

IN THE MATTER OF SALARY ARBITRATION BETWEEN:

DERICK BRASSARD

- AND -

THE NEW YORK RANGERS

BRIEF OF DERICK BRASSARD

TEAM 27



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1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Pursuant to section 12.9 of the NHL Collective Bargaining Agreement, this brief will analyze the individual performance and value of Derick Brassard (“Mr. Brassard”) of the New York Rangers. This analysis will suggest that Mr. Brassard’s consistent statistical production despite limited ice time, his durability, his contribution to the Rangers’ success and his increasing role as a leader on the team suggest that he is a valuable player and rising star. We submit that a fair and appropriate salary for Mr. Brassard is a one-year contract at a value of \$5.1 million.

A. RELIABLE, EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT PRODUCTION

At 6’1 and 202lbs, Mr. Brassard is the archetypal NHL centreman. TSN describes Mr. Brassard as a tremendous skater with excellent puck possession skills and offensive awareness, and a centreman with leadership qualities that competes with tenacity at both ends of the ice.¹ Mr. Brassard had an impressive 2012-2013 campaign, playing 47 of 48 possible games and scoring 12 goals and 29 points in the lockout shortened season. At 26², he is presumably entering the prime of his career and still possesses untapped potential.³

Mr. Brassard had a tremendous 2013-2014 season (the “platform year”)⁴, playing 81 games anchoring the Rangers’ third line behind centres Brad Richards and Derek Stepan. Despite this more limited role, Mr. Brassard set a career best in goals (18), two behind Richards for the team lead and placing him 47th among NHL centremen. Mr. Brassard also collected 27 assists and 45 points – the second highest total of his career –

¹ <http://www.tsn.ca/nhl/player-bio/derick-brassard/bio>

² At the time of scheduled arbitration.

³ <http://www.tsn.ca/nhl/player-bio/derick-brassard/bio>

⁴ 2013-2014 season.

placing him 47th amongst all centremen. Mr. Brassard was also a +2 on the year while setting career highs in power play goals (“PPG”) with 7 – 1st on the Rangers and 25th amongst NHL centremen – and game winning goals (“GWG”) with 4 – 1st on the NYR and tied for 27th amongst NHL centremen.

Mr. Brassard was also a valuable aggressor, collecting 124 hits, 19 blocked shots and 28 takeaways – each an impressive statistic as Mr. Brassard was used primarily at even strength and on the powerplay. Mr. Brassard also displayed flashes of brilliance, including an eight-game point streak spanning January to March – where he registered 5 goals and 10 points – and a three game goal streak from January to February.

Most impressive is that Mr. Brassard achieved all this while playing considerably less than his counterparts. Indeed, while placing between 25th and 50th in most statistical categories amongst his counterparts, Mr. Brassard averaged a modest 15:47 minutes per game (“TOI”) – 85th amongst NHL centreman. Those ranked 80-84 and 86-90 averaged 0.44 points-per-game, far less than Mr. Brassard’s 0.56 points-per-game and a difference of 10 points when pro-rated over an entire season.

Mr. Brassard also excelled in the playoffs, where he anchored New York’s third line en route to the Stanley Cup Finals. In the post-season, Mr. Brassard established career playoff highs in games played with 23, while scoring 6 goals and collecting 6 assists, placing him 25th in playoff scoring league-wide⁵, 9th amongst NHL centremen – with a TOI placing him 47th amongst centremen in the playoffs – and 2nd amongst centremen on the Rangers. His two game-winning goals were two shy of NHL leader Patrick Kane and one shy of the team lead. He also had 5 more takeaways than

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<http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm?season=20132014&gameType=3&team=&position=S&country=&status=&viewName=summary>

giveaways while collecting 32 hits and establishing career playoff highs in shots (45), power play assists (3) and power play points (3).

B. NO LONG-TERM INJURY CONCERNS

The NHL is a physical and demanding league where upper- and lower-body injuries are common. Mr. Brassard has consistently demonstrated his reliability, including in his platform year, where he played 81 of 82 regular season games and 97% of possible games including the playoffs. While Mr. Brassard suffered a considerable shoulder injury in 2009, which caused him to miss fifty NHL games, his only other notable injury was an 8 game hand injury in early 2011; otherwise, Mr. Brassard has suffered typical injuries causing him to miss at most two games at a time.⁶ There is also no indication that Mr. Brassard's shoulder injury has had any impact on his statistical production. Mr. Brassard's points-per-game since his shoulder injury has never been below 0.46, and his 2012-2014 campaigns were his most productive. Mr. Brassard has been remarkably consistent; a trait atypical amongst third-line centremen in the NHL, and he has no long-term health concerns. In his past 5 NHL seasons, Mr. Brassard has played 81, 47 (out of 48), 74, 74 and 79 games, or 94% of possible games, and he can be expected to consistently play 80 games annually for the foreseeable future.

C. KEY CONTRIBUTION TO TEAM SUCCESS

Mr. Brassard has been integral to the New York Rangers' success in recent years. Despite spending the 2012-2014 seasons playing behind NHL stars such as Richards, Martin St. Louis, Rick Nash and Derek Stepan, Mr. Brassard finished 4th on the Rangers in goals and points and 5th in assists. He had tremendous value on the Rangers'

⁶ <http://www.tsn.ca/nhl/player-bio/derick-brassard/bio>

powerplay, finishing his platform year tied for the team lead in powerplay goals, 4th overall in powerplay assists and tied for 2nd in powerplay points (“PPP”). He also finished tied for 3rd in game-winning goals (“GWG”).

Mr. Brassard also proved to be a clutch scorer, with 2/3^{rds} of his goals either coming when the team was tied or trailing by one goal. These clutch performances continued in the postseason, where Mr. Brassard tied for 2nd on the team in GWG and 3rd in goals, helping the New York Rangers make the Stanley Cup Finals for the first time since 1994. In the past two years, Mr. Brassard has played 35 playoff games and scored 24 points (0.69 PPG), notably above his regular season production. In 2014, Mr. Brassard played an integral role in the 2nd round against the Pittsburgh Penguins, scoring 4 goals in a competitive 7 game series to help the Rangers advance. Against the Los Angeles Kings, Mr. Brassard scored a respectable 3 points in 5 games, while being trusted with 19:50 TOI in the series, including 16:27 TOI at even strength alone.

Mr. Brassard’s responsibilities and contribution to the Rangers’ success can be expected to increase this upcoming season. In June 2014 the team bought out Brad Richards, with many speculating that Mr. Brassard will move into the second line centre role. Mr. Brassard’s statistical production should benefit from this: Richards’ 18:41 TOI corresponded with a point every 30:02 minutes, whereas Mr. Brassard in his platform year produced a point every 28:26 minutes. Pro-rating this TOI difference over an entire season, Mr. Brassard could be expected to produce approximately 54 points. This appears a reasonable assumption, as Mr. Brassard will also benefit from increased even-strength and power play opportunities with St. Louis, Nash and others.

2. VALID COMPARABLE PLAYERS

A. SAM GAGNER

Sam Gagner (“Gagner”) is a 5’11, 202lb NHL centreman. While he possesses sound vision and hockey sense, Gagner is a small forward who is considered to be ineffective along the boards, poor at winning puck battles and not an adept shooter.⁷ Despite these shortcomings, the Edmonton Oilers and Gagner in 2013 settled prior to scheduled arbitration on a contract worth \$4.8 million annually under a \$60 million salary cap.⁸ Pro-rated to this year’s \$64.3 million salary cap, the corresponding quantum is \$5.14 million. Gagner had a productive 2013 campaign, scoring 14 goals and 41 points in 48 (0.79 PPG).⁹ However, the shorter sample size of the lockout-shortened season must be weighed accordingly. In Gagner’s previous five full seasons, he averaged 15 goals and 44 points (0.60 PPG, slightly higher than Mr. Brassard’s PPG in his platform year), while playing significantly more ice time, including 19:24 TOI in his platform year. In the season prior to his platform year, Gagner scored 18 goals and 47 points in 75 games, producing a point every 27:25 minutes – essentially identical performance to Mr. Brassard in his platform year.¹⁰ The two also share the same career high in goals (18) and points (47). Gagner is also less durable than Mr. Brassard, playing in 89% of all possible games in five prior seasons, compared to Mr. Brassard’s 94%.¹¹

The two players thusly produced at a similar statistical pace, and their individual contribution to their team was similarly comparable. In his platform year, Gagner finished 4th on his team in goals and a distant 2nd in points – Mr. Brassard finished 4th and

⁷ <http://www.tsn.ca/nhl/player-bio/sam-gagner/bio>

⁸ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/news.htm?id=678570>

⁹ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474040>

¹⁰ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474040&view=splits>

¹¹ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474040>

4th respectively – while in the year prior Gagner finished 4th in both goals and points –Mr. Brassard’s full season stats would have placed him 4th and 5th respectively.¹² This is where the similarities end however, as while Gagner’s Oilers have yet to make the postseason with him in a top-six role, Mr. Brassard has anchored his team’s third line as New York has had considerable success in the playoffs. While Gagner has yet to demonstrate his value in the post-season, Mr. Brassard has already proven to outpace his regular season production and will only further his contribution as he anchor’s the second line of the reigning Stanley Cup finalists in 2014-2015.

B. BRYAN LITTLE

Bryan Little (“Little”) is a 5’11, 185lb NHL centreman. While Little is solid playmaker with a strong wrist shot and reliable two-way play, Little lacks the strength and size of Mr. Brassard, does not skate particularly well, and is notorious for his inconsistent production.¹³ Nonetheless, the Winnipeg Jets and Little settled before arbitration on a contract worth \$4.7 million annually under a salary cap of \$60 million.¹⁴ Pro-rated to this year’s \$64.3 million salary cap, the corresponding quantum is \$5.04 million. Little had a modest platform year, scoring a disappointing 7 goals but respectable 32 points in 48 games (0.66 PPG).¹⁵ This was also achieved during the lockout-shortened season, and the year prior Little produced similar to Mr. Brassard’s platform year, scoring 24 goals and 46 points (0.62 PPG) while, like Gagner, playing a significantly higher 20:13 TOI.¹⁶ In 2011-2012, Mr. Little averaged a point every 32:31 minutes,

¹²

<http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm?season=20122013&gameType=2&team=EDM&position=S&country=&status=&viewName=summary>

¹³ <http://www.tsn.ca/nhl/player-bio/bryan-little/bio>

¹⁴ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/news.htm?id=678681>

¹⁵ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473412>

¹⁶ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473412&view=splits&season=20112012&gameType=2>

considerably worse than Mr. Brassard's rate of one point every 28:26 in his platform year.¹⁷

Mr. Brassard and Little's statistical contribution to their teams were largely equivalent. In his platform year, Little finished 5th in goals and 4th in points (compared to Mr. Brassard's 4th and 4th finishes respectively), while in the year prior he finished 3rd and 6th (again similar to Mr. Brassard's pro-rated 4th and 5th finishes respectively).¹⁸ As was the case with Gagner, however, Mr. Brassard anchored New York's third line while helping the Rangers play six playoff series since 2013, while Winnipeg has failed to make the playoffs with Little as their first line centre.

III. CONCLUSION

Mr. Brassard is a star on the rise. While he has yet to fulfill his full offensive capacity, Mr. Brassard has proven to be a consistent regular season and playoff producer with excellent hockey sense and a physique that promotes durability. While Mr. Brassard's statistical performance is comparable to that of Gagner and Little, his contribution to his team's success is demonstrably greater. In light of all of the factors, Mr. Brassard should be awarded a one-year contract at a value of \$5.1 million, consistent with the contracts recently signed by comparables Sam Gagner and Bryan Little.

¹⁷ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473412&view=splits&season=20112012&gameType=2>

¹⁸

<http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm?season=20122013&gameType=2&team=WPG&position=S&country=&status=&viewName=summary>