



**SPECIAL
PRE-DRAFT
EDITION**

**THE
TRAVELERS
HAVE
ARRIVED**

They're new.
They're
ruthless. But
where do they
rank?

GRIDIRON

G O L D I L L U S T R A T E D

2025 Power Ranking Issue

From the Editor's Desk



Welcome to the 2025 Gridiron Gold Keeper Value Rankings

Fantasy football isn't a hobby in Gridiron Gold — it's a year-round war of strategy, pride, and precision. And with the introduction of keepers for the first time in league history, the stakes have never been higher.

This year's Pre-Draft Power Rankings mark our first full evaluation of keeper value across the league. We're not just asking who kept the biggest names — we're asking who got the best return for the pick they gave up. That means factoring in draft round cost, positional edge in PPR, roster leverage based on draft slot, and of course, ceiling.

Every keeper was weighed through that lens — not hype, not bias, just sharp fantasy calculus. And then there's the man behind the rankings: Vince Lupo.

Let's be honest — Vince is an acquired taste. He's brash, unforgiving, and makes zero effort to be polite. If your keeper choice was weak, he'll roast you for it. Loudly. But here's the thing: the man knows his stuff. His process is elite. His hit rate is scary. And love him or hate him, his analysis cuts deeper than most.

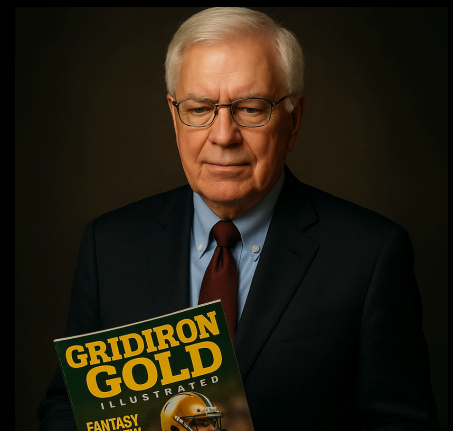
Naturally, the fallout was immediate. Each team's official media rep was given the floor to respond — and respond they did. Some defended. Some lashed out. Others doubled down. You'll find their reactions throughout this issue, offering a full-circle perspective on every keeper call.

We brought Vince on because Gridiron Gold doesn't want safe. We want sharp. We want fire. And if that means bruised egos along the way? So be it.

So as you read these rankings, don't just brace yourself — engage. Let it challenge your thinking. Or better yet, prove him wrong.

Because like it or not, your 2025 season has already begun.

Don Carson
Editor-in-Chief
Gridiron Gold Illustrated

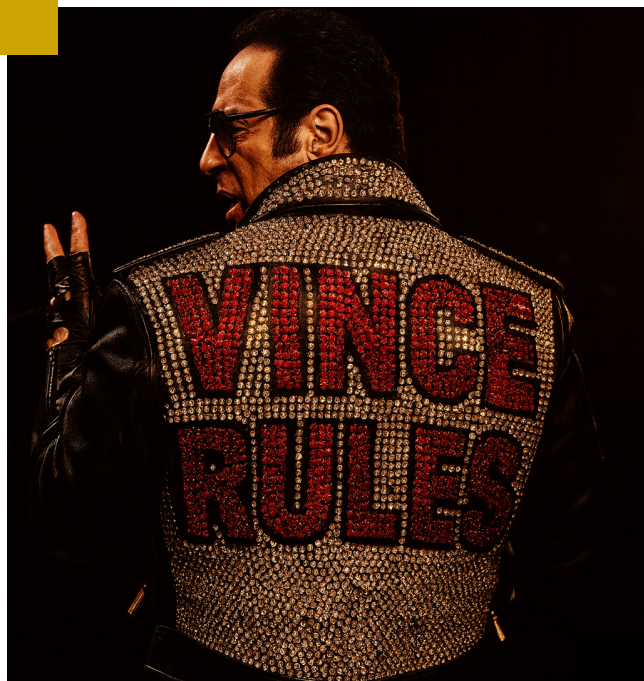


2025 PRE-DRAFT POWER RANKINGS

By Vince Lupo, Fantasy Analyst. Destroyer of Delusions.

Let's get something straight before we dive in: most of you don't actually know what value looks like.

You think just because you watch a few highlight reels, read two blurbs on a waiver pickup, or snag a "sleeper" off some podcast, that you've got the edge. You don't. What you have is fantasy Dunning-Kruger — the loud confidence of someone who doesn't realize they've been walking into a buzzsaw every season.



Keeper leagues? They don't start at the draft. They start the moment you declare who you're sacrificing draft capital for. That's your first move. That's your first mistake — for some of you. These rankings? They're not projections. They're receipts — cold evaluations of how well you understand return on investment, roster construction, and the ruthless reality of positional leverage in PPR formats.

Some of you played it sharp — extracting ceiling from mid-rounds, locking in elite production at a discount. Others? You paid full price for name-brand mediocrity and called it strategy. You kept quarterbacks in a single QB league like it was 2017. You burned draft picks on nostalgia. On vibes. On "safe."

I don't write to make you feel good. I write to tell the truth. And if that truth bruises your ego, you're welcome — consider it preseason conditioning.



So now the question is... who actually understood the assignment? Who turned a mid-round pick into leverage, and who lit theirs on fire for nostalgia and false confidence? I've seen the receipts, I've done the math, and I'm here to expose all of it — the brilliance, the delusion, the desperation.

You're about to find out which teams set themselves up for a run...and which ones are already drafting from behind. Let's get into it. **No apologies. No filters. Just facts.**



#1. The Travelers

Rudy Fabian



2025 Keeper – Brock Bowers (Costs Round 10 Pick)

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN... THIS IS A GIFT FROM THE FANTASY GODS!

Round 10? ROUND TEN?? Are you KIDDING ME?? This man — this absolute phenom out of Georgia — has the potential to be **Travis Kelce with afterburners**, and The Travelers get to keep him for the price of a grocery store scratch-off ticket?? I'm not mad... I'm just *jealous*.

Let me be VERY clear: This is what *value* looks like. This is what leverage looks like. This is how you EMBARRASS the competition before the draft even starts! Rudy Fabian didn't just make a great move — **he committed fantasy grand larceny**.

Brock Bowers in the 10th is like finding out Beyoncé is performing at your nephew's birthday party — you didn't earn it, but dammit, you take it and you WIN with it.

OFFICIAL TEAM RESPONSE – Delilah Sandoval, Media Relations Director, The Travelers

"Vince finally said something right, but let's not act like he saw this before the rest of us. Bowers for a 10th was a masterstroke, and if it came from an OG GM like Radke or McGriff, you'd be calling it generational. Don't backhand us with praise like you're being generous. Just admit it: The Travelers set the tone, and the rest of the league will be scrambling to catch up."



#2. The Wrecking Crew

Tony McGriff



2025 Keeper – Jayden Daniels (Costs Round 5 Pick)

This man right here... THIS MAN RIGHT HERE... has SWAGGER. He has LEGS. And now he stays with the Wrecking Crew for a FIFTH ROUND PICK??!!

Jayden Daniels is a certified PROBLEM. He's got the wheels. He's got the arm. He's got the fantasy upside to put up 30-point bombs like he's handing out flyers on the corner of your fantasy matchup. And Tony McGriff said: "Sure, I'll keep that. Let me give up my fifth-round pick – the round usually wasted on washed-up WRs and backfield timeshares – and I'll just take Jayden's QB1 potential and sit back with my feet up."

Folks, that's what we call **SAVVY. That's what we call SMART.** That's what we call managing your players like you've been there before. If Daniels goes nuclear in Year 2 – and I'm betting he will – Wrecking Crew just got the biggest fantasy cheat code since 2019 Lamar Jackson. Book it.

OFFICIAL TEAM RESPONSE – Deb Levi, Media Relations Director, The Wrecking Crew

"We'll take the nod and keep it moving. Daniels in the 5th wasn't a gamble – it was preparation. we have a plan, and this was the first domino. Respect to Vince for recognizing it."



#3. Fins In Low Places

Mike Lisle



2025 Keeper – Trey McBride (Costs Round 6 Pick)

Oh, so the new guy can play. Good. I was hoping we'd get somebody with a pulse.

Let me be clear: this was sharp. Not flashy, not headline-stealing — but smart. And in a keeper league, smart wins long-term. McBride exploded down the stretch last season with 4 top-6 finishes in the final 8 games. He led all tight ends in target share from Week 9 on. You think that's a fluke? That's called ascension. That's called being early.

Round 6 for a 25-year-old tight end locked into a high-volume role on a rebuilding team? That's **how you break the TE hellscape without spending premium capital**. It's positional leverage without tax. This isn't a homer pick. It's not brand-name laziness. It's a new GM walking into the room and making a calm, efficient, value-driven decision. Most first-year teams show up with a blindfold and a prayer. **Fins In Low Places showed up with a blueprint.**

Tight end with top-5 upside for the cost of a WR3? Yeah... that'll play.

OFFICIAL TEAM RESPONSE – Jasmine Nesmith, Media Relations Director, Fins In Low Places

"We appreciate the respect. McBride is the future, and locking him in now was about vision, not hype. We play the long game. But hey — thanks for noticing."



#4. Dragon Lady

Rita Reo



2025 Keeper – De’Von Achane (Costs Round 3 Pick)

THIS... this one here? This is what I call putting your money where the SPEED is.

De’Von Achane ain’t just fast. He’s Olympic-level fast. You blink, and he’s already 38 yards downfield doing the Griddy in your end zone. And Rita Reo said: “Let me burn a third-round pick to keep that in my lineup every week.” **AND YOU KNOW WHAT? I RESPECT THAT!**

Look, I got questions — Miami rotates backs like a DJ at a Vegas pool party. The man might get 8 touches one week and 18 the next. But this isn’t about touches. It’s about IMPACT. Achane breaks fantasy weeks open like a piñata, and if he stays upright, he’s a threat to house it every time he breathes near the football.

Round 3 ain’t cheap. But when you’re drafting speed that turns into points? You PAY. Rita took a swing. Might be risky. Might be brilliant. Either way? She ain’t playin’ scared.

OFFICIAL TEAM RESPONSE – Sterling Jones, Media Relations Director, Dragon Lady

“We get it. Vince likes his backs with guaranteed volume and three-down roles. But sometimes you bet on home-run hitters, and Achane is exactly that. Round 3 for that kind of juice is hardly a reach — it’s a warning. Everyone else can sleep if they want to.”



#5. Pud's Playmakers

Tyler Pudleiner



2025 Keeper – Mike Evans (Costs Round 4 Pick)

Now listen... I love Mike Evans. Great guy. Borderline Hall of Famer. But this keeper? This is like ordering prime rib at Waffle House — you're doing too much for too little!

Yes, the man is consistent. Yes, he's a red zone monster. **But this is a PPR league.** You need volume, you need separation, you need YAC — and Evans is giving you contested catches and maybe six targets on a good day. And for that, the Playmaker's gave up a round 4 pick??

This keeper screams "I panicked and clung to the past." Tyler Pudleiner could've rolled the dice on upside, on youth, on somebody that might make a leap. Instead, they locked in safe and solid — two things that DON'T scare anybody in fantasy football.

It's like walking into the casino and playing nickel slots while the high rollers are firing bets on the craps table. **You're in the game, sure — but you ain't gonna win big doing that.**

OFFICIAL TEAM RESPONSE – Will Powers, Media Relations Director, Pud's Playmakers

"Panicked? Safe? Vince says that like 10 straight 1,000-yard seasons and 13 TDs are a bad thing. The guy's a rock. You want flashy? Cool. We want points. And Evans delivers them, like clockwork. While everyone else keeps chasing upside, we'll keep stacking wins."



#6. 1024 Bandits

Juliano Wild



2025 Keeper – Joe Mixon (Costs Round 5 Pick)

If Joe Mixon is your ammunition... YOU BROUGHT A PELLET GUN TO A TANK FIGHT!

Let me be fair — Joe Mixon is a professional. He'll give you touches. He might even fall into the end zone 7–8 times. But in **2025**? In a PPR league? In an offense that's shifting toward a youth movement?

A fifth-round pick for Mixon is like placing a bet on a washed-up fighter who still thinks he's in his prime. I ain't here for vibes. I'm here for VALUE. And this pick ain't got it. Juliano Wild gave up a premium mid-round pick for a player who averaged under 4.0 YPC and needed volume just to crack 15 fantasy points. This ain't 2019. He's not catching 5 balls a game. He's not breaking 40-yard runs. He's hoping defenders trip.

So this keeper? It's all bark, no bite. Hey, 1024 Bandits! You want to win a title? Start by not using 5th-round draft capital on a guy who's one hip-flexor away from a timeshare.

OFFICIAL TEAM RESPONSE – DeAndre Bell, Media Relations Director, 1024 Bandits

"Here we go! Vince acting like a July foot injury is the end of Joe Mixon's career. Did he even check the Texans depth chart? It's not a committee, it's a setup. Mixon is the guy. Round 5 is a steal. Save the panic for someone else's keeper."



#7. Dem Wallz

Chanel Wall



2025 Keeper – Lamar Jackson (Costs Round 2 Pick)

I got MAD respect for Lamar Jackson. Former MVP. Human highlight reel. But for a second-round keeper? I NEED MORE!

Dem Wallz gave up a **second-round pick** for Lamar, and while that might've made sense three years ago, it ain't 2022 anymore, fam. This is a **PPR, Single QB format** league, and quarterbacks don't hold positional value like that unless they're giving you **30-point upside on the regular**.

And let's be honest — Lamar hasn't been that dude lately. The rushing is still there, but the offense has changed. Fewer designed runs. More checkdowns. More "Oh look, Isaiah Likely just got 4 targets again." You're giving up premium capital for a guy who's producing what others are getting 2–3 rounds later

It's not a disaster. It's not an atrocity. But let me be perfectly clear: **It's not sharp either**. Chanel Wall paid sticker price for a name-brand that's no longer the scariest item on the shelf.

OFFICIAL TEAM RESPONSE – Greg Cantrell, Media Relations Director, Dem Wallz

"Lamar Jackson slander in the year 2025? For real? Lamar is a weekly 30-point nuke, and some keyboard warrior is whining about format structure? Newsflash: You don't win this league with spreadsheets, you win with dynamite. And Lamar is TNT with wheels."



#8. Avengers Team

Joaquin Renteria



2025 Keeper – Joe Burrow (Costs Round 2 Pick)

WHAT. ARE. WE. DOING? Joe Burrow?? Second round?? This is not 2021, folks. You don't win fantasy leagues with name value. You win with output!

I'm gonna say this loud for the people in the back — **Joe Burrow is a good quarterback.** Maybe even great. But this ain't real football. This is fantasy. And in fantasy football, he's a middle-tier QB with minimal rushing and limited week-winning upside.

Avengers Team gave up their second pick for a dude who might throw 2 TDs and 230 yards most weeks? They paid Round 2 value for what they could've drafted in Round 8 — if they were patient and knew what the hell they were doing.

This pick screams **lazy**. It screams, "I needed a keeper and defaulted to the biggest name I could find." Joaquin Renteria didn't play the game — he filled in a blank. That's not how you compete in this league. That's how you finish in 7th and blame your luck.

OFFICIAL TEAM RESPONSE – Lauren Beltran, Media Relations Director, Avengers Team

"He came at Burrow like he's Will Levis in a Bengals helmet. Joe's a field general with elite weapons and playoff pedigree. Round 2 was the price. We paid it, no regrets. Keep calling it vanilla. We'll keep cooking."



#9. Appalachian Mud Dogs

Jesse Glaspell

2025 Keeper – Derrick Henry (Costs Round 3 Pick)

This pick made my head hurt. Literally. My head. Started pounding. Because WHAT IS THIS, PEOPLE?!

Derrick Henry? King Henry? The freight train? THE LEGEND?! Oh, I know the name. We ALL know the name. But this ain't 2019. It ain't 2020. And this sure as hell ain't Tennessee. The man is in **Baltimore** now, and the volume you think he's getting? It's a myth.

The Mud Dogs gave up a third-round pick for a 30-year-old RB in a **running-back-by-committee offense**. In a **PPR** league. Where Henry doesn't catch passes. Like... ever. This is like buying a Ferrari with no engine. It looks pretty. It sounds good. But it ain't getting you anywhere.

You wanna talk nostalgia? Fine. This pick is a love letter to the past. But fantasy football ain't about respect — it's about results. And Derrick Henry, for a third-rounder? Jesse Glaspell just donated a premium asset for the hope that a fading superstar has one last ride in him.

OFFICIAL TEAM RESPONSE – Joe Riddle, Media Relations Director, Appalachian Mud Dogs

"Henry's been defying age longer than Vince's been defying common sense. We'll take 1,000 yards and 10 touchdowns with a Round 3 tag any day. Keep doubting the King. You'll be one of the bodies he stiff-arms on the way to another playoff run."



#10. The Bad Guys

Anthony Radke Sr.

2025 Keeper – Bijan Robinson (Costs Round 1 Pick)

The Bad Guys kept Bijan... for a FIRST ROUND PICK??? My goodness, have they no shame?!

Let me tell you something right now — Bijan Robinson is a phenomenal football player. Generational talent. Explosive runner. Can catch out the backfield. I love the guy. But **this ain't about talent**. This is about VALUE.

And The Bad Guys? They torched their FIRST ROUND PICK to keep a guy that you'd still need to consider taking in the first round of this year's draft anyway! That's not a keeper move. That's just standing still with a smile on your face.

In a keeper league, Round 1 is SACRED. That's where you need to pull off heists. That's where you grab elite production **for a discount**. But what did Anthony Radke and the Bad Guys do? They gave up their biggest chip to break even. That's not sharp. That's not bold. That's not even brave. **That's basic**. And in this league? **Basic gets bounced in Week 15**.

OFFICIAL TEAM RESPONSE – Arthur Robinson, Media Relations Director, The Bad Guys

"So Bijan's too good to keep, huh? That's Vince's hangup. He talks himself into circles trying to find the 'perfect' value. Sometimes, the best move is the obvious one. Bijan is a franchise back. Round 1 or not, he's worth every inch of it."



#11. Hobbton

Charles Thomas

2025 Keeper – Josh Allen (Costs Round 1 Pick)

I told myself I wouldn't get emotional. I told myself I wouldn't raise my voice. BUT WHAT IN THE HELL IS THIS?!?

Josh Allen is a BEAST. I know it. You know it. Hell, my barber knows it. But this isn't real football. This is fantasy. And in a 1-QB league, you DO. NOT. WASTE. a first-round pick on a quarterback. I don't care if it's Allen, Mahomes, or Joe Montana's ghost — **you just don't do it.**

Hobbton could've locked in a WR1. A bellcow RB. Somebody with positional scarcity in a format where that matters. Instead, they spent their first-round draft capital on a QB you could replace 75% of the time with someone available in Round 6.

This ain't chess. It ain't checkers either. **It's fantasy math.** And the math says this is the worst ROI of any keeper on the board. This move doesn't give Hobbton an edge — it **handcuffs** their whole damn draft. This was not value. This was not strategy. This was... a fantasy felony.

OFFICIAL TEAM RESPONSE – Sam King, Media Relations Director, Hobbton

"Josh. Freaking. Allen. And you got the nerve to call it a mistake? Man, miss us with the purity contest. The dude carries fantasy squads weekly. He's not just a keeper, he's a freakin' fantasy battering ram. You want to criticize? Go ahead. We'll be too busy blowing the doors off everyone else's QB room."



#12. DBarber

Daniel Hernandez



2025 Keeper – No Player Selected

No keeper?? NO KEEPER?!?! Ladies and gentlemen, I am speechless. And that doesn't happen often!

While the rest of the league is cooking with effort, trying to flip mid-round picks into elite production, DBarber's out here showing up to a gunfight without a water pistol, let alone a weapon.

No keeper doesn't mean you're being strategic. It doesn't mean you're bold. It means **you let an opportunity to gain FREE VALUE slip through your fingers** like it was nothing. That ain't being mysterious. That ain't playing 4D chess. That's being unprepared.

Let me be blunt: **this league is too competitive to spot people free advantages**. Daniel Hernandez just started 2025 in the red, and he's gonna have to be damn near perfect on draft day to crawl out of the hole he dug for this team.

OFFICIAL TEAM RESPONSE – Jose Vargas, Media Relations Director, DBarber

"No keeper? That's his punchline? We didn't keep anyone because we weren't about to force value that wasn't there. Maybe Vince should try analyzing that instead of acting like everyone who passes on a mid-round RB is clueless. Keep watching. We'll show everyone how to play this game the smart way."