

Team Number 25
Case: Cody Franson
Club's Representative

Introduction

It is our position as representatives of the Toronto Maple Leafs, that when Cody Franson's performance, and valid comparable players are taken into account, that a fair award should be a one year contract valued at 2.7 million dollars. Mr. Franson is entering his peak years as an NHL defenseman at the age of 27; however, in his platform season, he has proven to be somewhat of a liability on the defensive side of the puck. An increase in Mr. Franson's ice-time to 20 minutes and 41 seconds per game, came at the expense of a dismal plus/minus rating of minus 20¹. The club understands the importance of an offensive defenseman in the NHL, but we believe this should not come at the expense of defensive reliability. Furthermore, Mr. Franson ranked amongst the worst in the league in giveaways over the past two seasons, leading to more scoring opportunities for opposing teams². The fact of the matter is that Mr. Franson was given the opportunity to play an important role for the Toronto Maple Leafs, but failed to meet expectations on both sides of the puck. Considering his struggles both offensively and defensively, and valid comparable players with similar statistics, we submit that an appropriate award would be a one year contract valued at 2.7 million dollars.

Mr. Franson's History

In Mr. Franson's platform year (2013-2014), he played 79 games scoring 5 goals and adding 28 assists for a total of 33 points³. He registered a very disappointing plus/minus rating of minus 20 while averaging 20 minutes and 41 seconds of ice-time per game⁴. In his 79 games played, he registered 282 hits, 111 blocked shots, and 30 penalty minutes (PIMs). Mr. Franson had a total of 18 points (1 goal, 17 assists) and averaged 2 minutes and 55 seconds per game on

¹ <http://www.rotowire.com/hockey/player.htm?id=2761>

² <http://www.sportingcharts.com/nhl/stats/player-turnover-plus-minus/2013/>

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

the power play⁵. Over the course of the season, he gave the puck away 68 times, and took the puck away from the opposing team 50 times (overall, minus 18)⁶.

In the previous season (2012-2013), Mr. Franson played 45 games scoring 4 goals and adding 25 assists for a total of 29 points⁷. He registered a plus/minus rating of plus 4 while averaging 18 minutes and 41 seconds per game⁸. In his 45 games played, Mr. Franson registered 124 hits, 59 blocked shots, and 8 PIMs⁹. He had a total of 13 points (3 goals, 10 assists) and averaged 3 minutes and 21 seconds per game on the power play¹⁰. Over the course of the season, he gave the puck away a total of 40 times and took the puck away 21 times (overall, minus 19)¹¹.

Mr. Franson has stayed relatively healthy over the course of his career. In February 2010, he suffered a rib injury that forced him to miss 9 games¹². In March 2012, he suffered a facial injury that forced him to miss 2 games¹³. Finally, in November 2013, Mr. Franson suffered a lower body injury that forced him to miss 2 games¹⁴.

When looking at Mr. Franson's performance overall, it is clear that he is an offensive defenseman that has come at the expense of defensive reliability. In his platform year, Mr. Franson was asked to play a more prominent defensive role against tougher competition on the second pairing¹⁵. Without the shelter of reduced minutes, and against weaker competition, he had the worst plus/minus rating of his career at minus 20. In addition to the disappointing plus/minus

⁵ Ibid

⁶ <http://www.hockey-reference.com/players/f/fransco01-additional.html>

⁷ <http://www.rotowire.com/hockey/player.htm?id=2761>

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ <http://www.hockey-reference.com/players/f/fransco01-additional.html>

¹² <http://www.tsn.ca/nhl/teams/players/bio/?id=5199>

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ <http://sports.nationalpost.com/2014/09/22/toronto-maple-leafs-cody-franson-trying-to-turn-a-negative-stat-into-a-positive/>

rating, Mr. Franson registered the most turnovers amongst Maple Leafs defensemen in 2013-2014 with a total of 68¹⁶. In fact, his turnover number ranked 15th worst amongst all NHL defensemen in the league that year¹⁷. His previous season (2012-2013) was not much better in the turnover department, registering 40 of them, which ranked 12th worst amongst NHL defensemen¹⁸. The reality is that these turnovers are often costing the team goals. In fact, the Toronto Maple Leafs ranked 26th in the league in goals against allowing 256 goals¹⁹.

Despite an increase in ice-time in his platform season, Mr. Franson saw also saw a significant decline in his offensive production. In the 2012-2013 season, he registered 4 goals and 25 assists for a total of 29 points in 45 games²⁰. This amounts to 0.09 goals per game, 0.55 assists per game and a total of 0.64 points per game. In Mr. Franson's platform year, these totals decreased to 0.06 goals per game, 0.35 assists per game and a total of 0.41 points per game. This means that it took Mr. Franson an average of one game more to register one point compared to the previous season. This is despite averaging 1 minute 54 seconds more ice-time than the 2012-2013 season²¹.

Overall, Mr. Franson's statistics over the past two seasons demonstrate some reason for concern. When asked to play a more demanding role for the Toronto Maple Leafs, Mr. Franson failed to meet expectations on both sides of the puck. Defensively, he registered the worst plus/minus rating and giveaway total on the team. Offensively, he saw a significant decline in point production despite an increase in ice-time in his platform season. It has come to a point where Mr. Franson's defensive struggles cannot be justified by his offensive production. We

¹⁶ <http://www.sportingcharts.com/nhl/stats/player-turnover-plus-minus/2013/>

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ <http://www.sportingcharts.com/nhl/stats/player-turnover-plus-minus/2012/>

¹⁹ http://espn.go.com/nhl/standings/_/sort/pointsAgainst/year/2014/seasontype/2/group/1/order/false

²⁰ <http://www.rotowire.com/hockey/player.htm?id=2761>

²¹ Ibid

believe that these facts justify a one year contract valued at 2.7 million dollars, especially when compared to the following players who were also arbitration eligible over the past two seasons.

Comparables

Tyson Barrie

It is our position as representatives of the Toronto Maple Leafs that Mr. Tyson Barrie represents a player that outperformed Mr. Franson, despite the former's 2 year contract valued at \$2,600,000 annually. The following discussion will outline how Mr. Barrie outperformed Mr. Franson in both point production and +/- statistics; two statistics that are crucial for an NHL defenseman.

An analysis of each player's point production statistics has revealed that it takes Mr. Franson an additional 18 minutes and 16 seconds of ice time in order to produce a single point for his team²². This is significant considering that Mr. Franson spends an average TOI of 20:41²³. It therefore follows that Mr. Franson needs to play nearly an entire game to match Mr. Barrie's performance. Breaking down these stats further, it becomes clear to the club that Mr. Franson is disappointing his team in both goal production as well as assist production. Last season, it took Mr. Franson 326 minutes and 48 seconds of ice-time in order to score a single goal²⁴. This is juxtaposed sharply with Mr. Barrie's efficiency of scoring a goal every 91 minutes and 19 seconds of ice time²⁵. It therefore takes Mr. Franson almost four times longer to score a point for his team. In terms of assists, it took Mr. Franson and Mr. Barrie 58:26 and

²² http://espn.go.com/nhl/player/stats/_/id/3422/cody-franson

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ http://espn.go.com/nhl/player/stats/_/id/5181/tyson-barrie

47:29 of TOI respectively²⁶. Given that the spread between these two values is 10 minutes and 52 seconds of ice-time, as well as the fact that Mr. Franson spends approximately 20 minutes and 41 seconds on ice per game, we can conclude that it takes almost half a game's worth of ice time just to match Mr. Barrie's performance.

The club would also like to draw the arbitrator's attention to the underlying reality that both Mr. Franson and Mr. Barrie serve their team as offensive defenseman. Despite this reality, Mr. Franson's point production was not only down this past season, but he was also unreliable whenever his team counted on him most. On the contrary, Mr. Barrie managed to score the game winning goal for his team 5 times in the 2013-2014 season²⁷. Mr. Franson failed to produce a single goal that determined the overall match. These statistics become more significant when considering each player's performance with regards to shots on net. Although the club does concede that Mr. Franson managed an additional 14 shots on net last season, his accuracy and ability to score is weak in comparison. Out of the 115 opportunities, he managed to only score 5 times for a meager 4.3% success rate²⁸. Mr. Barrie on the other hand might have been on the shorter side when it came to opportunities, yet he followed through for his team with precision. Out of his 101 shots on net, he scored 13 goals for a 12.9% success rate²⁹.

From the perspective of +/-, once again Mr. Franson is underperforming Mr. Barrie. Mr. Franson's score of -20 is indicative of his weakness as a defenseman. Generally, a high positive score is indicative of a defenseman's ability³⁰. Mr. Barrie on the other hand seems to be doing his duty to the overall team by holding an excellent score of +17. The +/- statistic reveals that

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ http://espn.go.com/nhl/player/stats/_/id/3422/cody-franson

²⁹ http://espn.go.com/nhl/player/stats/_/id/5181/tyson-barrie

³⁰ http://proicehockey.about.com/od/scoresandstat1/f/plus_minus.htm

when Mr. Barrie was on the ice this past season, his line managed to score 17 more goals in aggregate than the opposing team managed to score against his team. Thus, the spread of 37 points between the two players showcases that Mr. Franson's presence on the ice is dragging the team's overall effectiveness down. These statistics should further be read in light of the fact that both Mr. Franson and Mr. Barrie are considered to be offensive defensemen. The difference between the two players however, is that Mr. Barrie does not sacrifice his defensive duties in order to fulfill this roll. It is clear that Mr. Barrie outperformed Mr. Franson offensively while still maintaining an excellent +/- score. This shows that offensive production as a defenseman does not have to come at the expense of defensive reliability. Mr. Franson's offensive play style is therefore a liability to his team owing to his inability to produce points as well as defenseman against the opposing team.

Nick Leddy

It is our position as representatives of the Toronto Maple Leaf's that Mr. Franson underperformed Mr. Nick Leddy in the 2013-2014 season, despite the fact that the former was offered a contract of only \$2,700,000. The club is therefore seeking a valuation of 2.7 million dollars on account of Mr. Franson's relative performance. This statement is posited on an analysis of each player's point production capability, as well as their respective +/- scores.

An analysis of point production revealed that Mr. Leddy is a far more efficient player. It takes Mr. Franson an average of 49 minutes and 31 seconds of ice to produce a single point³¹. This is in comparison to Mr. Leddy, who took only 43 minutes and 17 seconds to generate the same results³². The breakdown of this statistic is even more revealing of each player's unique

³¹ http://espn.go.com/nhl/player/stats/_/id/3422/cody-franson

³² http://espn.go.com/nhl/player/stats/_/id/5447/nick-leddy

abilities. Although Mr. Franson and Mr. Leddy are nearly tied in terms of the amount of time on ice it takes for each player to score an assist, Mr. Franson required an additional 135 minutes and 4 seconds in order to produce a single goal for his team³³. Although a defenseman's principle responsibility is not goal production, it goes to show that Mr. Leddy managed to do more for his team in the 64 games he participated in, than Mr. Franson did in his 79 matches³⁴. Thus, Mr. Leddy is a far more efficient player that is earning a salary that is 600,000 less than the midpoint that is presently being contested.

Furthermore, an analysis of each player's +/- statistic indicates that Mr. Franson is underperforming as a defenseman relative to Mr. Leddy. In the 2013-2014 season, Mr. Franson had an underwhelming +/- score of -20³⁵. Mr. Leddy on the other hand, showcased his excellent talent on the ice with a score of +10³⁶. Once again, the club would like to draw attention to the fact that the +/- statistic is one of the most important driver when analyzing a defenseman's general worth to the team. Mr. Franson's weak score in this category indicates the reality that the opposing team managed to score a greater number of points against the Maple Leafs when Mr. Franson was on the ice. Mr. Franson's offensive play style did little to mitigate this fact as he repeatedly failed to score points against the opposing team. Mr. Franson's presence on the ice was therefore detrimental to the Toronto Maple Leafs performance throughout the 2013-2014 season especially in comparison to Mr. Leddy.

³³ Ibid (Comments 23 & 24)

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ http://espn.go.com/nhl/player/stats/_id/3422/cody-franson

³⁶ http://espn.go.com/nhl/player/stats/_id/5447/nick-leddy

Conclusion

It is our position as representatives of the Toronto Maple Leafs, that when Cody Franson's performance, and valid comparable players are taken into account, that a fair award should be a one year contract valued at \$2,700,000. This valuation is posited on 3 major points. The first is that Mr. Franson's overall performance has been lackluster this year. As an offensive defense player, both Mr. Franson's point production as well as his +/- was largely disappointing over this past season. Mr. Franson's offensive tactics did not pay off despite being given plenty of opportunities to score points for his team. Second, his offensive play style came at the cost of reliability. Mr. Franson registered an incredibly low +/- score which indicates that opposing lines were extremely successful when pitted against him. His mediocre performance is further accentuated by the fact that Mr. Franson is ranked as one of the league's worst players in terms of give-aways, which demonstrates his lack of reliability at the defensive end. Finally, an analysis of comparable players showcased that Mr. Franson's performance was eclipsed by players such as Tyson Barrie and Nick Leddy. Each of these players earned a salary of \$2,600,000 and \$2,700,00 dollars respectively. This indicates to the club that the true market value for a restricted free agent of Mr. Franson's caliber is 2.7 million dollars at most.