

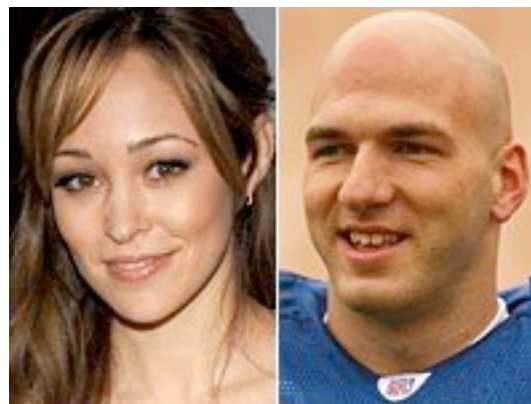


## The Taylor Townsend Project

Posted Jun 25, 2009 8:00AM By [Doug Bernstein](#)

*'The Taylor Townsend Project' is all about finding the minor characters of today that will be the stars of tomorrow in fantasy football.*

When evaluating fantasy prospects for the upcoming season there are always a handful of reserve players who appear intriguing as a result of a starter's offseason departure. Determining which of these replacements will succeed when given increased opportunity is no small feat. By Week 6, the free-agency list tends to be littered with the remnants of "should have been contributors."



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Consider the 2008 cases of Rashied Davis, Andre Hall and Chris Perry. While these players were quickly discarded and their owners left writing on message boards, "Dude, I swear the computer made that pick," successful replacements like [Aaron Rodgers](#) had fantasy managers collecting envy alongside W's.

I have labeled this search for minor characters that will star with the departure of a main character, 'The Taylor Townsend Project' (also considered the 'Converse Chachi Corollary,' where a role player becomes the primary guy and falters). For those of you unfamiliar with the groundbreaking teen soap, *The O.C.*, Taylor Townsend was a side character played by [Autumn Reeser](#) who first appeared in Season 3. With the death of Marissa Cooper, Taylor stepped into a lead role and not only matched, but exceeded the contributions of Marissa. Below are three players that I believe have Taylor Townsend-like potential.

**[Anthony Gonzalez](#), WR, Indianapolis Colts** – *departed: Marvin Harrison*

Harrison was targeted 107 times in 2008. A conservative estimate would say 25 percent of those passes would go to Gonzalez next year. Taking into account Gonzalez's reception percentage and yards per catch that should translate into approximately 72 receptions and 1,000 yards. If the projections hold true, Gonzalez should be a borderline No. 2 fantasy receiver or a very solid No. 3.

**[Miles Austin](#), WR, Dallas Cowboys** – *departed: Terrell Owens*

Despite his struggles last season, [Roy Williams](#) is slated to be the Cowboys' top wideout for 2009 and Austin will compete with [Patrick Crayton](#) for the second spot. Recent reports indicate that



Crayton is running with the first team but receivers coach Ray Sherman recently stated in regards to Austin, "The guy can play. The guy is a beast."

In 2008, the 6-foot-3 receiver registered 13 catches with three touchdowns. He is a physical player similar to Owens who should be a major red-zone target. Look for Austin to start, if not in Week 1 by at least Week 4. Take him as your fourth fantasy receiver and watch as he ends up your No. 2.

**Ahmad Bradshaw, RB, New York Giants** – *departed: Derrick Ward*

Bradshaw has averaged 6.1 yards per carry over his two-year career. He is a tough runner capable of breaking long runs and should excel in the Giants' screen-heavy passing game where Derrick Ward caught 41 passes for 384 yards in 2008. There is some concern that Danny Ware or rookie Andre Brown may surpass Bradshaw on the depth chart, but given running back coach Jerald Ingram's strong praise for Bradshaw I feel that is unlikely. Consider him a No. 4, borderline No. 3 fantasy running back.

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