

Fantasize your way to the World Series

By Adam Hill

Contributing Features Writer

Baseball statistics, names, games and complaints have been flying all over campus recently. Sports fans aren't merely conversing about how their team played the night before but how their fantasy baseball teams are playing as they speak.

Fantasy baseball is quickly becoming one of the most popular games played by groups of friends, baseball fanatics, UNLV students and Internet junkies alike. Yet, as popular as it is, many people don't even know what it is.

Some experienced fantasy players know exactly how to describe it. "Fantasy baseball just makes watching the games fun," freshman Joshua Wikler said. "Plus, you get to show off your knowledge of sports."

As someone who has been participating in fantasy baseball leagues for at least 10 years, I feel it is my duty to drop a little fantasy baseball knowledge on you.

Fantasy sports, in general, are growing by the day. There are now fantasy leagues for every sport from football to golf, basketball to NASCAR.

Baseball, however, was the first sport to be played in fantasy form. The sport has always had a special place in American life, and now, it seems, so does the fantasy game.

Fantasy baseball involves a



photo courtesy of the Associated Press

Mark McGwire is a coveted prize for any fantasy baseball owner participating in various leagues.

group of people who get together and form their own teams out of players in the real major leagues. Each fantasy team owner gets points for how well their major league players do.

In most leagues, the results are tallied at the end of the year and prizes are determined.

Originally, the game was played by groups of people who knew each other and just ran their own leagues. The system was simple. Either they'd play for fun, or they'd pay a small entry fee and have the winner keep the money.

As the game grew in popularity, so did the options open to fantasy players. Many companies

started to run fantasy leagues and the stakes were climbing higher.

Almost every sports magazine on the market had a fantasy league advertised. Some would charge up to \$100 or more and offer prizes of nearly \$10,000 to winners.

But, in the large, nationwide leagues, players didn't have the contact with other players that made the little leagues between friends so much fun. In addition, trades became nearly impossible as there was limited communication between members of the league.

Then, along came the biggest innovation in the history of fantasy sports, the Internet. Not only did it allow widespread access to leagues

but also permitted communication between participants.

Now, nearly every sports related site on the web allows users to participate in fantasy leagues.

There are leagues for competitive players that charge a great deal of money and offer large prizes and some that charge nothing and offer small prizes but plenty of fun.

One of the leagues that is set up mostly for fun is the Cable News Network-Sports Illustrated (CNNSI) league at www.cnnsi.com. The entry is free and even includes 75 free transactions, where most leagues charge anywhere from \$1-\$5.

At last check, over 105,000 people had teams in this league. One good feature of the league is it allows you to have a division featuring people you know. If you just want to take your chances, it will assign you to a division.

True, the prizes aren't great, but it is a well run league, and it won't cost you anything to try.

A late season league is forming now at the same site. Entries are due May 4, and, again, it is free. So if you are interested, just visit the site.

One thing to be aware of in choosing the right league for you is the scoring system used. There are several different ones in use.

The first is rotisserie style. This is the most like building a real team. Your team is ranked according to your proficiency at each statistic.

Therefore, if you are the best

at one thing and the worst at another, they will cancel each other out. It is better to be pretty good at everything. This is better for more knowledgeable players who know how to create balance on their fantasy roster.

The next is a system that goes purely on performance. Your players are awarded points based on how well they do.

The goal in this system is just to have players that put up big numbers, regardless of what category. This is better for those just starting out. You don't need a little of everything, just total points. This is in use in the CNNSI league.

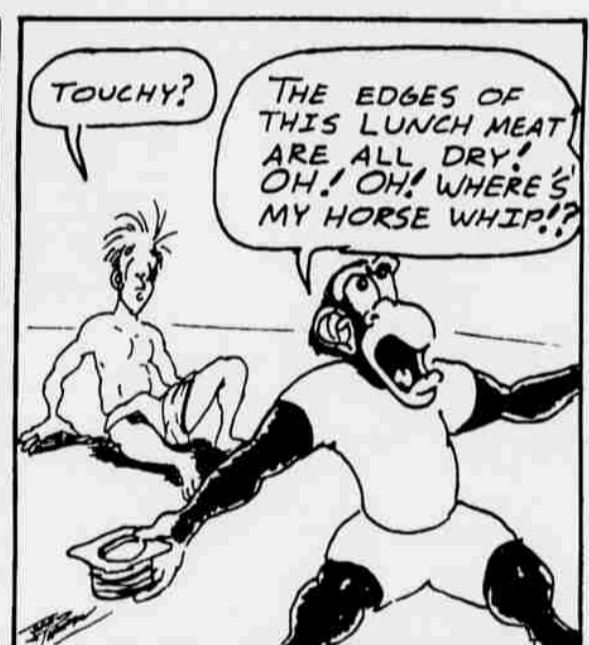
The next and newest form is the head-to-head style. In this form, you must make changes every day. Instead of just having one big roster and getting points from all your players, you must decide on a starting lineup and just get points for those players.

Each day, you play another person, and the winner for the day gets a win, the loser a loss, just like real baseball. This is the most realistic and challenging form of the game. However, this form is not for beginners.

Overall, the fantasy baseball experience can be a little overwhelming at first, but if you read the rules before you sign up, you'll feel a lot more prepared. The key is to make sure you find a league that you feel comfortable with to maximize your fun.

PRIMAL SQUAT

By Jerry Thompson



PRIMAL SQUAT

By Jerry Thompson

