

Hello everyone,

First, we would like to thank all of you for your resilience in dealing with the numerous travel issues that have come up nearly every weekend this season. Last weekend may have been the worst of all, with many people not getting home until Monday or Tuesday. We realize the stress that puts on everyone with work and family life. Thank you for your incredible dedication. If you are traveling this weekend, please keep in mind that TSA wait times have been much higher in many big airports. Please plan accordingly.

We are in the final weeks of the season. Keep your focus and authenticity as you analyze many more comparable teams in the same neighborhoods. We have two things for you to ponder and apply.

**Considering All Comparison Points.** We judge in a build up system and much of our files are filled with the achievements and challenges presented (as it should be). However, this may not address all comparison points on the sheet, all possible achievements, or your own impressions of what may be missing, less fulfilled, or an opportunity for the team.

Adam Grant, author and teacher, says, *“The most important skill for creativity is no longer original thinking. It's taste and tenacity. In the age of AI, ideas are abundant. Good judgment and execution are scarce. The future belongs to those who excel at finding and amplifying the signal in the noise.”*

We dig in and reward those teams with clear identity, depth of challenge, and achievement. Unity and concept and compatibility are key elements. Be mindful of your impression as you analyze the depth of the challenges presented by the team. During your wrap up, or any time you are feeling it, speak to what may be missing, limiting, or unclear. This is part of your authenticity and helps you consider all of the bullet points against the class standards and your own experience of what is possible. Ultimately, this will also help when you analyze and compare the teams to one another.

**Using Your Full Range of Numbers.** Given the process outlined above, when you come to comparing and scoring the teams, the balance of both the comparison points *and* real-time achievement should be evident in your subcaption rankings, spreads, and scores. Recaps tell a story and your numbers reflect that reality. As we have clarified before, neighborhoods can be up to one third of a box. This means having a team in 3rd for what and 10th for how can reflect what reality was for that day. The converse of 5th for what and 1st for how can also be true. The ultimate bottomline point spreads may be less but the subcaptions clearly show the results from the contest of the day.

More and more teams are tight and there are only small differentiators. Achievement and the performances of the day truly matter more and more as the competition tightens and heats up. Dig in and recognize the challenges and achievements displayed in your captions.

Please let us know anything you need. Have a great weekend!

Sam & William