

NFL is here and so is fantasy football

By Robert Belardi

The National Football League kicks off tonight as the Dallas Cowboys visit the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

The Bucs, who were crowned Super Bowl champions last season, look to begin the process of defending their crown as they welcome America's most popular team run by one of America's most popular billionaires.

Along with the narratives and the glamour that surrounds arguably the USA's most coveted sports league, there comes along one of the best things that any sports lover can do and that is to play fantasy sports.

Now this market ? that is also worth billions of dollars ? requires players to be analytical on all fronts. Players who draft in either eight-team, 10-team, 12-team and 14-team leagues have to understand who they want and when they want them.

Every year, big fantasy conglomerates such as ESPN, Fantasy Pros and Yahoo all come up with a projected rank system for all the top players in the league. After that, it's up to your own discretion to simply choose who you feel is going to thrive in that season.

So, here comes the research, the analysis, the process and the results.

Fantasy Football is something I can't get enough of

This year I'm in two football leagues. I had the fifth pick in a 12-team league and the 10 pick in a 10-man league for the second year in a row.

One thing when you draft is you must expect the unexpected. I anticipated taking Ezekiel Elliott fifth overall and, to my surprise, Alvin Kamara fell to me.

Mind you, I knew that the draft would not go the way that I would want it to go. Because my next two picks were DeAndre Hopkins and Patrick Mahomes. Normally, I would have taken a second running back but everyone had hopped all over James Robinson, Chris Carson and David Montgomery respectively.

I selected other players I wanted like Darrell Henderson Jr. and Myles Gaskin. I have other nice receivers like Tee Higgins and highly touted rookie DeVonta Smith.

When you draft with Yahoo, the app will provide you with an analysis and a grade. My grade was a B. I'm sure it had something to do with taking Mahomes early and not securing a number one running back besides Kamara.

So how do you approach fantasy and this upcoming season?

Despite a draft grade or a prediction, it will be difficult to predict things week to week. If you can escape the deep end of the injury pool, then god bless. Because planning around injuries and having a borderline medical ward on your bench is the most frustrating thing in fantasy football because you can't even stash them on IR.

However, forgetting about the obvious, my suggestion to fantasy football players is very simple: When you are making your weekly adjustments on the waiver wire, do not be afraid to make a move. Even the player is rostered between five to 20 per cent. Sometimes those guys are gems moving forward and you might regret not taking them.

As for making trades, I usually make trades only when I need to. Some players love making trades even before the start of the

season. Please don't do that. Stay very far away from that kind of mentality.

But other than those, best of luck this year fantasy players. It's going to be a wild ride.