Overview *(New rules – and/or important stuff - for 2023 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 six things, and savor a seventh:

1. Give every owner a chance to bid on the free agents that are available in our market. The free agent pool will consist of players who became free agents after the World Series, 2022. (Note: our free agent pool does not contain ***every*** free agent in baseball. 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. And your money!!!).
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. Continue to refine the Rule V Draft and the concept of the 30-man Roster.
4. Draft – in a fair and efficient manner - the 300+ rookies awaiting an opportunity to help you build that contending team in 2023 and – if you have a good draft – well beyond... think Astros and now, Orioles.
5. Continue to evolve a league that will mimic the MLB experience.
6. Have fun, as we celebrate the UBA's 46th season and 56th year of operation. (I know, the math doesn't add up, but the early seasons were played on a board with splits and dice – and not the ten-sided variety, either Earl! - That takes time when you also have to go to high school and then college and then grad school *and* keep your own stats...)
7. **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 though – because they do not have an edit feature – we are listed as being 45 years old in perpetuity. Perhaps I need to register the league each year..)

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. Whatever is easiest for you. See below).
2. **Bidding starts on all players at $1 over their market value**.
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 $60 bids on 15 outfielders to make sure you are in on at least 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).

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 sign - there ***may*** be compensation involved.
7. A brief word about Compensation:
    a. **A team that ultimately loses a player on whom they have placed a QO will receive a comp pick at the end of the second round**. (Between Rounds 2 & 3) **Teams that sign a player with a QO will no longer lose a draft pick.** An example: Atlanta signs a player with a QO from Buffalo. Buffalo is awarded a pick at the end of the second round. Also: teams receiving comp picks will do so in reverse order of finish. (More on that later).
    b. **Teams receiving a second comp pick will get their subsequent pick at the end of the third round**. Order of finish will still apply to teams with a second comp pick.
    c. **The Qualifying Offer for 2023 will simply be the greater of the player's Market Value plus $1 or $20. (This is a price reduction designed to stimulate more bidding for serviceable veterans and role players). Teams may place up to two (2) QOs on their former players who have entered free agency.** As before, teams are free to place a higher bid(s) on their QO players.
        i. **In any case, the QO designation *now allows the team that placed the QO* to make a final offer on that player – at least $1 over the highest bid from a competitor – when the signing date arrives for that player and there is an active bid on the table.**
        ii. **If the former club exercise that option, the team that held the high bid may make their own final offer at least $1 over the former club's final bid.** (**Example**: Denver places a QO on Jacob deGrom. On his signing date, Atlanta has the high bid of $45. Denver counters with a bid of $50. Atlanta counters with a bid of $51 and signs deGrom. Denver gets a comp pick at the end of Round 2. Or Denver counters with a bid of $60 and Atlanta withdraws from the bidding. Denver re-signs deGrom for $60 and no comp pick is awarded).
    d. **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 without hesitation. High bidder gets the player. (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.)
8. **During the active signing phase of the free agent market - roughly December 28 until February 24 - 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 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). An example: Let's say that Charlie Morton had a randomly generated signing date of February 1 and had not received a valid bid by that date. The first team to bid on Morton on February 1 or later would be an instant winner. **If that player, however, carries a QO, the former club will have the option of immediately re-signing that player at $20 or his market value + $1, whichever is greater.** (Example – Sam placed a QO on Morton and for some reason no one had placed a bid on him. On February 1 – his hypothetical signing date – San Antonio would be given the option to re-sign Charlie at his QO value of $20. (Even though his market value is only $3) Remember this: 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 nearly 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 February 24 - **he will not be automatically returned to his former club.**
b. **The bidding period for all non-QO players** will be reset and end at midnight (12 AM) on March 11 - at which time contracts will be awarded to the highest, valid bidders. (No mystery or random order – in this phase, everybody signs at midnight on Friday, March 10. 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 market value is $10 or less**, the player with the QO will be deemed to have accepted his club's QO and re-sign at the QO value of $20. (The contract will match the length of the player's MLB contract, and the salary will count against the cap).
d. **Players with a market value of $11 or more:** If no team has a valid bid on player with a Qualifying Offer whose market value is $11 or more, the team that placed the QO on this player **has the option of signing that player at market value.** If the team in question declines this option, that player **–** let's say that Morton, from our previous example had an MV of $13 **–** would stay on the market – by the rules above for other players with no bids - **and would sign on March 11 with the team that made the highest valid bid over market value – not the QO value. *Additionally, the QO is considered void once the former team declines to sign, so there is no comp pick, and the former team cannot make a saving bid.***
e. Players that remain unsigned after March 10 **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.

f. 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: This has only happened once in our history. 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!)

g. **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… *RotoWire*, which has replaced *The Sporting News*/AKA *Street and Smith's* due to unforeseen circumstances. Values range from $1 – for most rookies, benchwarmers and relief pitchers - who get no respect, none, save for the closers - to the mid-$40 range for those super star players, though Aaron Judge is going to set a record with a $60 MV for 2023. What I like most about *Rotowire's* approach is that they assign market value based on earned value, i.e., based on the season just completed, *NOT* on what they think the player will be worth in the upcoming season. (Our former bible – *The Sporting News* – was based on predicted value, which is important if you are playing the boring Rotisserie league where players amass points for their 'team' and never actually play as a team against their rivals. Thank God for Strat-O-matic).

h. **By the way, 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 open for bidding on December 15** - players will begin to sign on December 28 - and end on February 24. **Before the market opens for bids, owners will have to decide if they are going to place a Qualifying Offer on any of their players who have filed for free agency. (Up to 2 may be placed. Be judicious)** The exact deadline will be communicated by e-mail and also be on the website. Expect it to be somewhere around **December 10, 2022.**

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 UBA team, 2022 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 does its best to divide the players by position (the trend toward versatility makes that hard in some cases), indicate 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). And 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. (And you can Google that info if you want it).
   And remember, this is a replay league, meaning that our computer simulation uses those 2022 stats. This will offset some of the risk because you will already know how

a particular free agent will perform for you, at least in the first season with you if it is a multi-year contract.

I will continually update this document. (Note: Players who became free agents in November of 2022 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, we start the market on December 15 and on December 17 Jose Abreu decides to go back to his former club. Well, that's great news for the Chi Sox – and some serious science fiction - but too bad for the Mud Hens, his former UBA team. He is gone and Kathleen 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 she 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, March 5, 2023, at Noon**. I provide this so you can track what is happening on the board as teams trade picks and as comp picks are added. I will continually update this sheet, too. It will change somewhat by draft day as comp picks for QOs and Rule V draftees are added and as teams trade up or down in the draft order, or just trade away picks. As always, on that latter note, be creative... And, as always, be careful. Those prospects can be money in the bank and wins on the field.

3. The **Rookie List**. The Strat-O-Matic 2022 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 players who debuted in 2022 – Julio, Rodriguez, Adley Rutschman, Bobby Witt, and Christopher Morel to name a few – 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. Serious.). *RotoWire* market values are included on the list. **Unlike free agents, when you draft a rookie, the RotoWire market value IS their 2023 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 Rutschman on your Major League Roster. (Take note, New Orleans... and don't spend too much on deGrom). Again, the Rookie Draft begins March 5, which is after the Free Agent market has closed. More info will be provided on all of the festivities as that big day draws near.

4. **Your current roster and payroll**. Most important. This excel spreadsheet 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 a Jose Iglesias at $6 or $8 to fill that hole at short for one season might be a wiser strategy than going after Trea Turner 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 2022 may have earned a spot on your big club this year. (You'll make all of those final decisions. I am just trying to be helpful) Others will have left baseball since last season or perhaps were mired in the minors or injured with no MLB stats

to show for 2022. They appear – *italicized* – at the bottom of the chart and listed as DNPs. (Did Not Play, at least in the 2022 MLB season. INJ usually means they were Tommy Johned). One last note: DNP players do come and go, so, as in Hawaii, you might discover that your very own Justin Verlander has returned from his UBA hiatus to become a fixture in the rotation– 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. Last year we picked up around 20-25 players who had been out of the Bigs for more than two seasons. **30-Man Roster:** You will determine this who is on it and who is not, but **once you receive your roster sheet, I would ask that you immediately begin the process of determining who is on your 30-man roster.** By Opening Day this will change as you accommodate the free agents and rookies you added during those phases of the off-season – but this original declaration is needed for the Rule V Draft. (In essence, you are protecting 30 players from being snatched by another club. See Section III – Rule V Draft far below…)

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 Justin Verlander 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 your proof). This will also show your 30-man roster players so again, be diligent in setting that original 30-man for the off-season.

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 XM radio network heroes.

Communicating with the other clubs. You may contact other team owners at any time to discuss trades, etc. via our Google group (uba_2023) – team abbreviations appear in the owner's name (e.g., ATL, KCM, SFS). 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. I can also assist in the communication process. You may also find the Trade Assistant on the Website to be of great value. (God bless you, Tim.)

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; researched the rookie list and identified those players that you believe will develop into the kind of player your arch-rivals will want to sign when they become free agents; and even scanned the Team-to-Team for possible trades – then you are more than ready to pursue off-season glory.

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 four or 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).

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 farm them down, or they got hurt and did not play at all in 2022, 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, they remain on your 30-man roster,** perhaps squeezing out the next Anthony Santander, exposing him to another club come Rule V time. (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 Trea Turner got from the Rockies, 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).

1. **Front-loading**: Say you make the winning bid on Turner and it is for – wishful thinking, here - $40...and again, that's $40 a year for, oh, let's guess... 7 long years. Instead of seeing it as $40 per year, think in terms of total contract, in this example, $280. Now, let's say that by adding Turner you have completed your 26-man roster and the total payroll – including his $40 – is $240. (I wanna see how you did that, if it's true) That means, however, you're $60 under the cap. Rapture! So… why not give Turner $100 that first year, leaving a balance of $140 for the next six seasons, or roughly $24 per year instead of $40? 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. Seize it when you do.
2. **Back-loading**: Or let's say you have only $20 left under the cap and you desperately want to have Mr. Turner. Make that $40 bid, but only pay him $20 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 2024 - or, by the previous example, just pay him roughly $43 a year for the last six years of the contract instead of $40. (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 12 players on the roster… The league record is 130 losses – thanks, Craig - and you'd be vying for a shot at that record with all those $1 bargains that you were forced to sign or draft as Rule V's 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 Turner example – a seven-year deal worth $40 per year, or $280 total – in Year 1 of the contract, Turner must be paid a minimum of $28. The contract balance of $252 can be spread out over the remaining six 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 Turner as an example. Let's say he signs a seven-year deal for $40 per and $280 in total but had an opt-out after Year 1. In that first season, the signing team would have to pay the AAV - $40 – and not 10%, as stated above. If Turner decides not to opt-out, then the signing team can spread out the remaining balance in any manner that suits them for the remaining six years. (If – in this example the opt-out came after two seasons, then Turner would be paid $80 for two seasons, or $40 per. In those cases, an owner still might pay Turner $30 in year 1 and $50 in year 2, as long as he is paid the total AAV for the seasons prior to the opt out).
3. **Front-loading or Back-loading Minimums (and this assumes no opt-out)**: 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 San Francisco 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 – up to 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 Commissioner 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 Robbie Ray from Nashville for the stretch run. He is owed $70 per season through 2026 which means you would have to pay him $35 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 '24 season, In this example - $33) 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 Alex Cobb from Indianapolis – his salary for 2023 is $55 – but, though the Longhorns are willing to eat $20 – 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 $25 over the cap. That may be added to your 2024 payroll.

iii. There is still something else you can do to clear payroll space…

5. **Trades for Cash**: As we put into play in 2019 you may sell a player's contract for a 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 Ray example, if he is owed $70 for 2023, Nashville can agree to eat half - $35 – and in so doing would realize a $40 cap reduction for the remainder of the season. (The $35 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

More Meanderings on Qualifying Offers:

We are radically changing the way we consider QOs in the UBA this season. Some of the changes are to align the league with changes wrought by the new CBA in MLB. Others are modifications that are dictated by our limited player pool. While MLB clubs have farm systems with 150 – 180 players, our clubs average about 45 players in total. Free agency, Tommy John and retirement can drastically alter a team's competitive ability from year to year. Fortunes can turn on a dime in the UBA. A quick summary of the changes:

1. **A team that signs a player with a QO will no longer lose a draft pick.** This should have an immediate and positive impact on the market as teams that need to acquire players through the market but are loathe to lose a draft pick, may now bid competitively for players that will help them in 2023 and beyond.
2. W**e will continue the practice of awarding comp picks to teams that lose a player with a QO**. Again, we have a limited pool of players so it seems only fair.
3. **Team's will be limited to a maximum of two players that can be given a QO designation**. The QO dollar amount has been reduced to a simple formula: **The greater of $20 or the player's MV plus $1 is the QO amount for that player**.
4. **The QO designation will give to the team that places it the ability to make a counter-offer** in hopes of maintaining the contract of that player. More details below. (And above, technically)

1. **Placing QOs.** It's simple… You just let me know by the QO deadline – roughly December 10, 2022 - on which players – if any – you wish to place a QO. That deadline will fall roughly five days before the free agent market opens for bidding. **Limit is two per team.**
   Teams will still be allowed to place a bid on their QO players during the open market phase. This has always been the case. If Denver places a QO on deGrom, they can still make a bid during the bidding process in hopes of winning the bid. What is new is what happens if they do not place the winning bid…

2. **Signing Date and Counter-Offers for QO Players:** Now the fun part. When a player with a QO reaches his signing date, as is our practice, the league office will notify the team with the high bid.
   a. If that team is not the team that placed the QO, then the former club will be given the opportunity to make a counter offer on the player**. That bid must be at least $1 more that the winning bid.**
   b. **If the former club does make a counter offer, the team with the winning bid will have an opportunity to beat that number** ($1 higher will be fine). **If that club elects to beat the former team's counter-offer, then that team is awarded the free agent at the higher price and the former team earns a comp pick.**

c. **If the team with the original high bid declines to sign the player, i.e., does not wish to make a higher counter-offer, then the former team must sign him for the amount of their counter offer. No comp pick is awarded.**
d. **Note: The team that placed the QO does not have to make a counter-offer**. It can just let the player go and collect the comp pick. (Only players with a QO will yield a comp pick) **The team that had the original high bid does not have to make another offer.** It can just let the former club take the player back at the counter offer level. (This could get interesting) Examples:
    i. Atlanta has the high bid on Jacob deGrom at $45 AAV. Denver waives the right to make a counter offer and Atlanta signs deGrom for $45. The Mustangs earn a comp pick.
    ii. Denver makes a counter offer of $60 AAV. Atlanta declines to make another bid and Denver signs deGrom for $60 AAV.
    iii. Denver makes a counter offer of $60. Atlanta counters with a final bid of $61. Atlanta signs deGrom for $61 AAV. Denver gets a comp pick.

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

    a. **If you sign a player who has received a qualifying offer you will no longer forfeit your highest available pick or any pick in the draft.** This also eliminates the need to protect picks of the first ten teams by reverse order of finish.
    b. **Teams that lose a player with a QO will be given a comp pick at the end of the second round**. Teams receiving these comp picks will also do so in order of 2023 finish. Once again, teams receiving a second comp pick will get their subsequent pick **at end of the third round**.

4. **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 2023 free agent market, so I already know who is signing first and who will be last.) Again, order for comp picks will be based on the 2022 W – L records of the teams to be compensated.

5. **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. The market value is treated as if it is the *hypothetical* opening bid.** Just know that, again, with the QO – albeit, passively – teams do have an offer already on the table for their former players, and one with which they most likely will not win the bidding i.e., they will be beaten on that passive bid by one of their competitors eager to fill various holes in their roster at any price... So, in the case of a Jacob deGrom… if Dan places a QO on Jacob, 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. **(And, since this is for a player with a QO designation, *that* bid will not count against the limit of ten bids on the board. Denver could still place ten other bids**).

b. **Speaking of which…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...
c. **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 Jacob deGrom, for example, who let's say signed with the Dodgers for 3 years, your winning bid of $40 will be $40 for 3 seasons or $120 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 – in mid-December - there are probably not going to be too many deals known, but it's a risk you will have to take when you bid to provide 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...
d. **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...)

e. Other Stuff

i. O**n or around December 10 –** final 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. (Around December 28) 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 limited Saturday and Sunday signings.** This is a change from past seasons. We have about 20 more players to move on the market and while this will not be every weekend – or involve a high number of payers – do expect the random weekend announcement. 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, so this will not be a regular feature. But it will keep you on your collective toes..

iii. There is a finish line, however, **and that date is Friday, February 24, 2023.** 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 March 29, 2023, the day before Opening Day. (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 over 400 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, March 5, 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 catcher Adley Rutschman should probably look forward to making his UBA debut in New Orleans on March 30, playing for the Blues in their home opener against the Hawaii Islanders – and the ace they missed in 2022, Justin Verlander. (Good luck with that match-up, Adley).

Draft Day always has a festive feel to it as we gather owners together from metro Baltimore; Los Angeles. California; Tampa; Florida; Richmond, Virginia; Sunset Beach, North Carolina; Washington, D.C.; Brewster, NY; and numerous other hamlets.

This year, the Rookie Draft will begin on **Sunday afternoon, March 5, 2023**, at **12 PM**. **And here are the many ways that you can participate:**

1. **Join us in our Zoom Conference Call....** (The easiest way and also the best way to connect with the other owners, especially those who signed that free agent that you really, really, really wanted or who took you out of the play-offs last year). 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 for audio only – all on the same platform. Zoom is our hero.
2. **E-mail...** not as fluid, but if it is all we have to connect you, so be it...
3. **Texting –** We played with this last year and the Commish is now connected to most of the owners. It is a good real time way to alert owners that they are going on the clock and a good way for them to respond with their pick. (Of course, it helps if you have the Google Sheet up on one of your devices. Which brings us to…)
4. **Google Sheets: Our other Draft Hero.** This worked well in past years as a means of tracking the draft's progress remotely while not on Zoom – and also a means of recording your draft pick from wherever you are. 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. As indicated, 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 so after Draft Day… and, as is the case with the free agent pool, we have a larger number of rookies to move this season as MLB gets younger.

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 VIRTUALLY OR THROUGH SOME DEVICE OR MEDIA....

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 go as deep as you dare…) 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**).

As we all know, we will not finish the draft on Sunday, March 5. 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) We don't rush the later rounds. With luck, we will match last year's pace and finish in about eight - ten days (March 12 or so) This will give you a little over two weeks to finalize your 26-man and 30-man rosters – 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 30.
You will get a blank copy of the Computer Manager Report after the draft to fill in... and, if requested, with HAL's suggested settings and lineups.

Part III: The Rule V Draft

A. Once the UBA Championship has been decided, teams will prepare for the Rule V Draft, which **will be commence on Sunday, December 5**. This is the path that will take us there:

1. **By mid-November, available free agents for the 2023 market will be identified** and removed from current rosters. (As always, not all eligible MLB free agents will be offered in our market since a significant number of those players bring no real value to an active roster, due to poor stats or lack of playing time. We also do not include non-tendered since that was not ***your*** decision and we don't have the luxury of full farm systems… so shedding players is never an option).
2. Off-Season rosters will then be sent out to all owners – with payroll information - showing all active players for the 2023 season. (Players still under your control but who did not log time in MLB during 2022 will be listed in *italics* at the bottom of the roster sheet).
3. **By December 1** all owners will indicate which of those players – major or minor league – are on their club's **30 man roster**. **All other players will be exposed to the Rule V Draft**. (**Free agents that are still under contract are automatically on a team's 30-man roster**. NOTE: Some teams will not have enough players to create a 30-man roster initially, though every team will have one by the time the off-season is completed) Note: You may notify the Commissioner's Office by emailing a simple list, or a copy of your roster with the 30-Man roster players highlighted. Be creative as you like). Your 30-man roster will be composed of a combination of players who are on the parent club and on

the farm. And not everyone on your off-season big league roster needs to be on the 30-man. You are protecting players in this phase of the off-season, after all. (Let that worn out veteran be exposed to protect that emerging star).

4. There will be three rounds in the 2023 Rule V Draft. **Here is the Round by Round breakdown:**
    a. **Teams with fewer than 30 players will constitute the first round of the draft**, selecting a player from the available pool in reverse order of finish.
    b. All teams will participate in Rounds 2 & 3, again, in reverse order of finish.
    c. Participation in the Draft is optional. Teams are not required to draft a player given the conditions set forth below in A. 7. Teams can simply pass on their turn (A word of advice: you might wish to scour the available players. looking for that diamond in the rough that you would not mind carrying on your major league roster in hopes of cashing in on their future potential. Think Anthony Santander. This is why the Rule V is open to every team in the later rounds). **However, drafting or not, all teams with over 30 players under their control will participate as a feeder team for the pool. All unprotected players on every team are fair game.**
5. **No team may lose more than two players** to the draft. And **no team may drop below the 30 player threshold**. (E.g., Memphis has 31 players, 30 of whom are on the 30 man roster. One player would be left exposed to the Draft. If he is taken, Memphis would have no more players to risk in the Rule V pool unless they added a player to the roster during the draft).
6. **Teams that lose a player(s) will receive a sandwich pick(s) at the end of Round 4 in the Rookie Draft** as compensation for player(s) lost to Rule V. If a team earns a second pick, that will be awarded at the end of the 5th Round.
7. **Players that are drafted must be added to the team's 30-man roster and remain on the drafting team's *major league roster* for the entire 2023 season** or else they are returned to their team of origin. Team must also move a player off the 30-man roster to make room for the drafted player. That other player would then be exposed for the remainder of the draft.

B. The modified off-season schedule (dates approximate) would look like this:

1. December 1 – 30-man rosters are confirmed with League Office
2. December 5 - Rule V Draft begins (Reverse order of finish in 2022)
3. December 10 – Qualifying Offers are due
4. December 15 – Free Agent market opens for bids
5. December 28 – Free agent players may begin signing (They will, trust me)
6. February 24 – Free Agent market Concludes
7. March 5 - Our traditional first Sunday in March – The Rookie Draft (Over 300)
8. March 30 – Opening Day

This greatly simplifies our current Rule V practice and more closely mirrors MLB's process. And, while it eliminates the 'voluntary' aspect of those rules – all teams must declare their 30 man roster and all teams potentially will participate either as drafters or source teams – it also removes the minimums on at bats and innings pitched present on the old system and adds a level of strategy. E.g., a drafting owner may select an unprotected prospect – willing to carry that player on the roster for a season in the hopes that he will be the next ace or clean-up hitter.

ADDENDUM:

Since at some point during the season it may become necessary to seek waivers on a player – though the way we do the 30-man has all but eliminated the need for waivers - I thought I would include the waiver rules as an addendum to our Rule Book.

Waiver Rules:

One more time - the waiver rules do not apply to players on the 30-man roster. They can move back and forth between the major league club and the minors at will. (think of the four extra players as your taxi squad)

For all other players… 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 waivers; **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 else, 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 **and is not on the team's 30-man roster**:

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 – **or who are on the 30-man roster** - may be farmed down at owner discretion.

The Commissioner is always the final arbiter in wavier matters.