

In the Matter of Salary Arbitration Between:

Derick Brassard

-AND-

The New York Rangers

Team 9

Submission of the New York Rangers

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## Introduction and Overview

This brief contains an analysis of the performance and contributions of Derick Brassard of the New York Rangers (“the Rangers”). Derick Brassard’s lack of on-ice discipline, unimpressive offensive totals and his historical inability to excel as a second-line centre are all significant concerns for the organization. The Rangers submit Mr. Brassard is entitled to an award below the midpoint figure and that \$3.5 million per season is an appropriate and fair sum.

### **Lack of on-ice discipline**

Mr. Brassard is undisciplined on the ice. In the platform year, Mr. Brassard spent 46 minutes in the penalty box,<sup>1</sup> placing fifth on his team<sup>2</sup>. Analyzing the breakdown of his penalty minutes in 2013-2014 reveals insight into Mr. Brassard’s on-ice character. Mr. Brassard received six tripping penalties<sup>3</sup>, which is evidence of poor judgement. Presumably, he would not have been called if he either paid attention to where he was placing his stick while back-checking or skating faster to avoid having to use his stick to retard his opponents. The same can be said of the three hooking penalties he received<sup>4</sup>. Mr. Brassard should use his speed to stop his opponents and not his stick. Both tripping and hooking penalties are evidence of a lack of effort and overall laziness.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473544&view=splits&season=20132014&gameType=2>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm?fetchKey=20142NYRSASALL&sort=penaltyMinutes&viewName=summary>

<sup>3</sup><http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473544&view=splits&season=20132014&gameType=2>

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

Slashing, on the other hand, is a completely unnecessary penalty that accomplishes nothing. Mr. Brassard had three slashing penalties in the platform year<sup>5</sup>. Unlike tripping and hooking, which can be attributed to laziness or positional errors, slashing penalties generally arise out of frustration or from overly aggressive stick-checking.

The most telling episode of Mr. Brassard's undisciplined on-ice behaviour occurred on April 5, 2014 when the Rangers hosted the Ottawa Senators in a crucial game. Heading into the third period, the Rangers were down a goal and the game began getting chippy. Eric Gryba slashed Mr. Brassard mid-way through the final period and tensions between the benches began to escalate even further<sup>6</sup>. Instead of forgetting about the incident and focusing his energy and attention on tying up the game and forcing overtime, Mr. Brassard let his emotions get the best of him and earned himself a ten-minute misconduct with less than three minutes attempting to exact revenge against Mr. Gryba<sup>7</sup>. The Rangers lost that game 3-to-2 and failed to clinch a playoff berth until the final game of the season<sup>8</sup>. In the games to follow, Mr. Brassard was virtually non-existent on the score sheet, tallying an assist and another 2 penalty minutes<sup>9</sup>. Mr. Brassard not only placed his team's playoff chances in jeopardy with his selfish play on April 5, 2014 but he even failed to rectify his mistake by not contributing offensively to the final stretch before the post-season when his skills were needed most. In other words, Mr. Brassard's lack of discipline almost cost his team a playoff berth.

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup><http://rangers.nhl.com/gamecenter/en/recap?id=2013021166>

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup><http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473544&season=20132014&view=log>

For Mr. Brassard to make valuable contributions to his team, he must be on the ice and not in the penalty box. Mr. Brassard, a centreman who takes a fifth of Ranger face-offs<sup>10</sup> and averages 2:31 powerplay minutes per game<sup>11</sup>, has to be available in tough situations on either end of the ice. His undisciplined play, therefore, is detrimental to his team's success.

### **Unimpressive offensive numbers**

Despite the opportunities he was given in Columbus and even with the Rangers over the last couple years, Mr. Brassard has failed to establish himself as a *bona fide* point-producer in his NHL career thus far.

Mr. Brassard has never surpassed the 20-goal mark and has never registered more than 47 points in a single season<sup>12</sup>. His platform season, while approaching his career-best point totals, was still an inadequate performance from a purely numerical perspective. Of his 45 points in the 2013-2014 regular season, 18 were scored on the powerplay where points are more easily accumulated<sup>13</sup>. Even his 8-game point streak from January 26 to March 1 cannot be said to be overly impressive considering the Rangers played 4 games against teams that did not make the playoffs<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup><http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm?fetchKey=20142NYRSASALL&sort=blockedShots&viewName=rtssPlayerStats>

<sup>11</sup><http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm?fetchKey=20142NYRSASALL&sort=avgPowerPlayTOIPerGame&viewName=timeOnIce>

<sup>12</sup><http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473544>

<sup>13</sup><http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473544&view=splits&season=20132014&gameType=2>

<sup>14</sup><http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473544&season=20132014&view=log>

His powerplay numbers, while laudable, must be contextualized. Mr. Brassard played on the league's seventh ranked powerplay that converted 21.2% of the time and was a key player in that powerplay's success<sup>15</sup>. Of his seven powerplay goals, four were scored against teams that did not qualify for the playoffs<sup>16</sup>.

Even Mr. Brassard's plus/minus of plus-2 in his platform season was not spectacular<sup>17</sup>. Mr. Brassard averaged 0:01 minutes of shorthanded ice-time per game<sup>18</sup>. The fact that Mr. Brassard's plus/minus was not higher than plus-2, given the amount of time he spent on the powerplay, is at least indicative that Mr. Brassard's defensive contributions on even-strength are less than stellar or mediocre at best. Seeing as Hendrik Lundqvist finished the season with a .927 goals against average and was a Vezina Trophy finalist, Mr. Brassard's positive plus/minus is not very impressive<sup>19</sup>.

### **Historical inability to excel as a second-line centre**

With the buy-out of Brad Richards in the off-season, Mr. Brassard is expected to fill the void in the second-line as a centreman. Given his history, this is a role that Mr. Brassard has not entirely embraced with full enthusiasm. Mr. Brassard has a lot to prove before he can truly be said to possess second-line centre credentials.

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<sup>15</sup><http://www.nhl.com/ice/teamstats.htm?fetchKey=20142ALLSAAALL&sort=roadPowerPlayPercentage&viewName=powerPlay>

<sup>16</sup><http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473544&season=20132014&view=log>

<sup>17</sup><http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473544&view=splits&season=20132014&gameType=2>

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup><http://rangers.nhl.com/club/player.htm?id=8468685>

Mr. Brassard was drafted sixth overall in the 2006 NHL Entry Draft by the Columbus Blue Jackets and was handed second-line responsibilities with very low expectations, Mr. Brassard never took the opportunity to build upon the scoring touch he had possessed in major-junior hockey and develop into the quintessential 50-point per season second-line centreman that the Blue Jackets brass had envisioned when he was selected above Claude Giroux and Patrik Berglund. To this day, Mr. Brassard has failed to reach the 50-point mark in five full seasons in the NHL<sup>20</sup> and this fact weighs heavily against awarding Mr. Brassard a salary increase based on overly optimistic projected point totals for a position in which he has historically been mediocre at best.

#### Valid Comparable Players

##### **Valterri Filppula**

In July of 2013, the Tampa Bay Lightning agreed to a five-year contract valued at \$5 million per year with forward, Valtteri Filppula. While this constitutes the exact structure of Mr. Brassard's recent signing with the Rangers, Mr. Filppula is much more valuable to his team.

Mr. Brassard does not play on the penalty kill and is a subpar second-to-third-line centreman with a face-off percentage of 48.0<sup>21</sup>. His point totals were augmented by the fact that he started 60.5% of his shifts in the offensive zone- nearly 11% more than the team average.<sup>22</sup> Conversely, Mr. Filppula, who had a career high in goals as a first-line centreman for most of the

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<sup>20</sup><http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473544>

<sup>21</sup><http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473544&view=splits&season=20132014&gameType=2>

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

season, started roughly half of his shifts in the offensive zone and also contributed to roughly a fifth of his team's penalty killing minutes.<sup>23</sup>

Mr. Brassard finished his platform season with 45 points in 81 games while maintaining an unimpressive plus/minus<sup>24</sup>. Filling in for an injured Steven Stamkos, Mr. Filppula tallied 58 points in 75 games<sup>25</sup>. In other words, Mr. Filppula recorded 13 more points in 6 fewer games than Mr. Brassard. Mr. Filppula was also more disciplined when it came to penalty minutes, registering only 20 minutes in penalties compared to Mr. Brassard's 46.<sup>26</sup>

It is true that the Rangers went much deeper in the playoffs than the Lightning in 2013-2014, but both Mr. Filppula and Mr. Brassard were assets to their teams during the respective playoff runs. Mr. Filppula, for example, led all Lightning forwards with 20:41 minutes of ice-time in Game 3 of the first round, recorded a powerplay assist in Game 2 and finished Game 1 with 67% in the faceoff circle against Montreal's top centremen<sup>27</sup>. Ben Bishop's playoff-ending injury and the inactive statuses of Ondrej Palat and Radko Gudas proved disastrous for the Lightning who fell to Montreal and their Olympic-gold-winning goaltender, Carey Price, in four games. Mr. Filppula arguably did not have a true opportunity to showcase his talents in last year's playoffs to the same extent that Mr. Brassard was able to with the Rangers.

Mr. Filppula's salary of \$5 million per year is justified; Mr. Brassard is just not worth the same amount of money to the Rangers. For these reasons, the Rangers submit that Mr. Brassard is entitled to an award less than Mr. Filppula's \$5 million salary.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> [www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats](http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8470047&view=notes>



## **Matt Stajan**

In January of this year, the Calgary Flames re-signed Matt Stajan to a four-year deal worth an average \$3.125 million per season<sup>28</sup>. A holistic comparison of Mr. Stajan and Mr. Brassard yields two distinct monetary valuations.

Mr. Brassard was slightly more productive in the platform year on a strictly numerical evaluation of points. Mr. Brassard finished with 45; Mr. Stajan only registered 33<sup>29</sup>. Mr. Stajan was placed on injured reserve for much of October due to a lower-body injury and missed a few games late in the season for personal reasons, which accounts at least in part for the difference in point production. In the games that Mr. Stajan did play, however, he made more of an impact to his team's successes than did Mr. Brassard. Mr. Stajan, after all, averaged 18:22 minutes per-game in the regular season versus Mr. Brassard's 15:47<sup>30</sup>. Furthermore, 18 of Mr. Brassard's points were registered on the powerplay. Mr. Stajan was assigned significantly more short-handed minutes and even managed to tally a goal and two assists on the penalty kill.<sup>31</sup>

With 36 blocked shots in the platform year, Mr. Stajan stood in front of 17 more shots than Mr. Brassard.<sup>32</sup> This metric speaks volumes about Mr. Stajan's sacrifices for his team and represent an intangible that sets him aside from Mr. Brassard.

Due to the drastic differences between the two players and their respective contributions to their teams, the Rangers submit that Mr. Brassard is entitled to an award similar to Mr. Stajan's \$3.125 million salary that does not exceed \$3.5 million.

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<sup>28</sup><http://www.capgeek.com/player/177>

<sup>29</sup> [www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats](http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats)

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

## Conclusion

Mr. Brassard is unquestionably a valuable centreman. However, his lack of discipline, offensive mediocrity and his lacklustre performance as a second-line centreman throughout his career are insurmountable concerns for the Rangers organization. A holistic comparison of Mr. Brassard to other comparable forwards who have received similar awards in the last season shows that Mr. Brassard is entitled to an award below the midpoint figure of \$5 million and that \$3.5 million is an appropriate and fair award.