Overview *(New rules – and important stuff - for 2021 are in red, but if you never quite understood the old rules- or you are new to the UBA - then read everything...)*

We still want to accomplish four things, no, make that five…:

1. Give every owner a chance to bid on the free agents that are available in our market. (These are all players who became free agents at the MLB deadline post-World Series, 2020. Note: our free agent pool does not contain ***every*** free agent in baseball. As a reminder, I routinely weed out players from the list of eligible players who because of limited use – or horrible stats - would be of little or no value to you anyway and a waste of our collective times to consider, thus saving you a waiver request a little further down the road). This year I believe we begin with 85 players up for bid, all of whom would be a lovely addition to your roster.
2. More realistically simulate that open market by allowing teams to bid on multiple free agents simultaneously, consistent with their own bidding strategy, and with an eye to the salary cap.
3. Draft – in a fair and efficient manner - the 200+ rookies awaiting an opportunity to help you build that contending team in 2021 and – if you have a good draft – well beyond...
4. Have fun, as we celebrate the UBA's 44th season and 54th year of operation. (I know, the math still doesn't add up, but the first few seasons were played on a board with splits and dice. That takes time when you also have to go to high school and then college, *and* keep your own stats...)
5. **And be proud… you belong to the longest running, continuous Strat-O-Matic Baseball League in the history of fantasy baseball!!!** (It's true. Founded in 1968. You can look it upon Strat's own website)

Part I: Free Agency

A. **The Basics:**

1. After reviewing current rosters and assessing needs, owners will bid on desired free agents by sending bids to commissioner via e-mail at ubabaseball@gmail.com. (And feel free to bid using the Excel Bid Book that you will receive before the market opens. Just fill it out and send back to me. Or not. See below).
2. **Bidding starts on all players at $1 over their market/qualifying offer value**, whichever is greater (see below, part I, sec. D, 1)
3. **Offers for free agents will be confidential and will be accepted anytime up to the moment the player signs.** For realism, we are continuing the practice begun in 2010 of a 'rolling deadline', see explanation below. (Far, far below)
4. **Bids can be changed at any time** (raised, lowered, withdrawn) and you can join the bidding on a player at any point in the market process. We are very fluid. We need to be. We don't have scouts or developed farm systems. Worse, we rely on our own skill and guile.
5. **Teams may not have more than 10 active bids on the table at any one time.** You can adjust your bidding strategy whenever you like - withdraw a bid on one player and pursue another - but, for the sake of competition and realism, teams will have to be more strategic in their approach to the market and how they are committing their dollars. (This is to discourage the practice of 'placeholder' bidding, i.e., placing $50 bids on 15 outfielders to make sure you are in on one of them). QOs will be considered passive, defensive bids, and

will not count against the 10-bid limit. Additional amounts above the QO that are placed on the player also will not count against the 10-bid limit. (Rationale: We do not have developed farm systems and I will not penalize a team for efforts to hold onto a player deemed vital to the organization). Be strategic!!!!

6. **High bid will sign the player.** That simple. In case of a 'tie', I will contact the teams involved and conduct a confidential 'sudden death' bid round. And – depending on which players you sign - there ***may*** be compensation involved.
7. A brief word about Compensation:
    a. **If the former club made a 'qualifying offer'**, the team signing that player will surrender its highest available draft pick. **Only players that have received a qualifying offer –** and **you** decide which of your departing players will get one **- will generate a comp pick for the team losing that player**. **In turn, the team losing that player will receive a comp pick at the end of the first round**. (Between Rounds 1 & 2, the proverbial 'sandwich' pick. This is a variation on former CBAs. **We have too few players in our pool to not give a decent comp pick to teams losing quality players**). An example: Atlanta signs a player with a QO from Buffalo. Atlanta loses its highest available pick, i.e., the pick is removed from the board and all teams move up in the order for that round. Buffalo is awarded a pick at the end of the first round. Also: teams receiving comp picks will do so in reverse order of finish. (More on that later).
    b. **Teams receiving more than one comp pick will get their subsequent pick(s) at the end of the second round**. If they are due to receive more than one pick in this phase, they will receive the second after all other teams have received their first, and so on until all compensation picks have been exhausted. Order of finish will still apply to teams with multiple picks.
    c. **The Qualifying Offer for 2021 is $35. Exception:** Players with a market value greater than $35 will have a QO value equal to their market value. (E.g., if Nelson Cruz has a market value – MV – of $40, his QO would be – in actuality - $40. Bidding on Cruz would have to begin at…$41).
    d. There is an important exception to the comp rule above: **If the team that signs a player with a QO – by virtue of its 2020 UBA W-L record – has one of the top ten picks** in the draft, **they will keep that pick and instead lose their next highest pick**; in other words, that lesser pick becomes their highest *available* pick. This means that Oakland, for example, can sign a player with a qualifying offer and maintain that #1 pick in the draft - so, go for it, Panthers. (I know that you will) The Black Panther Party would instead lose their next highest pick, i.e., it is taken off the board, wherever it falls in the draft order. So, what that means in practice is that the Panthers could sign Cruz and still draft Luis Robert at #1. (Now that has possibilities and smacks of a play-off run, if you overlook the other holes, but, it's just an example).
    e. Any team signing a **second** player with a qualifying offer will lose its next highest available pick in the draft, **however, the Commissioner reserves the right to rule that the signing team lose two picks in those instances where the signing teams does not have a pick in the first few rounds; or lose a draft pick in the 2022 draft** if he deems that sufficient value is not forfeited. The team losing the player, again, will get a comp pick at the end of the first round. (Hey, I've pulled this trigger before, so don't tempt me)

f. **There will be no compensation for any other player signed as a free agent**. Players who did not receive a qualifying offer from their former team can be signed by other teams with no penalty and no comp picks involved. The signing team does not lose a draft pick and the losing team gains nothing. (**But do remember, every free agent you sign counts against your cap and is on your MLB roster.** So, don't just sign 20 or so players from among the non-qualified free agents, unless you get them really, really cheap.)

g. **Another exception: Teams who did not 'earn' their top ten pick.** If a team concluded a trade for another team's first round pick and that pick falls in the top ten slots of the draft – i.e., among the protected picks – **that will be considered *the highest available pick* for that team if – by virtue of their 2020 finish – they did not earn that slot in the top ten.** (E.g. – Prior to the draft, Chicago trades a player to Washington in exchange the Federals' first round pick, which is in the top ten, and by our rules, a protected pick. However, since Chicago did not 'earn' the right to a protected pick then the pick they received from Washington counts as their highest available pick if they sign a player with a QO. But, hey, if they burn that pick to sign Trevor Bauer and are able to keep their other picks, I'd still call that a bargain).

8. **During the active phase of the free agent market - roughly January 14 until February 19 - a free agent** not receiving any bids **by the time their random signing date arrives will remain on the market until they receive an offer at least $1 over their market/QO value. Once they receive that offer, they will immediately be offered to the bidding team.** (Of course, this will all be invisible to the market. Only the Commissioner knows when a player will be ready to sign, and, as you read this, know that your Commissioner already knows who is signing, when. No, really, it's November 15 as I am revising this portion of the rules, and I already know who is first and last to sign). An example: Let's say that J.T. Realmuto had a randomly generated signing date of February 1 and had not received a valid bid by that date – QOs do not count since they are a passive, defensive bid. The first team to bid on Realmuto on February 2 or later would be an instant winner. Suspense is everything in the UBA... I take the time to mention this because there is a lesson to be learned - if there *is* a player you really, really want to sign, do not delay making a bid. At least one player comes due every day that the market is open... so again, don't let opportunities pass you by).

So, what happens when we get to the last day of the market and there are unsigned players?

a. **General Rule:** If a player remains unsigned at the end of the free agent market period – i.e., he has no valid bids on or about February 20 - **he will not be automatically returned to his former club.**

b. **If there is no QO on the player,** the bidding period for those players will be reset and end at midnight (12 AM) on March 12 - at which time contracts will be awarded to the highest, valid bidders. (No mystery or random order – in this phase, everybody signs on Friday, March 12. Ties will be handled in the same way as before).

c. **Players *with* a QO will be handled in two ways:**

1. **If the player's actual market value is $18 or less**, the player with the QO will accept his club's QO and re-sign at the QO value of $35. (The contract will match the length of the player's MLB contract, and

the salary will count against the cap). This will provide a way for teams to safeguard certain players that they want to resign, **but they run the risk of getting a $4 player for $35**, because no one else wanted to spend in excess of $35 and/or sign him for multiple years, and/or lose a high draft pick. So, **before you go QO happy, remember that it might come back to bite you. It has in the past).**

2. **Players with a true market value of $19 or more:** If no team has a valid bid on player with a Qualifying Offer whose market value is $19 or more, the team that placed the QO on this player **has the option of signing that player at his QO value or market value – whichever is greater.** If the team in question declines the option, that player – Realmuto, in our previous example – would stay on the market – by the rules above for other players with no bids - **and would sign on March 12 with the team that made the highest valid bid over market – not QO – value. *Additionally, the QO is considered void once the former team declines to sign, so there is no comp pick, and the team that does sign the player does not lose a draft pick.*** (So, you might want to exercise that option.... since the comp pick will be gone if you decline)

d. Players that remain unsigned after March 12 **cannot be signed by any club until May 1, at which time bidding will open again on those players at half their market value.** ($1 will still be $1, however...) All contracts for these players will be awarded seven days later, high bid getting the player. **Again, there will be no comp pick awarded for any player signed in this secondary phase of the free agent market - all QOs are now void.** MLB contract durations will be honored, i.e., if the player signed a two-year contract in MLB, they would sign a two-year contract with the team winning the bid. (This might still be a real bargain...).

e. Those still not receiving bids after this May supplemental free agent market will remain on the market indefinitely and will be considered signed by the first team to offer a contract at $1 over half the amount of their market value. In theory, we are creating a throw-away pile for teams that might find themselves in dire need of a live body to fill a gap in July. Fun Fact: Nick Masset spent all of the 2015 UBA season in that throw-away pile. And not one of you cared enough to even inquire about him. Not one of you! (He's out of the UBA now, a broken man…)

f. **By the way… what is Market Value (MV)?** Every one of our players has one and it is the value assigned by our pricing bible… The Street and Smith's - AKA the Sporting News - Fantasy Baseball Yearbook, which is published each January for the new season. Values range from $1 – for most rookies, benchwarmers and relief pitchers - who get no respect, save for the closers - to the mid-$40 range for those super star players. This season, however, since S & S is not publishing its annual Fantasy Baseball Yearbook, we are going to utilize RotoWire's 2021 market values as our official market value bible.

g. **The sum of all those contracts for your 26-man major league squad must be at or below our cap of $300**

9. The Free Agent market will begin somewhere around January 13 and end on or about February 20. **Before the market opens for bids, owners will have to decide if they are**

going to place that Qualifying Offer on any of their players who have filed for free agency. The exact deadline will be communicated by e-mail and also be on the website. Expect it to be somewhere around **January 10, 2021.**

B. Getting started:

Before anything begins you will receive the following info from the Commissioner:

1. **The Free Agent Bid Book –** An excel sheet listing the players available through free agency. The list will offer information including position (s), current Strat fielding ranges, former team, 2020 actual stats, **fantasy market value (MV) as set by RotoWire, qualifying offer status;** and **the length of the free agent contract.** (If that last item is known. We don't always know when the market opens.... part of the risk).

   The list divides the players by position, indicates comp requirements and market value and also includes a brief – but valuable - stat summary for each player. (This also makes a handy tool for recording your bids with my office). Please do your homework. Sites like MLB or ESPN have just about every bit of information you want to know about the player short of spouse's name and astral sign. You can also reach the ESPN page by clicking on the player's name on the player page of your team page on the website – when it has not been hacked, that is.
   And remember, this is a replay league, meaning that the computer simulation uses those 2020 stats – or this season, projections based on those stats and other algorithms to create a 162-game season simulation. This will offset some of the risk because you will already know how the free agent will perform for you, at least in the first year if his is a multi-year contract.

   I will continually update this document. (Note: Players who became free agents in November may have already resigned with their original clubs and our precedent has been to follow suit in the UBA. **However, once we start the free agent market all players on the free agent list will remain free agents even if in the real world they do resign with their MLB clubs.** (For example, let's say we start the market on January 13 and on January 15 Trevor Bauer decides to go back to his former club. Well, that's great news for the Reds – and some serious science fiction - but too bad for the Monarchs, his former UBA team. He is gone and rookie owner Jordon will have to compete on the open market for him and try to re-sign him at some ridiculous price far above market value – even if he drops a QO on him).

2. The official **Draft Order** for the rookie draft, which – barring a last-minute rule change or unforeseen calamity - begins on **Sunday, February 28, 2021 at 2 PM**. I provide this so you can see what you might be giving up by signing a qualified free agent – or track what you are gaining as others steal your qualified players. I will continually update this sheet, too. It will change somewhat by draft day as free agents with QOs come off the board. You are also permitted to trade up in the draft order, or trade away your own picks... Be creative.... And, as always, be careful...

3. The **Rookie List**. The Strat-O-Matic 2020 season edition will ultimately define the final list of available rookies, but this list will be really, really, really, really close. At the least, it will contain the names of all rookies – like Ryan Mountcastle, Luis Robert and Cristian Javier – and their stats, so that you can determine who will immediately help your club in the coming season, and who will be a prospect or project for the future. (And if you do not recognize any of the names I just listed, you have some serious homework to do). TSN market values are included on the list. **Unlike free agents, when you draft a rookie, the TSN market value IS their 2021 salary.** (We don't bid on rookies – we draft). But this will also give you an idea as to how much money you might need to leave below the cap to carry Robert on your Major League Roster. (Take note, Oakland... and don't spend too much on Bauer). Again, the Rookie Draft begins February 28, which is after the Free Agent market has closed. More info on all of the festivities as that big day draws near.

4. **Your current roster and payroll**. Most important. This excel spreadsheet – you have already received one version of it without the non-free agent salaries - will display both your current major and minor league rosters and also show your payroll at the moment. (**Payroll cap is $300**). Some of you will already be awfully close to that threshold, meaning that taking a chance on Nick Markakis at $8 or $10 to fill that hole in the outfield for one or two seasons might be a wiser strategy than going after Marcell Ozuna or some other potential budget busters. Now, I have done my best with this chart. Some of your $1 players may not have had more than a few MLB at-bats or innings pitched last season, so I have taken the liberty of placing them where they will probably begin the season - in your farm system. Others will be listed among your farmhands – because they were on the farm last year – but, ultimately, their playing time and production in 2020 may have earned a spot on your big club this year. (You'll make all of those final decisions) Others will have left baseball since last season or perhaps were mired in the minors or injured with no MLB stats to show for 2020. They appear – *italicized* – at the bottom of the chart and listed as DNPs. (Did Not Play, at least in the 2020 MLB season. INJ usually means they were Tommy Johned). One last note: DNP players do come and go, so, as in New Orleans, you might discover that your very own Darin Ruf has returned from his UBA hiatus to become a fixture in the batting order– unless he files for free agency. And, once the Strat download is done, we might discover another player or two that has returned. I don't catch them all online.

5. A revised **Team-By-Team Comparison Chart**. This will show what I believe to be everyone's current payroll – within a few bucks, see # 4 above – and the returning players - give or take that Darin Ruf or two that I might have missed – and as such give you an instant snapshot of your club and how it stacks up against your competition as our off-season goes into its highest gear. The teams are presented in alpha order by division. (I know that some of you still may not realize that you are in a division, let alone a conference, but... here's the proof).

Once this stuff is posted, review all materials carefully. I welcome your calls and e-mails with questions and/or comments and requests for clarifications, or if you just want to talk about your club and speculate on the players available. I will assist in any way that I can. Think of me as your personal Mike Ferrin, one of my MLB radio network heroes.

Communicating with the other clubs. You may contact other team owners at any time to discuss trades, etc. via our Googlegroup (uba_2021) – team abbreviations appear in the owner's

name (e.g., ATL, KCM, SNF). I will also send out an excel spreadsheet identifying team, owner and his or her email address to expedite commerce between clubs. Be watching for that.

Once you have made an assessment of your needs for the coming season – you've checked out the free agent list and made determinations about those to whom you might like to make an offer; perused the rookie list for players that you might like to draft; and even scanned the Team-to-Team for possible trades – then you might devise, oh, you know, some sort of front office strategy. Orioles' fans would always hope against hope that Dan Duquette had devised one, but we know better. A cautionary tale… so, plan your work and then work that plan!!!!

C. Payroll

Particularly important to pay attention to this. Your cap – once again - is $300 fantasy dollars. Come Opening Day, you must be at or below this number. What number? **$300.** You cannot exceed this limit - **$300** - no matter what, and the commissioner will be keeping a close eye on your payroll as this process unfolds. Honestly, I'm already worried about some of you and that's based on just the five over-paid free agents you might be carrying over from last season. (And I will nag you about it incessantly as Opening Day approaches if you are hovering around $370 after that signing binge) And remember, as you prepare to make offers to free agents, keep in mind that you will also want to have money left to pay for those impact rookies, though realistically, if you have signed your way to a $370 starting point, you probably have no draft picks to speak of...

Remember: free agents that you signed in prior seasons to long term contracts, must remain on your payroll. (They will be in **bold** type on your roster sheet and highlighted, with the final year of the contract also noted in **bold**). **Even if they suck and you find a way to get them through waivers and farm them down, or they got hurt and did not play at all in 2020 you still need to pay them. If a free agent has time left on his contract with you, then his salary will count against your cap.** (And what is that cap??? Why, it's **$300**. Thanks for asking...) The exception to this is a suspended player. Since MLB teams do not have to pay them, UBA owners will not be expected to, either. I will prorate the amount to reflect time served on suspension.

But also remember - and this is a ***BIG*** **BUT - There are creative ways to deal with the cap!!!** (So, on second thought... enjoy that spending binge. To a point, anyway).

Here are a few tried and true strategies, but feel free to approach me with any others that are reasonable. (The Commissioner is a very reasonable man... who also honors the fantasy baseball Prime Directive, or at least gives it lip service):

Free Agents: You can defer payments or front load big payouts. Say that you look at that big contract that George Springer got from the Yankees, and you think to yourself, "Self, how do I make a competitive bid and not seriously hurt my ability to build a competitive team around the self-absorbed s.o.b. who is seeking this ridiculous contract?"
Front-load or back-load your offer. (It's the way I play Monopoly - buy everything by hocking everything else)
Front-loading: Say you make the winning bid on Springer and it is for – wishful thinking, here - $60...and again, that's $60 a year for, oh, let's guess... 6 long years. Instead of seeing it

as $60 per year, think in terms of total contract, in this example, $360. Now, let's say that by adding Springer you have completed your 26-man roster and the total payroll – including his $60 – is $240. (I wanna see how you did that, if it's true) That means, however, you're $60 under the cap. Joy! So…why not give Springer $110 that first year, leaving a balance of $250 for the next five seasons, or $50 per year instead of $60. Well, you get the idea…. Front loading is your friend. Do it as often as you can... since you won't often get the chance.

Back-loading: Or let's say you have only $40 left under the cap and you desperately want to have Mr. Springer. Make that $60 bid, but only pay him $40 this season, deferring that additional $20 to another season – after all, as things change year to year, you might be able to pay him $100 in 2022 - or, by the previous example, just pay him $64 a year for the last five years of the contract instead of $60. (You don't want to do this too often, though, or with too many players, or you will find yourself entering some future off-season with a payroll of $350 and only 9 players on the roster… The league record is 122 losses and you'd be vying for a shot at that record with all those $1 bargains that you were forced to sign to field a team after dumping all the salary that you could).

Deferring payments can also be your friend, but more like an in-law who is always borrowing money... with no visible means of repaying you. Be cautious... And remember, front-loading and back-loading can only be done with free agents who sign multi-year contracts. Everyone else goes year to year with the market value salaries as dictated by *RotoWire*.

Special Rules:

1. **Back-loading**: In the first year of a multi-year contract, you must pay at least 10% of the total contract to the player. Using the Springer example – a six-year deal worth $60 per year, or $360 total – in Year 1 of the contract, Springer must be paid a minimum of $36. The contract balance of $324 can be spread out over the remaining five years of the contract.
2. **Back-loading a contract with an opt-out**: If an MLB player signs a free agent contract with an opt-out clause, the player must be paid the AAV of the contract for all seasons prior to the opt-out date. Again, let's use Springer as an example. Let's say he signs a six-year deal for $60 per and $360 in total but had an opt-out after Year 1. In that first season, the signing team would have to pay the AAV - $60 – and not 10%, as stated above. If Springer decides not to opt-out, then the signing team can spread out the remaining balance in any manner that suits them for the remaining five years. (If – in this example the opt-out came after two seasons, then Springer would be paid $60 for two seasons).
3. **Front-loading or Back-loading**: In any given season, the minimum amount to be paid to a free agent is $2, or twice the league minimum. (Not to stifle creativity, but I think that there needs to be a cost assigned for every roster spot).
4. **You can unload big money in a subsidized trade:** I.e., you can trade away big contracts by agreeing to pick up a part of that player's salary. E.g., say you are Phoenix and decide you no longer wish to pay Bryce Harper his rather large contract through 2031 - and no one else does, either.
    a. You might offer him to a team in dire need of a DH or outfielder – offering to eat up to half of the contract for the current season and – if needed to close the deal in the case of free agents with multiyear contracts – half of the contract for subsequent season(s). (Half, because the receiving team must pick up at least half of a free agent's contract) Hey, it at least frees up some $$$ to use for a hot rookie or two, so think

about it. Or you could shop two veteran free agents on the cheap with decent combined numbers. (Be creative... Inside of each of us is a Billy Beane waiting to get out. Be the Moneyball, be the Moneyball - the Commish likes imaginative owners. Once again, to a point. That we have so many rules is testament to the creativity of our ownership).

b. **You can also pick up or trade part of a non-free agent's yearly salary if that's what it takes to close a deal.** This ½ of the contract maximum principle will also apply in the reverse scenario – when someone is hoping to pry a superstar from you for the stretch run and wants to do it without paying the full freight for him.
(This is a significant rule change. Owners will no longer be able to acquire players from other teams and just have that team pick up the salary. This creates an unfair competitive balance as we get to the training deadline, and besides, what team in MLB would ever say, "Oh, go ahead, we had nothing better to do with the money, so take our All-Star SS and we'll just pay him the $34 to help you take your division." Not fair to the other owners in the division or conference. So, owners acquiring stars for the stretch run will need to take financial responsibility for at least half of that contract). But there are ways to work with these scenarios:
    i. If the acquisition involves a free agent with additional year(s) remaining on his contract, the monies can be deferred to future season(s) – if the acquisition creates a cap issue - with the league minimum of $2 paid for the balance of the current season. (E.g., you want to acquire Lorenzo Cain from Denver for the stretch run. He is owed $60 per season through 2022 which means you would have to pay him $30 for the current season. If that put you over the cap, then the balance of the money owed – over the cap and less the $2 minimum – could be deferred to the '22 season) You will pay for him, but you can defer the pain for the sake of the shot at the Championship. Take the chance.
    ii. If the acquisition involves a free agent in the last year of his contract or a non-free agent, then the money may still be deferred – paying the league minimum for the current season of course – but it must ***all*** be added to the cap total for the next season. (E.g., You want to acquire free agent Albert Pujols from Milwaukee – his salary for 2021 is $37 – but, though Milwaukee is willing to eat $18 – you still cannot afford him under the cap. So, let's say for argument's sake, less the $2 minimum you must pay him, you are still $14 over the cap. That may be added to your 2022 payroll.
    iii. While I hope that eases the pain somewhat, there is now something else you can do to clear payroll space…

5. **Trades for Cash**: As we put into play in 2019 you may trade a player for cash consideration. The maximum allowed is not to exceed $5, which will be deducted from your cap total and added to the team which has 'paid cash' for your player. So, whether it is a $1 player that you sell for $6, or a $25 player you 'sell' for $30, this is a way to make room under the cap so that you can add other players.

Large contract clause: The selling team can agree to eat up to half of a larger contract **for the remainder of that season only** (in the case of multiple year free agent contracts), but in these potentially significant cash deals, there will be no additional cash consideration allowed. In the Cain example, if he is owed $60 for 2021, Denver can agree to eat half - $30 – and in so doing would realize a $35 cap reduction for the remainder of the season. (The $30 assumed by the other team plus the $5 additional 'cash' sale price.) I can explain…just call me.

OK. Now that you think you have a vision for the team you want to field and a strategy mapped out for putting it together and, of course, paying for it, now what?

D. The Free Agent Market: Less Basic

1. More Meanderings on Qualifying Offers:

While MLB players- by their real-life decisions - dictate who our free agents will be each year, we draw the line when it comes to making the critically important decision about Qualifying Offers. We do not follow what happens in MLB, for many of those decisions would not make sense for our teams' individual circumstances. These are important, strategic decisions. So, the UBA allows club owners to decide who among their free agents is going to receive a qualifying offer - not Brian Cashman, not Billy Beane, but you... yes you, the UBA owner reading these rules.

But, before you celebrate, let me tell you that this will not be an easy decision.

So, begin with that most basic question...to QO or not to QO? Well, with a Springer or a LeMahieu, it's a no-brainer**.** (In spite of what I said earlier, do you really think that no one will be willing to offer Springer a multi-year contract at $1 over his QO?) So, do yourself a favor and place that QO on the likes of those top-of-the-line players. But, with the other players it takes a bit more thought and involves some risk.

Let's say that in Denver, Dan puts a QO on Marcel Ozuna (highly advisable) ... but what about his free agent catcher, Austin Romine? Veteran, good defense, but by our Bible, his market value may be only $1. Still, Dan would really rather have him in a Mustang uniform instead of leaning on a thin rookie crop and decides to make somebody cough up some $$ to take him away from Denver. So, he extends a QO to Romine. Which means, again, that teams wishing to sign this $1 player will have to pay at minimum of $36 (the QO amount PLUS $1) AND lose their highest available pick to sign him. Now, Dan's strategy might just work. It may be that no one bids on Romine – unless they desperately need a catcher - because they do not want to pay more than market value/QO **and** lose that pick in the bargain. And, of course, here is the risk... the QO might cause other teams to turn away, but...if no one bids on Romine, Dan *will have no choice* but to sign him for $35 and not for $1, since by our rules, teams must resign a player with a QO that a.) received no bids, and b.) has a market value of $18 or less. And, that $35 is no laughing matter...it is nearly 12% of the cap. Of course, for a player that you feel you cannot afford to lose, $35 might still be worth it. Just don't do it too often. Those $$$ add up quickly.

Placing QOs. (Guess I should mention this….) It's simple… You just let me know by the QO deadline – around January 8, 2021 - on which players – if any – you wish to place a QO. That deadline will be set by the Commissioner's Office and will fall roughly one week (7 days) before the free agent market opens and ideally, about a week after your final rosters – with TSN salaries – has been sent to you. Again, bidding will begin roughly one week after the QO deadline has passed.

2. **More detail on Compensation Picks: As mentioned, only players with qualifying offers** will create a compensation scenario.

   h. **If you sign a player who has received a qualifying offer you will forfeit your highest available pick in the draft (first round, comp, or other picks if you have no first-round picks to lose). Exception**: If your team finished 2020 with one of the ten worst won-loss records – and we've all been there at one time or another - you will not forfeit your top ten pick, but your next highest pick in the draft, wherever and whatever that might be. That protection is not afforded a team with a top ten pick that did not earn the pick by virtue of their 2020 W-L record.
   i. **Teams that lose a player with a QO do not receive the highest available pick of the signing team.** That pick is taken off the board and all teams below that slot move up the board. **Teams that lose a player with a QO will be given a comp pick at the end of the first round**. Teams receiving these comp picks will also do so in order of 2020 finish. Once again, teams receiving more than one comp pick will get their subsequent pick(s) at end of the second round. If they are due to receive more than one pick in this phase, they will receive the second after all other teams have received their first, and so on until all compensation picks have been exhausted. Order of finish will still apply to teams with multiple picks.
   j. **If you sign a second QO player**, you will forfeit your next highest available draft pick no matter where that slot falls in the draft or why (comp pick, via trade, second, third, or fourth round), although **–** as stated earlier **- the Commissioner reserves the right to require the forfeiture of an additional pick(s) if the signing team's highest remaining pick is beyond the first few rounds.** The team losing the player will still be given a comp pick after the first round. (For example, there may be a team that has traded away its first and second round picks and/or signed D. J. Lemahieu and lost a pick, and then signed Marcel Ozuna. Well, William and Mary won't do, and neither will losing a third or fourth round pick in the draft as comp for Ozuna. The Commish may require both picks, and – in some extreme cases, require a high pick in the 2022 draft. (So, don't think you can waltz away with 3 or 4 QO players and not pay a price.... not that you won't be paying a high price already with your cap issues. But, on the other hand, if you have the picks to burn…)
   k. **Even more on the order for Comp picks**: As established long ago, the final order will not be a 'first-signed, first compensated' scheme since teams losing players with qualifying offers have no control over when their players will sign with another team. (That is based on the random order that I generate and only I will know. In fact, it has already been generated for the 2021 free agent market.)

Again, order for comp picks will be based on the 2020 W – L records of the teams to be compensated. However, teams receiving two or more comp picks will not receive consecutive picks. As noted above, the first comp pick will be awarded at the end of the first round and subsequent picks at the end of the second. (You'll see how it works out when the draft order is finalized. Trust me).

l. **Miscellaneous detail**

a. ***RotoWire*** **Market value**. For QO and non-QO players alike, you can find this number in the Bid Book (Excel Spreadsheet list) and please, use this as a guide. **It might help to think of this as the price that the *current* team would pay to retain the player, but please review the relationship between market value and QO as detailed above**. (**Note: Always remember, you can bid on your former players who have become free agents**. **The market value is treated as if it is *your* opening bid – same with the QO where that applies - but you do not have to hold there.** Just know that, again, with the QO – albeit, passively – you do have an offer already on the table for your former players, and one that they most likely will not take, i.e., you will be beaten on that passive bid by one of your competitors trying to fill various holes in their roster at any price... So, in the case of a Marcel Ozuna… if Dan places a QO on Marcel, it is in a manner of speaking, the opening – and likely lowest - bid on that player. But Dan can then turn around and place a higher bid on him at any time. (Like the initial QO offering, *that* bid will not count, however, as one of Denver's 10 bids on the table).
When the bidding period begins you can bid on as many players as you wish up to the limit of 10, not counting your QO bids, and you can do that by either e-mailing back the excel sheet that lists the players by position in alpha order – the Bid Book - indicating your offer next to each player that you are interested in signing, or by sending a separate e-mail at any time that simply gives the players name and your offer in fantasy dollars. What could be easier?
And… you can change bids, add bids to other players, withdraw bids, you-name-it, at any time as the market heats up. Keep those offers coming....and going...

b. **Duration of free agent contract** is equal to the contract that the player signed in MLB, which means, that if you win the bidding on James McCann, for example, who signed with the Mets for 4 years, your winning bid of $40, let's say, will be $40 for 4 seasons or $160 in total…**Note: Once we get our market started, we may not have contract terms for all of the free agents.** When the market opens – somewhere in mid-January 2021 - there are probably not going to be too many multi-year deals left out there, but it's a risk you will have to take when you bid on a contract of unknown duration. I will post the contract lengths as soon as they are available via MLB. In the heat of the market, you always have the option to decline as high bidder (back out of the deal) and pass to the next team in line...

c. **The offers will be confidential. No other team will know** what you are offering a particular player. **I will post updates every day or so** - or as I judge they are needed to stimulate competition - **that will simply**

identify the teams that have tendered offers on each player (On the same revised chart – the Bid Book - you will see after each player's name, the teams that are bidding on that player. You will know who is bidding against you, just not how much they are over or under your bid, but you can take a look at their payroll sheet and get an idea of how much they can afford. Little wonder we overpay... just like MLB)

Again, this important reminder....You are allowed to update (increase, decrease, withdraw) your offer to a player at any time prior to the moment he signs on the dotted line, or place a bid on a player that you might have forgotten or ignored until the constantly changing situation dictated that you make a move… you can always be late to the bidding game on any player. Highest bid wins. In the event of a tie, those teams with identical offers will be contacted by the commissioner's office and I will solicit another confidential 'sudden death' bid. In those cases, you will know what the other team has bid because you are in a dead heat... and you will know who they are. (So, you can send them threatening e-mails...)

d. Other Stuff

i. O**n or around January 8 –** date to be determined by the Commissioner's Office – your QOs will come due - and after that deadline passes, and all of your payroll information has been loaded, the bidding will begin**.** And, a few days after the bidding phase begins**,** players will begin to sign contracts based on your offers. As stated, the signing order will be random. Signings will be announced each day over e-mail and for the bigger contracts, on the website and FB page. And, as those signings are announced, you can frantically – well, maybe not frantically - continue to bid on any and all other players until they sign with another team or with you. (We live for those last-minute theatrics! As players begin to disappear from the market, strategies will shift, and monies will be thrown at other players. Trust me. Those who have lived through this before know exactly what I mean...)

ii. **There will be no week-end, i.e., Saturday or Sunday signings.** Stakes are high and owners will need a couple of days to regroup as they survey the changing field and make decisions on their shifting strategies. That will also be a good time for me to summarize the bigger picture... and for you to rethink strategy (or send those threatening e-mails to other owners bidding on the players you want).

iii. There is a finish line, however, **and that tentative date is Friday, February 19.** All signings will be announced by then. **Once again, all players not receiving bids/not signed by a team**, do not

automatically go back to their former team (see above)

Ultimately – everything will, of course, be predicated on a team's ability to sign players under their cap. And you must finalize with me how you are going to make room under the cap for all of your players by Opening Day, March 25, 2021. (Of course, you might have to adjust or withdraw other bids, but this is all part of how your personal strategy works out…or does not work out, depending, I guess, on whether or not you have one. Understand this: there are 29 other teams out there with different needs and various and sundry strengths and weaknesses. **You are not going to sign every player you try to sign**, even though you may focus on particular players. Such is life... But, as free agents slip away, you can adjust your bids for the other players at those same vital positions. Learn from the Dodgers… And don't panic too much. Between our free agents and rookies there are roughly 290 players to add to our rosters over the next few months, so you won't come away empty-handed. You might just not get the hand you anticipated.

OK....digest all of that, but keep one eye looking to Sunday, February 28, when we move to...

Part II: The Rookie Draft

Once the free agents have been signed, the way will be cleared for us to draft the new players into the league. As always, we draft in reverse order of finish, meaning that Luis Robert should probably look forward to making his UBA debut in Oakland on March 25, playing for the Black Panthers in their opener against the Wranglers though Angus and Ben may yet surprise us with their pick.

Draft Day always has a festive feel to it as we gather owners together from metro Baltimore, Los Angeles, Richmond, Chesapeake Beach, Washington DC, Brewster, NY, and numerous other hamlets.

This year, the Rookie Draft will begin on **Sunday afternoon, February 28**, at approximately 2 PM. **Unlike prior years, we will not be entertaining the idea of gathering interested and available owners at the league HQ to participate in the draft in-person or at the recently christened 'UBA Suite' at the Koba Café on Fort Ave (I love Adam and his staff – best coffee shop in South Baltimore). So, here are the alternatives for your participation:**

1. **Join us in our Zoom Conference Call....** (The easiest way and a good way to connect with the other owners, especially those who signed that free agent that you really wanted). I will send out the links for the call and you will be able to come into the conversation at any time by your device of choice – virtual conference on PC, iPhone, Android, even land line – all on the same platform. Zoom is our COVID hero.
2. **Once again we will utilize Facebook** – On draft day, all selections will be posted in a running conversation in real time on the UBA Facebook Wall. Once you join Facebook – if you have not already done so - 'Like' the UBA**.** While this will not be the preferred media for the Draft, we realize that not everyone will be connecting to Zoom for the duration. FB allows us to IM during the draft, and that is an extremely helpful tool – much like private

messages in Chat on Zoom - especially if you do not want others to hear sensitive questions or comments pertaining to your potential picks).

3. **E-mail...** not as fluid, but if it is all we have to connect you, so be it...
4. **Google Sheets –** This worked well last year as a means of tracking the draft's progress remotely while not on Zoom, so I will send out a link to everyone so that you can access this anytime on draft day, but also in the days that follow. You can monitor the Sheet and add your pick when the time comes. This will be especially helpful after Draft Day as we continue through the remaining rounds. As we all know, the draft has a way of lingering on for another week or two after Draft Day…

If you cannot join us for Draft Day, I implore you to do the following:

Create a drafting priority list. THIS IS CRUCIAL IF YOU CANNOT JOIN US IN PERSON OR ELECTRONICALLY....

If you cannot be present, I will expect to receive a priority list from you indicating which rookies you would like to draft, and in order of preference. (A list of about 20 – 25 should suffice to get us through the day, but feel free to rank the whole crop if you'd like. Some of you do just that and it is extremely helpful…) Without the list, I am forced to allow HAL – the computer simulation's GM program - to make your picks for you. **Not a good thing**. I guarantee that HAL has a radically different philosophy about team construction than you do, one that burrows deep into analytics and your ballpark size and how many actual left-handed at-bats you have on your bench - things you don't want to think about. (And HAL also does not know your hometown loyalties, nor is he aware of your intuitions or superstitions pertaining to certain players. And, he has never read a scouting report or Baseball America review. He sees the available players, calculates what he feels are your deficiencies – and some are not the most urgent, but, if the best player to fit them is available, guess what? Again, this is **not a good thing. NOT A GOOD THING**).

Now, we will not finish the draft on Sunday, February 28. Just won't happen, though we might just get through three or four rounds. At some point, exhaustion, real life, spouses and children or some combination intercede, and we begin to peel away from the task at hand. (As was the case in past years, we will continue the draft by utilizing those priority lists – as applicable and needed – but primarily through an e-mail/Google Sheet combo for those who really want to brood over the fringe selections... there is gold in there sometimes. Just ask my brother about the day he drafted Derek Jeter... and the impact that late rounder had on UBA history)

With luck, we will match last year's late rounds and finish in about eight - ten days (March 9 or so) This will give you a little over two weeks to finalize your 26-man roster – including payroll adjustments - set your priority line-ups, starting rotations, bull pen assignments, bench deployment, routine defensive changes, etc. and be ready for the UBA Opening Day on Thursday, March 25. Just like MLB, every team will open on the same day in 2021.

You will get a blank copy of the Computer Manager Report after the draft to fill in... and, if you like, with HAL's suggested settings and lineups.

Part III: The Modified Rule V Draft

The intent of this 'draft' is to provide teams that have lost that disproportionate number of players - due to those aforementioned factors - the chance to field a complete team.

Our collective experience has shown that it is difficult to restock a depleted roster through any combination of free agents and drafting. The expense is prohibitive and too often the signing of a large number of free agents to short contracts only exacerbates the problem and can lead to chronic roster issues. (Especially if you are forfeiting draft picks). Enough rationale.

The other guiding principle is that participation will be voluntary, that is, regardless of how many players a team has stockpiled, they will not be forced to enter the draft as a 'feeder' team. As you will see, there will not be 'protected' players on a roster - so your long-range strategies for building a sustainable winner will not jeopardized by this draft, but by those uncontrollable circumstances named above.

1. At the conclusion of the Free Agent Market and Rookie Draft all teams will be invited to identify players that they are willing to part with in exchange for a comp pick in the following year's draft, 2022. (It may be that more than a few of these players turn out to be among those that were going to be waived before the start of the season anyway, or perhaps were already on your farm. Hold that thought).
2. **This is voluntary**. Again, you do not have to participate. You can fill your roster with free agents and rookies and then go about getting ready for Opening Day and pay the Rule V Draft no mind. (My hope is, though, that teams with a few extra marginal/reserve players at a particular position – even one - will offer those to the pool, given that those players – if selected by another team - will turn into prospects for them next March as a comp pick). And again, if you choose to participate, rather than protecting players, you simply identify the ones with which you would not mind parting company… however…
3. PARAMETERS:
    a. The players you offer up should be waiver eligible, that is, position players should have 200+ at bats; starting pitchers at least 75 innings; and, relief pitchers, 25 innings. (The point is to help a team complete a roster. However, it does not have to be with A list talent or can't-miss prospects. I really miss Yovani Gallardo's presence in the player pool – he was the consummate Rule V player).
    b. On a case-by-case basis, I will consider players who do not quite meet the wavier eligible request – a catcher with 180 at bats, a starter with 68 innings - so please ask.
    c. **Players under a free agent contract - that you now wish you had not signed to that 7-year deal - can be offered, but only at their market value. The rest of their contract remains on your payroll.** (No dumping of bad contracts will be allowed, but you can get rid of the player you deem in a death spiral and perhaps shed a couple of bucks off his total cost to your payroll. Steve, I really don't think that Chris Davis will be selected, but you can always try).
4. The Commissioner's Office will compile a final list of available players – by position. Every team is encouraged to provide players to the pool, though, again, that is not mandatory**. But I offer this suggestion:** Many of you will have players on your big-league roster that you will want to move to the minors – hey, Travis Shaw always comes to mind - but that will require waivers. This draft provides a way to do that, and though

you might lose the player in question, you will still receive a rookie in the next draft as compensation for a player who was not in your plans this year, anyway. So, instead of seeking waivers before the season starts, I encourage you to place them in the Rule V pool. If they are not selected, they move to your farm. And again, if they are selected, you get a draft pick for them in 2022. Think about it.

5. **Every team that chooses to participate in the Rule V – it's voluntary - will have the opportunity to 'draft' players, though you do not have to contribute players to the pool to do so.** Just declare your intent before Rule V draft day. And you can always contribute players and not draft in the hopes of gaining some rookies in 2022. Up to you.
6. **LOGISTICS**: It should all proceed something like this:
    a. Players are identified for the Rule V pool. Come one, come all.
    b. Teams that wish to draft will notify the Commissioner prior to draft day.
    c. Teams will draft in reverse order of 2020 finish.
    d. Teams that lose a player in the draft will be awarded a comp pick sandwiched between rounds 4 and 5 in 2022.
    e. No team can lose more than 2 players. The others they have placed in the pool will pass automatically to the farm as if they had passed through waivers.
    f. There is no limit as to the number of Rule V players you can draft, but…
    g. **Every player that you draft under Rule V must remain on your 26-man roster for the whole season**. (That was the point to begin with, eh? But seriously, how many Travis Shaws do you want to carry?)
    h. We will draft until either all of the players are gone or, there are no more teams wishing to draft what remains.
    i. Players who were not drafted may be assigned to their respective teams' farm club WITHOUT having to pass through waivers. (Not to belabor this point, but if you think about it, this is the Waiver Wire in another form. Players who would have required waivers to get to the farm are being exposed just as they would on the waiver wire. And, once 'claimed' by the Rule V team, the waiving team does get a player in return. The waiver 'deal' is the trade of the player for a draft pick).
7. TIMETABLE:
    a. The rookie draft begins on Sunday, February 28, but as we know, it will last for another week or two. But, by the end of the first few rounds, you should have a good idea as to which of your fringe players you might want to offer to the pool. So**, on or about March 7, I will send out the invite to all teams asking for the players' names**. **Deadline to identify Rule V pool players will be March 12.** I will then post the final list of pool players.
    b. Ergo, we should be able to hold/begin and perhaps finish the Rule V Draft on Sunday, **March 14**, beginning at 2 PM.

Those are the basics. And, though I do not expect this will generate a landslide of activity, I do think that it will continue to evolve. The basic point of the exercise remains the same - if we move some players around in the name of competition, that will be a good thing.

But forget about all that for now... focus on those free agents and the immediate task at hand. As always, call or write to me with questions or comments. Good luck!

ubabaseball@gmail.com 410-790-1631 (cell)

ADDENDUM:

Since you are inevitably going to cross paths with the need to seek waivers on a player at some point, I thought I would include the waiver rules as an addendum to our Rule Book.

Waiver Rules:

Once waivers are asked on a player – by contacting the Commissioner's Office - any team may claim him. If more than one team claims that player from the waiver wire, **the team with the worst record in that waiving team's conference** gets preference. If no team in the player's conference claims him, the claiming team with the worst record in the other conference gets preference. Through the first month of the new season, preference is determined using the previous year's standings. After May 1, the current season standings are considered. Players are placed on waivers for a 72-hour period. (3 days)

If a team claims a player off waivers and has the viable claim as described above, the player's current team – the team that placed the player on waivers - may choose one of the following options:

- arrange a trade with the claiming team for that player within two business days of the claim; or
- rescind the request and keep the player on its major league roster, effectively canceling the waiver; or
- do nothing and allow the claiming team to (1) assume the player's existing contract, and (2) place the player on its **active major league roster.**

If a player is claimed and the waiving team exercises its rescission option, the waiving team may not use the option again for that player in that season - not a good idea if you are trying to dump that player or move him to the minors.

If no team claims a player off of waivers in three business days, the player has **cleared waivers** and **may be assigned to your minor league team, traded to anyone, or released outright.**

Who must be placed on waivers?

Any player that a team wishes to reassign to its farm club, etc., who meets or exceeds the following performance minimums:

a. Position players with more than 200 at bats
b. Starting pitchers with more than 12 starts or 75 innings pitched
c. Relievers with more than 20 appearances or 30 innings pitched
d. Players who do not meet these minimums may be farmed down at owner discretion.

The Commissioner is always the final arbiter in wavier matters.