

DT Must-Haves for 2012

(Forwards)

With the start of the Nab-cup less than a month away it is high time we started looking at potential candidates for our teams. Regardless of your strategy to combat the utter disaster the bye rounds (11-13) will prove to be a winning team will have a mixture of these stars or as I affectionately dub them 'DT Sluts'.

Lance (Buddy) Franklin:

What hasn't been said about this man? Exciting, incredibly athletic and a profound ability to outrun Cale Hooker (who is forever damned to be seen huffing and puffing while chasing Buddy). Regardless of Hooker's incompetence in a chase Buddy is a DT beast. He has averaged 96+ points a season in 3 of the last 4 seasons, the bogey year came in the form of Hawthorn's season-long premiership hangover in 2009 (for the record he averaged 80.7 that year).



In a year that the hawks are tipped to become a prime candidate for the premiership Buddy's output should only increase. It is quite remarkable that Franklin managed to set a career-high DT average last season at 101.6 points per game (5.2 points more than his 102 goal tally set in 2008). This could be directly attributed to both Buddy's added ability to push up the ground and grab a few cheap possessions and the Hawks new 'kick to kick' game-plan that saw them become the highest averaging team (in terms of DT output per game) last season. Buddy's scores in 2011 included a season high and low of 144 against the swans and 55 against the pies respectively. Buddy also managed to improve on his consistency with him recording 86+ points in 15 out of a possible 19 games (2 missed due to injury).

As with most stars Budwood has a vice that sees his season take a blow practically every year. This vice, ladies and gentlemen is suspensions. Franklin's love-affair with being on the wrong side of the ever jaded AFL tribunal began in 2008 with a report of a level 1 rough conduct offense against Adelaide's Michael Doughty. While this did not garner a suspension (he gained 93.75 carry-over points for his next offense). His next major offense came in round 21 against Ben Cousins, Buddy copped a 2-match ban which not only bugged the end of the Hawks 2009 season but saw him suspended for the very first game of 2010. Franklin's addiction almost took over his game in 2010. Along with him missing round 1 Buddy also was absent for round 4, round 7, round 10 and round 16 (due to injury). I

n 2011 Buddy was far more subdued with him not suffering a single suspension yet he did miss 3 games through injury.

All in all Buddy is a great choice for your team and should improve upon his stellar average of 2011. This is so long as you can put up with a game missed here and there due to either injury or suspension. If I had to give a potential season average I would say about 105 (obviously barring injury and whatnot).

Dustin (Don't Argue) Martin:

Welcome to my top 3 forwards Dustin, I never expected to see you here. That's not to say I am not glad to see you here, I am ecstatic! After a very successful second season Martin somehow managed to find himself with DPP eligibility for 2012 (I guess kicking 33 goals garners eligibility). So Dusty has managed to avoid the second-year blues, this begs the question: Can he still get better? The answer to this is an unequivocal yes. He himself is coming into his third year which for many young players means a steady improvement and if Dusty were to improve 5-6 points a game that would easily see him sit in the top 10 forwards of yesteryear. Along with this Martin is among an ever-improving Tigers outfit, with the likes of Cotchin, Deledio, Riewoldt and a number of rookie defenders picked up should see Richmond at least have a tilt at the top-8.



While he may be young (21 in June) he is experienced among his peers. It is not often that a rookie comes out and plays every single game (bar one) in his first two seasons, but that is exactly what Dusty has achieved. That gives durability a big tick. How about scoring ability? He has got that but with a minor caveat. While Martin can top the ton with seven 100+ scores (peak of 141) he can also have a bad day here and there with him scoring 70 or less on several occasions (trough of 59) throughout the season.

There are a few potential negatives with Dusty. As mentioned before he does have a tendency to have a quiet game here and there. He also finished off the year a hell of a lot worse than what he started. From rounds 1-12 (round 11 was the tigers bye round) Dustin averaged 95.54 points per games and from rounds 13-24 (Tigers had round 19 bye) he managed 83.4. That is a huge gap of 12.14 points in the back-half of the season. While this stat is a little bit worrying it should not be indicative of what Dusty will offer up this year. The slide itself could be attributed to being a young player that needs to work in a little more consistency in his game or that teams were paying more attention to him after he carved up the first half.

In summation Dusty will be a great pick this year as he and the Tigers improve to challenge for a top-8 spot. If this does come to fruition then you could expect Dusty to improve his average to approximately 95 if not higher.

Steve (no real nickname) Johnson:

Well this one shall be easy to start off with. He was the highest averaging forward last year at 107.1 points per game. The next highest in the forward line was his buddy 'All Chaps Rage' Chapman at 102.2. That is a fair buffer Steve has there and I don't expect that to drop off this season either. Johnson has been a safe DT pick since 2007 where he bolted from an average of 67.2 to a whopping 94.8 in just a seasons time, Looks like he finally started chowing down on his veggies. From then on Stevie J has been going from strength to strength with him averaging 90+ in every season after that, which included his monstrous 107.1 average of 2011. The huge increase in Johnson's game last year can be directly attributed to Ablett's departure to the sunny north. This saw Johnson spend more time in the midfield rotations and therefore an increase in his disposals per game, 18.6 in 2010 and upped to 22.4 in 2011.



While this is all fine and dandy I hear you say, but can he keep it up? In response to this I say do you see Ablett in the Cats line-up? Nope, didn't think so. Even if he were to drop off a slight amount (say 5 points per game) he would still easily fit into the top 5 forwards at seasons end. Speaking of points, boy did Johnson turn it on last season. Twelve 100+ scores closely followed by a further four 90+ scores with a whopping season high of 171 which he got twice! In contrast to his scoring prowess Johnson did have a couple of quiet games (who doesn't) with a season-low of 66 against the crows in round 14 and a further five games in the 70's. Not a biggie though.

In terms of negatives there is one bogey. This particular bogey caught me out a couple of times last season (rounds 7 and 18) . This black mark on Johnson's game ladies and gentleman is what I dub 'soft-cock-itis' (source: Mrbearessential PhD). This disease which very few players contract leads to symptoms of either seemingly being fit before lock-out and then coming down with a strain in the pre-game warm up which forces them to be a late withdrawal or the terrible 'general-soreness' symptom which sees the player missing the game because the club believes he is tired. Both are bad and both unfortunately struck Johnson last season (the first symptom he has suffered for quite some time). While this shouldn't deter you from picking him up you must accept that he will miss a game or three throughout the season. If you can get past that then Stevie J should be a great selection.

In closing, Johnson will yet again be a good pick for dream team although I do see his output dropping slightly due to age and Geelong possibly sliding backwards a tad, I know this was said last year but they are yet another year older. Regardless I expect a season average of about 100-105 for Steve this year.

Honourable Mentions:

While I have only selected 3 forwards there are a few more that definitely need to be considered for your team. These players include:

Paul Chapman:

AVG: 102.2

Games Played: 20

+: DT royalty, averaged 100+ for 5 out of the last 6 seasons

-: Is not getting any younger (31 in November), has not played a full season in 5 years

Adam Goodes:

AVG: 99.3

Games Played: 22

+: Had his best year to date, has only missed 6 games in his career of 12 seasons

-: Is another year older (32 years old), Sydney are a non-friendly DT team.

Nathan (Avatar) Fyfe:

AVG: 98.4

Games Played: 21

+: Very young and energetic, destroyed the second year rule (increased average by 30.2 points per game)

-: Plays a dangerous game-style that will result in some injuries, is still young