

# fantasy baseball

PUT TOGETHER YOUR OWN TEAM OF BASEBALL

SUPERSTARS – AND MAYBE YOU CAN COMPETE WITH THE YANKEES **BY MARK LUCE**



**I**n 1980, in a now-closed New York City restaurant named La Rotisserie Francaise, a bunch of literary types, led by Daniel Okrent, got together for an auction that would change the course of history — at least baseball-fan history.

Armed with \$260 each, the men bid on ballplayers for the upcoming season and had to fill a 23-man roster. Those players would be “theirs” for the entire season and would get points based on the players’ performances in specific categories. To the winner, of course, would go the spoils.

The advent of ESPN and the boom of the Internet have helped spread so-called rotisserie baseball into a variety of forms now more commonly known as fantasy sports. Gone are the reams of paper for stats. In its place are Web sites and instantaneous statistical information and injury updates. There are now vicarious leagues for football, hockey, basketball, golf and even Formula One Racing and NASCAR.

I played fantasy baseball for a few years with extraordinarily pathetic

results. The leagues were thoroughly addicting, a wonderful way to bond with buddies, and they brought back memories of childhood joy in rooting for “your” guys. On the down side, playing fantasy baseball requires time, patience and a huge effort to keep up with box scores, roster changes and injuries.

So if you care about the nation’s pastime and have a couple of free hours a week (or more, depending on how intense your league is), you should think about getting some friends together and forming your own league. Luckily, you can do it with minimal effort — or cost — on your end.

On the Yahoo Fantasy Baseball Web site ([baseball.fantasysports.yahoo.com](http://baseball.fantasysports.yahoo.com)), the Web company offers a free league that’s completely customizable, so all you have to do is sit back and overmanage your team. You can choose to play in a public league or create your own private league, opt for weekly head-to-head battles with other fantasy teams or play strictly on points.

You can also choose roster sizes, create trading rules and even determine which

statistical categories you want to include. All you have to do is register on Yahoo (free) and start picking. You can either have an autodraft (less time consuming) or participate in a live online draft (could take a few hours). Soon afterward, you are managing your own team.

As you play, keep a couple of things in mind. First, if you just pick your favorite players, you may be disappointed to know that they are not good “fantasy” players in your league. You want to know what categories are being counted and find a balance of them among the players on your roster. Keep your eyes open for emerging talent and snap it up, and don’t be afraid to deal to counter weaknesses in your team. Don’t give up after a bad April and May.

If you are extremely lucky, your team will be able to challenge this year’s real-life version of Steinbrenner’s “Let’s Buy Another Championship” Pinstripers — at least in wins and losses, if not the revenues.

*Mark Luce lives in Lawrence, Kan., where he bats left, like Ichiro, his favorite player.*

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