



Use the tools available to draft your best team.

by Mark Sims

Last year, some of my friends convinced me to join their Fantasy Football league. As a participant in the league, I served as general manager of a virtual professional football team. It was my job to choose a team roster by participating in a draft in which all players of the National Football League (NFL) were available. Each week of the NFL regular season, I faced an opponent in our league. Points were based on the actual performance of the NFL players in real games.

Similarly, it is our job as cattlemen to ensure we are fielding the best team on our farm or ranch. Having a successful team starts with accurate recordkeeping. Keeping accurate records gives us the ability to analyze data and characteristics of our players, just as NFL scouts, managers and coaches view

upcoming prospects and team members.

Handy new tool

The American Angus Association recently released Angus Black Book, an app designed for commercial cattle producers. The app automates cattle recordkeeping and management,

making it easier to manage your operation.

With the Angus Black Book app, you can fully digitize your cattle recordkeeping, allowing you to execute seamless day-to-day management and recordkeeping from your smartphone.

Reports generated from the app can provide you with key insights, giving you a snapshot of your overall operation so you can make management decisions based on documented information. You can view reports related to calving, breeding, weaning and progeny. Those reports can be viewed and shared at any given time.

Learn more about Angus Black Book online at www.angus.org/Commercial/Links/BlackBook.aspx.

Build your roster

Once reports have been generated, it then comes time to analyze your players to decide who should stay and who, if any, should go.

For the purpose of this article, let us consider a spring-calving herd. Hopefully your females have been pregnancy-checked this fall to determine those safe in calf from those who are open. If you are looking to reduce your cow herd size, consider culling the nonpregnant females, because they are the most expensive to feed through the winter. After all, open cows are like wide receivers who can't catch a pass. At the very least, they have to catch the ball first before they can run for a touchdown.

From there, identify the productive and nonproductive cows in your herd. By using records generated from the Angus Black Book, you can identify cows that have consistently weaned calves that rank in the bottom 10%-25% of your herd. If a cow consistently ranks low, you should consider releasing her from your team.

Furthermore, if you are still looking to depopulate your herd, identify the problem cows. Those are the ones with unsound udders, teats, feet and legs, or bad dispositions.

The American Angus Association continues its commitment to providing commercial cattlemen with the tools they need to manage a successful and profitable cow herd. I hope our investment in Angus Black Book will better position you and your family's cattle operation for the future. For other tools and technology available through the American Angus Association, visit www.angus.org. |

Editor's note: Mark Sims was a regional manager for the American Angus Association and now pursues a career in auctioneering and sale management.