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Papa John's Names Five Finalists in Search for Fantasy Football League That's 'Better Than the Rest'

All-Pro Tight End Antonio Gates, ESPN Fantasy Football Expert Matthew Berry Lead Expert Panel of Judges; Winner to Receive Trip to 2011 NFL Draft

LOUISVILLE, Ky.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- As fantasy football teams across the country load up for a playoff push, owners in five elite leagues will square off to determine which league reigns supreme. Papa John's, the Official Pizza Sponsor of the NFL, today announced the selection of five finalists for its "Fantasy to Reality" contest, a competition to find the fantasy football league that's "better than the rest," with the winner claiming ultimate bragging rights and a trip to the 2011 NFL Draft in New York City.

Consumers can review the finalists and cast their votes now through Dec. 12 at Papa John's Facebook page. America's vote will be included in selection of the winner, who also will be judged by an expert panel led by six-time All-Pro tight end Antonio Gates and ESPN Senior Fantasy Analyst Matthew Berry. The winner will be announced the week of Dec. 13 as many fantasy football playoffs kick off.

"In fantasy football, just like in the National Football League, you have to bring your 'A' game every season, every week, every game," Gates said. "These five finalists have done just that, competing and managing their leagues to perfection and providing the ultimate fantasy experience — from draft day blowouts, entertaining smack talk, strategic roster moves and great competition. But only one of these leagues can take home the title of the fantasy league that's 'better than the rest'."

The five finalists are:

- Excessive Celebration — Brent Johnson leads this 12-team, Atlanta-based league with an iron fist, even drafting up a Constitution with league rules and bylaws. This well-oiled machine of a league holds league votes to approve incoming owners and awards virtual trophies each week for some added motivation.
- The Dude Abides — This long-standing league, spearheaded by Hunt Meacham of Charlotte, N.C., consists of best friends dating back to elementary school, all coming back every year for a shot at the title. But these friendships make way for fierce rivalries as each owner strives for a chance to wear the coveted league championship belt.
- Southern Illinois Fantasy Football — Not content with standard 10- or 12-team leagues, this league consists of 32 teams split in four divisions. League Commissioner Donald Basta from Carterville, Ill., and his league managers are so dedicated to their league that they hold an annual owners meeting each April to discuss all potential rule changes to improve the league.
- The Coaches Poll — Peter LaBauve from Columbus, Ohio takes his league so seriously that he created a website featuring league updates, manager profiles, photos and The Coaches Poll record books. The dedication is all worth it for a chance to win the 3-foot-tall Trueman Trophy.
- The AFFL — Each year, 12 team owners battle it out for the coveted AFFL Championship Ring, which bears the league's creed: "Survival of the Luckiest." League Commissioner Raffi Lalazarian of Los Angeles manages the league's website, which features customized team pages and weekly articles and podcast interviews with team owners.

"The quality of the responses in our search for the fantasy football league that's better than the rest is a true testament to the passion and dedication that exists for fantasy football," said Andrew Varga, Papa John's chief marketing officer. "And we knew that in order to choose between these five deserving leagues, we needed to get input from America, as well as some fantasy football experts. Who better to help determine the fantasy league that's 'better than the rest' than the best tight end in fantasy and reality, Antonio Gates, and ESPN's Matthew Berry, the expert fantasy owners turn to for advice on how to bring home the championship for their fantasy team?"

"Between the hundreds of leagues I've played in over the past 25 years as well as the millions of leagues I have seen in my 10 years writing for ESPN.com, I definitely know firsthand the creativity, hard work, friendship and banter it takes to make a league great," said Berry, a charter member of the Fantasy Sports Writers Association (FSWA) Hall of Fame. "I'm looking forward to helping choose the league that's better than the rest and stealing some of their ideas for leagues of my own."

Known for "Better Ingredients, Better Pizza," Papa John's is in the first year of a multi-year sponsorship with the NFL and Papa John's is also the Official Pizza of the Arizona Cardinals, Atlanta Falcons, Baltimore Ravens, Dallas Cowboys, Houston Texans, Indianapolis Colts, Miami Dolphins, New York Giants, New York Jets, Philadelphia Eagles, Seattle Seahawks, St. Louis Rams, Tennessee Titans and Washington Redskins.

Headquartered in Louisville, Kentucky, Papa John's International, Inc. (NASDAQ: PZZA) is the world's third largest pizza company. For 10 of the past 11 years, consumers have rated Papa John's No. 1 in customer satisfaction among all national pizza chains in the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). Papa John's also was honored by Restaurants & Institutions Magazine (R&I) with the 2009 Gold Award for Consumers' Choice in Chains in the pizza segment. Papa John's is the Official Pizza Sponsor of the National Football League and Super Bowl XLV, XLVI and XLVII. For more information about the company or to order pizza online, visit Papa John's at www.papajohns.com.

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