

Life of a Stud Quarterback

by Mike Herman, exclusive to Footballguys.com

Study Questions

What does the career path of a fantasy football stud quarterback look like? When does studliness begin, and when does it end? Are there any not-so-stud-like gaps in the middle? The same types of questions surface every year about the current batch of top fantasy players. A wide variety of factors will determine the answer for each individual player. What follows is a graphic comparison of numerous studs' careers, in hopes of finding any trends or parallels.

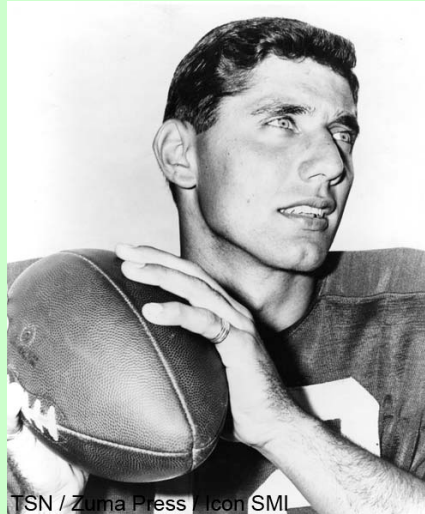
What exactly is a fantasy stud quarterback? That question could have numerous answers, and could be an entire article in and of itself. For the purpose of this study, I started by looking at all players who had at least one year end fantasy rank in the top five, going back to 1980. To make the final cut, they had to have an additional top five finish, or the top five plus two top ten finishes. Some quality players probably missed the cut. Some two-year-wonders that may not belong probably made the list, however a player coming off of two strong years will be a candidate for a top pick in fantasy drafts, and thus worth studying.

Table of Studs

The table starting on the following page indicates the results for quarterbacks, showing the fantasy rank for each year of their NFL career. Top five finishes are highlighted in yellow and top tens finishes in green. Active players and their upcoming year (2009) are shown in blue. Players with significant legal issues are highlighted in red.

The 37 players listed on the next page begins with early starters and continues through late bloomers, so that players with similar career paths are grouped together. The group of seven players on the subsequent page is the super-stud lifetime achievers. My apologies to any of the players (or their fans) that just missed the arbitrary cut.

Studs: Then and Now



TSN / Zuma Press / Icon SMI

Long before fantasy football hit the mainstream, **Joe Namath** was a stud of sorts, with his legendary guarantee and a subsequent side career in commercials.



Mark Cowan / Icon SMI

Peyton Manning is the ultimate fantasy stud QB. He has finished in the top ten every year of his eleven years in the NFL. Eight of those were top five finishes, and two of those were number one.

Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Blake, Jeff	71	19	4	4	22	44	11	24	85	27	22	58	69								
Vick, Michael	35	3	39	12	11	3															
O'Brien, Ken	33	3	5	12	18	16	19	10	41	43											
Brooks, Aaron	28	8	5	5	18	18	41														
Garcia, Jeff	18	2	2	10	12	27	42	31	17	22											
Palmer, Carson	23	1	4	9	41																
Culpepper, Dante	73	1	15	2	1	2	35	43	32	39											
Warner, Kurt	68	1	14	1	45	53	29	23	39	10	4										
Green, Trent	72	7	20	17	8	4	4	13	37	44	54										
McNabb, Donovan	36	5	5	12	13	3	20	9	12	7											
Bledsoe, Drew	16	4	20	6	6	11	8	13	44	5	21	19	6	35							
Kelly, Jim	4	9	11	9	10	2	5	7	11	13	16										
Esiason, Boomer	43	6	2	8	4	6	9	14	28	6	15	27	29	27							
Williams, Doug	28	17	4	4	7	71	27	17	46												
Brunell, Mark	56	14	3	8	15	13	7	12	21	47	33	14	31								
Kramer, Tommy	36	60	8	12	5	4	43	27	12	10	41	34	35	67							
Lomax, Neil	29	20	9	2	11	17	4	6													
McNair, Steve	40	32	6	5	12	16	7	9	6	32	15	18	47								
Everett, Jim	34	21	2	3	4	12	6	27	8	8	23	51									
Brady, Tom	71	19	6	10	9	2	7	1	59												
Anderson, Ken	28	16	4	1	1	7	10	18	15	30	2	3	24	24	54	61					
Cunningham, Randall	44	19	1	1	2	1	63	3	37	9	40	43	3	38	39	39					
Jaworski, Ron	49	41	48	5	13	13	5	13	11	8	15	9	31	58	49						
Brees, Drew	48	18	26	8	6	2	5	1													
Hasselbeck, Matt	64	55	30	20	3	13	4	21	7	36											
White, Danny	51	64	47	45	8	12	5	5	30	10	29	14	54								
Mitchell, Scott	68	68	24	27	2	9	10	56	63	40	87										
George, Jeff	23	19	26	19	7	7	47	3	38	14	37	60									
Simms, Phil	23	23	22	61	7	7	8	13	5	15	20	34	35	14							
Krieg, Dave	66	31	34	22	3	4	11	10	21	12	14	23	10	35	24	17	27	79	66		
Sipe, Brian	30	42	12	25	8	1	2	10	29	6											
Bartkowski, Steve	17	39	32	16	18	3	3	14	7	21	40	42									
Thiesman, Joe	47	58	29	22	11	9	15	7	6	3	6	25									
Fouts, Dan	26	17	24	11	29	7	4	1	1	1	14	11	8	16	16						
Hostetler, Jeff	69	68	55	41	34	21	21	3	10	30	8	42									
Testeverde, Vinny	33	20	14	13	30	15	20	16	17	2	17	4	65	15	24	48	32	18	47	61	45
Gannon, Rich	74	63	18	15	19	39	58	40	31	18	3	4	4	2	37	45					

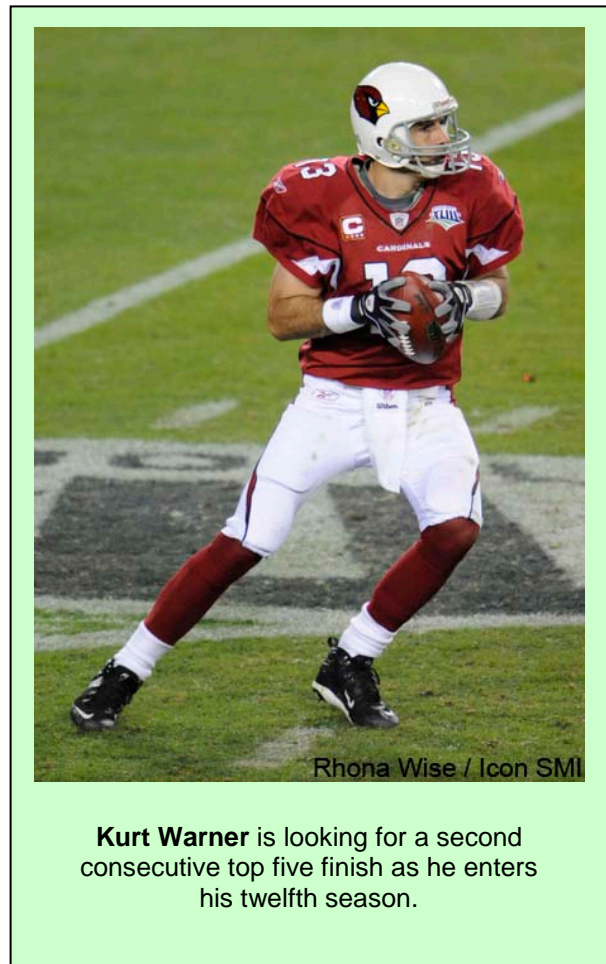
Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Young, Steve	35	14	30	36	31	38	7	1	1	1	9	10	9	1	54						
Moon, Warren	12	18	12	7	13	5	2	1	13	4	6	3	34	7	27	70	53				
Montana, Joe	52	26	8	2	2	4	1	23	2	9	4	3	56	18	12						
Manning, Peyton	9	4	3	6	4	2	1	3	1	3	6										
Marino, Dan	12	1	2	1	5	3	7	8	3	2	32	3	11	14	11	10	24				
Elway, John	27	13	5	6	3	8	10	6	5	17	2	5	5	5	4	13					
Favre, Brett	71	7	7	2	1	1	1	3	6	10	4	11	7	5	14	11	8	14			

Assorted observations and thoughts based on the quarterback “picture” above:

- Let's start with who's not on the list. Nineteen players had a top five finish, but didn't make the cut. The first six on this list are still active, so they still have a chance to join the studs.

Eli Manning	Kordell Stewart	Ken O'Brien
Marc Bulger	Mark Rypien	Tony Eason
Philip Rivers	Timm Rosenbach	Lynn Dickey
Jay Cutler	Don Majkowski	Bill Kenney
Tony Romo	Steve Beuerlein	Jay Schroeder
Ben Roethlisberger	Troy Aikman	Jake Plummer
	Brad Johnson	

- Three out of the 44 players were two-year wonders. Jeff Blake is the only one that did so in back-to-back years.
- The most common number of top ten finishes is four years (8 out of the 32 that are done playing).
- The most top ten finishes: Brett Favre currently has 13. He is followed by John Elway with 12, Dan Marino with 11, and Peyton Manning currently with 11.
- Kurt Warner is coming off a top five finish in his eleventh season. Four of the five studs who previously had a top five finish in year 11 replicated that feat in year 12 (Ken Anderson, Rich Gannon, Joe Montana, and John Elway).
- After ranking in the top ten during their second through fourth seasons, Aaron Brooks and Jeff Garcia dropped out in their fifth season and never returned. Carson Palmer is hoping to break that pattern as he enters his sixth year.
- Only two studs made the top ten in their first year. Jim Kelly was the first; however he made a two-year pit stop in the USFL before playing in the NFL, so he wasn't a true "rookie". Peyton Manning also started out in the top ten, and has never left.



8. Top ten finishes at the latest point in their career: Dan Marino did so in his 16th season and Brett Favre did so in his 17th season.
9. Most of the players took a break from the top 10 at some point and then returned (25 out of the 32 that are done playing).
10. The most common slump year appears to be the eighth season.
11. A handful of the late-bloomer quarterbacks had sustained success: Dan Fouts, Steve Young, and Rich Gannon.
12. Donovan McNabb, Jeff Garcia, Dante Culpepper, and Matt Hasselbeck are all entering their eleventh season. Only 11 of 31 studs logged a top ten finish in their eleventh year.
13. Mark Brunell has now gone eight consecutive years without a top ten finish. Jeff Garcia has now been out of the top ten for six years. No stud has returned to the top ten after that long of a break. The closest were Ken O'Brien and Dave Krieg who each had a gap of four years between top ten finishes, and Kurt Warner who returned after a five year absence.
14. After a string of successful seasons, culminating in a first place finish in his eighth year, Tom Brady dropped way out of the top ten in his ninth season (due to injury). Drew Brees enters his ninth season after a string of successful seasons, culminating in a first place finish in his eighth year.

