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### Impact of Fantasy Sports on Participants' Interest in Real-League Occurrences

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## Impact of Fantasy Sports on Participants' Interest in Real-League Occurrences

### Abstract

Fantasy sports have developed into their own significant section of the sport industry, accounting for \$4 billion and having over 32 million participants in the United States and Canada (FSTA, 2012). Academic research into fantasy sports is a fairly new, and much of it has focused on motivation behind fantasy gaming, while any consumer behavior research has been focused on media consumption and team identification. This research is for determining what the relationship between fantasy sport participation and consumption of information about league current events, such as rule changes, labor issues, and team rebranding, is. The participants in this research took a survey posted on Facebook and Twitter, and were between 18 and 25 years of age. This information helps leagues find if fantasy sports help increase the depth of a fan's commitment to the league. There was also information gathered about fantasy sports' perception as a form of gambling, due its tumultuous past.

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### Professor's Name

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**Impact of Fantasy Sports on Participants' Interest in Real-League Occurrences**

**Michael Carroll**

**St. John Fisher College**

## Abstract

Fantasy sports have developed into their own significant section of the sport industry, accounting for \$4 billion and having over 32 million participants in the United States and Canada (FSTA, 2012). Academic research into fantasy sports is a fairly new, and much of it has focused on motivation behind fantasy gaming, while any consumer behavior research has been focused on media consumption and team identification. This research is for determining what the relationship between fantasy sport participation and consumption of information about league current events, such as rule changes, labor issues, and team rebranding, is. The participants in this research took a survey posted on Facebook and Twitter, and were between 18 and 25 years of age. This information helps leagues find if fantasy sports help increase the depth of a fan's commitment to the league. There was also information gathered about fantasy sports' perception as a form of gambling, due its tumultuous past.

## Introduction

Fantasy sports are a portion of the sport industry that has significantly grown (FSTA, 2011). They have provided fans with a new way to become involved in their sport of choice. Fans have responded well, and the effect in sport media is noticeable. Yahoo!, ESPN, FOX, and CBS have all established fantasy portions of their business (ESPN Fantasy and Games, 2012; Fantasy Games, 2012; Fox Fantasy and Games, 2012; Yahoo! Sports, 2012). Initially known as a "roisserie" game when Dan Okrent invented fantasy baseball (Lewis, 2003), fantasy has grown to include multiple sports, and the most popular are basketball, baseball, football, and hockey (Davis & Duncan, 2006). As of 2009, the fantasy sports industry has

grown into a \$4 billion industry (Dae Hee, Choong Hoon, Woo Young, & Mahan, 2010) with around 32 million participants in the US and Canada (FSTA, 2011), which is a 2.5 times increase in revenue and more than a doubling of participants from 2006. The fantasy sports industry's incredible growth has created a new area for sports researchers to explore, including the game's impact on television viewership, its impact on overall media consumption for players, and players' motivation for participation (Dwyer, 2011; Dwyer & Drayer, 2010; Dwyer & Yongjae, 2011; Farquahar & Meeds, 2007). Fantasy sports as an area of research is relatively new, as the earliest research is only from 2005 (Bernhard & Eade, 2005)

As fantasy sports gain an increasing role in our society, there is an ever-growing need to understand their effects on participants. Leagues such as the NFL, NBA, MLB, etc. will need to know how these product extensions affect their core product, especially since fantasy is a fan-made game based on their product, as opposed to a marketing tool the leagues pioneered themselves. For this reason, the purpose of this paper is to determine what impact, if any, fantasy sports participation has on a fantasy player's interest in the current events of a professional league. This will help determine if fantasy sports help fans become more knowledgeable, and, therefore, "better" fans. If a fan is more knowledgeable about a league, the depth of his fandom will presumably be greater than someone who does not know as much. The research question that will be explored is:

"What is the relationship between fantasy sport participation and consumption of league current events?"

This research will determine if there may be a relationship between fantasy sport participation and a fans' knowledge of the off-field occurrences in the league. Learning about issues like lockouts, rule changes, and team relocations or name changes signifies a

greater dedication to a league compared to the average fan. In turn, this signifies a person is likely higher up on the frequency escalator. Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton (2000) describe the frequency escalator as a graphic representation of the different levels of fan involvement in sport. The escalator ranges from a nonaware nonconsumer to a heavy user. If someone is a heavy user, it suggests they are invested in the sport to a large extent. The way this information will be useful is if a person's location on the frequency escalator is positively related to fantasy sports participation, leagues may be able to use fantasy sports to move people up the escalator. Someone who is heavily invested in a league will presumably not be as affected by negative occurrences like labor strife, player legal issues, and corruption. Also, even if a heavy user falls on the escalator the same amount as a medium user after negative occurrences, the heavy user will still finish at a higher level. This can help with fan retention through hard times.

### **Literature Review**

The fantasy game, in its traditional form, is quite simple. Common statistics in a sport are given a point value, and a player earns points based on his statistical output. An owner tries to put together a team of players he believes will have the best statistical performance, and the owner with the most points wins. Using football as an example, as it is the most popular fantasy sport (Dae Hee, et. al., 2010), an owner drafts around 16 real players to be on his fantasy team. Based on situational variables such as who the player is and the opponent each player is playing, and health variables such as injury status and severity of the injury, an owner makes the decision to start certain players he believes will get him the most points.

While there is an element of luck involved, owners who succeed are likely the ones best able to predict how a player will perform and adjust accordingly by releasing and adding players, not starting certain players, and trading players with other owners to build a more complete team (Boswell, 2008). This aspect of the game requires research and informed decision making, also known as the rational approach to decision making (Lee & Cummins, 2004). This approach requires as much pertinent information as possible in order to choose the perceived best option. Fantasy owners' use of the rational approach to decision making has led to the creation of expert-based services in the mainstream sports media, such as Yahoo!, ESPN, and CBS (Klaassen, 2006). The creation of these services lends credence to the idea more knowledge will lead to greater success. These services range from online advice shows, to articles explaining why certain players are worth trying to get or trying to get rid of, to even live television shows with last-minute advice. Most of these services are free, but ESPN offers extra online content for its Insider subscribers, which requires a fee (ESPN Fantasy and Games, 2012; Fantasy Games, 2012; Fox Fantasy and Games, 2012; Yahoo! Sports, 2012).

The luck portion of the game is likely part of its appeal. One of sport's unique traits is it is unpredictable and inconsistent (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2000). The fact no one can predict how every player will perform is what makes sports, and by extension fantasy sports, enjoyable for people. Participants in Farquahar's and Meed's study in 2007 said they could still have fun and succeed if they did not know a lot about the fantasy game, and others said they liked fantasy sports because the unpredictable nature of sports made them feel as if they always had a chance to win. These responses indicate sport's unique unpredictability draws people to fantasy games in a similar manner to real-life sports.

Fantasy sports may be popular now, but they have faced hurdles on their way to mainstream acceptance. The game began as "rotisserie" baseball played between a group of friends, but with the advent of the Internet players are able to play with friends, or strangers,

from across the world, sometimes for significant prizes (Davis & Duncan, 2006). The prize aspect has caused fantasy sports and those that run fantasy leagues legal problems.

*Humphrey v. Viacom* was a case filed in New Jersey contending an entry fee for a fantasy football league should be considered a wager. Humphrey was a fantasy player who had an unsuccessful season. New Jersey has a law in place where people can recoup gambling losses, and he sued Viacom under that statute. Since he received extra services besides entry in the league from the hosting website, it was determined the entry fee was not a wager (Moorman, 2008). This ruling allowed fantasy sports to continue, but that did not mean the struggle for legal acceptance was over.

Even those who researched fantasy sports early on saw fantasy sports as gambling. Bernhardt and Eades' (2005) research goal was to set a framework for future fantasy research. The researchers' approach cast fantasy sports in a gambling light, and the stated purpose of the research was to explore fantasy baseball's similarities to traditional gambling (Bernhardt & Eades, 2005).

In 2008, Boswell took the notion that fantasy sports were illegal gambling to task and argued it was, in fact, a game predominantly based on skill. He argued that the decision-making aspect of fantasy games negate the chance-based aspect of predicting an outcome. He also pointed out Congress explicitly allowed fantasy sports to be conducted in its anti-gambling laws, and the state of Montana did, as well (Boswell, 2008). Hancock came to the same conclusion in 2009 when he asserted fantasy sports were based predominantly on skill and were therefore exempt from anti-gambling laws.

The explosion in fantasy sports' popularity indicates the game has become more than just a fad or quirky activity, and is in fact a new industry with significant influence on the sporting world. However, as mentioned earlier, entry fees are often used in fantasy leagues,



and some may consider this to be a gambling venture. There is obviously some argument over this, but a strong fact pointing to fantasy sports not being a gambling game is the professional leagues for the four most popular fantasy sports seem to publicly support fantasy sports' existence. The National Football League (NFL), Major League Baseball (MLB), National Hockey League (NHL), and National Basketball Association (NBA) all have fantasy sections on their websites (Fantasy, 2012; Fantasy Central, 2012; Fantasy Hockey, 2012; MLB.com, 2012). Since these leagues entered into a lawsuit against the Governor of Delaware to halt the use of betting on their games as a form of state lottery fundraising (*Nat'l Football League v. Governor of the State of Del.*, 2009), their backing of fantasy sports should be taken as an endorsement of their legitimacy.

Some previous research has shown support for the idea fantasy sports participation will lead to a person paying more attention to what is happening in a league (Dwyer & Drayer, 2010), but the research has focused on sport information consumption, not necessarily how it affects the fan's interest in the league as a whole. Dwyer and Drayer (2010) found in their research of the relationship between fantasy football participation and media consumption that fantasy football players are more likely to watch multiple games on television each week compared to non-participants. Nesbit and King (2010) built on this when they determined fantasy participants watched 73% more MLB games per week and 35% more NFL games per week than non-participants. As opposed to Dwyer and Drayer's research, Nesbit and King looked at fantasy baseball's impact, as well as fantasy football's, so the results have a greater relevance to the overall fantasy industry, since those games are two of the most popular. An increase in television viewing suggests an interest in seeing the proverbial "story" behind the raw statistics. Randle's and Nyland's (2008) study on fantasy sports' impact on sport media consumption showed fantasy players consume more sports information across all mediums than non-participants. They did not limit their research to a

single sport and instead used an online message board to attract fans of all sports to participate. This makes their findings more universally applicable. Farquahar and Meeds (2007) found in their research on fantasy participation motivation that players enjoyed fantasy because it allowed them to keep up-to-date on what was happening in the sports world when they would not have otherwise, and Dwyer and Yongjae (2011) supported the research in a subsequent project. Their research was not focused on a single sport, rather the participants were college students made up of about the same gender breakdown as the overall fantasy sports industry. Dae Hee, Choong Hoon, Woo Young, and Mahan (2010) researched what caused fantasy owners to feel confident in their ability to win. They focused on college students with previous knowledge of fantasy sports, and conducted their study during the fantasy football season, so the results are most relevant to fantasy football. This article was quite revealing because it showed how sports knowledge affected fantasy owners' emotions, and provided insight into why fantasy players consumed more sport media, instead of just pointing out they did consume more.

The main form of sport media consumption seems to be television. Previous research into sport consumption has mainly focused on television (Adam & Heath, 2010; Dwyer, 2011; Dwyer & Drayer, 2010; Nesbit & King, 2010). The Internet is quickly becoming an important avenue for sport media consumption. In 2008, 4 million people watched 4.3 billion hours of March Madness games on CBS Sports' website, an increase of 135% in viewers and 58% in hours consumed compared to the previous year (Pegoraro, Ayer, & O'Reilly, 2010).

Fantasy sport consumption is slightly different than regular sport consumption, but still closely related. Drayer, Shapiro, Dwyer, Morse, and White found in their 2010 research that fantasy sport owners do not replace their feelings for their favorite real-life team with their fantasy team, so people will not change how they follow their favorite team. Dwyer found in 2011 that fantasy football actually increased a fan's loyalty to his team. As

previously shown, fantasy sports do affect how much sport people consume. Therefore, logic would dictate fantasy sports affect how one consumes sports in general. This can lead one to wonder if perhaps the increase in sports consumption will result in a strengthened interest in off-field occurrences.

These researchers all found fantasy sports have an impact on a how fantasy owners consume sport. However, they did not determine whether they had an impact on owners' following of league happenings and increasing their knowledge about current events, nor did they determine if people believe fantasy sports to be a form of gambling. This is the hole in the current knowledge that this research is designed to fill. Consuming more sport does not mean one pays more attention to things like player suspensions (especially when those player's are not on one's fantasy team), league lockouts, rule changes, stadium construction, team relocation negotiations, or things of that nature. It also does not mean one knows about coaching changes or philosophical approaches to the game. Watching a game or reading box scores is much different than being aware of the business or technical sides of the sport that results in the product on the field.

## **Method**

This mixed-method research is exploratory research is the in the interpretivist tradition. According to Byrne (1998), interpretivism is revelations brought about through one's best judgement based on the available data. Generally, it is used to garner ideas about social phenomena (Byrne, 1998). My research studied the relationship between fantasy sports participation and interest in current events of a league. This study looked at people's

feelings, and since I was interpreting the information to come to a conclusion, it falls into the interpretivist tradition (Byrne, 1998). The quantitative information people provided was also based on feelings, so it is not a purely scientific study (Byrne, 1998).

The method for collecting the data for this study was cross-sectional and executed with a survey. The participants were part of Generation Y between ages 18 and 25. This was the desired study sample because this is the age group just beginning to gain buying power and gaining a foothold in that age group will provide a league with several decades of support from each fan. Also, 20% of people in that age group participate in fantasy sports (Dae Hee, et al., 2010). Snowball sampling was used by distributing the survey through Facebook and Twitter. There are inherent risks with snowball sampling in such a manner, such as repeat participants, and participants not in the desired demographic. However, these risks are minimized through demographic questions during the survey, which allowed for non-desirable participants' responses to be discarded, and prior experience with the target demographic that suggests an unwillingness to participate more often than requested.

For this research, "fantasy sports" was defined as a game in which a person uses real athletes' performances to win a fabricated competition. This included all formats, such as salary cap, traditional drafting, "keeper" leagues where a person may retain "ownership" of a player from one season to the next, and other non-traditional formats which may have been developed. The fantasy participation could be in any sport, including football, hockey, basketball, baseball, soccer, NASCAR, or any other lesser-known sport. "League" was defined as the professional league or organization on which the fantasy game is based. "Current events" referred to events that happen and affect the league, but are not necessarily found in a box score, such as player discipline, player and league outreach initiatives, rule changes, labor stoppages, and business happenings such as team logo/jersey changes, team relocations, and stadium construction/naming negotiations. Sport media consumption was

used rather than overall sport consumption because not everyone has access to a live professional sport event. However, the Internet and television are widespread so many people have access to sport media. Therefore, sport media consumption will be measured and it was defined as the amount of time and/or money spent on watching, reading about, and otherwise following sports.

The participants were asked demographic questions to establish the gender, age, and work/education status of the sample group. They were then asked about their fantasy sport participation using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5. The questions covered how long they have been participating in fantasy sports, if at all, how many and what different fantasy sports they were involved in, and how many leagues in each sport they were involved in. They were then asked about their sport media consumption using the same type of scale. They were asked how much sports media they consume each week during the fantasy season, including television, radio, Internet, newspapers, and mobile applications. They were then asked how much they consume outside of the fantasy season. The reason sport media is being inquired about is not all fans have access to live professional sports, but sport media is much more accessible. Also, the media is where one would keep up to date on goings on of a league. If the subject did not play fantasy sports, they simply answered how much they consume currently. Another question asked them to rate their knowledge of different events such as the NFL lockout, the retirement of David Stern, and the institution of a new MLB playoff structure, based on what they say their favorite fantasy sport is. For those who preferred fantasy football, the questions asked respondents to rate their knowledge and awareness of the 2011 NFL lockout, the recent change to overtime rules in the NFL regular season, and of the 2013 free agency transactions for all players, including non-star players. Baseball respondents were asked to gauge their awareness and knowledge of the new MLB playoff structure, the Los Angeles Dodgers' ownership debacle, and the issues regarding

performance enhancing drugs in baseball. Those interested in hockey were asked about their knowledge and awareness of the 2012 NHL lockout, the division and conference realignments in the NHL, and the rumors about expansion of the league and relocation of teams. Those who chose basketball as their favorite fantasy sport were asked about their knowledge and awareness of NBA commissioner David Stern's retirement, the situation regarding the sale and possible relocation of the Sacramento Kings, and the change in leadership of the NBA players union. If the respondents do not play, then they will be asked questions regarding whichever sport they follow the most, based on their response to a piped question asking for that information. A final question asked if the participant feels fantasy sports should be considered a form of gambling. This question helped give an idea of the public's view on the debate over whether fantasy sports are illegal gambling or not. All awareness/knowledge and perception questions were measured using a Likert-type scale from 1-5, while demographic and consumption questions were measured with multiple choice questions.

This knowledge goes along with the team identification framework. However, in this case it is league identification and loyalty, rather than individual teams. The framework says when a person has a high team identification and loyalty, there is a positive correlation to the amount of money and time the fan will invest in the team (Matsuoka, Chelladurai, Harada, 2003). Theoretically, this will apply to the league as a whole. This research is about taking the team identification and loyalty framework and garnering how it applies to a league, rather than an individual team. If a fan comes to identify with a league and broadens his fandom to the whole league instead of only one team, logic would dictate he will be more interested in league current events.

The independent variable for this study was a person's fantasy sports participation, and the dependent variable is the extent to which a person pays attention to league current

events. The variables will be analyzed to determine if fantasy sports participation does, in fact, influence how much attention a person pays to current events in a league.

The steps used to gather the information were developing a survey, distributing the survey, and send out 4 reminders over Facebook and Twitter. After being active for 5 days, the survey was closed and the results were analyzed.

The data was analyzed through a a frequency analysis by breaking respondents into groups based on level of fantasy participation, then the responses to how much the interest increased or decreased were given point values, and the average was taken to determine the overall change. The sport media consumption answers were given point values, the averages were determined, and the difference was the base interest stimulation fantasy sports provide in regards to fan interest in sports leagues' current events. The data was input using the SPSS software to organize and analyze the information.

## **Results**

A total of 38 responses were obtained, but two respondents were outside of the desired age range, which led to the invalidation of those responses. Of the remaining 36, 21 were male and 15 were female. A majority, 24 people (66.7%), were 20 or 21 years old. The rest were split evenly between 18-19 years old and 22-23 years old at 6 respondents (16.7%) each.

The most popular sport among the respondents was football, both as a fantasy game and as a real-life sport. Of the respondents who did not play fantasy sports, nearly 45%

admitted to following football more closely than the other three major sports. Of the fantasy participants, 80% chose football as their favorite fantasy sport.

## Charts

**Figure 1**

**This question is in regards to fantasy sports' perception as a gambling enterprise.  
Please answer using a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 representing "not at all" and 5  
representing "Fantasy sports are on par with slot machines."**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	14	38.9	38.9	38.9
2	6	16.7	16.7	55.6
3	7	19.4	19.4	75.0
4	6	16.7	16.7	91.7
5	3	8.3	8.3	100.0
Total	36	100.0	100.0	

In regards to people's perception of fantasy sports as gambling, the results were both slightly surprising and not surprising at all. Of the 36 utilized responses, 14, or 38.9% categorized fantasy sports as "not at all" gambling. This response was the most popular, doubling the next highest total. This would indicate fantasy sports have become mainstream enough to be socially accepted, and the free aspect of the game has significantly detracted from the association with gambling that was apparently so prevalent. What was still slightly surprising was how many people still strongly considered fantasy sports gambling. The top end of the Likert scale was "Fantasy sports are on par with slot machines," and three people chose that answer, while six responded with "4," the second-highest value. Those two responses constitute a "fantasy sports are gambling" belief. Even though the two responses combined still do not have the same support as answer "1," and are much less than when answers "1" and "2" are combined, this study would suggest 25% of Generation Y considers fantasy sports gambling.



## NON-FANTASY PARTICIPANTS

Figure 2

**How much sport media do you consume during the fantasy season?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	13	86.7	86.7	86.7
2.00	2	13.3	13.3	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Figure 3

**How much sport media do you consume during the fantasy offseason?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	13	86.7	86.7	86.7
2.00	2	13.3	13.3	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

The non-participant sport media consumption figures showed that most non-participants consumed a small amount of sport media, generally between zero and 10 hours each week. Only two of the 15 non-participants indicated they consumed between 11 and 20 hours of sport media each week. There was no change in consumption between the fantasy season and offseason.

Figure 4

### Football

	Lockout	Overtime	Free Agency
N Valid	4	4	4
Missing	11	11	11
Mean	2.7500	3.2500	2.2500
Mode	3.00	1.00 <sup>a</sup>	1.00
Std. Deviation	1.25831	1.70783	1.50000
Variance	1.583	2.917	2.250
Range	3.00	4.00	3.00

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

The current event knowledge of football fans was overall fairly middle of the road. Only four respondents answered questions about football, but it was the highest response for a single sport. Respondents indicated moderate knowledge of the NFL’s current events, with the highest awareness being of the new overtime rules.

Figure 5

		Basketball		
		Stern	Kings	NBPA
N	Valid	2	2	2
	Missing	13	13	13
Mean		1.0000	1.0000	1.5000
Mode		1.00	1.00	1.00 <sup>a</sup>
Std. Deviation		.00000	.00000	.70711
Variance		.000	.000	.500
Range		.00	.00	1.00

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Figure 6

		Hockey		
		Lockout	Realignment	Expansion/ relocation
N	Valid	1	1	1
	Missing	14	14	14
Mean		3.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Mode		3.00	1.00	1.00
Range		.00	.00	.00

Both basketball and hockey had small response numbers and showed a fairly low level of knowledge of current events. No respondent chose over “3” for any category, and most categories garnered a response of “1.”

Figure 7

		Playoffs	Dodgers	Steroids
N	Valid	2	2	2
	Missing	13	13	13
	Mean	2.5000	2.5000	4.0000
	Mode	1.00 <sup>a</sup>	1.00 <sup>a</sup>	3.00 <sup>a</sup>
	Std. Deviation	2.12132	2.12132	1.41421
	Variance	4.500	4.500	2.000
	Range	3.00	3.00	2.00

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Baseball, like hockey and basketball, had a low response rate, but the respondents had a higher knowledge of current events than people who chose basketball and hockey, since the average response was higher than theirs.

### 1-2 league participation

Figure 8

How much sport media do you consume during the fantasy season?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	10	47.6	50.0
	2.00	6	28.6	80.0
	3.00	3	14.3	95.0
	5.00	1	4.8	100.0
	Total	20	95.2	100.0
Missing	System	1	4.8	
	Total	21	100.0	

During the fantasy season, fantasy participants tend to not consume more than 20 hours of sport media, but 25% of respondents consumed more than 20, including one person who consumes over 40 hours each week.

Figure 9

**How much sport media do you consume during the fantasy offseason?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	11	52.4	52.4	52.4
Valid 2.00	7	33.3	33.3	85.7
Valid 3.00	3	14.3	14.3	100.0
Total	21	100.0	100.0	

During the fantasy offseason, participants did decrease the amount of sport media they consumed, as one extra person consumed no more than 10 hours, one extra person consumed no more than 20 hours, and no one consumed over 40 hours. However, this data still shows and increase in sport media consumption over non-participants.

Figure 10

**Football**

	Lockout	Overtime	Free Agency
N Valid	18	18	18
N Missing	3	3	3
Mean	4.2222	4.0556	2.3889
Mode	5.00	5.00	1.00
Std. Deviation	1.11437	1.51356	1.33456
Variance	1.242	2.291	1.781

The fantasy football participants showed a 53% increase in knowledge about the 2011 lockout. The mode response was “5,” which indicates extreme knowledge and awareness. Awareness of the overtime rule change increased 25%, also with a mode response of “5.” Awareness of free agent transactions increased only 6%.

Figure 11

		<b>Basketball</b>		
		Stern	Kings	NBPA
N	Valid	1	1	1
	Missing	20	20	20
	Mean	2.0000	4.0000	2.0000
	Mode	2.00	4.00	2.00

Information on basketball from fantasy participants was sparse, garnering only one response. The one respondent did indicate more knowledge of current events than non-participants, as the non-participants indicated little to no knowledge of current events.

Figure 12

		<b>Baseball</b>		
		Playoffs	Dodgers	PEDs
N	Valid	2	2	1
	Missing	19	19	20
	Mean	5.0000	5.0000	5.0000
	Mode	5.00	5.00	5.00
	Std. Deviation	.00000	.00000	
	Variance	.000	.000	

Fantasy participants that answered questions about baseball showed an extreme knowledge of the sport's current events, but the response rate was very small, as only two people provided data.

### 3-4 League Participation

Figure 13

		<b>Sport Media Consumption</b>	
		In-season	Off-season
N	Valid	1	1
	Missing	0	0
	Mean	3.0000	2.0000
	Mode	3.00	2.00

Figure 14

		Football		
		Lockout	Overtime	Free Agency
N	Valid	1	1	1
	Missing	0	0	0
	Mean	4.0000	5.0000	5.0000
	Mode	4.00	5.00	5.00

The three to four league participation category had only one respondent, who was obviously very aware of the current events in fantasy football, increased his sport media consumption during the fantasy season, and had a higher off-season sport media consumption than most non-participants. Since there is such a small sample size, it is more prudent to combine the one and two league participants with the three to four league participant to create a single fantasy participant group.

### Discussion

Since one appeal of fantasy sports is the occasional monetary risk (Dwyer & Yongjae, 2011), there will likely always be a gambling aspect, and therefore a belief that fantasy sports are a form of gambling among the public. However, a 25% rate of belief that fantasy sports are highly a form of gambling among the country's youngest generation shows that there is still a ways to go for fantasy sports to grow and gain even more mainstream acceptance. Likely, the free aspect of various online fantasy options (Fantasy Football, 2012) will serve to lessen the perception of fantasy sports as gambling as the game continues to grow.

The sport media results were fairly unsurprising. Fantasy sports participants consumed much more sport media than non-participants, especially during the fantasy season. Considering a full time job is seen as working 40 hours per week, the fact one respondent indicated he consumed more than 40 hours of sport media each week during the

fantasy season was striking. The results did not produce any overly revealing information, but does reinforce previous research (Randle & Nyland, 2008; Drayer et al., 2010).

The survey results showed significant, but not unexpected data. Due to the lack of responses regarding baseball, basketball, and hockey, the only sport that produced data that can reasonably be analyzed was football. Comparing one or two non-fantasy participants to one or two fantasy participants for a specific sport is simply too small of a sample size to expect the results to give much information. Across all three of the underrepresented sports, however, there was consistently an increase in knowledge and awareness of the current events from the non-participants to the fantasy participants.

The football results were not incredibly surprising, however it was expected that there would have been a larger difference between fantasy participants and non-participants in knowledge of free-agent signings. There is a possible factor that may have affected the data. It is possible that the fantasy participants are more aware of what they do not know than non-participants. The question asked about all free agent signings, instead of just a few star player signings, so non-participants may not be as aware of the free agency process and the multitude of transactions that are processed compared to fantasy participants, but they simply do not understand their lack of knowledge. It is possible fantasy participants know more about the free agency signings compared to non-participants than the data would suggest, but graded themselves more harshly because they understood their ignorance. This situation revealed a de-limitation in the study, which was the human error factor. The immense difference in awareness and knowledge of the 2011 lockout between participants and non-participants is interesting, but can also be explained. The lockout was quite prolonged, and the NFL regular season was in danger of having games cancelled, which would have affected the fantasy season. Therefore, fantasy football players would likely have had at least basic knowledge of the lockout's details. Also, sport media outlets like ESPN provided exhaustive

coverage of the ordeal, and since fantasy participants consume more sport media than non-participants, they would have been exposed to the coverage more.

One limitation of this research was the small sample size. Due to the target demographic, the distribution method, and the length of time the survey was active, it was too small to give reliable, definitive information.

Unfortunately, there was a flaw in the survey design. It ended up suggesting a relationship between fantasy participation and current event knowledge (i.e. interest) rather than an actually proving fantasy participation increases current event interest. The question “Did you become more interested in league current events after you began playing fantasy sports?” should have been posed to fantasy sports participants, and “How interested are you in the current events of your favorite sport’s major league?” should have been posed to non-participants. This was a limitation of the study because it was a decision, albeit an inadvertent mistake.

Future research into this area is certainly advised. This research has laid a foundation, but the small sample and flawed survey did not do enough to determine if there is, in fact, a correlation between fantasy sport participation and interest in league current events. It merely suggested a relationship between the two without discovering whether any causality existed. A future study would likely need to reach out to a larger sample, perhaps obtained from the FSTA. The surveys could also be better tailored to individual sports that way, since the researcher would have prior knowledge of what fantasy sports each participant played. Obviously, the questions mentioned above would also need to be included.



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