

2013 HOCKEY ARBITRATION COMPETITION OF CANADA

Carl Gunnarsson v. Toronto Maple Leafs

Submission on Behalf of the Player

Midpoint: \$3.15 million

Submission by Team 23

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I. INTRODUCTION

This brief analyzes left-handed defenseman Carl Gunnarsson (or the “Player” or Mr. “Gunnarsson”) with regards to his performance and contributions to the Toronto Maple Leafs (or the “Club” or the “Leafs”). Mr. Gunnarsson was drafted in the 7th round of the 2007 NHL entry draft by the Leafs and signed a two year entry level contract with them on July 1st, 2009. He was 22 years old on September 15th, 2009. Since that date Mr. Gunnarsson has played four seasons with the Leafs which makes him a “Group 2 Player” under section 10.2(a) of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (“CBA”).¹ He is therefore eligible for salary arbitration pursuant to section 12.1 of the CBA.²

The CBA goes on to list the following as types of evidence that may be offered for the purpose of an arbitration: the overall performance of the player in the previous season or seasons, the number of games played by the player, his injuries or illnesses during preceding seasons, the length of service of the player in the League and/or with the Club, the overall contribution of the player to the success or failure of his Club in the preceding season, and any special qualities of leadership or public appeal.³ This brief will proceed by assessing the Player in regards to each of these criteria before comparing his midpoint salary to the compensation of players alleged to be comparable.

The midpoint salary for Mr. Gunnarsson’s arbitration is \$3.15 million. After examining him as a player individually and in relation to other comparable players it will be evident that he is a valuable member of the Maple Leafs organization and deserving of a salary above the midpoint. The Player respectfully requests that he be awarded a salary arbitration of \$3.5 million.

¹ CBA s. 10.2 (a)(i).

² CBA s. 12.1.

³ CBA s. 12.9(g)(ii).

II. PERFORMANCE OF THE PLAYER

A. Career Performance

Table 1: Carl Gunnarsson Career Performance Statistics⁴

Season	GP	G	A	P	P/G	+/-	PIM	PPG	SHG	GWG	S	S%	TOI/g
2009-2010	43	3	12	15	0.35	8	10	0	0	0	45	6.7	21:16
2010-2011	68	4	16	20	0.29	-2	14	1	0	1	69	5.8	21:42
2011-2012	76	4	15	19	0.25	-9	20	0	0	0	89	4.5	18:14
2012-2013	37	1	14	15	0.41	5	14	0	0	0	28	3.6	21:26
Career	224	12	57	69	0.31	2	58	1	0	1	231	5.2	20:32

Mr. Gunnarsson broke into the Club's lineup in the 2009-2010 season. After being called up from the Toronto Marlies in early November he remained with the team and played in 43 games and averaged over 21 minutes of ice time per game. In those games, the Player contributed 15 points and boasted an impressive plus-minus of 8 and only took 10 minutes of penalties.

In subsequent years Mr. Gunnarsson has been in a steady contributor to the Leafs' blue-line. In the 224 games he has played he has managed to keep a positive plus-minus (+2) despite the struggles of the Club. Plus-Minus is an important statistic for first and second line defensemen because they are often matched up against top lines from opposing teams. Mr. Gunnarsson has also kept himself out of the box. Over his career he has taken about one penalty ever eight games. This is important because top line defensemen are needed even more on the penalty kill. They hurt their team immensely not only by taking a penalty but by not being available to then kill it off.

B. Platform Year Performance

Table 2: Carl Gunnarsson 2012-2013 Performance Statistics⁵

Season	GP	G	A	P	P/G	+/-	PIM	PPG	SHG	GWG	S	S%	TOI/g
2012-2013	37	1	14	15	0.41	5	14	0	0	0	28	3.6	21:26

⁴ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474125#&navid=nhl-search>

⁵ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474125&view=stats>

Despite being short, the Leafs had a very successful 2012-2013 season. Mr. Gunnarsson was an important factor in that success. His 0.41 points per game average was a career high and placed him third among the Club's defensemen.⁶ Mr. Gunnarsson also had the third highest shorthanded time on ice average for Leaf defensemen which made him a big contributor to the Club's 87.9% penalty kill percentage which was good enough for second in the league.

III. NUMBER OF GAMES PLAYED AND INJURY HISTORY

Mr. Gunnarsson has played a total of 224 regular season games for the Club over the past 4 season. Since being he was called up from the AHL the Club has played 277 regular season games. Mr. Gunnarsson has missed 33 games due to various injuries over these four seasons

In the 53 games missed by Mr. Gunnarsson it is prudent to note that he was never sidelined for a recurring injury in different seasons. The longest an injury has sidelined him was when he missed 22 games in his rookie season due to a hyperextended elbow; an injury that has not been an issue in any of the past 3 seasons.⁷ Mr. Gunnarsson also suffered a separated shoulder and missed the final two games of the 2011-2012 season.⁸ Surgery however was not required, and with the extended off-season caused by the lockout, he was able to make a full recovery and was not impacted by the injury last season.⁹

The most concerning part of Mr. Gunnarsson's injury history is the total of 11 games missed due to a hip injury during the 2012-2013 season.¹⁰ He missed 8 games in early February and another 3 games closer to the end of the season.¹¹ This injury is of minimal concern because despite the injury Mr. Gunnarsson returned from the 8 games off to play 30 more games without

⁶ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm?fetchKey=20132TORSASALL&sort=avgPointsPerGame&viewName=points>

⁷ <http://www.tsn.ca/nhl/teams/players/bio/?id=5218>

⁸ <http://www.tsn.ca/nhl/story/?id=392209>

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ <http://www.tsn.ca/nhl/teams/players/bio/?id=5218>

¹¹ *Ibid.*

his play being affected. In those games he maintained his role playing over 21 minutes per game and kept up his career high points per game total.¹² Further, he played every game in the playoffs and averaged over 22 minutes of ice time per game in a tight 7 game series against Boston.¹³ At no time during this series did Mr. Gunnarsson's earlier hip injury impact his performance.

IV. OVERALL VALUE TO THE CLUB

Since being drafted by the Leaf's in 2007 Mr. Gunnarsson has amassed 4 years of professional experience with the club and has become a valuable member of the organization. His contributions are reflected in the fact that he plays on the top defensive pairing alongside team captain Dion Phaneuf.

Mr. Gunnarsson is used by the organization to defend against stronger lines from opposing teams. This is evident in his high corsi relative quality or competition stat of 1.422, which is second highest among Leaf defensemen last season, only to his line-mate and captain Mr. Phaneuf.¹⁴ This statistic is particularly useful because it indicates that the Player spends a high amount of time on the ice against the opposition's stronger players. Further, Mr. Gunnarsson also ranked among the top 10 Leafs' players in on ice shooting percentage (11.61), and on ice save percentage (.924).¹⁵ Therefore despite facing some of the toughest competition the Team was more successful statistically while he was on the ice.

V. SPECIAL QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP OR PUBLIC APPEAL

Having been drafted by Leafs and coming up through their system, Mr. Gunnarsson has become a recognized name among some of the most dedicated hockey fans in the league. More recently, his pairing with team captain Dion Phaneuf and the considerable amount of ice time he

¹² <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474125&view=log&season=20122013>

¹³ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474125&view=splits&season=20122013&gameType=3>

¹⁴ http://www.behindthenet.ca/nhl_statistics.php?ds=30&s=32&f1=2012_s&f2=5v5&f5=TOR&c=0+1+3+5+4+6+7+8+13+14+29+30+32+33+34+45+46+63+67#

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

receives with the team's top players have increased his recognition with the Toronto Fan base.

Mr. Gunnarsson also has an impressive international hockey record playing with team Sweden. He competed for his country in the 2009, 2010 and 2011 World Championships.¹⁶ Team Sweden left all three of those championships with medals; unfortunately none of them were gold.¹⁷ Although the World Championship does not receive as much attention in North America, it is an important competition in that it allows the rest of the world to see top caliber NHL players. This helps build fan bases for the league as well as individual teams and players in new markets.

VI. COMPARABLE PLAYERS

When deciding which players serve as useful comparables for Mr. Gunnarsson it is important to look for first line defensemen playing about the same amount of time in similar situations. The Players submits that Zach Bogosian and Kyle Quincey both serve as useful comparables to support the \$3.5 million salary arbitration award that is requested.

A. Zach Bogosian

Zach Bogosian is a 24 year old defenseman with the Winnipeg Jets.¹⁸ He was drafted 3rd overall by Atlanta in the 2008 entry draft and in 2011 re-signed as a Restricted Free Agent ("RFA") with the Winnipeg Jets for a two year deal. Despite differences in age, draft position and years of professional experience, Mr. Bogosian serves as an interesting comparable because he has played a similar number of games and has had similar success to that of Mr. Gunnarsson.

¹⁶ <http://www.iihf.com/iihf-home/history/past-tournaments.html>

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474567&view=stats>

Table 3: Zach Bogosian v. Carl Gunnarsson Career Statistics¹⁹

	GP	G	A	P	+/-	P/g	PIM	PPG	SHG	GWG	S	S%	TOI/g
Gunnarsson	224	12	57	69	2	0.31	58	1	0	1	231	5.2	20:32
Bogosian	297	34	69	103	-42	0.35	237	6	2	2	635	5.3	21:44

Mr. Bogosian has played 297 career games to Mr. Gunnarsson's 224. In that time Mr. Bogosian averaged slightly more time on ice per game than Mr. Gunnarson (21:44 to 20:32) and maintained a points per game average of 0.35 which was 0.04 better than Mr. Gunnarsson's. It is prudent to note however that Mr. Bogosians plus-minus record for his career is a dismal -42 compared to the positive 2 posted by Mr. Gunnarsson. In addition, Mr. Bogosian has acquired almost four times more penalty minutes than Mr. Gunnarsson, which is an important statistic for first line defensemen playing a non-enforcer role.

Table 4: Zach Bogosian vs. Car Gunnarsson 2012-2013 Performance²⁰

Season	GP	G	A	P	P/G	+/-	PIM	PPG	SHG	GWG	S	S%	TOI/g
Gunnarsson	37	1	14	15	0.41	5	14	0	0	0	28	3.6	21:26
Bogosian	33	5	9	14	0.42	-5	29	0	0	0	85	5.9	23:18

In their platform year Mr. Bogosian and Mr. Gunnarsson had very similar seasons. Both played about the same number of games and maintained almost identical points per game averages. Mr. Bogosian did average over 2 more minutes of time on ice than Mr. Gunnarsson which speaks to the more balanced blue line of the Leafs that season. Mr. Gunnarsson had less than half the penalty minutes of Mr. Bogosian despite playing more game.

Mr. Bogosian also has a comparable injury history to that of Mr. Gunnarsson. In his rookie season Mr. Bogosian also missed a considerable amount of games the cause of which was a broken leg.²¹ He missed games for various injuries in each of his subsequent seasons.²² Like Mr. Gnnarsson, Mr. Bogosian also had concerning injuries in his platform year. First, Mr. Bogosian

¹⁹ *Ibid*, and *supra* note 5.

²⁰ *Ibid*, and *supra* note 6.

²¹ <http://www.tsn.ca/nhl/teams/players/bio/?id=6587>

²² *Ibid*.

suffered a wrist injury so serious that mid-season surgery was required.²³ His season was then ended early when he missed the last 3 games due to an “upper body injury”.²⁴ Unconfirmed reports were that the injury was a concussion sustained after a high hit from Kyle Okposo of the New York Islanders.²⁵ If this is the case it poses concern for the Jets given the recurrence and current concern over head injuries in the league.

On July 29th, 2013 Mr. Bogosian signed a 7 years deal with the Jets that has an AAV of just under \$5.15 million. Given the similarities between the players Mr. Bogosian serves as the best comparable for Mr. Gunnarsson. Given their slight differences and the difference in length of the contracts, a one year arbitration award of \$3.5 million is more than fair to the Club.

B. Kyle Quincey

Kyle Quincey is a 28 year old defenseman with the Detroit Red Wings. He was drafted in the 4th round of the 2003 NHL entry draft by Detroit.²⁶ He did not complete his first season until being claimed off waivers by the LA Kings in 2008 and then moved to Colorado for 3 years before moving back to Detroit during the 2011-2012 season.²⁷

Table 5: Kyle Quincey vs. Carl Gunnarsson Career Statistics²⁸

	GP	G	A	P	+/-	P/g	PIM	PPG	SHG	GWG	S	S%	TOI/g
Gunnarsson	224	12	57	69	2	0.31	58	1	0	1	231	5.2	20:32
Quincey	257	18	77	95	-5	0.37	250	7	0	3	509	3.5	21:29

Despite entering the league earlier, Mr. Quincey is an interesting comparable because he has played only 30 more games than Mr. Gunnarsson and has had similar results. Mr. Quincey’s career points per game average is .06 higher and he has averaged about 1 minute more ice time per game. Mr. Gunnarsson has maintained a positive plus-minus and has been penalized less than

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ <http://www.winnipegssun.com/2013/04/21/no-bogosian-jokinen-for-jets-against-sabres>

²⁶ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8470724#&navid=nhl-search>

²⁷ <http://www.tsn.ca/nhl/teams/players/bio/?id=3471>

²⁸ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8470724#&navid=nhl-search>, and *supra* note 5.

one quarter as much as Mr. Quincey.

Table 5: Kyle Quincey (11'/12') vs. Carl Gunnarsson (12'/13') Platform Year Statistics²⁹

	GP	G	A	P	+/-	P/g	PIM	PPG	SHG	GWG	S	S%	TOI/g
Gunnarsson	37	1	14	15	5	0.41	14	0	0	0	28	3.6	21:26
Quincey	72	7	19	26	-1	0.36	89	4	0	1	168	4.2	21:51

Although their platform years were significantly different length due to the lockout, the two players were quite comparable. While Mr. Quincey was fairly stagnant, Mr. Gunnarsson recorded some career highs. Notably Mr. Gunnarsson's point per game was .05 higher, and his time on ice per game was only 25 seconds less than Mr. Quincey's.

Mr. Quincey is also an interesting comparable because of his injury history. Most notably, in the 2010-2011 season he missed a total of 64 games – 8 due to concussion and 53 due to shoulder injury.³⁰ Although he did not have any major injuries during his platform year, the seriousness of previous injuries would still have been a concern for Detroit at time of signing.

On July 18, 2012 Quincey signed a \$7.55 million two year deal with Detroit.³¹ The AAV of this deal is \$3.775 million. Seeing as the two players are quite similar and Mr. Gunnarsson arguably had a better platform year, Mr. Quincey's compensation is strong evidence that the \$3.5 million that has been requested is a realistic and fair result for this arbitration.

VII. CONCLUSION

Mr. Gunnarsson has established himself as a stable and important part of the Leaf's blue-line. His consistency and improvements stand as evidence that he is deserving of a salary arbitration award above the mid-point of \$3.15 million and closer to the salaries of Mr. Bogosian and Mr. Quincey. Mr. Gunnarsson therefore respectfully request that this panel award him a salary of \$3.5 million.

²⁹ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8470724#&navid=nhl-search>, and note 6.

³⁰ <http://www.tsn.ca/nhl/teams/players/bio/?id=3471>

³¹ <http://www.capgeek.com/player/1008>