

In the Matter of Salary Arbitration Between:

Derick Brassard

-And-

New York Rangers

Brief of: Derick Brassard (Player)

Team 31

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PART I – OVERVIEW

Pursuant to Article 12.9 of the NHL Collective Bargaining Agreement,¹ this brief represents the collective position of the National Hockey League Players' Association and Derick Brassard (hereinafter collectively referred to as the "NHLPA") in the arbitration hearing between Derick Brassard ("Brassard") and the New York Rangers (the "Club" or "Rangers"). The analysis below will demonstrate that Brassard has been a truly effective offensive player and has helped improve the Club's power play dramatically over a short time span. Brassard is a player with untapped potential and his performance is likely to improve in years to come. The NHLPA submits that Derick Brassard should be entitled to an award of \$5.6 million per year.

PART II – INTRODUCTION TO DERICK BRASSARD

Derick Brassard was drafted 6th overall in the 2006 NHL Entry Draft by the Columbus Blue Jackets.² He played parts of five seasons for the Blue Jackets before being dealt to the New York Rangers at the 2013 NHL Trade Deadline.³ The key players involved in the trade were Marian Gaborik moving to Columbus and Derick Brassard moving to the Rangers. Gaborik had been the Club's leading scorer over the past three seasons, and scored more than 40 goals in three of his previous five seasons.⁴ It is clear the Club had high expectations for Brassard. This past June, the Rangers bought out the contract of center Brad Richards.⁵ Brassard will be expected to fill the position left by Richards' departure.

During his Platform Year,⁶ Brassard played an average of 15:34 per game, third most amongst the Club's centers.⁷ Offensively, Brassard scored at a rate of 0.56 points per game

¹ NHL Collective Bargaining Agreement, 2013.

² <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

³ <http://rangers.nhl.com/club/player.htm?id=8473544>.

⁴ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

⁵ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/news.htm?id=723260>.

⁶ Platform Year" is defined as the year immediately preceding a player's arbitration eligibility.

⁷ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

(“P/GP”).⁸ However, when one takes into account the somewhat limited ice time Brassard received, his production is much more impressive at 2.11 points per sixty minutes (“P/60”).⁹ His production over his career has shown to be quite consistent. Brassard’s Career to Platform¹⁰ scoring rate is also 0.56 P/GP, while his rate adjusted for time on ice is 2.14 P/60.¹¹ Brassard’s true offensive talent is on the power play. Last season, he was tied for second on the Club in power play points at 18; however, considering his power play time on ice, Brassard was in fact the most efficient player, scoring at a rate of 5.3 power play points per sixty minutes (“PPP/60”).¹² The Club’s power play percentage increased from 15.7% prior to Brassard’s trade to 18.2% this past season.¹³ Brassard’s success on the power play is clearly a contributing factor to the team’s overall improvement on the power play.

Brassard is a very reliable defensive player. At even strength, the Rangers allowed only 2.2 goals per sixty minutes (“GA/60”) when Brassard was on the ice.¹⁴ Brassard finished the year with a positive +/- rating of +2.¹⁵

To be a valued forward, a player must be effective both with and without the puck. With the puck, Brassard only committed only 28 giveaways throughout the year.¹⁶ Without the puck, Brassard plays an aggressive style of hockey. Last season he issued 124 hits and still remained fairly disciplined, receiving only 18 minor penalties.¹⁷

Throughout his career, Brassard has proven to excel when the stakes are highest. His

⁸ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

⁹ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

¹⁰ “Career to Platform” includes all previous NHL seasons from the player’s first game up to and including the player’s Platform Year.

¹¹ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

¹² <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

¹³ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/teamstats.htm?fetchKey=20142ALLSAAALL&sort=wins&viewName=summary>.

¹⁴ <http://www.stats.hockeyanalysis.com/ratings.php>.

¹⁵ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

¹⁶ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

¹⁷ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

Career to Platform production in the Stanley Cup Playoffs is significantly higher than his regular season production, at 0.69 P/GP.¹⁸ Not only does he produce more during the playoffs, but his goals come at opportune moments; all six of his playoff goals last season came when the games were within one goal.¹⁹ During the Rangers' playoff push in March and April of last season, Brassard saw his average time on ice ("ATOI") increase by a full minute per game.²⁰ In the Stanley Cup Finals, Brassard's ATOI increased to a staggering 19:50, more than four minutes more than his regular season average.²¹

Brassard has immense value to the Club. In his Platform Year, he played most often with Mats Zuccarello and Benoit Pouliot.²² With Brassard as their centerman, both Zuccarello and Pouliot had the best seasons of their careers.²³ The chemistry that Brassard developed with Zuccarello, the Club's top scorer,²⁴ will be extremely important for the Club's future. Since the departure of Brad Richards, Brassard will have an important role on the Club's top two lines and will certainly see a large increase in ice time, which can only help his overall point production.

PART III – SELECTION OF VALID COMPARABLE PLAYERS

The NHLPA selected its comparable players objectively through the analysis of their statistical performance. Only NHL forwards who were arbitration eligible at the conclusion of the 2012-13 or 2013-14 seasons were considered. Players who were arbitration eligible at the end of the 2013-14 season, but who had not signed a contract prior to July 27, 2014 were not considered. The criteria used by the NHLPA to select its comparable players was:

¹⁸ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

¹⁹ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

²⁰ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

²¹ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

²² <http://www.hockeyabstract.com/testimonials>.

²³ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

²⁴ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

Platform Year²⁵

- +/- 5 minutes of regular season ATOI
- Played in at least half of their team's regular season games
- +/- 50% of regular season P/GP

Career to Platform²⁶

- +/- 4 minutes of regular season average time on ice per game (ATOI)
- +/- 15% of total regular season games played
- +/- 25% of regular season points per game (P/GP)

A total of three NHL forwards fit the criteria mentioned above and are depicted in *Table*

1. The NHLPA will use all three players as comparable players to Derick Brassard. These players are Bryan Little, Sam Gagner, and Ryan O'Reilly.

Table 1: Comparable Players²⁷

Player	Platform Year	Platform Year			Career To Platform		
		GP	ATOI	P/GP	GP	ATOI	P/GP
Derick Brassard	2014	81	15:34	0.56	403	15:39	0.56
Bryan Little	2013	48	19:48	0.67	404	17:46	0.56
Sam Gagner	2013	48	19:24	0.79	414	17:01	0.62
Ryan O'Reilly	2014	80	19:49	0.80	345	18:07	0.55

PART IV – ANALYSIS OF BRASSARD AND COMPARABLE PLAYERS

A. BRYAN LITTLE

In July 2013, Bryan Little ("Little") signed a five-year deal with the Winnipeg Jets worth an average of \$4.7 million per year.²⁸ During his Platform Year, Little averaged 19:48 per game as the Jet's first line center, nearly four minutes more than Brassard.²⁹ Little scored at a rate of

²⁵ Between 10:34–20:34 ATOI; at least 41 GP in 2013-14 or 24 GP in 2012-13; between 0.28 – 0.83 P/GP.

²⁶ Between 11:39 – 19:39 ATOI; between 342 – 463 total games played; between 0.42 – 0.70 P/GP.

²⁷ All performance statistics in *Table 1* are available at <http://www.nhl.com>.

²⁸ <http://www.capgeek.com>.

²⁹ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

0.67 P/GP, a figure higher than Brassard.³⁰ However, when you consider the additional time on ice, Brassard actually outperforms Little's rate of 2.02 P/60.³¹ Over the Career to Platform period, both players produce at the exact same rate of 0.56 P/GP; however, Brassard outperforms Little when ice time is considered (2.14 P/60 and 1.90 P/60, respectively).³² On the power play, Little is outmatched by Brassard. Despite playing nearly identical time on the power play Little only scored at a rate of 2.5 PPP/60 during his Platform Year, less than half of Brassard's rate.³³

Little makes very few mistakes with the puck. He committed only 11 giveaways in 48 games in his Platform Year. While issuing only 32 hits, Little is not nearly as physical of player as Brassard, but he is extremely disciplined, only taking two penalties in the entire season.³⁴

At even strength, the Jets allowed 2.5 GA/60 while Little is on the ice, more than the Rangers allowed when Brassard is on the ice.³⁵ Due to playing with offensively gifted forwards such as Andrew Ladd and Blake Wheeler,³⁶ Little still managed to finish with a +8 plus/minus rating during his Platform Year.³⁷ Ladd and Wheeler were the Jets' two leading scorers that season and would have contributed positively to Little's plus/minus rating.³⁸

Little's value to his club is unclear at this point. Although they signed him to a longer term deal, Mark Scheifele, one of Winnipeg's top prospects, might challenge Little for the role of top line centre in the near future. If this does happen, Little's ice time could see a significant reduction as would his time playing with Ladd and Wheeler.

Through the analysis above, it is evident that Derick Brassard is a more effective player,

³⁰ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

³¹ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

³² <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

³³ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

³⁴ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

³⁵ <http://www.stats.hockeyanalysis.com/ratings.php>.

³⁶ <http://hockey.dobbersports.com>.

³⁷ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

³⁸ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

especially on the power play. The NHLPA submits that Brassard should receive an award in excess of Little's average salary of \$4.7 million per year.

B. SAM GAGNER

In July 2013, Sam Gagner ("Gagner") signed a three-year deal with the Edmonton Oilers at an average salary of \$4.8 million per year.³⁹ During his Platform Year, Gagner played 19:24 per game, more than any other Oiler forward and significantly more than Brassard.⁴⁰ That year, Gagner's point production was exceptional; he averaged 0.79 P/GP.⁴¹ Although this seems significantly higher than Brassard, the gap diminishes when you consider ice time. Gagner scored 2.45 P/60, only sixteen percent more than Brassard at 2.11 P/60.⁴² Over the Career to Platform period, the offensive production of the two players is much more similar. Gagner averaged 0.62 P/GP, only slightly higher than Brassard's average of 0.56 P/GP.⁴³ Again, when considering the difference in ice time, Gagner and Brassard are quite similar (2.20 P/60 and 2.14 P/60, respectively).⁴⁴ On the power play, Gagner scored an average of 6.4 PPP/60 during his Platform Year, significantly more than Brassard.⁴⁵

Gagner may be a more offensively gifted player than Brassard; however, Gagner has demonstrated an inability to play effective defense. At even strength, the Oilers allowed 3.0 GA/60 with Gagner on the ice, the worst of any Oiler forward, and significantly worse than Brassard.⁴⁶ In fact, the rate at which the Oilers were scored on with Gagner on the ice was one of the highest in the NHL.⁴⁷ Note only does Gagner lack the ability to play effective defense, he

³⁹ <http://www.capgeek.com>.

⁴⁰ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

⁴¹ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

⁴² <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

⁴³ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

⁴⁴ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

⁴⁵ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

⁴⁶ <http://www.stats.hockeyanalysis.com/ratings.php>.

⁴⁷ <http://www.stats.hockeyanalysis.com/ratings.php>.

also makes many mistakes with the puck. He committed 26 giveaways in only 48 games during his Platform Year, a much higher rate than Brassard.⁴⁸

Gagner's multi-year contract shows that, at some point, he was part of Edmonton's long term plan. Had Gagner learned to perform defensively he may still be with the Oilers. However, Edmonton decided to trade Gagner this past June for another winger, even though the Oilers did not have a replacement to take over one of the top two center positions.⁴⁹

Gagner's offensive advantage compared to Brassard diminishes significantly when ATOI is considered. Gagner's offensive production is greatly overshadowed by his inability to play defense. The NHLPA submits that Brassard should be entitled to an award greater than Gagner's average salary of \$4.8 million per year.

C. RYAN O'REILLY

Earlier in July 2014, Ryan O'Reilly ("O'Reilly") signed a two-year contract with the Colorado Avalanche worth an average of \$6.0 million per year.⁵⁰ O'Reilly averaged 19:49 per game during his Platform Year, much higher than Brassard.⁵¹ Offensively, O'Reilly scored at a rate of 0.80 P/GP or 2.42 P/60 last season, outscoring Brassard by a fair margin.⁵² O'Reilly's offensive advantage disappears when looking at Career to Platform statistics where he averaged 0.55 P/GP or 1.83 P/60.⁵³ Brassard has outperformed O'Reilly during this period. On the power play, O'Reilly has a significant advantage over Brassard, scoring at a rate of 6.2 PPP/60.⁵⁴

O'Reilly committed slightly more giveaways than Brassard in his Platform Year (33 in 20 games); however, he had an NHL best 83 takeaways, which is more than triple Brassard's 28

⁴⁸ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

⁴⁹ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/news.htm?id=724511>.

⁵⁰ <http://www.capegeek.com>.

⁵¹ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

⁵² <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

⁵³ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

⁵⁴ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

takeaways.⁵⁵ Although he is not a physically aggressive player (only 22 hits last season), O'Reilly is a very disciplined player, winning the Lady Bing Memorial Trophy⁵⁶ during his Platform Year.⁵⁷ Defensively, the Avalanche allowed 2.8 GA/60 with O'Reilly on the ice, which is considerably more than the Rangers allowed with Brassard on the ice.⁵⁸

Last season, O'Reilly showed that he could excel in high-pressure situations. O'Reilly saw a large increase in ice time over March and April as the Avalanche fought for playoff positioning.⁵⁹ Colorado finished in 3rd place overall last season.⁶⁰ During the playoffs, O'Reilly's scoring rate increased to 0.86 P/GP, although the Avalanche were eliminated in the first round.⁶¹

Brassard and O'Reilly have similar career statistics, although more recently, O'Reilly has shown that he can sustain a higher rate of scoring than Brassard. Brassard has proven to be a more aggressive defender and allows fewer goals at even strength than O'Reilly. The NHLPA submits that Brassard should receive an award that is at or near O'Reilly's average salary of \$6.0 million per year.

PART V – CONCLUSION

Derick Brassard has demonstrated his ability to produce offensively despite a relatively low ATOI compared to Little, Gagner, and O'Reilly. He is a key contributor to the Rangers' power play and brings a physical edge to his game. With the departure of Brad Richards, the NHLPA believes that Derick Brassard's role on the New York Rangers will increase dramatically, allowing Brassard to show his true potential. Therefore, the NHLPA submits that Brassard be awarded a salary of \$5.6 million per year.

⁵⁵ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

⁵⁶ The Lady Bing Memorial Trophy is an annual award given to the player who exhibits the "best type of sportsmanship and gentlemanly conduct combined with a high standard of playing ability"; see <http://www.nhl.com/ice/page.htm?id=24938>; <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

⁵⁷ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

⁵⁸ <http://www.stats.hockeyanalysis.com/ratings.php>.

⁵⁹ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.

⁶⁰ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/teamstats.htm?navid=nav-sts-teams#>.

⁶¹ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>.