

2014 HOCKEY ARBITRATION COMPETITION OF CANADA

SALARY ARBITRATION OF CODY FRANSON (TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS)

SUBMISSION MADE ON BEHALF OF THE PLAYER
TEAM 24

1) BACKGROUND

Cody Franson (“Franson”) is a 27 year old, 6’5”, 213 lb defenseman from British Columbia, Canada. He was originally drafted by the Nashville Predators in the 3rd Round (79th overall) of the 2005 NHL Entry Draft. After spending his first two years with the Predators, Franson was traded to the Toronto Maple Leafs (“Leafs”) in 2011.

In accordance with articles 12.1 and 12.2 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the NHL and NHLPA (2012-2022), Franson of the Leafs filed notice of player-elected salary arbitration in July of 2014. The midpoint salary is \$3,300,000 per season. It is our submission, on behalf of Franson, that he should be paid a salary greater than \$3,300,000.

2) CAREER PERFORMANCE

Franson has established himself as a premier top four defenseman in the NHL. He is above-average offensively, and brings a physical presence that is expected of a big minute defenseman. The Leafs depend on Franson to create offensive opportunities for his teammates at even strength and particularly on the powerplay.

Figure 1: Career Offensive Statistics for Cody Franson¹

Season	Games	Goals	Assists	Points	+/-	TOI /g	PPG	PP TOI /g
2009-2010	61	6	15	21	+15	14:11	0.34	1:58
2010-2011	80	8	21	29	+10	15:10	0.36	1:53
2011-2012	57	5	16	21	-1	16:11	0.37	1:31
2012-2013	45	4	25	29	+4	18:47	0.64	2:49
2013-2014	79	5	28	33	-20	20:41	0.42	2:54

¹ TOI/g = Time on Ice per Game Average; PPG = Points per Game; PP TOI = Powerplay Time on Ice per Game Average; <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8471742&docid=TeamPlayerBio:43094#&navid=nhl-search>

When we look at how to assess an offensive defenseman, certain aspects come to mind: facilitation for teammates, impact on the powerplay and the team's offensive performance while said player is on the ice. Franson has more than satisfied all of these indicators. In addition, he's delivered exceptional playoff numbers over his career.

3) PLATFORM SEASON

In Franson's platform season, 2013-2014, he finished 42nd in scoring among defensemen and 19th in powerplay points. Franson established new career highs in Assists (28), Points (33) and Time on Ice (20:41 per game). Franson's career trend has him quickly moving up the ranks in defenseman scoring in the NHL.

Figure 2: Platform Season Offensive Rankings for Cody Franson²

Season	Points	League Rank (Defensemen)	Powerplay Points	League Rank (Defensemen)
2013-2014	33	42 nd	18	19 th

Facilitation of the Leafs Offence

While Franson is a quality playmaker at even strength, he is even greater on the powerplay. Franson's powerplay savvy is further reinforced when looking at his Individual Assist Percentage ("IAP") and Individual Point Percentage ("IPP"). IAP is the percentage of goals scored while a player was on ice that the player has an assist on. In 2013-14, Franson was exceptional at contributing to goals with the man advantage when he was on the ice.

² <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8471742&docid=TeamPlayerBio:43094#&navid=nhl-search>

Figure 3: Platform Season Advanced Powerplay Metrics for Cody Franson³

Season	IAP (5 on 4)	Team Rank	IPP (5 on 4)	Team Rank
2013-2014	65.2	1 st	65.2	1 st

When the Leafs scored a powerplay goal in 2013-2014, and Franson was on the ice, he was directly involved with either a goal or an assist two thirds of the time. Franson's contributions on the powerplay led the Leafs to the 6th best powerplay percentage in the NHL in 2013-2014.

Physical Presence and Defensive Abilities

In addition to his offensive prowess, what sets Franson apart from other offensive-minded defenseman is his physical presence on the ice. In 2013-14, Franson led all defenseman in the NHL with 282 hits, an average of almost 3.6 per game. Further, Franson was 76th amongst all defenseman with 111 blocks. Franson's physical nature as an offensive defenseman adds another facet to his game, making him a useful all-around asset to any team.

Figure 4: Platform Season Defensive Statistics for Cody Franson⁴

Season	Hits	League Rank (Defensemen)	Blocked Shots	League Rank (Defensemen)	Takeaways	League Rank (All)
2013-2014	282	1 st	111	76 th	50	40 th

Franson's physical nature also allows him to thrive in another aspect of the game central to a defenseman: takeaways. In 2013-14, Franson was 40th amongst all NHL skaters in takeaways with 50. So, in addition to producing above average offensive numbers, Franson is also positively impacting the game on the defensive end, blocking shots, taking the body (hits) and stripping opposing players of the puck (takeaways). However, as the below table shows, 2013-14

³ <http://stats.hockeyanalysis.com/ratings.php?db=201314&sit=5v5&type=individual&teamid=28&pos=defense&minutes=100&disp=1&sort=HARTp&sortdir=DESC>

⁴ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8471742&view=splits>

was not an anomaly in this regard as Franson usually has a strong impact on the game defensively.

4) PLAYOFF PRODUCTION

In his playoff career, Franson has proven himself to be an elite defensive scoring option. He has 13 points in 23 games for a 0.57 points per game (PPG) average. That number is well above his regular season average, suggesting that he is able to elevate his game when needed most.

Franson began to show his ability to step up in the playoffs in 2010-11 with the Predators. In seven games against the Boston Bruins, Franson scored an incredible six points (0.86 PPG). He was second on the team in playoff scoring. Franson played a central role in the Leafs taking the eventual Eastern Conference Champion Boston Bruins to seven games.

Figure 5: Playoff Statistics for Cody Franson⁵

Playoffs	Games Played	Goals	Assists	Points	PPG	Powerplay Points
2010-2011	12	1	5	6	0.5	3
2012-2013	7	3	3	6	0.86	3

5) INJURY HISTORY

Franson's value also comes from his durability and reliability. In 2013-14, he played 79 out of a possible 82 games. In his career as a Toronto Maple Leaf, he has played in 181 out of a possible 212 games, an 85 percent appearance rate. Furthermore, he is second on the team in Powerplay Time on Ice (222:40), third in Penalty Kill Time on Ice (125:12) and third in Time on Ice per Game (TOI/G) at 20:41. This means that as a Maple Leafs defenseman, Franson is consistently healthy and playing top 4 minutes on both even strength and special teams. Franson has proven to be a reliable and versatile cog in the Toronto Maple Leafs defence.

⁵ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8471742&view=splits>

6) COMPARABLE PLAYERS

A. Justin Schultz

Justin Schultz is a 24 year old, 6'2", 198 lb defenseman from British Columbia, Canada. In the 2014 off-season, the arbitration-eligible Schultz signed a one-year deal with the Oilers at an AAV of \$3,675,000. Looking at Schultz's statistics from this past year, he profiles as an above-average offensive defenseman as well. In 2012-13, Schultz had 27 points, which was 2 points less than Franson. In 2013-14, he had the exact same number of points as Franson, finishing tied for 42nd amongst all defenseman. However, Schultz averaged 23:20 minutes to Franson's 20:41. Despite playing almost two minutes less per game than Justin Schultz, Franson was able to put up comparable numbers at a more efficient rate and far surpassed Schultz's powerplay production.

Figure 6: Career Offensive Statistics for Justin Schultz⁶

Season	Games	Goals	Assists	Points	+/-	TOI/g	PPG	PP TOI /g
2012-2013	48	8	19	27	-17	21:26	0.56	3:12
2013-2014	74	11	22	33	-22	23:20	0.45	3:26

Since the Oilers rely on Schultz as a powerplay weapon, it holds that he should be involved heavily in his team's powerplay goals. The following table represents Schultz's Individual Assist Percentage ("IAP") and Individual Point Percentage ("IPP") for 2013-14.

Figure 7: Platform Season Advanced Powerplay Metrics Comparison⁷

Player	PP Points	IAP (5 on 4)	Team Rank	IPP (5 on 4)	Team Rank
Franson	18	65.2	1 st	65.2	1 st
Schultz	12	40.0	1st	45.5	1st

⁶ TOI/g = Time on Ice per Game Average; PPG = Points per Game; PP TOI = Powerplay Time on Ice per Game Average; <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474602&view=stats>

⁷ <http://stats.hockeyanalysis.com/ratings.php?db=201314&sit=5v5&type=individual&teamid=12&pos=defense&minutes=100&disp=1&sort=HARTp&sortdir=DESC>

Despite being the only defenseman on the Oilers to amass over 100 minutes in powerplay time, both Schultz's IAP and IPP marks still fall well short of Franson's. This shows that when the team scores while both players are on their respective teams' powerplay, Franson is far more likely to be involved in than Schultz. Franson has a bigger presence on the powerplay than Schultz.

Defensive Presence

Where Schultz falls short compared to Franson is his physical presence in the game and versatility. Despite having a similar frame to Franson, Schultz does not impact the game defensively nearly as much as Franson.

Figure 8: Platform Season Defensive Statistical Comparison⁸

Player	Hits	Blocked Shots	Takeaways	SH TOI /g
Franson	282	111	50	1:38
Schultz	30	107	20	0:58

Franson has more hits and takeaways than Schultz, and logs nearly twice as much time on the penalty kill per game. This highlights the versatility and completeness that Franson brings to the table beyond simply contributing offensively. And while Schultz has yet to compete in the playoffs, Franson has demonstrated that he is capable of performing at a high level.

B. Jason Demers

Jason Demers is a 6'1", 185 lb defenseman from Quebec, Canada. Demers was drafted by the San Jose Sharks in the 7th round (186th overall) and he has played his entire career-to-date with

⁸ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8471742&view=splits>;
<http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474602&view=splits>

the Sharks. This past offseason, the arbitration-eligible Demers signed a two-year deal worth at an AAV of \$3,400,000.

Figure 9: Career Offensive Statistics for Jason Demers⁹

Season	Games	Goals	Assists	Points	+/-	TOI/g	PPG	PP TOI /g
2009-2010	51	4	17	21	+5	15:25	0.41	2:22
2010-2011	75	2	22	24	+19	19:29	0.32	2:11
2011-2012	57	4	9	13	-8	16:50	0.23	1:59
2012-2013	22	1	2	3	-4	18:37	0.14	1:18
2013-2014	75	5	29	34	+14	19:29	0.45	1:55

Similar to Franson, Demers fits the bill of an above-average offensive defenseman. In 2013-2014, their offensive numbers were comparable, with Demers scoring one more point than Franson. However, where Franson bests Demers is through his consistency and track record. Franson has had three seasons with over 20 points compared to Demers' single season (2013-2014). Franson is definitely the more proven player in terms of offensive production.

Like Franson, Demers is also a key cog on his teams' powerplay. In 2013-14, Demers was second on the Sharks in powerplay Time On Ice (1:55 PP TOI/g). Demers had an above-average season on the powerplay, finishing 55th amongst defenseman. However, his powerplay stats in 2013-14 paled in comparison to Franson, who doubled Demers' production with 18 points. In addition, Franson has bested Demers in powerplay points the past three seasons.

Figure 10: Platform Season Advanced Powerplay Metrics Comparison¹⁰

Player	PP Points	IAP (5 on 4)	Team Rank	IPP (5 on 4)	Team Rank
Franson	18	65.2	1 st	65.2	1 st
Demers	9	50.0	1 st	56.2	2 nd

⁹ TOI/g = Time on Ice per Game Average; PPG = Points per Game; PP TOI = Powerplay Time on Ice per Game Average; <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474218&view=stats>

¹⁰ <http://stats.hockeyanalysis.com/ratings.php?db=201314&sit=5v5&type=individual&teamid=25&pos=defense&minutes=100&disp=1&sort=HARTp&sortdir=DESC>

Defensive Presence

While Demers provides a greater defensive presence than Schultz, Franson still bests Demers in the core defensive statistics. In particular, Franson's use of the body as demonstrated by hits demonstrates his value as an all-around defenseman.

Figure 11: Platform Season Defensive Statistical Comparison¹¹

Player	Hits	Blocked Shots	Takeaways	SH TOI /g
Franson	282	111	50	1:38
Demers	69	107	40	1:25

7) CLOSING REMARKS

Franson has proven himself to be an above-average scoring defenseman who is exceptional at facilitating and creating opportunities for his teammates both at even strength and on the powerplay. While Schultz and Demers are comparable in terms of raw scoring stats and powerplay time, that is where the similarities end. Franson has shown that he is greater powerplay catalyst, besting both in powerplay points, IAP and IPP.

Further, Franson has shown a strong, physical presence on defense and the ability to play significant minutes on the powerplay, penalty kill and even strength. While being offensively talented, Demers and Schultz are not the complete player that Franson is. A salary higher than \$3,300,000 would be reflective of Franson's value when compared to Schultz and Demers.

¹¹ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8471742&view=splits>;
<http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474218&view=splits>