

# SUPREME COURT OF FANTASY JUDGMENT

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## **Stud Muffins v. Speedboys**

### ON PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI FROM A FANTASY BASEBALL LEAGUE

Decided July 16, 2010  
Cite as 1 F.J. 60 (July 2010)

#### **Factual Background**

A rotisserie fantasy baseball league (hereinafter referred to as “Roto league”) utilizing an auction-style draft and transaction platform seeks an evaluation of a trade made between two teams within the Roto league. This is an NL-only keeper league where each team is permitted to maintain up to ten (10) players during each off-season with each individual player allowed to be kept for a maximum of three (3) years. Each team is also permitted to keep two minor league players which are in addition to the ten players kept. This Roto league also has a \$36.00 in-season salary cap that is applicable for all teams.

As with many rotisserie leagues, the subject Roto league uses the standard 5x5 scoring categories to determine the standings and prize money. For offensive players, the five categories are: (1) batting average; (2) homeruns; (3) runs batted in; (4) runs scored; and (5) stolen bases. For pitchers, the five categories are: (1) wins; (2) earned run average; (3) WHIP (walks+hits/innings pitched); (4) strikeouts; and (5) saves. Statistics are cumulative throughout the course of the season and there are no head to head games contained within the Roto league.

#### **Procedural History**

The Stud Muffins, the 12<sup>th</sup> place team in the Roto league, have made a trade with the Speedboys, the 4<sup>th</sup> place team in the league. The Stud Muffins traded Ian Desmond (SS-WAS), Ryan Howard (1B-PHI), and Vicente Padilla (SP-LAD) to the Speedboys in exchange for Jeff Francoeur (OF-NYM), Jonathan Herrera (2B-COL), Chris Johnson (3B-HOU), Jason Marquis (SP-WAS), Manny Parra (SP-MIL), and Arthur Rhodes (RP-CIN).

#### **Issue Presented**

(1) Should the trade between the Stud Muffins and the Speedboys be upheld and approved?

#### **Decision**

The Supreme Court of Fantasy Judgment typically favors individual fantasy sports participants and teams’ ability to make moves, transactions, and trades. The standard of review has been that people pay money to purchase a team in a league, draft their team, and manage it accordingly. Whether success is bred from that individual’s decision-making is purely left to some skill, luck, dedication, and savviness. The Court also acknowledges that the analysis for evaluating trades is much different in a keeper league than a non-keeper league. A trade that may look uneven or lopsided on its face may receive a different opinion when it is involved in a keeper league. The

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reasons for this are obvious, but must be restated. In a keeper league, teams that are having unsuccessful seasons are more likely to continue to pay attention and make moves that will set themselves up for better success in the following season. They can do this by acquiring young talent that is not under contract within the league, or by dumping salary (assuming it is an auction league) and allowing greater financial flexibility to sign key players in the next season's draft. In non-keeper leagues, there is no rationale for thinking ahead, nor is there any need to stockpile young, inexpensive talent.

Another factor that the Court must always consider is whether there is any collusion or under-the-table dealings going on between teams. The Court has not been presented with any evidence of such malfeasance, so assumptions will be made that this is not an issue.

At first glance, the trade of Ryan Howard, Ian Desmond and Vicente Padilla in exchange for Jeff Francoeur, Jonathan Herrera, Chris Johnson, Jason Marquis, Manny Parra and Arthur Rhodes appears not to be fair and even. Without question, Ryan Howard is the centerpiece of this trade as he produces massive numbers in terms of homeruns, RBI and runs scored. This season, he has kept his batting average near .300 which adds a 4<sup>th</sup> category that he contributes positively in. That being said, he is a lock for these numbers year in and year out. At only 30 years old, Howard has several more years hitting in the bandbox that is Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia where he will continue to accrue gargantuan statistics. On top of that, Ian Desmond is a highly touted prospect in the Nationals' organization who has been given significant playing time this season already. He is currently hitting .254 with 6 homeruns and 36 RBI, which are not terrible numbers for a rookie on a bad team. Finally, Vicente Padilla has been one of the most consistent starting pitchers for the Dodgers this season, when healthy. In 9 starts, he is 4-2 with a 4.00 ERA and 50 strikeouts.

In comparison, Jeff Francoeur is now part of a four-man rotation in the Mets' outfield now that Carlos Beltran has returned. Jonathan Herrera and Chris Johnson are unproven youngsters with limited playing time this year. Jason Marquis is an unremarkable pitcher when healthy; however, he is currently out for the year recovering from major surgery. Manny Parra has raw talent, but he is continually shuffled between the starting rotation and bullpen in Milwaukee. Finally, Arthur Rhodes, the 40-year old All-Star, adds nothing to this Roto league team outside of some WHIP help.

One glaring issue is the fact that the Stud Muffins have no real options at first base after they trade Howard. As previously stated in Carson City Cocks v. Stud Muffins, 1 F.J. 55, 56 (July 2010) trading superstar players, such as Howard, raise some inherent concerns, especially when these trades are made by teams at the bottom of the standings such as the Stud Muffins. The Court urges league owners and commissioners to be aware of the dynamic of last place teams trading their superstar players.

Financial considerations do not seem to be an issue here as the net difference gained by the Stud Muffins would only be \$0.50. The only justification the Court can conceive is the fact that the

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Stud Muffins would be trading players, including Howard, who have only one year remaining under contract in exchange for players who have two years remaining. However, Ryan Howard for another year and a half compared to two and a half years of marginal talent is by far the better option. The Stud Muffins have made multiple trades over the course of the season to accumulate salary cap room to apply to next year's draft, which is commendable and intelligent. But a line must be drawn somewhere when it comes to being competitive in the present and making good decisions for the league overall.

Ryan Howard has proven over the course of his career what he is capable of doing, and his statistics will generally help teams in four of the five stat categories. Plus, with the other moves the Stud Muffins have made to create more cap space, they can be aggressive and creative in the 2011 draft and build a team around a superstar like Ryan Howard. While 2011 may be his last year under contract, at least the Stud Muffins can be competitive and perhaps challenge for a championship. Without players like Howard or Fielder, they cannot hope to compete.

While this Court has repeatedly approved of uneven looking trades based on financial flexibility and projections for future years, it cannot do the same in this case. Allowing the last place team to deal Ryan Howard to the 4<sup>th</sup> place team in exchange for far lesser value would not be in the best interests of the league. The Court has previously commented on allowing teams to make decisions that affect their own futures, which continues to hold true. However, in this case, the trade is not even and it also could undermine the integrity of the league.

The Court hereby decides that the subject trade should not be approved as it does not comport with the best interests of the league.

*IT IS SO ORDERED.*