

2014 HOCKEY ARBITRATION COMPETITION OF CANADA

Mr. Derick Brassard v New York Rangers

Submission on behalf of the New York Rangers

Midpoint: \$ 5 000 000

Team 11

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I. INTRODUCTION

This brief analyzes the performance and contributions of Derick Brassard (the “Player” or “Mr. Brassard”) of the New York Rangers (the “Club” or the “Rangers”). Mr. Brassard signed his second SPC contract in 2010.¹ This four year Standard Player Contract (“SPC”) with the Rangers expired at the end of the 2013-2014 season. Having acquired more than four years of professional experience, Mr. Brassard is eligible for salary arbitration pursuant to section 12.1 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (“CBA”).² As will be clear from the evidence of his performance and contributions presented in this brief, Mr. Brassard’s lack of any significant increase in statistical production does not warrant an increase in salary to \$5 million, the midpoint of the proposed amounts. New York Rangers respectfully requests that the panel find that he is entitled to a salary arbitration award of \$3.3 million.

II. OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF THE PLAYER

A. Career Performance

Table 1: Career Statistics for Derick Brassard³

Season	GP	G	A	P	+/-	PIM	Hits	BS	GvA	TkA	TOI
2007-2008	17	1	1	2	-4	6	11	0	3	4	9:03
2008-2009	31	10	15	25	12	17	40	3	13	21	14:25
2009-2010	79	9	27	36	-17	48	97	11	14	21	14:57
2010-2011	74	17	30	47	-11	55	121	14	23	26	17:02
2011-2012	74	14	27	29	-20	42	137	16	28	35	16:20
2012-2013	47	12	17	29	1	16	83	8	17	19	16:33
2013-2014	81	18	27	45	2	46	124	19	28	28	15:48
Career	403	81	144	144	-37	230	613	79	143	173	15:34

¹Derick Brassard Profile: <http://www.capgeek.com/player/593>

² NHL Collective Bargaining Agreement, 2012, s. 12.1(a)-(c). The CBA establishes that the following evidence is to be considered in determining the Player’s salary arbitration award: the overall performance of the Player in previous seasons; the number of games played by the Player and his injuries or illnesses during the preceding seasons; the length of service of the Player in the League and/or with the Club; the overall contribution of the Player to the competitive success or failure of the Club in the preceding season; special qualities of leadership or public appeal not inconsistent with the fulfillment of his responsibilities as a playing member of his team; the overall performance in the previous season or seasons of any player(s) who is alleged to be comparable to the Player whose salary is in dispute; and the compensation of players who is alleged to be comparable to the Player whose salary is in dispute. s.12.9(g)(ii)(A)-(G). This brief will consider each of these criteria in turn.

³ All Statistics for Table 1 were provided by www.nhl.com.

Mr. Brassard was selected 6th overall by the Columbus Blue Jackets (the “Blue Jackets”) in the 2006 NHL Entry Draft.⁴ Following the Draft, the Player remained with his Quebec Major Junior Hockey League (“QMJHL”)⁵, as the Blue Jackets, despite finishing in 13th place in the Western Conference in the preceding season felt that Mr. Brassard would benefit from being returned to the QMJHL. Mr. Brassard’s NHL career began in the 2007-2008 season when he played 17 games for the Blue Jackets.⁶ Despite the Blue Jackets again finishing in 13th place in the Western Conference, Mr. Brassard spent most of the season in the American Hockey League (“AHL”) with the Blue Jackets affiliate the Syracuse Crunch.⁷ Mr. Brassard made the Blue Jackets out of training camp in the 2008-2009 season.⁸ The Player was dealt to the Rangers in a deadline deal in the 2012-2013 season.⁹

Mr. Brassard has consistently been a minus player throughout his career. Despite showing signs of improvement, the Player’s low plus/minus combined with his career average of 0.35 giveaways per game suggests that Mr. Brassard is not yet a reliable defensive player.¹⁰ Mr. Brassard’s defensive shortcomings are also reflected in the fact that only 41.8% of his career zone starts are in the defensive end.¹¹

Mr. Brassard has also not demonstrated throughout his career that he is first line level offensive player. Mr. Brassard has never produced more than 50 points in a season, nor has he ever scored 20 goals.

⁴ Player Profile: <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473544>

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

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

¹¹ *Ibid.*

B. 2013-2014 Season

Table 2: 2013-2014 Season Statistics for Derick Brassard

Season	G P	G	A	P	+/-	PIM	PPG	BS	GvA	TkA	TOI
2013-2014	81	18	27	45	2	46	7	19	28	28	15:48

Mr. Brassard had a consistent but unremarkable platform year. Mr. Brassard again failed to break the 20 goal or 50 point plateau. Although Mr. Brassard's offensive statistics are respectable they do not justify a salary increase to a number at or above the midpoint of \$5 million.

Further, the Player's statistics demonstrate a reduction in responsibility that he had for the Club. Mr. Brassard's ice time fell below 16 minutes per game for the first time since the 2009-2010 season. Additionally, Mr. Brassard regressed in his defensive skill set as his takeaways were equal to his giveaways in the 2013-2014 season. Further, the player's defensive zone starts fell to 39.5%.¹² Mr. Brassard remains a useful player; but the potential for growth and improvement is not demonstrated by his performance in his most recent season which instead flags areas of regression.

III. NUMBER OF GAMES PLAYED AND INJURY HISTORY

In seven seasons in the NHL Mr. Brassard has played 403 career games. This is an average of 67 games per season. Mr. Brassard has accumulated fewer games played in part because early in his career he spent most of his first season with the AHL Syracuse Crunch.

Mr. Brassard, when healthy has been a consistent presence in the line-up for either the Blue Jackets or the Rangers. The player however, does have an injury history. Mr. Brassard injured

¹² *Ibid.*

his shoulder on two occasions. The first was immediately following his draft year. Mr. Brassard recovered from this injury and played for the Syracuse Crunch for most of the next year.¹³ Mr. Brassard, however, reinjured this shoulder in the 2008-2009 season in a fight.¹⁴ Mr. Brassard only played 31 games that season and required surgery.¹⁵ The integrity of Mr. Brassard's shoulder is therefore a concern on a going forward basis. In addition Mr. Brassard's continued propensity to fight increases the risk that he has of injury.

IV. LENGTH OF SERVICE

Mr. Brassard was selected 6th overall by the Blue Jackets in the first round of the 2006 NHL Entry Draft.¹⁶ Mr. Brassard signed a 3 year entry level SPC with the Blue Jackets in 2007.¹⁷ The Player signed a subsequent four year SPC with the Blue Jackets which expired at the end of the 2013-2014 season. Overall, Mr. Brassard has amassed 6 years of professional experience.

V. OVERALL CONTRIBUTION TO THE CLUB

During Mr. Brassard's time with the Blue Jackets, the Club was largely ineffective and only made the postseason once in 2008-2009.¹⁸ Mr. Brassard was injured this season and therefore never played a playoff game prior to joining the Rangers.

Mr. Brassard has enjoyed success with the Rangers. The Player has been involved in 35 playoff games and averaged 16:51 in ice time.¹⁹ The Club advanced to the Stanley Cup Finals in 2013-2014.²⁰ Mr. Brassard's average ice time went down in comparison to the previous season's

¹³ Player Profile: <http://www.rotowire.com/hockey/player.htm?id=2558>

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Supra* note 1

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Columbus Blue Jackets Team Results: <http://www.hockey-reference.com/teams/CBJ/>

¹⁹ *Supra* note 10.

²⁰ New York Rangers Team Results: <http://www.hockey-reference.com/teams/NYR/>

playoffs from 18:55 to 15:47.²¹ This demonstrates that the Club achieved greater success with Mr. Brassard playing a reduced role.

VI. SPECIAL QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC APPEAL

Mr. Brassard is a well-liked teammate who performs respectably on the ice; however he has not assumed any leadership positions with the Rangers. Mr. Brassard does not have a noteworthy off-ice presence, and he has not made an impact or impression with the local New York media. The most accurate analysis of Mr. Brassard's value is from his on ice performance.

VII. COMPARABLE PLAYERS

A. Mats Zuccarello

Table 3: Career Statistics for Mats Zuccarello²²

Season	GP	G	A	P	+/-	PIM	BS	Hits
2010-2011	42	6	17	23	3	4	19	56
2011-2012	10	2	1	3	0	6	3	8
2012-2013	15	3	5	8	10	8	15	27
2013-2014	77	19	40	59	11	32	41	116
Career	144	30	63	93	24	50	78	207

Mats Zuccarello was a restricted free agent and arbitration-eligible when he signed his one year \$3.5million contract before the start of the 2014-2015 season²³. These players were not only teammates in their platform years, but they were also born within 30 days of each other. Mr. Zuccarello therefore makes a very good comparable player to Mr. Brassard.

In terms of offensive statistics, Mr. Brassard has scored at a pace of 0.57 points per game, while Mr. Zuccarello has picked up considerably more with 0.65 points per game. Additionally, this gap cannot be minimized by taking into account goal scoring, as Zuccarello's 32% points

²¹ Player Profile: <http://www.hockey-reference.com/players/b/brassde01.html>

²² <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8475692&docid=TeamPlayerBio:41060#&navid=nhl-search>

²³ <http://www.capgeek.com/player/1777>

from goals is very close to Mr. Brassard's 36%. The disparity grows even further when one considers that not only did Mats Zuccarello score significantly more points last year (0.77 compared to 0.56) but he also scored one more goal than Mr. Brassard, while playing four fewer games. Given these statistics, it is clear that Mr. Zuccarello has superior career offensive statistics, that become far superior in the players' platform seasons.

Even being on the same team in their platform year, Mats Zuccarello garnered a +/- rating of 11, compared to the 2 of Mr. Brassard. This trend also hold true over their careers, as Mr. Zuccarello is a career 24, whereas Mr. Brassard is a career -37. That is a discrepancy to the tune of 61 points on the +/- rating.

Defensively, Mr. Zuccarello again does better than Mr. Brassard in almost every category. His 0.54 blocked shots per game career and 0.53 platform dwarf Mr. Brassard's 0.2 career and 0.23 platform. Though, Mr. Brassard has gained more hits per game over his career at 1.52 and platform 1.55 than Mr. Zuccarello, who sits at 1.44 career and 1.5 platform. However, this only represents a small differential.

Given that Mr. Zuccarello has outperformed Mr. Brassard in almost every category in both career and platform season numbers, and given that they are of comparable age and played for the same team, it would be unjust to award Mr. Brassard more than the \$3.5million that Mr. Zuccarello earns, and should sit closer to \$3.3 million.

B. Chris Stewart

Table 4: Career Statistics for Chris Stewart²⁴

Season	GP	G	A	P	+/-	PIM	PPG	HITS	BkS
2008-2009	53	11	8	19	-18	54	1	80	8
2009-2010	77	28	36	64	4	73	3	100	11
2010-2011	62	28	25	53	-6	53	12	56	18
2011-2012	79	15	15	30	1	109	2	112	21
2012-2013	48	18	18	36	0	40	6	41	13
Career	319	100	102	202	-19	329	24	389	71

Chris Stewart was a 26 year old forward for the St. Louis Blues, when he signed his \$4.1million 2 year deal, while he was arbitration-eligible²⁵. Mr. Brassard is only one year older at the time of this arbitration and also plays an offensive-minded forward role. These players are therefore valid for comparison.

When viewing total point production, it quickly becomes clear that Mr. Stewart has outperformed Mr. Brassard. Mr. Stewart has amassed points at a 0.63 points per game pace over his career, compared to 0.57for Mr. Brassard. On his platform season, Mr. Stewart collected 0.75 points per game, far more than Mr. Brassard's 0.56. Indeed, Mr. Stewart also scores a higher percentage of his points from goals, as he sits at 50% on his career and 50% platform, whereas Mr. Brassard is 36% career and 40% platform.

Neither player is amazing in terms of +/- with Mr. Brassard earning -37 career and Mr. Stewart sitting at -19, but Chris Stewart's number is undoubtedly better. The one thing that can be said about Mr. Brassard is that he throws more hits. He has 1.44 hits per game career compared to 1.2 for Mr. Stewart, which grows to a differential of 1.5 hits per game to 0.85 when considering the platform year. However Mr. Stewart blocks more shots (0.22 to 0.2 career and 0.27 to 0.23 platform in favour of Mr. Stewart.). Given that Mr. Stewart has a much better +/-

²⁴ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473485&view=stats>

²⁵ http://www.capegeek.com/search/?search_criteria=stewart

rating and blocks more shots, but throws fewer hits, it can be said that the two players are relatively equal defensively.

As Mr. Stewart outperforms Mr. Brassard in all offensive categories, and is comparable to Mr. Brassard defensively, it follows that Mr. Brassard should certainly be awarded a lower figure than Mr. Stewart's award of \$3.5million.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Derick Brassard is an offensive player who has shown signs of scoring potential, but who has never exceeded 50 points or 0.6 points per game, and who had a career negative +/- rating. His platform season saw a regression in ice time and an increase in offensive-zone starts, without increased offensive performance. His teammate, Mats Zuccarello, outperformed him in almost every category, and was awarded \$3.5million for his efforts. Mr. Chris Stewart also outperformed Mr. Brassard in almost every category, save for defensive categories, and has nearly as much game experience. Mr. Stewart was awarded \$4.15million. Given Mr. Brassard's regression in responsibility and given that both Mr. Zuccarello and Mr. Stewart outperform him, it is justified that Mr. Brassard be awarded less than both, and receive \$3.3million.