12.5%	17.2%	10.6%	14.3%	21.4%	11.6%	15.1%	19.0%

5x5 American League
Relative Difference Between Consecutive Standings Places

ST PLACE	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	RUNS	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO
2nd - 1st	14.0%	11.7%	19.8%	15.4%	10.1%	12.5%	19.1%	17.1%	14.3%	11.3%
3rd - 2nd	10.5%	9.8%	11.5%	11.5%	9.3%	8.3%	10.3%	7.8%	9.5%	9.3%
4th - 3rd	7.0%	6.3%	8.3%	7.7%	6.4%	8.3%	7.4%	7.0%	4.8%	7.7%
5th - 4th	5.3%	5.4%	6.3%	7.7%	5.5%	4.2%	7.4%	4.7%	9.5%	5.9%
6th - 5th	7.0%	6.3%	8.3%	3.8%	7.2%	8.3%	7.4%	8.5%	4.8%	8.0%
7th - 6th	8.8%	8.7%	6.3%	7.7%	7.0%	6.3%	4.4%	6.2%	4.8%	5.2%
8th - 7th	4.4%	6.3%	6.3%	7.7%	8.1%	6.3%	7.4%	6.2%	9.5%	5.9%
9th - 8th	8.8%	9.3%	7.3%	7.7%	7.2%	8.3%	8.8%	7.8%	9.5%	9.0%
10th - 9th	10.5%	8.7%	6.3%	3.8%	8.7%	8.3%	7.4%	8.5%	9.5%	9.5%
11th - 10th	10.5%	10.9%	6.3%	15.4%	13.0%	10.4%	8.8%	10.9%	9.5%	8.8%
12th - 11th	13.2%	16.6%	13.5%	11.5%	17.4%	18.8%	11.8%	15.5%	14.3%	19.3%

5x5 National League
Relative Difference Between Consecutive Standings Places

ST PLACE	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	RUNS	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO
2nd - 1st	11.6%	11.6%	16.5%	14.3%	12.2%	16.3%	12.8%	13.4%	14.3%	10.1%
3rd - 2nd	9.9%	7.7%	9.9%	14.3%	7.3%	9.3%	9.0%	8.4%	4.8%	9.6%
4th - 3rd	7.4%	7.4%	9.9%	3.6%	8.9%	4.7%	7.7%	8.4%	9.5%	9.6%
5th - 4th	6.6%	6.0%	7.7%	7.1%	6.2%	7.0%	7.7%	6.7%	4.8%	5.7%
6th - 5th	6.6%	8.0%	7.7%	7.1%	5.7%	4.7%	7.7%	6.7%	4.8%	5.7%
7th - 6th	6.6%	7.1%	6.6%	3.6%	7.6%	4.7%	6.4%	6.7%	14.3%	5.0%
8th - 7th	8.3%	7.4%	5.5%	7.1%	9.2%	7.0%	6.4%	5.9%	9.5%	8.0%
9th - 8th	7.4%	9.7%	5.5%	7.1%	6.2%	9.3%	6.4%	7.6%	4.8%	5.9%
10th - 9th	9.9%	9.7%	7.7%	7.1%	11.4%	7.0%	10.3%	7.6%	4.8%	7.3%
11th - 10th	9.9%	9.4%	8.8%	10.7%	9.5%	9.3%	11.5%	10.1%	4.8%	10.7%
12th - 11th	15.7%	16.2%	14.3%	17.9%	15.7%	20.9%	14.1%	18.5%	23.8%	22.4%

5x5 Mixed League
Relative Difference Between Consecutive Standings Places

ST PLACE	HR	RBI	SB	AVE	RUNS	W	SV	ERA	WHIP	SO
2nd - 1st	11.7%	14.6%	13.7%	16.7%	12.4%	14.0%	10.6%	12.9%	16.7%	15.2%
3rd - 2nd	10.8%	9.5%	10.5%	12.5%	8.0%	11.6%	7.4%	11.9%	11.1%	8.8%
4th - 3rd	8.1%	7.1%	8.4%	8.3%	4.4%	7.0%	6.4%	6.9%	5.6%	7.3%
5th - 4th	8.1%	6.8%	8.4%	4.2%	8.7%	7.0%	5.3%	8.9%	5.6%	6.3%
6th - 5th	7.2%	8.2%	6.3%	8.3%	6.5%	4.7%	6.4%	5.0%	5.6%	5.2%
7th - 6th	6.3%	6.8%	6.3%	4.2%	6.5%	4.7%	5.3%	7.9%	11.1%	6.6%
8th - 7th	5.4%	6.5%	7.4%	8.3%	8.4%	7.0%	7.4%	6.9%	5.6%	7.0%
9th - 8th	7.2%	8.2%	6.3%	4.2%	6.9%	7.0%	9.6%	5.9%	11.1%	8.8%
10th - 9th	9.0%	8.5%	8.4%	8.3%	8.7%	7.0%	8.5%	8.9%	5.6%	7.9%
11th - 10th	10.8%	9.9%	10.5%	8.3%	10.5%	14.0%	13.8%	8.9%	11.1%	11.3%
12th - 11th	15.3%	13.9%	13.7%	16.7%	18.9%	16.3%	19.1%	15.8%	11.1%	15.4%

Before the results can be discussed, it is necessary to determine if the unevenness of the spread is real, or if it is an artifact of the data being composed of a wide variety of leagues in terms of keeper versus non-keeper, draft versus auction, reserve versus no reserve, etc. The point being that the spread might be representative of the style of league. For example, as mentioned earlier, keeper leagues with playing for the future will often have teams trading their most productive players in order to rebuild, so the totals of the top teams will be higher and those of the bottom teams lower. In a league that uses a fresh player pool each year and fills its rosters via a serpentine draft, the top to bottom spread is likely to be reduced, potentially minimizing the gaps seen in the conglomerate data.

Providing the above analysis is correct, an assumption can be made. Of the fifty leagues pooled, those whose winning totals are the greatest are most likely the keeper leagues and those that are the smallest are probably the redraft leagues. Recall that the total amount of statistics in each category was bound by limits with respect to the overall average, so a high winning total cannot be a result of that league having more active roster spots. If it were, the total of stats for the league would fall outside of the accepted range. Similarly, the winning totals at the low end cannot be due to league rules allowing fewer than standard slate of active players, as that total would be beneath the lower limit.

As such, each 50-league sample can be fragmented into five sections of 10-leagues each which can be looked at separately. The leagues will be ordered from the highest winning totals to the lowest. The relative spread between categories will be analyzed for each set of ten leagues to determine if the non-linearity is uniform or if it is a function of a specific set of data.

It would be too cumbersome to present all the data, but interestingly, when this procedure is performed on all five leagues, the same result ensues: non-linearity exists in all leagues, for all the categories, even in each sub-division of ten league sets.

Although it is possible to suggest some general strategies based on this phenomenon, it is incumbent upon you to understand that your league might exhibit trends anti to those shown here. It is imperative that you manage specific to your league, but you can surely keep some general trends in mind.

The data reveals that the two largest gaps between consecutive places in the standings occurs going from last to 11th and from 2nd to 1st. There are a few reasonable explanations as to why one of the largest spreads

is from 12th to 11th. Categories may be strategically punted from the initial draft. Participants may become frustrated that their team is not performing up to snuff and thus may shift priorities away from fantasy baseball and let their team further deteriorate. Teams may decide mid-stream to bag a category and trade out of it to improve elsewhere. It is a bit more difficult to explain why the spread from second to first is so large. It can be argued that these teams were not managed efficiently, as the huge excess could have been traded for help elsewhere. The irony of this is earlier data showed that champion teams finished first in more categories than any other position in the standings, so they must be doing something right. The main problem with explaining the large gap at the top of each category is this study did not consider if champions exhibited this same large spread or actually managed their team more efficiently and it is the non-winning teams that won individual categories that are responsible for this outlying spread. This makes excellent fodder for future studies.

The chief strategy to glean from this data is something already shown to be detrimental to winning: one should not totally punt a category. Realizing each league has its unique spacing, the data strongly suggests there will be a point somewhere in the middle of each category where standings points can be gained easier than they can be lost. One can decide to trade into more points or to try to hold steady, as the drop-off to a lower point in the standings is fairly steep. Similarly, there will be a point near the top of each category where one's resources may be better spent elsewhere, as getting that next point requires more effort than getting points in a different category. Just be sure points are not lost, as one is at the pinnacle of where standings places can more readily be gained, hence they can more readily be lost.

Are there any categories that appear to be easier or harder to gain or lose points in?

The top to bottom percentage profiles of each category are similar, so no category stands out as toughest or easiest to manage. There is a common thought that it is more difficult to make up ground in the ratio categories, but this is a myth. This data does not provide the direct evidence but even late in the season, when at bats and innings pitched have mounted, points can still be had, or lost, in batting average, earned run average and WHIP.

The more important factor is again that your league may have category trends where diligent management of statistics may provide avenues to gain rotisserie points.

Is there anything hidden in the category total data that can be used to an advantage?

Why yes, there is-thanks for asking. The following is an observation whose repercussion leads to some strategy implications very important to those playing in 5x5 leagues. The total of strikeouts needed to earn ten points is lower than one might expect. It is generally assumed in 5x5 that the leaders in wins and strikeouts deploy a lineup with at least seven, if not eight or all nine of their pitching spots occupied by a starter. The target totals for third place in all three 5x5 leagues could be reached while incorporating three, four or even five relievers. This is most notable in the American League only pool. In 2003, only 940 whiffs were needed to earn 10 points in the strikeout category. Quick math shows that this is an average of about 105 per pitcher. Another way to approach it is if you had three relievers averaging 80 strikeouts, your six starters needed to total only 700 strikeouts to get your 10 points. You may suffer in the wins category, but your saves and especially your ERA and WHIP will benefit. Truth be told, this is somewhat opposite of the strategy our own Jason Grey has used to win back-back American League Tout Wars titles, but it may be a more comfortable strategy for those not as adept at finding the hidden pitching jewels.

Highlighting the Results

Perhaps the most revealing piece of information garnered from these studies is that just discussed, that is you do not need an entire staff of starting pitchers to compete in the strikeout category in 5x5 leagues.

Also noteworthy is that half of the champions had a category in which they finished in the bottom half of the standings. While it was demonstrated that totally ignoring a category is not wise, it is very possible to compete if your squad does exhibit a weakness.

Another particularly salient nugget was how much category totals can differ from year to year, but how consistent they are when compared to the corresponding overall totals from each year. This is especially useful for those who like to draft with specific target in mind.

Somewhat surprising is the reliance on the home run category for winners. Stolen bases was shown to be the least favored hitting category for the champions, so it does stand to reason that if funds are not spent in the area of steals, they are shunted to power.

While the data shows that in 2003, victors favored hitting over pitching, it is too early to really construct strategies to take advantage or combat this for the data in 2002 was not as strongly bent towards hitting.

Future Studies

The prevailing shortcoming of this study was the inability to segregate data from keeper leagues and redraft leagues. Just about every aspect of the study would be affected, but most notably, the success of punting a category. Intuitively, it is really hard to win in a keeper league if your team has even one weakness. It stands to reason that someone will have bottom fed sufficiently to shore up their squad in enough areas forcing you to be competitive across the board in order to hang with them. The ancillary effect of this is those instances where dumping was successful likely occurred in redraft leagues, where the effectiveness of the strategy needs to be considered without keeper league data interfering.

Secondarily, the difference in data between auction leagues and draft leagues might be an interesting follow-up as well. This might be best demonstrated by looking at each formats percentage of hitting points versus pitching points, as when to select pitching is a strategy conundrum encountered in draft leagues.

A very compelling study would be to relate the amount of hitting and pitching points winners earn to the amount of money they spent on them. Did the teams that excelled in pitching need to spend more for their pitching or did their staffs perform beyond expectations? This data can be used in concert with the data showing whether winning teams fared better in hitting or pitching to better determine the amount of budget that should be earmarked for hitting and how much for pitching.

Parting Remarks

Admittedly, these pages contain a plethora of data which may or may not be relevant to your league. One of the most enjoyable aspects of this hobby is analyzing data and designing a strategy around your individual talents. What is presented is one person's point of view. The numbers are the numbers, there is no arguing that. What can be argued is the interpretation of the numbers and the associated repercussions. To this end, you are cordially invited to make use of the Mastersball.com forum where you can pose further questions about the study or offer your own analysis. Feedback is always appreciated, especially with respect to what you would like to see studied in the future.