

**2014 HOCKEY ARBITRATION COMPETITION OF CANADA**

**Lars Eller v. Montreal Canadiens**

*Submission on Behalf of the Montreal Canadiens*

*Midpoint: \$3.5 million*

*Submission by Team 6*

## I. INTRODUCTION

This brief will analyze the past output and contribution of Lars Eller (the "Player" or "Mr. Eller"). Mr. Eller is a left-handed forward for the Montreal Canadiens organization (the "Club" or the "Canadiens").<sup>1</sup> Mr. Eller signed a three year entry level Standard Player Contract (SPC) in 2008 with the St. Louis Blues before being traded to the Canadiens on June 17, 2010.<sup>2</sup> He then re-signed with the Canadiens to a two year contract in 2012. The Player was 19 years of age on September 15, 2008, and has acquired more than four years of professional playing experience. Mr Eller is therefore eligible for salary arbitration pursuant to section 12.1 of the *National Hockey League Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA)*.<sup>3</sup>

According to the *CBA*, the following evidence is to be considered in determining a player's salary arbitration compensation: overall performance including NHL official stats of player in previous seasons; the number of games played by the player, his injuries or illnesses during the preceding seasons; the length of the service of that player to the Club; the overall contribution of the player to the Club; any special qualities of leadership or public appeal; the overall performance of players alleged to be comparable to the Player whose salary is in dispute; and the compensation of players alleged to be comparable to the Player whose salary is in dispute.<sup>4</sup>

The Montreal Canadiens have considered such evidence and takes the position that Mr. Eller should be compensated less than the \$3.5 million midpoint. The Club respectfully requests that the panel find an award of \$3 million.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474189>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474189&view=notes>.

<sup>3</sup> Collective Bargaining Agreement Between NHL and NHLPA, 2012, Article 12.1 (a)-(c).

<sup>4</sup> Collective Bargaining Agreement Between NHL and NHLPA, 2012, Article 12.9 (g) (ii).

## II. OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF THE PLAYER

### A. CAREER PREFORMANCE

Table 1: Career Statistics for Lars Eller<sup>5</sup>

SEASON	GP	G (G/G)	A (A/G)	P (P/G)	+/-	PIM	PPG	S	S%
2009-2010	7	2 (0.29)	0(0)	2 (0.29)	2	4	1	8	24
2010-2011	77	7 (0.09)	10 (0.13)	17 (0.22)	-4	48	0	79	8.9
2011- 2012	79	16 (0.20)	12 (0.15)	28 (0.35)	-5	66	2	129	12.4
2012-2013	46	8 (0.17)	22 (0.48)	30 (0.65)	8	45	1	84	9.5
2013 - 2014	77	12 (0.16)	14 (0.18)	26 (0.33)	-15	68	2	137	8.8
CAREER	286	45 (0.16)	58 (0.20)	103 (.36)	-14	231	6	437	10.3

Mr. Eller's NHL career is best illustrated by what he lacks the most – identity. Over his few years with the Montreal Canadiens he has failed to establish a role on the team. He doesn't play a significant role in any special team situations, lacks discipline and offensive prowess. His offensive numbers are mediocre at best. Over his 286 games played he average a decimal amount of only .36 points per game and a minus 14. It is evident that he doesn't excel at either end of the ice. Furthermore, as a centre man its his job to win crucial faceoff's where he has sadly failed to do as he below 50% over his career.<sup>6</sup> This evidence shows that Mr Eller has failed to be an integral part of the Montreal Canadiens in any of the three zones on the ice.

### B. 2013-2014 REGULAR SEASON PREFORMANCE

Table 2: 2013-2014 Regular Season Statistics for Lars Eller<sup>7</sup>

SEASON	GP	G (G/G)	A (A/G)	P (P/G)	+/-	PIM	PPG	S	S%
2013 - 2014	77	12 (.016)	14 (0.18)	26 (0.33)	-15	68	2	137	8.8

Mr. Eller re-signed with the Canadiens in 2012 and enjoyed a respectable 2012-2013 season. However, in the final year of his contract, the 2013-2014 season, Mr. Eller left much to be desired. The Montreal Canadiens as a team enjoyed fine seasons in both 2012-2013 and

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474189&view=stats>.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

2013-2014, finishing 3rd and 4th respectfully in the Eastern Conference.<sup>8</sup> However, Mr. Eller's contributions decreased significantly in the latter season. His points-per-game average of 0.65 dropped to 0.33, basically cut in half.<sup>9</sup> His plus/minus decreased dramatically, from +8 to -15 (See Table 1)<sup>10</sup>. It should also be noted, that in the final 48 games of the 2013-2014 season, Mr. Eller only scored 9 points.<sup>11</sup> These statistics do not only emphasize inconsistency in Mr. Ellers game, but also his inability to establish identity as either an offensive threat, or a steady defensive presence.

### **III. NUMBER OF GAMES PLAYED AND HISTORY OF INJURIES**

Mr. Eller has competed in 286 NHL games as a member of the St. Louis Blues and the Montreal Canadiens. He has also competed in 25 playoff games for the Canadiens. As a member of the Canadiens, Mr. Eller has only missed 15 regular season games, starting in almost 95% of the Clubs games, while averaging just over 14 minutes per game.<sup>12</sup> In his platform year, Mr. Eller averaged almost 16 minutes of ice time per game, however saw his point production fall, accumulated more penalty minutes, and was on the ice for more goals against (See Table 1).

On May 3, 2013, Mr. Eller suffered a concussion after a devastating hit in a playoff game versus the Ottawa Senators. He was unable to return to the Canadiens lineup for the rest of the playoffs.<sup>13</sup> Concussions continue to be a prominent issue in the NHL, which can have long term effects on a player, and are more likely to reoccur after suffering one. Mr. Eller also had shoulder issues when he first arrived to the Canadiens organization, which required surgery where he missed the first two weeks of the season.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.nhl.com/ice/standings.htm?season=20122013&type=con#&navid=nav-stn-conf>.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474189&view=stats>.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474189&view=log&season=20132014>.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474189&view=stats>.

<sup>13</sup> <http://forecaster.thehockeynews.com/hockeynews/hockey/player.php?6418>.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

#### IV. LENGTH OF SERVICE

Mr. Eller was the 13th player selected overall in the 2007 NHL Entry Draft.<sup>15</sup> Mr. Eller then signed a three year entry level SPC with the St. Louis Blues and played his first professional season in 2009-2010.<sup>16</sup> Mr. Eller was then traded to the Montreal Canadiens in exchange for Jaroslav Halak in the 2010 offseason. He has now accumulated 5 years of combined professional experience across his tenure with the Blues and the Montreal Canadiens organizations.<sup>17</sup>

#### V. OVERALL CONTRIBUTION TO COMPETITIVE SUCCESS OF CLUB

In 2013-2014, the Canadiens finished fourth in the Eastern Conference with a record of 46-28-8.<sup>18</sup> This is the third playoff berth the Canadiens have secured since Mr. Eller joined the organization. In 2012-2013, the Canadiens finished second overall with a record of 29-14-5.<sup>19</sup> In 2011-2012, the Canadiens finished last place (15th overall) with a record of 31-35-16.<sup>20</sup>

When Mr. Eller re-signed with the Canadiens in 2012, the Club was signing a player with great upside, with the potential of being a solid two-way forward.<sup>21</sup> While Mr. Eller is still young, he has yet to truly show great offensive upside, and has struggled in his own zone. The Canadiens list Mr. Eller as their third line center.<sup>22</sup> It would seem that this is an appropriate spot for the Player. While the Canadiens have enjoyed success over the last 2 years, Mr. Eller did not show any real contribution heading into the final stretch of the season. His 9 points in the last half of the season in 2013-2014 was not a significant offensive contribution.<sup>23</sup> He was also a

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.nhl.com/ice/standings.htm?season=20132014&type=CON>.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.nhl.com/ice/standings.htm?season=20122013&type=CON>.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.nhl.com/ice/standings.htm?season=20112012&type=CON>.

<sup>21</sup> <http://forecaster.thehockeynews.com/hockeynews/hockey/player.php?6418>.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.capgeek.com/canadiens/depth-chart/>.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474189&view=log&season=20132014>.

disturbing -17 in those games.<sup>24</sup> Mr. Eller has yet to show great offensive output to play on a first or second line. He would seem better suited in a shut down roll, although his plus/minus in his platform year is detrimental in fitting in that position. It is for these reasons that Mr. Eller is lacking any identity with the Club as he does not seem to fit in an offensive roll, or a shut down roll.

While Mr. Eller is relatively young, it can be said that he does have considerable potential. As the Player continues to grow, it may become more apparent as to what Mr. Eller brings to the Canadiens. However, at this time it is difficult to specify exactly what that is.

## **VI. SPECIAL QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP OF PUBLIC APPEAL**

At this point in his professional NHL career, Mr. Eller has yet to demonstrate any noteworthy leadership qualities. While this may in part be due to lack of playing experience, Mr. Eller will need to develop above average special teams abilities to compensate for his alarming plus/minus. Putting in substantive minutes in crucial situations over the course of an entire season is another step Mr. Eller will have to take to demonstrate that he is a valuable member of the Club.

## **VII. COMPARABLE PLAYERS**

In order to determine an arbitration award, it is essential to determine comparable players to examine salary benchmarks for players with a similar skill set. The following players that are going to be comparable to Mr. Eller were arbitration-eligible at the end of either the 2013-2014 or 2012-2013 seasons. The most noteworthy benchmarks used to determine where a player stands amongst his colleagues is based on a combination of career statistics, length of service, age, position and platform year statistics.<sup>25</sup> Appropriately, Josh Bailey and Mikkel Boedker are

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> CBA s.12.9(g)(ii)(A)-(G).

the most accurate players when engaging in a direct comparison with Mr. Eller. In regards to the salary, it will be referred to as the Average Annual Value (AAV) to illustrate the comparisons in the most accurate light.

#### A. JOSH BAILEY

Table 3: Platform Year Statistical Comparison<sup>26</sup>

<b>Player</b>	<b>GP</b>	<b>G (G/G)</b>	<b>A (A/G)</b>	<b>P (P/G)</b>	<b>+/-</b>	<b>PIM (PIM/G)</b>	<b>PPG</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S%</b>
Lars Eller	77	12 (0.16)	14 (0.18)	26 (0.33)	-15	68 (0.88)	2	137	8.8
Josh Bailey	38	11 (0.28)	8 (0.21)	19 (0.50)	7	6 (0.15)	0	76	14.5

Josh Bailey is an accurate comparable player for Mr. Eller. Both players had similar goals in their platform years (Eller: 12, Bailey 11), although, Mr. Bailey achieved this in 38 games, which is half the amount of games that it took Mr. Eller. In addition, he achieved this in a more efficient manner since his shooting percentage of 14.5% was almost double Eller's 8.8%. Being drafted a year later than Mr. Eller, Josh Bailey has had the benefit of playing one more year. With that stated, with just one more year of professional experience, Josh Bailey has played in a significant amount of professional games (406) compared to Eller's 286 over their careers.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, Mr. Bailey is much more disciplined, only averaging .15 penalty minutes per games compared to Eller's 0.88. Taking close to a minute a game in penalties forces your team to be stuck on the penalty kill therefore limiting their offensive chances. A player with the discipline of Mr. Bailey is much more attractive to a team since they do not have to worry about him becoming a liability to their team. Furthermore, in comparing Eller's platform year to Baileys, it is clear what type of impact they have on their respective teams. Eller's plus/minus was a deficiency of negative 15, whereas Bailey was able to contribute to his team coming out

<sup>26</sup> All player statistics are referenced from [www.NHL.com](http://www.NHL.com).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

positive 7. Similarly, Bailey contributes more frequently to as he averages 0.50 point per game compared to Eller's 0.33. Therefore with Bailey being the same age as Eller, he has demonstrated that he is a greater threat to opposing teams through his illustrated offensive statistics and being more disciplined. Accordingly, this proves not only that Mr. Eller should be award a salary that falls below the proposed midpoint of \$3,500,000 but a salary below Josh Bailey's \$3,300,000. Consequently, a salary of \$3,000,000 would be reasonable after seeing the comparison made out above.

#### B. MIKKEL BOEDKER

Table 3: Platform Year Statistical Comparison<sup>28</sup>

<b>Player</b>	<b>GP</b>	<b>G (G/G)</b>	<b>A (A/G)</b>	<b>P (P/G)</b>	<b>+/-</b>	<b>PIM (PIM/G)</b>	<b>PPG</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S%</b>
Lars Eller	77	12 (0.16)	14 (0.18)	26 (0.33)	-15	68 (0.88)	2	137	8.8
Mikkel Boedker	48	7 (0.14)	19 (0.39)	26 (0.54)	0	12 (0.25)	3	83	8.4

Mikkel Boedker is also an accurate comparable player for Mr. Eller. Both players have similar goals per game in their platform years (Eller: 0.16, Boedker 0.14). Although, Mr. Boedker achieved this in 48 games, which is half the amount of games that it took Mr. Eller. Similar to Josh Bailey, Boedker was drafted a year later then Mr. Eller and has had the benefit of playing one more year. With that stated, with just one more year of professional experience, Mikkel Boedker has played in over 50 more professional games (338) than Eller.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, Mr. Boedker is also much more disciplined by only averaging 0.25 penalty minutes per games compared to Eller's 0.88. Taking close to a minute a game in penalties forces your team to be stuck on the penalty kill therefore limiting their offensive chances. A player with the discipline of Mr. Boedker is much more attractive to a team since they do not have to worry about him

<sup>28</sup> All player statistics are referenced from [www.NHL.com](http://www.NHL.com).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*



becoming a liability to their team. Furthermore, in comparison to Eller's platform year to Boedker, it is clear what type of impact they have on their respective teams. Eller's plus/minus was a deficiency of negative 15 whereas; Boedker was able to remain even. Similarly, Boedker contributes more frequently, too. He averages 0.54 point per game compared to Eller's 0.33. Therefore with Boedker being the same age as Eller, he has proven to be a greater threat to opposing teams through his illustrated offensive statistics and being more disciplined. Accordingly, this proves not only that Mr. Eller should be award a salary that falls below the proposed midpoint of \$3,500,000 but a salary closer to Mikkel Boedker \$2,500,000. Consequently, a salary of \$3,000,000 would be reasonable after seeing the comparison made out above.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

Based on the evidence above, the Canadiens respectively submit that Mr. Eller deserves compensation that is less than the midpoint salary of \$3,500,000. Mr. Eller has failed to gain any identity on the ice, and has not contributed to the Canadiens in any substantial way on offense or defense. He has not contributed effectively enough to be compensated in line with comparable players. Therefore, we submit that an award of \$3,000,000 is appropriate.