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# THE NEXT

**DIGITAL GAMING INDUSTRY:  
CEO INTERVIEW SERIES**

## Volume 28: We talk to Blitz:Draft CEO Toby Bucsescu

## **BLITZ : DRAFT**

**You've created something totally unique in the fantasy space. Give us some detail on the genesis of Blitz:Draft.**

The genesis was really very simple. I had recently tried playing a season-long fantasy hockey league with my friends. Despite being a die-hard hockey fan, I lost all interest after just a few weeks. I wanted to be in the thick of it with them, but between managing waiver wires, tweaking lineups, and tracking stats, it just felt like work. The draft was the best part, and everything after that was downhill.

Shortly after, I was swiping on Tinder and it just dawned me. What if I drafted my team like this? One player at a time. Swipe right, they're on your team. Swipe left, you skip them. But you don't know who's coming next. That tension, that simplicity, it immediately felt like something. I carried the idea with me for years, pressure-testing it, refining the concept in my head, before finally going all-in and building Blitz:Draft.

*I have a background in Human Factors and Systems Engineering. Essentially, designing systems around how people actually think and behave under pressure. That discipline is baked into every corner of Blitz:Draft.*

**You come from a background in air traffic control - not exactly a traditional path to founding a fantasy sports company. How did that outside perspective become an advantage when designing Blitz:Draft?**

Being an Air Traffic Controller was a childhood dream of mine. It's an incredibly rewarding career and something I'm very proud of. It may not be a traditional path to founding a fantasy sports company, but I'd argue it's a great one.

Along with Air Traffic Control, I have a background in Human Factors and Systems Engineering. Essentially, designing systems around how people actually think and behave under pressure. That discipline is baked into every corner of Blitz:Draft. We didn't want to build another cluttered, spreadsheet-style fantasy app. The same speed and simplicity we brought to the gameplay needed to carry through the entire interface, every screen, every interaction.

Aviation is also one of the most heavily regulated industries in the world. That gave me a real comfort level when I dove into the DFS regulatory landscape to understand how to position Blitz:Draft for long-term success. Where a lot of first-time founders might find that world intimidating, it felt familiar to me.

And lastly, being a controller is all about rigorous preparation combined with anticipation. Spotting problems before they develop into serious ones. That mindset has been hugely beneficial as a first-time founder building in this space.

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You're constantly scanning the horizon, making decisions with incomplete information, and staying calm under pressure. That's air traffic control, and that's startup life.

**The two-minute draft mechanic is central to your product experience. Can you walk us through the thinking behind it - why was speed important, and how are you balancing simplicity with strategic depth?**

Speed was always central to our vision. We wanted Blitz:Draft to feel like a game from the very first second, not a homework assignment. When my co-founders and I were building out the gameplay, we knew the draft experience needed to be fast and engaging. But we also knew something was missing. That's when my co-founder Matt came up with the idea of adding a two-minute clock, and it was an immediate aha moment for us. The missing ingredient was pressure.

*During our first NFL season, users averaged 7 drafts per week. That kind of repeat engagement tells us we've built something that clicks with power users.*

Blitz:Draft is simpler than traditional fantasy for sure, but it has real depth to it. Every second on that clock matters. You're making rapid-fire decisions about which players to draft and which to skip, without knowing who is coming next. And the clock isn't just there to create urgency. It's the first tiebreaker in the event two users draft the same team. If you don't finish your draft before the clock expires, every player drafted after that comes with a -5 point penalty. So there are real consequences to poor time management.

Then there's the Undo function, which is one of my favorite strategic layers. Users can go back to the last player they skipped, but it costs them 20 seconds off their draft clock. That's a highly consequential decision. It could pay off huge, or it could backfire badly if you burn too much time and end up taking penalties on your final picks. Those kinds of trade-offs are what give the game its depth while keeping the experience fast and intuitive.

Matt also came up with the name Blitz:Draft shortly after that, which captured exactly what we were building.

**You offer two draft modes - Swipe and Grid. With these distinct draft modes, what kind of user do you believe Blitz:Draft serves better than anyone else?**

Legacy fantasy sports players love Blitz:Draft. Our surveys indicate that most of our early users have experience playing other fantasy sports products, and the response has been incredible. During our first NFL season, users averaged 7 drafts per week. That kind of repeat engagement tells us we've built something that clicks with power users.

But where Blitz:Draft truly stands apart is in reaching the casual sports fan. You don't need to follow every team religiously or study stat sheets to enjoy Blitz:Draft. Blitz:Draft meets you where you are, and you might even discover new players along the way just by drafting them.

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We also believe Blitz:Draft has a real opportunity to resonate with female sports fans, a massive and growing audience that traditional fantasy platforms have largely failed to engage. The complexity and time commitment of legacy products has kept too many fans on the sidelines, and we think our fast, intuitive gameplay opens the door much wider. As women's sports continue their incredible rise in popularity, we want Blitz:Draft to be the platform that meets those fans where they are.

The two draft modes play a big role in all of this. Both are fast and engaging, but they reward different skills. Blitz:Swipe tests your knowledge and instinct. You see one player at a time and you have to act quickly based on incomplete information. Blitz:Grid presents four players at once, each from a different position. Every draft choice is layered. If you draft a QB, you're also skipping the RB, WR, and TE while deciding not to see who the next QB is. It's both simpler and more intriguing at the same time.

**Fantasy sports platforms are increasingly evolving into digital communities where players share insights, discuss strategies, and compete in real time. How important is community to your long-term retention strategy?**

Community is huge for us, and we have big plans. Fantasy sports at its core is a social experience. The best moments come from competing against people you know, talking trash, and having something on the line when you watch the games together. Everything on our product roadmap is designed to amplify that.

On the digital side, we're building out private, user-generated leagues along with season-long leagues where users draft a new team every week or even every day. These features will give our users more reasons to come back and more ways to compete with the people they care about.

*The thing we are most excited about is a concept we recently coined: DFS IRL. We want to bring our ultra-fast drafting experience to bars and venues. Imagine walking into your favorite watering hole, scanning a Blitz:Draft QR code, and jumping into a two-minute draft right there.*

But the thing we are most excited about is a concept we recently coined: DFS IRL. We want to bring our ultra-fast drafting experience to bars and venues. Imagine walking into your favorite watering hole, scanning a Blitz:Draft QR code, and jumping into a two-minute draft right there with friends at the bar. Then watching the standings update live on the TV behind the bar. That's the future we're building toward, and we think it has the potential to completely change how fans experience fantasy sports in a social setting.

**You're live across the NFL, NBA, and MLB, with EPL on the way. How do you decide which sport to add next, and does your user experience translate equally well across all of them?**

From the very beginning, we wanted to make sure Blitz:Draft could offer contests year round. That was a core part of our go-to-market strategy. The way Blitz:Draft is built, it is very easy and relatively quick to launch a new sport. Our drafting mechanics translate naturally across any team sport because the core experience doesn't change. You're still

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making fast, high-stakes decisions against the clock regardless of whether you're drafting quarterbacks or point guards.

*Our drafting mechanics translate naturally across any team sport because the core experience doesn't change. You're still making fast, high-stakes decisions against the clock.*

The key factor for us is the number of athletes playing on any given day. We need a minimum number of players in order to generate our draft pools, which aren't purely random. We use an algorithm to curate the player selection, ensuring that every draft feels balanced and delivers a great user experience. For example, if there were a day when there was only one NBA game, we simply wouldn't offer any contests. There aren't enough players to build a quality draft pool from. That's why team sports with full, active schedules work best for our current game mechanics, and why EPL and NHL are the obvious next steps for us.

We're also very eager to launch women's sports on the platform. WNBA and NWSL are priorities for us as soon as it's practical. The growth of women's sports has been extraordinary, and we want to make sure Blitz:Draft is part of that momentum.

Beyond that, it comes down to weighing data feed costs against current user demand. We also have some exciting plans to introduce new game styles that will open the door to sports like UFC where the number of athletes competing on any given card is much smaller. That's going to expand what Blitz:Draft can offer in a big way.

**With real-money contests live in select states, how are you navigating the regulatory landscape as you look to expand into new markets?**

As a New York City based company, we are very eager to launch our paid product right here in the Big Apple. However, we knew from the beginning that our go-to-market strategy needed to be smart and disciplined. Rather than spending early resources on licensing, we launched in the 18 states where daily fantasy sports operators are not required to obtain a license. These include massive markets like Florida, Texas, Georgia, and Illinois, so the opportunity in front of us is already significant. There is plenty of room to grow in these states alone.

What's equally important is that we built Blitz:Draft to be compliant with regulated state DFS rules from the very beginning. The game mechanics, the app, the entire product was designed with those standards in mind from day one. So when the time comes to expand into licensed states, we won't need to rework the product. All we need is the license. As we build momentum and the business matures, we'll begin pursuing those licenses, starting with New York.

**Blitz:Draft was built as a direct response to the bloated, spreadsheet-style experience that dominates the fantasy landscape. How do you make sure the product stays true to its original promise as the company continues to scale and users anticipate new features?**

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We approach every new feature or game style with the same set of questions. Does this make the game faster? More convenient? Does it keep the playing field level? If the answer to any of those is no, it doesn't make it into the product. That filter has kept us honest from the beginning and it will continue to as we scale.

Let me give you a quick example of an early issue we encountered that forced us to ask ourselves: who are we, and who do we want to be?

Blitz:Draft includes a Weekly Leaderboard with a \$100 prize. When we launched, every contest a user played in, free or paid, scored them points towards the leaderboard. Last place gets 1 point, and each place above that gets an additional point. The goal was to drive engagement. The more you play, the more likely you are to win the leaderboard prize. Well, for weeks on end, the same two users won. They were grinders. They were playing 30 to 50 contests each week.

We asked ourselves a simple question: do we want to be a platform where grinders can just dominate? Where the prize always goes to the person willing to spend the time? Is that the Blitz:Draft brand? No.

So we modified the rules. Now, a user's five highest scores from their first ten contests each week count towards the Weekly Leaderboard. Quality over quantity. That's who we are, and every decision we make going forward will reflect that.

**The fantasy sports boom has been building for years, but daily formats are still relatively young. Do you think the window for disruption is still wide open, or is it starting to close?**

There is no better time to disrupt the stale fantasy sports market. The dominant platforms haven't meaningfully innovated in years, and now their parent companies are distracted chasing prediction markets. Their fantasy products are languishing.

Blitz:Draft captures the speed of sports betting while staying true to the peer-to-peer, skill-based contests that sports fans love so much. We live in an attention economy right now, and with so many distractions, Blitz:Draft cuts through the noise. The window for disruption isn't closing. For a product like ours, it's never been wider.

**I would imagine that EPL is just one piece of what's ahead. As Blitz:Draft builds momentum through 2026, what else can users expect to see coming soon?**

We are very excited about our product roadmap. Head-to-head contests, private user-generated leagues, and season-long leagues where users draft a new team each week are the three features I am most excited for. Head-to-head brings a whole new competitive dynamic. Private leagues give friend groups a home on Blitz:Draft.

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And season-long leagues with weekly drafts take the best part of fantasy sports and make it a recurring experience rather than a one-time event.

On top of that, we have a bunch of exciting plans for how we can gamify fantasy sports even further. I mentioned DFS IRL earlier, bringing our drafting experience to bars and venues, and that's just one piece of it. There's a lot more coming that I can't share just yet, but everything we build will stay true to our brand and core value propositions. Fast, fun, and fair.

**While I'm sure most of your time goes into building Blitz:Draft, what's something you're genuinely interested in or enjoy pursuing outside of your career?**

Music. I have been writing and recording music for a long time. It's a creative outlet that I've always valued. Between being a startup founder and a dad to a two year old, finding the time for it is tough these days, but it's something I always come back to. You can check out my music on all the streaming platforms under the name "The Basin".

**Thank you for taking the time to discuss Blitz:Draft, it has been a fascinating discussion. With all my questions for you, I'd like to offer you the same opportunity. Go ahead and ask me anything you want on the industry.**

Joel, you've had in-depth conversations with founders across every corner of this industry. From that vantage point, what do you think separates the companies that actually break through from the ones that don't? As a first-time founder, I'm always looking to learn, and I'd imagine you've picked up some patterns that the rest of us can't see from inside our own businesses.

**Toby, that's a great question and one I could probably give you a really lengthy answer to. As I think about some of the most successful founders I've met, there are a couple recurring themes I've come across. The first is a maniacal focus on doing one or two things really, really well. I sometimes use the Chipotle analogy: make the best burritos in whatever enterprise you're involved in, and keep shaping it endlessly. I've seen several folks get tripped up by trying to master a number of products, businesses, and verticals at the same time, losing focus which ultimately costs them. I also think a key for founders is to not assume they have every answer. Surrounding yourself with good advisors who don't always tell you what you want to hear, but what you need to hear and being able to embrace that critical feedback goes a long way. I look forward to seeing how you scale and grow Blitz!**



### Toby Bucsescu - Biography

*Toby Bucsescu is the co-founder and CEO of Blitz:Draft. He holds a B.S. in Air Traffic Management with a minor in Human Factors and Systems Engineering from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida. His professional background spans Airport Operations, Aircraft Fire and Rescue, and Air Traffic Control at both the Boston Air Route Traffic Control Center and the New York Terminal Radar Approach Control. Blitz:Draft is his first startup.*

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