NAMES TO KNOW-BIG 10

Illinois Fighting Illini

Top Play: RB Chase Brown Potential Bust: RB Chase Brown Sleeper: WR Brian Hightower Impact Transfer: WR Jafar Armstrong Dynasty Prospect: RB Chase Brown Fantastic Freshman: QB Samari Collier



No secret what a Bret Bielema offense plans to do, and that was heightened even further with the hiring of offensive coordinator Tony Petersen – Run. The. Football. Where it gets a little hairy is the differences in philosophy as Bielema has typically employed the bellcow approach whereas Petersen has gone with a committee for the most part. In over half of the 19 seasons where Petersen has been an OC at the Division I level, he's had at least three different running backs carry the ball 50 times or more. And the Ilini have the depth to make that happen with **Chase Brown**, Mike Epstein and East Carolina/Arkansas transfer **Chase Hayden**. Brown is the clear favorite to start coming off a third-team All-Big Ten performance a year ago, rushing for 540 yards and three touchdowns, and will run behind a line that returns four starters. Brown currently isn't in the Top 88 among RBs in Fantrax's ADP and is a definite "buy" at that price.

Bielema's Razorback teams ranked 73rd or lower in all four seasons in passing volume, averaging around 29 passing attempts per contest. He inherits a veteran quarterback who can functionally run the offense in sixthyear senior Brandon Peters, but that'll help more in the W/L column for Illinois as opposed to providing any fantasy value. Biggest question mark on the Illinois offense comes at receiver where you have a pair of P5 transfers in **Jafar Armstrong** and **Brian Hightower** looking to revitalize their careers. Armstrong could never find a firm role during his time at Notre Dame, splitting between multiple positions and was never healthy. He should get ample playing time as there isn't much else to work with beyond these two.

Indiana Hoosiers

Top Play: WR Ty Fryfogle Potential Bust: QB Michael Penix Jr. Sleeper: WR D.J. Matthews Impact Transfer: RB Stephen Carr Dynasty Prospect: QB Donaven McCulley Fantastic Freshman: RB David Holloman



If not for the injury history, **Michael Penix Jr.** would be a Top 25 CFF quarterback after throwing for 14 touchdowns in just six games last season, averaging over 274 passing yards per. But three straight years of season-ending injuries, most recently a torn ACL vs. Maryland, puts a cloud over his fantasy worth. Penix remains on track to start in the opener at Iowa. Despite losing his favorite target in Whop Philyor, Indiana does return last year's Big Ten receiver of the year in **Ty Fryfogle** who caught 37 passes for 721 yards (19.5 YPC) and seven TDs. While talented, the variability of his performances is a cause for concern. Six of the seven scores came against Michigan, Michigan State and Ohio State. In the four other games played – just 12 receptions and one touchdown. And that was as Indiana's second option behind Philyor. What happens when you're the focal point of the defense? The Hoosiers did add Florida State transfer **D.J. Matthews** who should start in Philyor's place in the slot that totaled 190 targets over the last two seasons. Philyor and Luke Timian combined for over 100 targets in the slot back in 2018 as well, so this isn't a limited two-year sample size either. I prefer Fryfogle in bestball formats because of said variability with his production, while Matthews is a low-cost option that has a 60-target floor.

I figured Indiana would add a running back via the portal when the most frequently mentioned rusher coming out of spring ball was a walk-on. Doesn't appear as though Tim Baldwin or Sampson James made headway to becoming the starter, hence why the staff went out and added USC transfer **Stephen Carr** to the mix who I suspect will start immediately. A talented player that's been hampered by injuries throughout his career, Carr should fit well into a system where running backs averaged 27 catches per season (57 career receptions). Running backs coach Deland McCullough has indicated he would like to split up the workload among multiple players so don't expect anyone to get 200+ carries here.

Iowa Hawkeyes

Top Play: RB Tyler Goodson Potential Bust: n/a Sleeper: WR Tyrone Tracy Jr. Impact Transfer: n/a Dynasty Prospect: RB Gavin Williams Fantastic Freshman: WR Keagan Johnson



As is the case every year with lowa, we can skip right over whoever is playing quarterback and focus on the position of interest at running back with returning starter **Tyler Goodson** who helped lowa produce its best rushing season in 13 years. Makes sense that happened as lowa finished in the Top 10 nationally in rushing grades per PFF, though will have to replace three starters up front entering this season. Confidence appears to be high in at least four of the five spots, but wouldn't be shocked to see some regression with the amount of turnover in personnel. As for Goodson, his 17.8 carries per game was the most by an lowa running back in 2017, and there is questionable depth behind him this year with a redshirt freshman in **Gavin Williams** (8 career carries) and an injury-prone senior in Ivory Kelly-Martin. The staff appears confident in the 215-pound Williams based on spring reports, and would be a low-cost dynasty stash with Goodson being an NFL Draft prospect after this year.

Rarely do I have interest in Iowa receivers, but I did take notice to this quote from the Athletic regarding **Tyrone Tracy Jr.** "In 2019, Tracy became only the third Iowa receiver since 2011 to catch at least 30 passes with a 16-yard average. He's strong, versatile and capable of soaring above 60 catches with an equally potent average." That hasn't happened for an Iowa receiver since 2015. Incoming true freshman **Keagan Johnson** (6foot-1, 190 pounds) was already taking first-team reps this spring and looks set to start immediately

Northwestern Wildcats

Top Play: RB Cam Porter Potential Bust: n/a Sleeper: WR Stephon Robinson Impact Transfer: QB Ryan Hilinski Dynasty Prospect: WR Jordan Mosley Fantastic Freshman: RB Anthony Tyus III



Cam Porter is one of my favorite "buys" over the last few months, sitting at RB68 in Fantrax's ADP, and going off the board at RB39 in our recent bestball draft. Really, really low for a running back in a system like Northwestern's where both the HC and OC have an extensive history of giving their RB1 250-300 carries in a season. Northwestern struggled along the offensive line a year ago, but brings back three starters and a fourth that has starting experience. Pat Fitzgerald brought in Bowling Green transfer Andrew Clair as a safety net for Porter who has just 81 career carries to his name, but don't view him as a threat to steal significant carries away from the RB1. 3-star recruit **Anthony Tyus** is expected to see the field immediately as a freshman.

Fitzgerald brought in South Carolina transfer **Ryan Hilinski** who should be able to direct the offense like his predecessor Peyton Ramsey did, but zero interest from a CFF standpoint. Kansas transfer **Stephon Robinson** steps into a situation where the leading returnee at receiver had all of five catches last year, so he appears a safe bet to wind up as the WR1 with 75 receptions over the last three years. WR1 for Northwestern has averaged 51 catches per over the last seven seasons.

Rutgers Scarlet Knights

Top Play: WR Bo Melton Potential Bust: n/a Sleeper: RB Isaih Pacheco Impact Transfer: WR Joshua Youngblood Dynasty Prospect: RB Jamier Wright-Collins Fantastic Freshman: WR Shawn Munnerlyn



In the essence of time, it's **Bo Melton** and not much else for Rutgers from a CFF standpoint. We've seen WR1s have monster seasons under OC Sean Gleeson in the past during his time at Princeton, and Melton was right on pace last year to surpass the seven-year average of 55-776-7 as he was targeted nine times per game in 2020. As we saw in DFS, Aron Cruickshank and Shameen Jones traded off weeks where they put up double-digit fantasy points, and both topped 50 targets in nine games. Just don't foresee that being sustainable with Noah Vedral throwing them to football over a 12-game span. **Isaih Pacheco** is a good running back, but surpassed 10 fantasy points just three times in eight games. All five starters at back along the offensive line, but this was one of the worst groups in the country, and looks to be a multi-year project for fixing it. Gleeson has leaned on a workhorse before while calling plays, but I think we see a rotation with backup Aaron Young and talented freshman **Jamier Wright-Collins**.

Michigan Wolverines

Top Play: RB Hassan Haskins Potential Bust: RB Hassan Haskins Sleeper: WR Cornelius Johnson Impact Transfer: WR Daylen Baldwin Dynasty Prospect: QB J.J. McCarthy Fantastic Freshman: RB Donovan Edwards



Similar to my Bijan Robinson take, I think everyone at this point knows where I stand regarding the Michigan backfield. If I'm drafting anyone in redraft formats, its **Hassan Haskins** who will undoubtedly get the first carry of the season against Western Michigan. Where it goes from is anyone's guess as the Wolverines will rotate in redshirt freshman Blake Corum and incoming 5-star **Donovan Edwards**, both of whom performed well during spring camp. I believe in the overall talented of this group, with varied skillsets between the three that should complement each other well, this has all the makings of a RBBC in 2021. As for Edwards, I'm bypassing him in every format considering his price point as a Top 5 dynasty back that may never reach his true potential because of the school he committed to – as much as that hurts to say.

How soon does Jim Harbaugh hand over the keys to 5-star QB **J.J. McCarthy** with his future in doubt according to outside pundits? McCarthy participated in the spring and did not appear out of place from all accounts, including a highlight-reel throw that was posted of him launching a 60-yard bomb accurately downfield to a sprinting receiver. Incumbent **Cade McNamara** has been compared to Brian Griese, a player that knows the offense and will throw the ball with pinpoint accuracy, but has no dominant physical traits. Strong bet here that its McNamara to begin the year and if things trend downwards, McCarthy gets the keys before season's end. Minimal interest from a CFF standpoint.

Similar to running back, I do like the potential Top 3 at wide receiver with **Cornelius Johnson** and Jackson State grad transfer **Daylen Baldwin** on the outside, and Ronnie Bell moving back to his more natural position in the slot. Johnson was the ascending player this spring and has the traits to be a No. 1 WR, while the 6-foot-3 Baldwin comes over after a breakout season with 27-540-7 in just six games. He had an Ohio State offer which makes you take notice.

Minnesota Golden Gophers

Top Play: RB Mohamed Ibrahim Potential Bust: n/a Sleeper: WR Daniel Jackson Impact Transfer: WR Dylan Wright Dynasty Prospect: RBs Behind Big Mo Fantastic Freshman: RB Mar'Keise Irvin



If you prefer a more conservative approach to your CFF Drafts, I don't have much of an issue if you select **Mohamed Ibrahim** over Bijan Robinson in redraft formats. In terms of beat writers around the nation to trust, Minnesota's 247 guy Ryan Burns is right up there as being the most accurate over the years. If Burns is saying that Ibrahim will be getting 25 touches a game in 2021, safe bet that'll happen...and that's exactly what he's been claiming all offseason. With five starters back up front, Big Mo should be in for another monster season. With Ibrahim being a senior, we need to uncover who his successor will be. **Trey Potts** and **Cam Wiley** appears to be 2a and 2b at the moment, and both possess differing running styles with the former being an east-west runner whereas Wiley is one-cut and get upfield. Don't have a strong conviction as of now who next year's RB1 will be, but as we've seen from head coach P.J. Fleck in the past, its not always a one-man band in the backfield. Think Western Michigan with Jamauri Bogan and Jarvion Franklin. In dynasty formats, I'll look to add both players, and there seems to be an outside chance **Ky Thomas** could still wind up a factor for the Gophers at some point as well.

The top two are set at receiver with Chris Autman-Bell and **Daniel Jackson**, with the latter being undervalued right now as the WR2 under Fleck has been exceptionally productive over the years averaging 54 catches and six TDs over the last seven seasons. The WR3 is still TBD with Michael Brown-Stephens projected currently to start in the slot, but hasn't proven much in his three years on campus. I like 6-foot-3 Texas A&M transfer **Dylan Wright** as a dynasty asset for next year when Autman-Bell likely heads off to the NFL as they play similar roles as a field-stretcher with the size/speed combination.

Michigan State Spartans

Top Play: RB Kenneth Walker Potential Bust: RB Kenneth Walker Sleeper: Wide Receivers Impact Transfer: QB Anthony Russo Dynasty Prospect: n/a Fantastic Freshman: WR Keon Coleman



Minimal interest in whomever comes out on top at quarterback between Temple transfer **Anthony Russo** and sophomore Payton Thorne, with the latter being the slight favorite coming out of spring ball. Thorne showed some promise after taking over the job last season, throwing for 325 yards and three touchdowns vs. Penn State, and could provide some rushing upside – 48 yards on four attempts vs. Indiana and 56 yards and a TD on four attempts vs. Ohio State. The hope is that either can support a talented Michigan State receiving corps featuring **Jayden Reed**, **Jalen Nailor** and **Ricky White.** Nailor finished 14th among FBS receivers in YPC with his tremendous speed and was the team leader in targets with 55, though with only a 47 percent conversion rate. Reed finished with a team-high 34 catches, and could benefit if Thorne ends up starting as they were high school teammates. I prefer Nailor most in bestball formats given his sporadic stat-lines from a year ago – 17, 9, 14, 1, 17, 5, 25 fantasy points scored each week.

Someone get in **Kenneth Walker's** ear and tell him to choose better collegiate destinations. If his goal was to go to a school where the lion's share of the carries would be available to him, Michigan State under Jay Johnson ain't the place. Not to mention he will be running behind what was one of the worst offensive lines in all of college football a year ago. We do have a few instances where Johnson's RB1 tops 200 carries with him as the primary play-caller, but the RB2s averaged right around 130 attempts in that span as well. Michigan State brings back all of their depth from a year ago, including leading rusher Jordon Simmons and 2019 leader Elijah Collins who appeared to be back in form this spring after dealing with COVID issues last season. Forecasting 200 touches for Walker given the factors mentioned above is difficult to envision.

Maryland Terrapins

Top Play: QB Taulia Tagovailoa Potential Bust: RB Tayon Fleet-Davis Sleeper: WR Dontay Demus Impact Transfer: WR Marcus Fleming Dynasty Prospect: TE Weston Wolff Fantastic Freshman: WR Tai Felton



I'm begrudgingly taking **Taulia Tagovailoa** as the top play for Maryland as I see the market shares at both running back and receiver being disbursed amongst numerous players in 2021. We saw the upside he possesses, putting up a 50-burger in fantasy points against Minnesota, followed up by tossing three TDs the following week against Penn State. But the volatile play also led to negative fantasy points scored in the opener against Northwestern, and Tagovailoa completed just 47 percent of his throws at Indiana in late November. While not the biggest fan of Taulia's new OC, Dan Enos, his work with quarterbacks over the years is impressive, getting the most out of marginal talents like Cooper Rush and Brandon Allen.

Tagovailoa will benefit from working with a deep and talent receiving corps, featuring WR1 **Dontay Demus**, upstart sophomore Rakim Jarrett and Nebraska transfer **Marcus Fleming**. I'm not here to claim that Demus is or will be a better player than Jarrett, but he's exponentially better value, sitting 37 spots lower in ADP amongst WRs and every indication coming out of spring was that the 6-foot-4 will remain the Terps' top producing wideout in 2021.

I'm normally a proponent of avoiding running backs in a Mike Locksley system as he prefers a committee approach, but that wasn't the case with Jake Funk who accounted for 50 percent of the volume in the Maryland backfield last season. Fifth-year senior **Tayon Fleet-Davis** was set to have a role last year before his suspension stemming from a legal issue. Promising quotes coming from Locksley out of the spring regarding TFD –

"The expectation is he is the guy," Locksley said. "He is a triple threat as a runner, a pass catcher and as a protector for our quarterback. Because of his experience, we hope we get the same results that we got out of another veteran a year ago in Jake Funk." – The Athletic.

Nebraska Cornhuskers

Top Play: QB Adrian Martinez Potential Bust: RB Markese Stepp Sleeper: WR Omar Manning Impact Transfer: WR Samori Toure Dynasty Prospect: TE Thomas Fidone Fantastic Freshman: RB Gabe Irvin



Are we expecting **Adrian Martinez** to FINALLY put it together in his fourth season as the starter? At some point, a player is what he is, right? Martinez did complete 71.5 percent of his throws, a school record, but turnovers continue to plague him, and his best games came late in the year against two of the lesser defenses in the Big Ten in Minnesota and Purdue. Where Martinez gets a lot of his value is as a dual-threat where he's guaranteed 600 rushing yards and at least seven rushing scores based on the last four years of production under Scott Frost. Getting Illinois, Fordham and Buffalo right off the bat should provide Martinez with a confidence boost, but then its four straight Top 30 defenses right in a row after that. Brutal stretch to close the season as well with Ohio State, BYE, at Wisconsin and Iowa. Yikes. Best served as a backup CFF quarterback and streaming option.

USC transfer **Markese Stepp** likely gets the first carry of the season, but his career to this point has been marred by injuries, and that continued in the spring. I'm most intrigued by 200-pound true freshman **Gabe Ervin** who looks to have the goods after watching his spring game performance, running for 57 yards on 12 carries. Regardless of who starts, don't bank on any one player having 200 carries here – five-year average for RB1s under Frost (if we extrapolate Dedrick Mills carries to 12 games in 2020) is just 120 attempts and about 60 YPG. Offensive line loses two starters, but confidence appears high in this group that paved the way to over 200 rushing YPG last year and finished 36th nationally in line yards.

Top 3 at receiver comprise of **Samori Toure**, **Omar Manning** and Oliver Martin – each of which garnered plenty of praise during the spring. Talent-wise, Manning tops the group, but feel confident it will be Toure leading the group in terms of receptions with an 87-catch season already on his resume back in 2019 at Montana. WR1 average over the last five years is 57 catches, and there was a 13-touchdown season in that span as well, so there's a shot we see at least one fantasy-relevant receiver here. 4-star tight end **Thomas Fidone** is set for a redshirt after a knee injury in the spring, but shouldn't be ignored in dynasty drafts as a key offensive piece in the future.

Ohio State Buckeyes

Top Play: QB C.J. Stroud Potential Bust: RB Master Teague Sleeper: WR Jaxon Smith-Njigba Impact Transfer: n/a Dynasty Prospect: QB Kyle McCord Fantastic Freshman: RB TreVeyon Henderson



All signs continue to point to **C.J. Stroud** being the opening week starter for Ohio State, and I personally believe he will hold down the job for the entirety of the season, making him a valuable CFF asset in every format. Very small sample size from Stroud, particularly throwing the ball, so he was a tough projection this offseason. Looking back to J.T. Barrett's and Justin Fields' debut seasons as the Ohio State QB1, the numbers are quite similar, averaging 234 and 236 YPG through the air. With the receiving talent at his disposal, Stroud should be able to hit that mark with relative ease, bringing his season total to around 2,800 passing yards. Add in 125+ which is the floor for Ohio State QB rushing attempts in an offense that averages 40+ PPG on a yearly basis, and you have the ultimate high ceiling/high floor CFF quarterback. Even if you have Stroud rostered, I would absolutely handcuff with incoming 5-star **Kyle McCord** who will be a tremendous asset to your roster, whether at Ohio State or some other destination as he is a prime transfer candidate with 2022 prospect Quinn Ewers committed to the Buckeyes as well. Justin Fields is the perfect recent example of this.

Master Teague is a near lock to take the first carry of the season vs. Minnesota, and I also think he is a lock for at least eight rushing touchdowns, a mark that has been reached by an Ohio State running back in every season since 2011. Who takes the final carry of the season is an entirely different story with 5-star **TreVeyon Henderson** and Miyan Williams nipping at his heels. If you decide to punt on running backs this year – a strategy I've employed multiple times already in bestballs – securing both Teague and Henderson feels like a worthwhile strategy as the top two OSU backs have averaged 2,053 yards and 17 rushing scores over the last four years. The hope here is that Williams doesn't enter the conversation and add a third mouth to feed.

I won't have many shares of Ohio State receivers this year unless they fall to me in the fifth-round range of drafts. Garrett Wilson and Chris Olave accounted for 60 percent of the target share a year ago, and I don't believe that will remain the case as OSU has the best receiving corps in the entire country. It sounds as though former 5-star **Jaxon Smith-Njigba** will factor more into the equation this season as he will start in the slot, and we've seen plenty of instances where Ohio State regularly rotates 5-6 receivers. Adding two more 5-star talents in this past recruiting cycle makes it plausible we see a rotation in 2021.

Penn State Nittany Lions

Top Play: WR Jahan Dotson Potential Bust: RB Noah Cain Sleeper: QB Sean Clifford Impact Transfer: RB John Lovett Dynasty Prospect: TE Brenton Strange Fantastic Freshman: WR Lonnie White Jr.



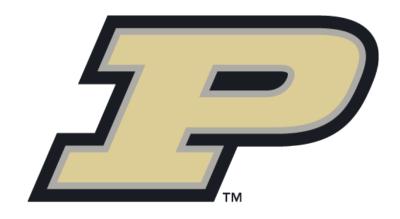
Jahan Dotson is far and away the top play for the Nittany Lions this year, particularly with the hiring of OC Mike Yurcich where is his WR1 typically presides at the outside alignment. Dotson was already on that pace last year, averaging 98.2 yards per contest, and the Yurcich hiring hopefully leads to better QB play as well, boosting Dotson's value. WR1 average over the last seven seasons for Yurcich is 56-1,016-10, which includes three 1,300+ yard seasons during his time at Oklahoma State. To reach those levels, **Sean Clifford** must perform better in 2021. While his passing leaves much to be desired, with a career 60 percent completion rate, Clifford gives us a solid floor because he's averaged 10.2 carries per game over the last two seasons. Head coach James Franklin has shown his willingness to run his QBs in big games during his tenure. One stat I found particularly interesting - Penn State quarterbacks have averaged 20.6 attempts per game in the last five Ohio State matchups.

That leads directly into my next point – don't anticipate a bell-cow at running back for Penn State with as many as five runners vying for carries, along with Clifford. **Noah Cain** is the likely candidate to start, though expect to see Baylor transfer **John Lovett**, Keyvone Lee and Devyn Ford all get playing time. Don't anticipate any Penn State running back topping 700 yards this season, but the Nittany Lions should boast a strong rushing unit given the strength of the O-line.

Sophomore **Brenton Strange** came on for the injured Pat Freiermuth and had 14 receptions in the final five weeks. Yurcich rarely uses his tight ends in the passing game, but neither did his predecessor Kirk Ciarrocca, and Penn State TEs still combined for 44 catches in nine games.

Purdue Biolermakers

Top Play: WR David Bell Potential Bust: RB Zander Horvath Sleeper: WR Milton Wright Impact Transfer: WR Broc Thompson Dynasty Prospect: WR T.J. Sheffield Fantastic Freshman: WR Deion Burks



Regardless of which quarterback Purdue settles on this season, David Bell is the consensus WR1 for CFF this season, and should lead the nation in targets and receptions. Double-digit targets in five of the six games played last season and double-digit fantasy points in every week. 100 receptions is a realistic possibility as Ronalde Moore showed back in 2018, and it sounds like the plan is to move Bell around quite a bit this season to give opponents different looks. As for the WR2, the three candidates appear to be 6-foot-3 **Milton Wright** or slot receivers **T.J. Sheffield** and Jackson Anthrop. Arguments could be made towards all three and I have dynasty shares of both Wright/Sheffield with multiple years of eligibility remaining. WR2 averages over the last seven years = 50-690-6 so it's likely someone emerges as a fantasy producer. To round out the depth beyond the top four, **Broc Thompson** was brought over from Marshall and 3-star early enrollee **Deion Burks** who was the highest-rated offensive recruit in the Boilermakers' class.

I've been reluctant to have any shares of starter **Zander Horvath** despite his ranking of RB61 on my board. Purdue was abysmal running the football last year, ranking 124th nationally and were dead last in the conference for a second straight season. The Boilermakers have been in the mix for multiple backs in the transfer portal this offseason, which makes me hesitate on selecting Horvath, but they haven't landed one yet. If that continues to be the case, my interest level increase slightly given what Horvath was able to do in the passing game with 30 catches on 32 targets in just six games. Purdue returns four starters along the offensive line and their new LT is a grad transfer from UTEP with six games of starting experience, so they feasibly should be improved.

Wisconsin Badgers

Top Play: RB Jalen Berger Potential Bust: RB Jalen Berger Sleeper: TE Jake Ferguson Impact Transfer: RB Chez Mellusi Dynasty Prospect: RB Loyal Crawford Fantastic Freshman: WR Markus Allen



A lot of projection and prior history with Wisconsin running backs when it comes to predicting possible outcomes for sophomore **Jalen Berger** who never carried the ball more than 15 times in a game last season. Berger saw his workload increase as the season went along, and finished as the team's leading rusher for 301 yards and a 5.0 YPC average. Expecting a Jonathan Taylor-like workload this season is probably unrealistic, but 1,000 yards and double-digit TDs should be more than attainable behind a Wisconsin line that will be one of the best in the nation with eight returnees on last year's two-deep, and 59 career starts between them. With Berger's inexperience and no sure-fire RB2 as insurance, the Badgers added former 4-star recruit and Clemson transfer **Chez Mellusi** who should be a serviceable backup.

Minimal attention given to the Wisconsin passing game, though I like their receiving corps with Danny Davis, Kendric Pryor and Chimere Dike from a pure football standpoint. Tight end **Jake Ferguson** is the best of the bunch, and relatively cheap at TE15 for someone with 40-reception upside. If you wait on tight ends until the final rounds of a redraft, Ferguson is a prime target.