

ODDS AND ENDOZONES

STUDENTS UNLOCK THE WINNING PLAYBOOK



HENRY SMITH

FRESHMAN •

Freshman Henry Smith is enthusiastic about football and has played fantasy since he was in elementary school.

"My dad gave me one of his leagues to play in when I was in second or third grade and I enjoyed it a lot," Smith said.

Smith plays in a league with his friends that he created in fourth grade.

"I love that [fantasy football] brings competitive aspects each year, like a football season in general, and also it's great for bragging rights against friends, [although] I have yet to win the league personally," Smith said.

LEAGUE RANK

4

YEARS PLAYING

7

WIN/LOSS RECORD

4-4



RAVI KRISHNAN

SOPHOMORE •

Sophomore Ravi Krishnan was convinced by friends to join his first fantasy football team this year. While he is still learning the ins and outs of the game, he loves the challenge each week brings.

"It's my first time playing but I love it, I like to connect with [my football teammates] and play together," Krishnan said.

Krishnan, who is also a running back on the Burlingame football team, uses fantasy football as an alternative way to have fun playing the sport he loves and cherishes.

LEAGUE RANK

8

YEARS PLAYING

1

WIN/LOSS RECORD

2-5



CASSIE CAFFERKEY

JUNIOR •

Although this is Cassie Cafferkey's first year playing fantasy football, this isn't her first year spending Sundays watching whatever games are on.

"My brother and my dad have always been really big fans of football. So every Sunday my family would just watch football, so I'd watch it with them," Cafferkey said.

But fantasy football is not just about picking your favorite team — it's a competitive and stressful game. Although it doesn't always go her way, Cafferkey recommends fantasy football to anyone interested.

"If you're a competitive person, it's just something fun to do and talk about with your friends."

LEAGUE RANK

6

YEARS PLAYING

1

WIN/LOSS RECORD

5-3

PROFILES BY AUDREY WEI AND ALICE LEE, STAFF REPORTERS

FANTASY FOOTBALL: THE ADDICTION IS REAL

BY ZACHARY NEWMAN, SPORTS EDITOR •

Fantasy football has captivated diehard fans and casual observers alike, including myself for about six years. It wasn't long after I began playing that I was engulfed and came to the realization: Fantasy football is addicting.

I've spent countless hours preparing for drafts, reading injury reports and constantly weighing my roster options week to week. Despite understanding that my time could be spent more productively, I can't help but check my lineup or scour the waiver wire to search for a new pickup if my star wide receiver isn't playing.

What makes fantasy football fun and exciting is the precise reason that it's equally frustrating. While you can prepare for each week by watching videos for advice, coming up with a formula, or going with your gut, at its core, fantasy football is a game of luck. A player may score 40 points, and carry your entire squad to victory, but they can just as easily score no points, ensuring a costly defeat. All you can do is watch (and yell at the television screen or write an angry comment on a player's social media post — things that intense fans do daily).

While fantasy football can connect you with your favorite players in a unique way, and provide an added thrill to watching the game, it can also create a toxic atmosphere where fans go too far.

When the National Football League's (NFL) Buffalo Bills-Cincinnati Bengals matchup was canceled due to Damar Hamlin's cardiac arrest last January, the first instinct of many fans, and admittedly, my first instinct, was to worry about my fantasy team. I had Bills' quarterback Josh Allen starting, and I needed a measly nine points from him to secure a win. But when I found out the game was canceled, my first reaction, instead of grief and prayers for Hamlin, was to get upset with my fantasy team's loss. While I didn't mean to have a moment of deep insensitivity, I immediately recognized the situation was bigger than football. But fantasy football itself is designed for us to focus on player performances above all else.

This creates a dilemma that I and all players of the game face weekly. Do I root for my actual football team to win, even if it means I may not get enough points to win in fantasy? The answer is different for everyone.

In some leagues, the main objective isn't to win the league, but instead, it is to avoid finishing in last place. Many leagues establish a punishment for the bottom-feeder squad at the end of the season to add incentives and raise the stakes.

But Fantasy Football is so popular because it provides fans a chance to interact with the game of football itself, without having to necessarily bet money or be experts on the NFL. Fantasy football is also a great way to connect with friends, family and even strangers in a way that not many other activities can.

Fantasy football, while a big time commitment for many, is one of the most fun and exciting activities I've ever done. There are not many other activities where you can experience emotional highs and devastating lows in a short time, all while doing something lighthearted. Its randomness is what makes the game engaging and entertaining.

STUDENTS ENGAGE IN ONLINE SPORTS BETTING

BY JAKE ROTHSTEIN, MANAGING EDITOR •

In an age dominated by the internet, it is increasingly difficult to prevent minors from accessing online gambling.

In the United States, the legal age to gamble is 21. However, daily fantasy sports (DFS) are considered games of skill rather than chance — drafting fantasy teams and picking parlays, for instance — and are thus legal in California at 18.

Senior Cavin Mellman first got into sports betting from a friend who recommended using the app Fliff. On Fliff, gamblers use tokens instead of real money.

"[A friend] put me on [and] he told me to start doing sports betting, and that's how I got into it," Mellman said. "I started by using Fliff, which gives you free fake-ish money. As you get more money through winning parlays and stuff, you can eventually transfer out once you hit \$50 [in balance]."

Although Mellman was underage at the time, he also began to place wagers on PrizePicks, a DFS operator, on Basketball and the Ultimate Fighting Championship. Mellman isn't alone — even with the imposed gambling age restriction, many underage users still manage to gain access to real money online gambling sites.

"I just faked it. I used somebody else's [ID when I was underage], but now I can do it [legally] because I'm 18," Mellman said. "I like watching sports, and I feel like having money on the line makes it more interesting."

In April 2023, a national study on sports betting by the National Collegiate Athletics Association surveying 18 to 21-year-olds found that 58% of respondents had been involved with some type of sports-related gambling in 2023, and 27.5% of respondents bet through a mobile app or website. This report shows a troubling trend of underage bettors getting around age restrictions, as many states require bettors to be over 21.

Some students don't only play DFS games but also use online sportsbooks — where a gambler can wager on various sports — which is illegal in California but legal in places such as Nevada.

"If you use a VPN, you can use websites that have like sportsbooks on them to bet," senior Connor Lynch said. "I put my location in like Nevada so it thinks I'm in Nevada so I can place bets through there."

Some students take their parlay strategies to the next level by comparing their picks with others online or with professional sports bettors who analyze sports to find the optimal picks. The majority of these communications take place on Discord — a free app that allows users to chat in real-time using text, voice or video.

"It's on Discord [servers where] where you send your picks to people and people say if it's good or bad and [some] people have professional people [that] sometimes you pay money for picks, which basically it's [where] people spend their entire day researching the odds and probably of these players, whose choices are a little bit better than regular people's," Mellman said.

Senior Luca Scatena, who has been sports betting for around three years and currently makes weekly bets through websites PrizePicks and Sleeper, is considering paying for picks from professional bettors.

"I'm on a few discord channels and we just talked about picks for all different sports, even like CS:GO which is eSports," Scatena said. "I'm thinking about [paying for an analyst], I have a strong relationship with a few analysts."

Mellman, Lynch and Scatena have all had different monetary outcomes from their betting, but they all urged others to only gamble what they can afford to lose as the majority of bettors lose money.

"If you've lost, if you're down in money gambling, just stop. Don't keep on buying it. Just stop, take a break," Scatena said.

