

IN THE MATTER OF SALARY ARBITRATION BETWEEN:

DERICK BRASSARD

-AND-

THE NEW YORK RANGERS

BRIEF OF THE NEW YORK RANGERS

TEAM 12

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I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Pursuant to section 12.9 of the NHL Collective Bargaining Agreement¹, this brief will analyze the performance of Derick Brassard (“Mr. Brassard”) of the New York Rangers. The analysis will conclude that while Mr. Brassard has established himself as a valuable player, Mr. Brassard has reached his potential as a second or third line center and has proven to be a defensive liability throughout his career. As such, the New York Rangers submit that Mr. Brassard is entitled to an award below the \$5 million midpoint, and that \$4.3 million would be a fair and appropriate figure.

A. Mr. Brassard has reached his Potential

Mr. Brassard is a 27 years old center and has played in parts of 7 NHL seasons. Mr. Brassard was originally drafted 6th overall in the 2006 NHL Entry Draft. Over his career, Mr. Brassard has played in 403 NHL games, tallying 81 goals and 144 assists for a total of 225 points. Throughout his career, Mr. Brassard has averaged 15:39 minutes per game. The 2014-15 season will be Mr. Brassard’s final restricted free agent year.²

Last season, Mr. Brassard played in 81 games for the New York Rangers, scoring 18 goals and tallying 27 assists, a total of 45 points.³ This ranked third amongst New York Rangers centers, behind Derek Stepan and Brian Richards. Mr. Brassard averaged 15:48 minutes per game, also third amongst New York Rangers centers.⁴ When compared to centers across the league, Mr.

¹ <http://www.nhlpa.com/inside-nhlpa/collective-bargaining-agreement>

² <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473544>

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm?season=20132014&gameType=2&team=NYR&position=C&country=&status=&viewName=summary>

Brassard ranked 47th in points, 54th in points per game, and 82nd in average TOI.⁵ Mr. Brassard's major statistics consistently rank him amongst other NHL team's second and third line centers.

Mr. Brassard's offensive statistics, while respectable, have peaked. Over the last 3 seasons, Mr. Brassard has averaged 0.569 points per game. In 2013-14, Mr. Brassard averaged 0.556 points per game. These numbers are consistent with Mr. Brassard's career average of 0.558 points per game.

⁶ In fact, Mr. Brassard has only posted one full season with a point per game average above 0.6, 2010-11, a season in which he recorded 0.635 points per game. The other two seasons in which Mr. Brassard scored points at a rate higher than 0.6 points per game were both shortened seasons, one by injury and one by the 2012-13 NHL lockout. In both of those seasons, Mr. Brassard's statistics were boosted by a shooting percentage over his career average.⁷

B. Defensive Liability

Mr. Brassard has been a defensive liability throughout his career. This is evidenced by his career plus minus rating of – 37.⁸ Another demonstration of Mr. Brassard's poor defensive ability is his career shorthanded time on ice (TOI). Mr. Brassard has averaged less than 5 seconds of shorthanded TOI per game over his NHL career.⁹ This demonstrates a lack of trust in Mr. Brassard's defensive abilities on behalf of his coaches. This lack of trust is again demonstrated by the percentage of offensive starts Mr. Brassard has had over his career; 58.4% of his starts come

⁵Points per game and TOI requires >50 games played.

<http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm?season=20132014&gameType=2&team=&position=C&country=&status=&viewName=summary>

⁶ *Supra* note 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473544&view=splits>

in the offensive zone.¹⁰ Further, during his platform year, Mr. Brassard blocked 19 shots and had 28 takeaways, numbers that ranked 292nd and 183rd amongst NHL forwards.¹¹ Because Mr. Brassard contributes little defensively, his value to the New York Rangers must be determined solely from his offensive production.

II. VALID COMPARABLE PLAYERS

A. Bryan Little

Prior to the 2013-14 NHL season, Bryan Little of the Winnipeg Jets signed a 5 year, \$23.5 million dollar contract. Over the life of the deal, Mr. Little will be compensated \$4 million in year one, \$4.75 million in year two and three, and \$5 million in year four and five. The deal carries an average annual value of \$4.7 million.¹² Mr. Little's deal covered his last RFA year and four UFA years. Mr. Little and Mr. Brassard have been statistically similar throughout their careers. Before signing his deal, Mr. Little had played in 404 career NHL games, scoring 99 goals and tallying 128 assists for a total of 227 points.¹³ This results in a career average of 0.562 points per game. Mr. Brassard has played 403 career games, scoring 81 goals and 144 assists, for a total of 225 points. Mr. Brassard has scored an average of 0.558 points per game over his career.¹⁴

However, a significant difference exists between the platform seasons of Mr. Little and Mr. Brassard. In their platform seasons, Mr. Little and Mr. Brassard averaged 0.667 and 0.556 points

¹⁰ <http://www.hockey-reference.com/players/b/brassde01-additional.html>

¹¹ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm?season=20132014&gameType=2&team=&position=F&country=&status=&viewName=rtssPlayerStats>

¹² <http://www.capgeek.com/player/342>

¹³ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473412>

¹⁴ *Supra* note 2.

per game respectively.¹⁵ This is a trend that has existed for several years proceeding each player's platform season¹⁶:

Player	Platform year	Last 2 years	Last 3 years	Career
D. Brassard	0.556	0.578	0.569	0.558
B. Little	0.667	0.639	0.636	0.562

During the above time span, Mr. Little has begun to consistently lead Winnipeg Jets centers in TOI.¹⁷ As a result, when the Jets signed Mr. Little to a five-year deal, the salary given to Mr. Little is to reward him for playing the important role of a first line center.

Mr. Little is also able to provide a significant amount of value to his team defensively. This is shown by his efforts on Winnipeg's penalty kill. During his platform year Mr. Little averaged 1:32 per game on the penalty kill.¹⁸ This demonstrates that the Winnipeg Jets have a strong level of trust in Mr. Little's defensive abilities. Mr. Brassard however, only averaged one second of penalty kill time per game.¹⁹ Similarly, Mr. Little's other defensive statistics support that he is a stronger defensive player than Mr. Brassard. Mr. Little averaged 0.40 blocked shots, 0.60 takeaways, and 0.22 giveaways per game.²⁰ Mr. Brassard averaged 0.23 blocked shots, 0.35 takeaways, and 0.35 giveaways per game. Mr. Little's faceoff percentage was 51.2%, while Mr. Brassard's was 48.0%.²¹ Additionally, 55.4% of Mr. Little's starts came in his defensive zone²², while just 39.5%

¹⁵ *Supra* note 2,13.

¹⁶ In points per game played. *Supra* note 13.

¹⁷ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm?season=20122013&gameType=2&team=WPG&position=C&country=&status=&viewName=timeOnIce>

¹⁸ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473412&view=splits>

¹⁹ *Supra* note 9.

²⁰ *Supra* note 18.

²¹ *Supra* note 9, 18.

²² <http://www.hockey-reference.com/players/l/littlebr01.html>

of Mr. Brassard's starts began in the defensive zone²³. This indicates that the Winnipeg Jets deploy Mr. Little in situations in which it is necessary for the team to clear the puck out of its defensive zone, while the New York Rangers are unable to rely on Mr. Brassard in that capacity.

Furthermore, Mr. Little has played in 88.2% (404/458) of his team's game since he joined the league and has not missed any time with significant injuries since joining the NHL.²⁴ Since he became a regular in the NHL during the 2007-08 season, Mr. Brassard's has played a similar percentage of his team's games at 84.3% (386/458).²⁵ However, Mr. Brassard experienced a significant shoulder injury during the 2008-09 NHL season, causing Mr. Brassard to miss most of the year.²⁶ While he has suffered no serious injuries since, Mr. Brassard suffered a similar injury during his OHL career.²⁷ While these injuries are not recent, any history of serious injuries cause concerns about the long-term health of a player.

Due to the similarities in career offensive production between Mr. Little and Mr. Brassard, but considering Mr. Little's increasing offensive production, more important role, and superior defensive value, the New York Rangers submit that Mr. Brassard should receive an award below the annual average value of Mr. Little's contract.

²³ *Supra* note 10.

²⁴ *Supra* note 13.

²⁵ *Supra* note 2.

²⁶ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473544&view=notes>

²⁷ *Ibid.*

B. Chris Stewart

Prior to the 2013-14 NHL season, Chris Stewart signed a 2 year, \$8.3 million dollar contract with the St. Louis Blues. The contract will pay Mr. Stewart \$4.1 million in the first year of the contract and \$4.2 million in the second year. The deal carries an average annual value of \$4.15. The first year of the contract covers Mr. Stewart's last RFA year, with the second year covering a UFA year.²⁸ While Mr. Stewart primarily plays right wing and Mr. Brassard is a center, throughout their careers the similarities in TOI per game is remarkable. Mr. Stewart has averaged 15:41²⁹, while Mr. Brassard has averaged 15:39.³⁰ During their platform years, Mr. Stewart averaged 15:49 while Mr. Brassard averaged 15:48 minutes per game. During their platform years both players spent similar amounts of time on the power-play. Mr. Stewart averaged 2:19³¹ and Mr. Brassard averaged 2:31.³² Neither player is known for their defensive ability; this can be shown by the player's career plus minus ratings. Mr. Stewart has compiled a rating of -19 over 5 NHL seasons, compared to Mr. Brassard's cumulative -37 rating. Neither Mr. Stewart nor Mr. Brassard have played significant minutes on their respective team's penalty kill.³³

There are significant differences in the level of offensive production that Mr. Stewart and Mr. Brassard have been able to create. Prior to signing his deal, Mr. Stewart had averaged 0.633 points per game over his NHL career, significantly more than the 0.558 that Mr. Brassard has averaged.³⁴ Furthermore, in his platform season, Mr. Stewart averaged 0.750 points per game, compared to

²⁸ <http://www.capegeek.com/player/560>

²⁹ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473485>

³⁰ *Supra* note 2.

³¹ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473485&view=splits>

³² *Supra* note 13.

³³ *Supra* note 2, 13, 29, and 31.

³⁴ *Supra* note 2, 28.

Mr. Brassard's 0.556.³⁵ Throughout his career, Mr. Stewart has been able generate an average of 191 shots per 82 games, while Mr. Brassard has only been able to register an average of 153.

The New York Rangers acknowledge that Mr. Stewart has missed more time due to injury, playing in only 69.7% of his team's games before signing his contract, less than Mr. Brassard's 84.3%.³⁶ However, when Mr. Stewart has been on the ice, he has been a significantly more productive player than Mr. Brassard.

The New York Rangers note the similarities in roles between Mr. Stewart and Mr. Brassard. Both players are defensive liabilities on the ice and must provide value offensively. Considering that Mr. Stewart's offensive numbers have been greater than Mr. Brassard's in both their platform years and over their careers, but that Mr. Brassard has been a more durable player, it is the New York Rangers position that Mr. Brassard should receive an award similar to the \$4.15 million annual average value of Mr. Stewart's contract.

III. CONCLUSION

Mr. Brassard has had success in the role of a third line center. However, he has failed to develop into a more important role on the team. Additionally, Mr. Brassard has a poor defensive track record. When compared to players of similar age and NHL track records it is clear that Mr. Brassard is entitled to an award below the \$5 million midpoint and that \$4.3 million would be an appropriate award.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*