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After examining the quarterback position in the first edition of this series, it's time to focus on tight ends. Typically, this is a position where fantasy owners can largely ignore rookies, as we usually see it take years for young tight ends to make an impact in the league. However, the recent Hunter Henry’s regular season success and Austin Hooper’s postseason success, along with the amazing depth of this upcoming class, should get the attention of dynasty and keeper owners.

Many analysts, including Mike Mayock of NFL Network, have referred to this tight end group as the best to come along in many years. Not only is it top-heavy with many of the players we’ll look at here, but the depth is unrivaled. We could see as many as 20 tight ends drafted, which would be the most since 2010. The best part of this impressive depth for fantasy players is that the majority of those NFL Draft prospects...
are also potential dynasty options, not just in-line blockers or glorified H-Backs.

**Editor's Note:** Enter to win a free Dynasty League Football subscription (a $29 value)! You must be a 4for4 subscriber to enter to win!

**OJ Howard, Alabama**

Ranked as the top tight end prospect by essentially every analyst around, Howard has the total package. He has the size (6'6", 250 pounds) to be a force when he's asked to block, but also possesses the speed to make him a downfield mismatch against most linebackers.

The knock on Howard has to do with his production, or lack thereof, at Alabama. Although he entered college as the top tight end prospect of his class, his annual production is meager in comparison to either general expectations or the numbers posted by other top tight ends in this class. Howard’s Crimson Tide averaged over 37 points per game in his four years, yet he managed just seven career touchdowns. Howard also posted just two 100-yard games in his four seasons, but those both came in the two most recent National Championship games, proving Howard can be a clutch player when given the opportunity. And despite not being used a great deal in the passing offense, Howard was a factor down the field, ranking fifth among draft-eligible tight ends in 20+ yard receptions.

Howard is viewed as a can’t-miss prospect and has been referred to as the safest tight end available. He is expected to be the first tight end off the board in the NFL Draft, which should mirror dynasty rookie drafts. Based on dynasty ADP from Dynasty League Football, Howard is already being valued as the TE7, ahead of solid fantasy producers like Zach Ertz and Jimmy Graham. That places Howard as the ninth rookie overall, but an informal poll I recently conducted on Twitter indicated he’s probably the favorite to be the 1.07 pick in dynasty rookie drafts. While we should temper our expectations about the out-of-the-gate performance of rookie tight ends, Howard is at the top of a class that will be difficult to avoid.

**Evan Engram, Mississippi**

My personal favorite prospect from this tight end class is the former Ole Miss Rebel, Engram, who dominated the SEC after surprisingly returning to school for his senior season. Despite playing alongside a loaded receiver depth chart, Engram set new career highs in virtually every receiving category and leaves as the school’s all-time leading receiver from the tight end position.

While still carrying the tight end designation, Engram spent most of his time in the slot, leading all FBS tight ends with 926 yards, and finishing second in receptions (65) and touchdowns (8). There have been rumors and reports that Engram could be preparing for an official switch to wide receiver, but he worked out with the tight ends at the February NFL Combine -- a sign that he sees himself continuing to play his college position.

Engram seemingly was a willing blocker at the college level, but it was apparent he lacked the frame and strength to have success, which should only become more difficult at the professional level. However, he may not need to block if he's used as a move tight end, primarily running routes and catching passes like a receiver out of the slot. Engram is an excellent route runner and could be the favorite among the 2017 class to make an immediate fantasy impact.

When it comes to his dynasty value, Engram is next in line behind Howard and sits just inside the top 100 overall dynasty players. This makes Engram the TE9 and the twelfth rookie drafted.
**David Njoku, Miami**

The hottest name among the group of tight ends since the college season concluded is Njoku, the athletic big man from Coral Gables. Njoku has been described as more of an athlete than a football player, and that provides a perfect picture of the 6'4", 246-pounder. Njoku split the tight end role in his final season for The U, yet still tied for second in the nation in touchdown scoring at the position. He also finished among the top three in yards per route and deep pass receptions, according to PFF.

What has NFL teams excited about Njoku is the same feature many dynasty players covet: upside. It's not necessarily about what Njoku has shown on the field throughout his abbreviated college career, it is about what he might become. Njoku is considered raw as a route runner and blocker, yet still produced for the Hurricanes and is expected to come off the board in the first round of the upcoming NFL Draft.

Most dynasty players consider the top tier of rookie tight ends to be three-deep, so it is no surprise Njoku's current ADP is in the same range as his two predecessors on this list. He currently ranks as the TE11 with an overall ADP of 112, which places him as the fourteenth rookie selected in startup dynasty drafts.

**Bucky Hodges, Virginia Tech**

Hodges has already transitioned from high school quarterback to college tight end. Might another position switch -- this time to wide receiver -- be in the works for Hodges? Like Engram, Hodges spent much of his time lined up in the slot as a college pass catcher, and also like Engram, Hodges maintained his positional designation during the Combine workout.

After making that transition to tight end, Hodges is understandably raw when it comes to some of the finer points of the position, including the route tree. Among NFL Draft analysts, opinions are split, with some viewing Hodges as a high-upside athletic specimen, and others simply worried he's too much of a project and has unreliable hands.

Hodges' athleticism, along with his huge 6'6" build, will interest some NFL teams enough to take the plunge sometime on the draft's second day. That likely makes Hodges a late second-round pick in dynasty rookie drafts. While dynasty owners are expecting big things, and fast, from Howard, Engram and Njoku, Hodges is the project of the class.

**Jake Butt, Michigan**

By now, you all know the story. Butt, an All-American tight end, suffered a torn ACL in Michigan's Bowl Game. This drew a lot of attention in a season in which multiple players opted to sit out of arguably meaningless post-season contests in anticipation of the NFL Draft and their future careers. While this injury will not end Butt’s dream of playing in the NFL, it will almost certainly impact his draft position. Once projected as highly as the first round, Butt could fall to the third round or later. There is also some uncertainty about his availability for the 2017 season. It is fair to assume Butt could be a candidate for the PUP list, which would mean he would miss the first six weeks of the season, at a minimum.

While this injury is very unfortunate for Butt, it should provide excellent value for the savvy dynasty or deep keeper league player. We often search for players to stash at the end of our bench and wait for them to develop, and this is the ideal situation to do just that. The best part is Butt has already developed a solid all-around game.

Butt is viewed as a traditional tight end, being a solid blocker and intermediate pass-catcher. He doesn’t have the speed of some of his fellow tight ends, but does bring experience as a four-year starter in a pro-style offense under Coach Jim Harbaugh for his final seasons in Ann Arbor.
Due to the injury and likely mid-round draft status, Butt is expected to fall to the third round or even later of dynasty rookie drafts and he should be a prime target in that range for all dynasty players looking for huge return on their investment.

**Others to Watch:**

I mentioned the amazing depth of this class. While the top tier is impressive, dynasty and keeper owners must familiarize themselves with the tight ends who will be selected on Days Two and Three of the NFL Draft.

**Adam Shaheen** is a name you might not know, and for good reason. The star of Division II Ashland Eagles enjoyed a breakout season as a red shirt sophomore and caught the attention of scouts as a junior in 2016. A former basketball player, which has become a calling card for athletic tight ends, Shaheen is a 6’6”, 278-pound beast who many are now projecting to be a second-round draft pick. Even with that potential lofty status, he’s still flying under the radar and is another player to target in the third or fourth round of dynasty rookie drafts.

South Alabama’s **Gerald Everett** is another under the radar player who suited up for three different schools during his college career. He has ideal size to play the position and is an above-average pass catcher, despite small hands in comparison to other tight ends.

There are several other players who will be candidates to be end of bench stash players or priority waiver wire players, depending on how the NFL Draft plays out. Among them are: **Jeremy Sprinkle** (Arkansas), **George Kittle** (Iowa), **Cole Hikutini** (Louisville), **Jordan Leggett** (Clemson), **Michael Roberts** (Toledo) and **Jonnu Smith** (Florida International).

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