

THE MAKING OF MY FANTASYLAW MVP

Brian Rock

John F. Kerry (D-MA) has served the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a U.S. Senator for 24 years. He has spent 19 years on the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, currently serves as its chairman, and is a member of eight other committees and subcommittees. He is ranked fourteenth in Senate seniority, and was the 2004 Democratic nominee for President of the United States.

He was also not picked by a single team owner in any league participating in the FantasyLaw preseason.

And it's too bad – a little research shows that several teams could have benefited from having Kerry round out their rosters in the past two weeks. For instance, Harmless Error from the Galloping Gophers League would be in the number one spot if only it had drafted Kerry instead of Senator Claire McCaskill (D-MO), and Speech and Debate Claws in the Stimulus Spending League could have had a second-place showing last week if Senator Arlen Specter (D for now-PA) were benched in favor of Kerry.

Granted, it is early in the season, and hindsight is always 20-20. Kerry's value as a team member may diminish as the year goes on, but for the week of July 19 he was a rock star by FantasyLaw's measures. And, his unappreciated productivity highlights a limitation of our FantasyLaw reporting system: as of now only drafted congressmen and -women get recognition for their legislative accomplishments. But, being a thorough, thoughtful, and slightly nerdy editor (perhaps not uniquely, at FantasyLaw), I have created a system to ensure that top Senators and Members of the House of Representatives get the glory they deserve from week to week, regardless of whether they were popular enough to get drafted by any FantasyLaw owners.

Brian Rock is an editor of FantasyLaw and a student at the University of Virginia School of Law.



Senator John F. Kerry (D-MA), FantasyLaw MVP.

In addition to publishing each league’s statistics and standings, FantasyLaw will be posting my “MVP” list of the top ten Senators and Representatives for every week (or at least every week I get around to delivering my picks). The list will rank top congressmen and -women, show their stats in each category for the week, and assign them a grade that will roughly reflect how valuable they were (or, as in Kerry’s case, should have been) to a team owner, given that week’s data.

I realize that providing a single formula for “most valuable player” will probably over-emphasize some players’ accomplishments, under-emphasize others, and reveal some elements of my own brand of arbitrariness.¹ Despite these limitations, I couldn’t resist providing our gracious preseason team owners with the joy of knowing their clairvoyant drafting strategies paid off, or, in some cases, with the regret of realizing the value of forgone opportunities.

MVP scoring works like this: I construct two new imaginary leagues – one with 100 teams made up of only sitting Senators (let’s

¹ So do not be surprised if other FantasyLaw editors eventually chime in with their own rankings.

The Making of My MVP

call it “Senators League”), and one with 441 teams consisting solely of Members of the House of Representatives (“Representatives League”).² Each team has exactly one player, and no two teams have the same player. So, effectively, each Representative or Senator is the owner of, and sole player on, his or her own FantasyLaw team, and is competing in a league made up of only his or her colleagues. Each week I will run our normal scoring algorithms³ for both of these imaginary leagues and post the top ten performers in each chamber of Congress.

Our actual leagues in the 2009 preseason have only 5 or 6 teams right now (although leagues are permitted to have as many as 9 teams), so the most points a team in one of those leagues can earn in a given category (recall that there are 11 performance categories in FantasyLaw) is a 5 or 6. The Senators League, however, has 100 teams and thus the top-performing legislator in each category in the Senators League earns a maximum of 100 points. In the Representatives League, with 441 teams, I will dole out a magnificent 441 points to the high scorer in each category.⁴ And, just as in the actual FantasyLaw leagues, the tie-breaker formula will split points among those legislators who tie in a given category for that week.⁵

After all the calculations are run, Senators and Representatives who perform highly in multiple categories will receive more points than their colleagues (*i.e.*, receive a higher grade) and will rise in the standings of their respective imaginary leagues. Those lucky few who reach the top ten for their respective chamber will earn the enviable honor of being an MVP for that week of the season and will

² FantasyLaw includes representatives of federal territories.

³ For a thorough explanation of the FantasyLaw scoring system, see Daniel Klionsky, *Scoring Summary*, 12 GREEN BAG 2D 487 (2009), www.fantasylaw.org.

⁴ Consequently, and until I choose to do something about it, the grades I give representatives will be much higher on an absolute scale than their senatorial counterparts. More accurately, grades will be about 4.41 times as high on average since there are 4.41 times the number of teams in the Representatives League as in the Senators League, and thus 4.41 times the number of points given to its top performers.

⁵ See Klionsky, 12 GREEN BAG 2D at 488.

Brian Rock

be recognized on FantasyLaw.org for their accomplishments.

At the bottom of each week's MVP page you'll also find tables showing the "Season Leaders" from both houses of Congress. Season Leaders are those Senators and Representatives who have the highest average MVP grade ("GPA") for the entire preseason. GPA is calculated by adding up each Senator's or Representative's total grade points and dividing by the number of weeks played so far.

It is my hope that the MVP lists will not only aid and abet polite bragging between team owners, but also will be used as references for well-informed add/drop/trade decisions and as tools for future FantasyLaw drafters.

You can access the MVP .pdf files on the FantasyLaw website at www.fantasylaw.org.

