

FANTASY COURT

SYLLABUS

IN RE THE KING HENRY SHOWDOWN

Original petition for an advisory opinion on waiver priority procedure

No. 26-1543-1. Heard and decided October 21, 2026

The Ringer Fantasy Football Show, “‘MNF’ Reactions, Power Ranking What’s Aged the Best This NFL Season, a Robust Fantasy Court, and a LOT of Gold Bond,” at 57:45–1:04:11

Petitioner A-Bone is a member of the self-styled “Cerebral League,” a four-team league in which all drafting is conducted strictly from memory—no cheat sheets, phones, or tablets permitted—and overall record determines both the champion and the recipient of a last-place punishment. Petitioner concedes that the league’s drafts take place at random times during the offseason and that participants are typically heavily intoxicated and under the influence of other substances. As a consequence, the league has on occasion failed to draft star players entirely; this season, the entire league forgot Derrick Henry. Because the league permits only a single mid-season waiver pickup per team each year, Henry has remained unrostered for half a season, and all four members now covet him. The league is divided as to whether waiver priority should be determined by reverse standings, which some members contend unduly rewards poor drafting, or by auction, free-agent budget, or rolling waivers.

Held: In a league that drafts from memory, priority for a waiver claim on a forgotten star is determined by a memory contest, not by reverse standings or an auction. The members shall write down as many current Baltimore Ravens as they can in five minutes, and the longest list claims Derrick Henry.

We held that a gap in a league’s waiver rules is filled by asking what the league is for, and the Cerebral League is for remembering. Reverse standings would hand the forgotten player to the member who forgot the most, while an auction or free-agent budget would import a mechanism

Syllabus

the league has never used, so each measures something the league does not value. Only a contest of recall is consistent with the league's charter, and we adopted one, with tiebreakers drawn from Henry's former Titans teammates and the 2015 Alabama roster.

JUSTICE KELLY delivered the opinion of the Court, in which CHIEF JUSTICE HEIFETZ and JUSTICE HORLBECK joined.

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[October 21, 2026]

JUSTICE KELLY delivered the opinion of the Court, in which CHIEF JUSTICE HEIFETZ and JUSTICE HORLBECK joined.

Petitioner A-Bone belongs to a four-team league that calls itself the Cerebral League. Its charter has one real provision: members draft from memory. No cheat sheets, no phones, no tablets. Overall record crowns the champion and sentences the last-place finisher to a punishment. Petitioner adds, with the candor we have come to expect from our litigants, that the drafts occur at random times during the offseason and that the drafters are usually very drunk and sometimes worse. The predictable result is that the league occasionally forgets a star. This year it forgot Derrick Henry.

The league permits one mid-season waiver pickup per team per year, so Henry has sat on the wire for half a season, and all four members want him. The league cannot agree on how to order the claims. Some favor reverse standings. Others say that rewards the worst drafter for drafting worst, and propose an auction, a free-agent budget, or rolling waivers. Petitioner asks us how to run what he calls the King Henry Showdown.

We hold that none of the proposed methods will do. A league that drafts from memory must resolve its waiver disputes by memory. Each member shall have five minutes, a pen, and a sheet of paper, and shall write down as many current Baltimore Ravens as he can. The longest list claims Derrick Henry.

Opinion of the Court

I

Two preliminary matters. First, the posture. Petitioner styles this as a request for an advisory opinion, and this Court has lately been careful about answering questions nobody asked. *In re Expansion of the Playoff to Twenty-Four Teams*, 26-1543-3 (2026) (Kelly, J., concurring in the judgment). That caution has no application here. Four people asked. The controversy is concrete, it has a name, and the name has been sitting unrostered since the draft. We proceed.

Second, nobody asks us to undo the draft, and we would not. We have held that a league's decisions do not become void because the league was, "in the technical legal terminology, absolutely hammered," when it made them. *In re Inebriated League Governance*, 24-0806-1 (2024). The Cerebral League forgot Henry collectively and symmetrically. No member can claim prejudice from an omission he shared in equal measure. The draft stands, Henry is a free agent, and the only question is who gets him.

II

Ordinarily that question has an easy answer, because ordinarily a league has a waiver rule. This one does not. It has one pickup a year and no procedure for ordering it, and so we must supply one. We do so the way we construe any gap in a league's rules: by asking what the league is for. See *In re Hard Seltzer Waiver Claim*, 20-1357-1 (2020) (reading a beer-drinking tiebreaker in light of the league's practices because the rule "aims to test managers' dedication and create entertaining content, not to enforce beverage taxonomy").

The Cerebral League is for remembering. That is not a quirk of the league; it is the league. Every other feature of its design is downstream of the decision to make recall the skill being tested. Measured against that purpose, each proposed method fails, and each fails instructively.

Reverse standings fail most clearly. The league has chosen to let overall record do double duty, crowning the champion and condemning the loser, and in a league where the only input is memory, the standings are a running tally of who remembered the most. To hand the best forgotten

Opinion of the Court

player to the team at the bottom is to subsidize forgetting. The members who object that reverse standings reward poor drafting are therefore not making a policy argument; they are reading their own charter correctly. Competitive balance is a fine value. The Cerebral League simply did not adopt it.

An auction or free-agent budget fails for a different reason. The league has no budget. It has never had a budget. Introducing one in Week 8 to decide a single contested claim would be the invention of a mechanism never before employed, for the benefit of whoever happens to be richest in a currency that did not exist last week. Cf. *Andrew v. Commissioner*, 24-0826-1 (2024) (voiding a redraft league's mid-season introduction of pick trading, "a practice never before employed," to facilitate one acquisition). Rolling waivers fail more simply still. There is nothing to roll. With one claim a year, a rolling order is just a fixed order wearing a hat.

What these proposals share is that each answers the question of desert with a metric the league does not value. Reverse standings measure futility. An auction measures money. Rolling waivers measure the calendar. The Cerebral League measures one thing, and a procedure consistent with its founding principles must measure the same thing.

III

Hence the test. Henry plays for the Ravens, so the Ravens roster is the subject. Each member gets a pen, a sheet of paper, and five minutes, with no phone, tablet, or cheat sheet, exactly as at the draft. He writes down as many current Baltimore Ravens as he can. Lists are then scored by the number of actual Ravens named. Players no longer on the roster do not count, but neither do they cost anything; the league is cerebral, not punitive. Spelling is not graded, for the same reason. Waiver priority runs from the longest list to the shortest, and the longest list takes Henry.

Three refinements. First, a member who is a Ravens fan has a structural advantage that would make the contest, in the Chief Justice's phrase, "kind of cheating." Such a member shall instead list the teammates

Opinion of the Court

Henry played with in Tennessee, a roster he has no partisan reason to know. Second, ties are broken by that same Titans list. Third, if the tie survives, it is broken by the 2015 Alabama roster, on which Henry was a junior and which went 14-1. The Court notes that it is able to administer that tiebreaker from the bench: Jake Coker, Calvin Ridley, ArDarius Stewart, Kenyan Drake, A'Shawn Robinson, Reggie Ragland, Reuben Foster, Minkah Fitzpatrick, Jonathan Allen. We will stop there, both because the list is long and because one member of this Court got the quarterback wrong on the first try.

We are aware of the objection that recall under a clock is unreliable, that a reasonable person asked to name a woman will say Hillary Clinton and then Amelia Earhart and then nothing. The objection is correct, and it is not an objection. The league has chosen to be governed by exactly this frailty. A procedure that tests it is not an imposition on the Cerebral League; it is the Cerebral League, finally applied to itself. Whether the contest is held sober or in the league's customary condition we leave to the members. We held in *Inebriated League Governance*, 24-0806-1, that "drunk words are sober thoughts." Whether drunk recall is sober memory is a question of first impression, and the record this contest produces will help us answer it.

* * *

The league forgot Derrick Henry together. It will remember its way back to him one Raven at a time. The members shall conduct the contest described in Part III, and the resulting order shall govern the King Henry Showdown.

It is so ordered.