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## Fantasy Sports Come in All Sizes and Shapes and Prices

Richard C. Crepeau

University of Central Florida, [richard.crepeau@ucf.edu](mailto:richard.crepeau@ucf.edu)

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE  
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With the opening of spring training camps and the arrival of the players in Florida we begin the season of hopes and dreams in baseball. Young players will dream of making the major league club, and older players will dream of World Series victories and large contracts to follow. For those lesser mortals among us there are other kinds of dreams created and manufactured for our pleasure.

Fantasy sport has become a major growth industry. In the world of my childhood the fantasy was at a very rudimentary level. If only you could see the great player, perhaps exchange a word or two, or get an autograph, your dreams would be realized.

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and we still are, fantasies like all else are available in multiple forms and venues, often at a price. From the simple to the extravagant to the absurd, the entrepreneurial and creative minds of our demented materialistic world have produced a cornucopia of fantasy sport experiences.

There is Fantasy Baseball, Football, Hockey, Basketball, Soccer, Golf, NASCAR, Formula One, and yes, even Fantasy Cricket. In these strange worlds you can become the owner of players. Last year I owned Pedro Martinez, Mike Piazza, Mariano Rivera and a full roster of baseball greats and not so greats. I didn't need millions to buy this team just a few dollars and a little patience. If I don't like the way players perform I trade them or drop them from the roster and replace them with a fresh face. I exercise heartless power without worrying about unions or free agency. It is a fantasy within a fantasy.

At the next level are the fantasy camps where middle-aged fans can join over-the-hill players to go through the motions of a training camp experience. The culmination of this fantasy is a game where the campers play with or against the idols of their youth. At the baseball version of this fantasy you get your own "authentic" uniform, your own baseball card, and your own muscle pulls and strains.

The Richard Petty Driving Experience offers the opportunity to drive a car on the track at Charlotte or one of four other tracks at 160 M.P.H. and get the experience of taking

a car through those high-banked turns. This is a high powered rush at prices ranging from \$350 to \$3,000 depending on track and duration.

The next stop up this fantasy ladder is to spend time with a current star or compete with or against a current star. Dinner or lunch, a round of golf, an evening at the game with a superstar could be a major ego boost for those who could afford such a luxury. This takes the pro-am golf concept to the next level.

One Internet site has been offering a half-hour of fielding and hitting practice with Yankee shortstop Derek Jeter during spring training. What is your bid? Would you go over the \$5,500 current high bid? What would you pay for a round of golf with Tiger Woods? It is expected that some lucky consumer would be willing to put up \$300,000 for this fantasy. Bidding will open at \$10,000 on April 1 when fools are aplenty. The International Management Group will be making Woods, Palmer, Sampras, and even Tara Lipinski available for a fantasy experience. How's your double or triple toe loop?

Ultimatebid.com, esuperstars.com, and IMG will all be making this sort of fantasy available to people with more money than is good for them. Esuperstars offered special Super Bowl packages which included luxury hotels, a chance to play with a star in the NFL Charity Golf Classic, access to NFL exclusive Super Bowl events, and luxury boxes for the game, all for a mere \$9,000. The thirty-six available packages sold in just a few days.

With the tremendous popularity of the TV quiz show, "Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?" and the highly rated "Who Wants to Marry a Multimillionaire?" the next step up the ladder seems obvious. "Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire Athlete?" would feature any star athlete with a seven figure annual income. If FOX had little trouble finding fifty women to compete for the right to marry an anonymous multimillionaire, how difficult could it be to find thousands of young women interested in marrying Derek Jeter or Alex Rodriguez?

Someone suggested to me the other day that "Who Wants to Have a Child by an NBA Player?" might be another possibility. Indeed it might, but as we know life often imitates art, and sometimes it anticipates art as in this

case where any number of fans already have had this experience. It is a shame really as Shawn Kemp would have been the perfect host, a kind of Regis Without Condoms.

As you can tell the variations on this possibility seem endless: the money to be made exceeding the bounds of your imagination. If you have your own ideas in this area for fantasy camps or fantasy experiences send your suggestions on to FOX Television Sports or perhaps you could just e-mail them to me.

Don't forget, in our high tech and progressive world today's fantasy could be tomorrow's reality. You too could become a multimillionaire.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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