

What is a Fantasy?

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From the age of 5 I wanted to be three things when I grew up: a dentist, a marine biologist...and a pirate. This makes us all laugh now (particularly the idea of a pirate dentist having such a large clientele base), but I was legitimately fantasizing about the life I had ahead of me, sailing the seven seas, collecting interesting specimens from the murky waters and performing the occasional root canal.

Unfortunately, I had to grow up, and as the years passed I left behind each of those amazing fantasy jobs, the last one dropping off after my miserable experience in Science B-53 freshman year-it turns out Marine Biology is a lot more about memorizing algae facts and less about sharks. I've spent the last three years studying Economics, a subject I've convinced myself to enjoy, and trying to visualize myself in different jobs, none of which have inspired any unbounded amount of excitement. Instead of being driven by joy or curiosity, I have been trying to plan my future with a nervous mind and nagging relatives. I had always heard the saying "do what you love" but I honestly couldn't see myself or many of my peers really taking that to heart. Then I thought of my fantasies again, my pirate-dentist-biologist fantasy, and started thinking about what I really loved to do.

You see, much of my time in the fall semester this year was spent pursuing another fantasy, the perfect fantasy football team in my 8-man league. For those of you not too familiar with fantasy football, it is basically an online competition between friends, coworkers or classmates which pits your team of real NFL players against others using an algorithm, which determines how many points your team scores based on your players real life achievements. A description out loud makes the whole practice

seem very sad, but I assure you Fantasy Football and Fantasy Sports in general is a very well developed business. I was fortunate enough to be able to play with 7 of my good friends from high school, including one of my current roommates, and I found out pretty quickly that I was good, or at least lucky. I was number one in my league for the entire season until the championships, when my players just didn't do what they had done for me all year, and I ended up losing badly to my biggest competition, my fellow Lowellian, Matthew.

Now, there are clearly many differences between fantasy football and the ever-ominous senior job search. For one, there are fewer scapegoats to be had when pursuing a career. I can blame my late season blunders on Percy Harvin's emergency appendectomy and Rob Gronkowski's two broken forearms all I want, but when I miss a deadline or fail to prepare for an interview there's really only one person at fault. One would assume that the opposite is also true, that there are more bragging rights afforded from landing an entry level position at a consulting firm than there are for playing Doug Martin and having him miraculously explode into the best running back in the league, but it's actually the reverse of this. My classmates and I are expected to work hard and succeed in finding jobs just like the fantasy studs of the season are expected to churn out excellent numbers every week. These expectations make not achieving those goals even more bleak of an outcome, an outcome I am desperately trying to avoid.

The funny thing about a fantasy is that the fantasizer only has the outcome in focus. The time necessary to study, sweat, or sail your way to your dream is very rarely considered. My football fantasy was not to spend my time in class checking on free agents or trade updates, it was to win my league that was all. As my fantasy shifts now, to a job near Boston that pays enough to live on, I am finally starting to realize that those outcomes that are the beautiful substance of fantasies don't fall into your lap.

There's another saying about fantasies, "you feel much better about the result if you put in the work to get there". I think we all know this to be true, and I plan on using that knowledge to plan for the future. It's nice to think about where you'll be in ten years, but it's important too to know what your plan is for the week and month ahead.

As I think now about my plans for next year, I realize that besides the planning and work, I need to put a little wiggle room into my fantasies, because an inflexible dream isn't easily achievable, but a dream that can shift and change shape with changing circumstances leads the dreamer on a journey that will get him somewhere better than his starting point. Maybe I won't be a master of swashbuckling and teeth brushing and maybe next year my fantasy football team won't even make the playoffs, but I will put everything I have into planning for the months of job searching ahead, because even though that first job might not be my fantasy in the long run, it's what my dream has become, and heck, I can always be a pirate as a back up.