

Smart drafting, round by round

BY KYLE STACK
Special to amNewYork

Most fantasy baseball drafts last 15-plus rounds, but your team's destiny will be determined during the first eight.

Here is a round-by-round strategy assuming a 12-team, standard-scoring system.

Round 1

The strategy is simple: Select the best position player. Your first rounder sets the tone for your offense, so prioritize a HR/RBI machine who can hit for average. **Mark Teixeira** or speedster **Carl Crawford** are fine late-round choices.

Round 2

This year's second rounders don't lag far behind the first rounders, so employ a similar strategy. Opting for the best position player rather than fretting over position scarcity should be your main concern.

Seattle's **Cliff Lee**, top, and the Yankees' **Mark Teixeira**, bottom (GETTY)



Hurlers such as **Tim Lincecum** or **Roy Halladay** also work.

Round 3

Now is the time to form balance in your lineup. If you opt for a position player, choose one who offers a different set of skills from the first one or two you drafted. Keep in mind the top five short-stops likely won't last past this round.

Round 4

A run of second- and third-tier outfielders could start here, so grab one who projects for double-digit homers and steals, such as **Grady Sizemore**. If you haven't selected a pitcher, it would be more sensible to wait and pursue another position player for depth.

Round 5

Time to snag a high-end starter, such as **Cliff Lee** or **Adam Wainwright**, if you haven't already. Opting for arms rather than bats in the next couple

rounds is practical; just don't be the person to pick a closer this early.

Round 6

This could be your last chance to grab a top-notch second baseman. **Aaron Hill**, **Brandon Phillips** and **Ben Zobrist** won't last long if they're still available. Round 6 is your chance to select one of the few elite catchers, too.

Round 7

It's vital to choose a second starter. While building your offense is paramount, ensuring you have three reliable starters adds team balance. Go for a third in Round 8 or 9. An alternative here is a value pick at first base, such as **Kendry Morales**.

Round 8

Consider yourself in great position if you select a sixth position player with two high-end starting pitchers in tow. You're armed and dangerous if you have two statistically versatile outfielders, power at the corner infield positions and batting average and speed locked up at the middle infield positions.

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