

# Fantasy hoops primer

BY KYLE STACK  
Special to amNewYork



FantasyReality

Most fantasy sports fans are familiar with baseball and football, but there are several reasons basketball remains a mystery.

In order to help fantasy owners prepare for the upcoming NBA season, we present four facets of fantasy basketball that separate it from other sports:

## Scattered games

Fantasy baseball players are programmed to seek out their players' stat lines in the daily box

scores. The NBA schedule doesn't provide that same everyday convenience.

Owners must juggle their players' varied number of games, which typically run from three to five per week. That means weekly league owners falling behind in some stat categories (points, rebounds, assists, etc.) should try to avoid players who have only three contests slated for that week.

## Specialty players

The nature of fantasy basketball's usual statistical format breeds an extra case of specialization.

For instance, three of the top seven players in 3-pointers made per game during the 2008-09 campaign finished

the season with a 3-point percentage of 38 percent or lower. Top-rate scorers such as Memphis' **Allen Iverson** might contribute mightily to one stat while hurting your team in shooting percentage. Furnishing your team with role players who specialize in one or two particular areas is vital to solidifying your depth.

## Youth is served

Unlike baseball, you can't lean on minor league call-ups to give you a jumpstart later in the season.

Familiarize yourself with the young benchwarmers on each team to see who best maximizes their

## SCORING SYSTEMS

■ **Standard scoring categories:** Points, rebounds, assists, steals, blocks, 3-pointers made, field-goal percentage, free-throw percentage

■ **Popular alternative scoring categories:** 3-point percentage, assist-to-turnover ratio, offensive and defensive rebounds, minutes played, turnovers

■ **Positions:** PG, SG, G, SF, PF, F, C, Util, Util, Util

■ **Trade deadline:** First Thursday in March (KYLE STACK)

minutes at the beginning of the year. Those are the players who will get more burn after the All-Star break, when trades and poor team records create new playing opportunities.

Who knows, you might find the next **Anthony Randolph**, who averaged 13.5 points and 10.5 rebounds for Golden State in his final 12 games last season.

## Real vs. fantasy

In football or baseball, it's a safe bet that the game's best players will be drafted in the first round. That's not necessarily the case in basketball.

At mockdraftcentral.com, the average draft position report from Oct. 4-18 shows that four players typically regarded among the league's 10 best — **Kevin Garnett**, **Steve Nash**, **Tim Duncan** and **Dwight Howard** — aren't listed in the top 15 drafted spots.

That's because decreased minutes or a glaring weakness (Howard's horrid free-throw percentage for Orlando, for example) can send even elite players spiraling down the fantasy draft order.

Orlando's Dwight Howard may be the game's best center, but his career 60.1 free-throw percentage hampers his fantasy value because Howard gets to the line so often. (GETTY)



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