

2014 HOCKEY ARBITRATION COMPETITION OF CANADA

Mr. Lars Eller v Montreal Canadiens

Submission on Behalf of Mr. Lars Eller

Midpoint: \$3 500 000

Team 11

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I. INTRODUCTION

This brief analyzes the performance and contributions of centre Lars Eller (the “Player” or “Mr. Eller”) of the Montreal Canadiens (the “Club” or the “Canadiens”). Mr. Eller signed an entry level Standard Player Contract (“SPC”) with the St Louis Blues (the “Blues”) in 2008.¹ Mr. Eller is eligible for salary arbitration as he has acquired the minimum four years professional experience pursuant to s. 12.1 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (“CBA”).²

Mr. Eller is a productive member of the Canadiens who has demonstrated consistent improvement year after year. As such, Mr. Eller respectfully requests that the panel find he is entitled to a fair salary arbitration award of **3 600 000**.

II. OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF THE PLAYER

A. Career Performance

Table 1: Career Statistics for Lars Eller³

Season	GP	G	A	P	+/-	PIM	HITS	BS	GvA	TkA	TOI
2009-2010	7	2	0	2	2	4	8	1	2	1	10:49
2010-2011	77	7	10	17	-4	48	85	22	25	24	11:08
2011-2012	79	16	12	28	-5	66	72	55	31	42	15:18
2012-2013	46	8	22	30	8	45	86	33	19	23	14:49
2013-2014	77	12	14	26	-15	68	130	58	25	30	15:57
Career	286	45	58	103	-14	231	381	169	102	120	14:10

¹ Lars Eller Player Profile: <http://www.capgeek.com/player/998>

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. Eller was selected 13th overall by the Blues in the 2007 NHL Entry Draft.⁴ Following the Draft, the Player remained in Europe for the 2007-2008 season where he played on loan from Frolunda Hockey Club for Boras Hockey Club in the HockeyAllsvenskan, which is the second highest Swedish tier league. Mr. Eller would spend most of the 2009-2010 with the Blues American Hockey League (“AHL”) affiliate in Peoria. In Peoria, the Player was named AHL Rookie of the Month for March and was also named to the AHL All-Star Rookie Team.⁵

In his full rookie season in 2010-2011, Mr. Eller immediately demonstrated his offensive skill by contributing 0.22 points per game. This offensive contribution from the player built off of his NHL debut where Mr. Eller scored the Blues only goal. In his career, Mr. Eller has been a steady offensive presence as he has consistently generated more than 0.33 points per game.

In the 2010-2011 and the 2011-2012 seasons, Mr. Eller has played an average of 0:40 and 0:43 minutes per game on the power play.⁶ In the Player’s platform year his power play time per game was increased to 1:13 minutes per game. This demonstrates that Mr. Eller is trusted to be an offensive contributor and is assuming a growing role as part of the Club’s offensive attack.

Defensively, Mr. Eller was trusted to play as part of the Canadiens 4th ranked penalty kill in 2013-2014.⁷ Furthermore, Mr. Eller is consistently trusted to start in the defensive zone as demonstrated in his career average 52.5% defensive zone start percentage.⁸ Mr. Eller outside of his brief stint with the Blue in the 2009-2010 season and his full rookie season has consistently had more takeaways than giveaways..

⁴ Lars Eller NHL Player Profile: <http://canadiens.nhl.com/club/player.htm?id=8474189>

⁵ Press Releases from AHL: <http://theahl.com/eller-grabs-top-rookie-honor-for-march-p141808>;
<http://theahl.com/2009-10-ahl-all-rookie-team-announced-p141785>

⁶ <http://www.rotowire.com/hockey/player.htm?id=2793>

⁷ nhl.com/ice/teamstats.htm?fetchKey=20142ALLSAAAll&sort=penaltyKillPercentage&viewName=penaltyKill

⁸ Lars Eller Additional Statistics: <http://www.hockey-reference.com/players/e/ellerla01-additional.html>

B. 2013-2014 Season

Table 2: 2013-2014 Regular Season Statistics for Lars Eller

Season	GP	G	A	P	+/-	PIM	PPG	BS	GvA	TkA	TOI
2013/2014	77	12	14	26	-15	68	2	58	25	30	15:57

During the 2013-2014 season Mr. Eller was a consistent player for his Club. He played an average of 15:57 minutes per game and only missed 4 games during the season. Mr. Eller continued to have more takeways then giveaways. Mr. Eller also assumed a greater role on the Canadiens in his platform season as he increased his power play time to 1:13 per game.⁹

III. NUMBER OF GAMES PLAYED AND INJURY HISTORY

Mr. Eller has played in a career 286 games. The Player has been a consistent presence in the Canadiens line-up. Mr. Eller has never missed more than 3 games in a season. Mr. Eller has not missed any significant playing time due to injuries. However, the player underwent off season shoulder surgery prior to the 2011-2012 season.¹⁰ Mr. Eller made a full recovery and played in 79 of the Club's 80 season games in the 2011-2012 season. The Player suffered a concussion in the Canadiens 2012-2013 playoff run and his post season ended early.¹¹ Mr. Eller recovered to play in 77 of the Club's 80 regular season games in the 2013-2014 season.

IV. LENGTH OF SERVICE

Mr. Eller was selected 13th overall by the Blues in the first round of the 2007 NHL Entry Draft.¹² Mr. Eller signed a 3 year entry level SPC with the Blues in 2008. The Player signed a subsequent two year SPC with the Canadiens which expired at the end of the 2013-2014 season.

⁹ *Supra* note 8.

¹⁰ Preseason Outlook: <http://www.rotowire.com/hockey/player.htm?id=2793>

¹¹ <http://www.cbc.ca/sports/hockey/nhl/habs-lars-eller-injury-overshadows-senators-win-1.1371974?cmp=rss>

¹² *Supra* note 4.

V. OVERALL CONTRIBUTION TO THE CLUB

Since Mr. Eller's trade to the Canadiens, the team has generally enjoyed success as the Club has advanced to the playoffs in every year except the 2011-2012 season.¹³ In the 2013-2014 season the Club advanced to the Eastern Conference Finals.¹⁴

Mr. Eller was also one of the Canadiens most consistent performers in the 2013-2014 playoffs as he was second on the team in points.¹⁵ The Player scored 5 goals and 8 assists in the Canadiens 17 playoff games. Mr. Eller was also a +6 during the playoffs. Given that goal scoring is regarded as being at a premium in the playoffs, Mr. Eller's continued offensive production against elite teams further demonstrates his reliability and offensive contributions to the Club.

The Canadiens also placed 4th overall on the penalty kill in the 2013-2014 season.¹⁶ Mr. Eller's consistent presence on the Club's second penalty killing unit demonstrates his defensive skill set.

Mr. Eller's performance in the playoffs and his continued presence on the penalty kill unit of the Club demonstrate the Player's contribution to the continued success of the Canadiens.

VI. SPECIAL QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC APPEAL

The Canadiens are characterized as a small team. Mr. Eller brings an element of toughness. This is demonstrated as the Player led the Club in hits in the 2013-2014 season with 130 hits.¹⁷

Mr. Eller is also involved in the community and maintains a relationship with Canadiens fans as he is active on his own personal Twitter account which has over 87.6 thousand followers.¹⁸

¹³ Montreal Canadiens Playoff History: <http://www.hockey-reference.com/teams/MTL/>

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Playoff Statistics: <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474189>

¹⁶ *Supra* note 10.

¹⁷ *Supra* note 3

¹⁸ Twitter Page: https://twitter.com/Eller_89

Mr. Eller has also attained public appeal through his participation in international hockey events. In 2006 and 2007 Mr. Eller was a member of the Danish silver and gold medal teams respectively at the International Ice Hockey Federation Under 18 Championship.¹⁹ Mr. Eller has also played for Denmark in the 2007 and 2009 World Junior Ice Hockey Championships in Division I where he was part of a gold and silver medal winning team respectively.²⁰ Mr. Eller when he was selected in the 2007 NHL Draft was also the highest ever drafted Danish player at the time.²¹

VII. COMPARABLE PLAYERS

A. Michael Frolik

Table 3: Career Statistics for Michael Frolik²²

Season	GP	G	A	P	+/-	PIM	PPG	BS	Hits
2008-2009	79	21	24	45	10	22	1	24	46
2009-2010	82	21	22	43	-4	43	5	32	72
2010-2011	80	11	27	38	2	30	1	37	52
2011-2012	65	5	10	15	-10	22	0	32	56
2012-2013	45	3	7	10	5	8	0	23	32
2013-2014	81	15	27	42	8	12	1	51	41
Career	430	76	117	193	11	137	8	199	299

Michael Frolik was 26 when, prior to the 2014/2015 season, he signed a one year SPC with the Winnipeg Jets.²³ He was taken in the 10th overall in the 2006 NHL Entry Draft, Just one year earlier and in the same round as Lars Eller.²⁴ Each player is expected to contribute to their team as a skilled scoring forward. Therefore, Mr. Frolik and Mr. Eller are proper for comparison.

¹⁹ Career Statistics: <http://www.capgeek.com/player/998>

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Supra* note 7.

²² <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473564&view=stats>

²³ <http://www.capgeek.com/player/816>

²⁴

The most pertinent question with regard to these two forwards, is what they have done for their clubs lately and how consistently. Mr. Frolik has amassed approximately 0.45 points per game on his career, whereas Mr. Eller has contributed 0.36 points per game. However, if we consider the last three seasons that each player has played, Mr. Eller has accumulated 0.42 points per game, whereas Mr. Frolik was only able to perform at 0.36 points per game. As recent performance is the primary point of comparison for the purposes of negotiating a new salary, it can certainly be said that Mr. Eller has been more productive in the relevant term. Additionally, over that same span of those three seasons, 43% of Mr. Eller's points have come from goals, compared to a mere 34% from Mr. Frolik. While it is true that Mr. Frolik earned 0.52 points per game in his platform season compared to Mr. Eller's 0.34, if we include Mr. Eller's stellar playoff performance of 13 points in 17 games, his points per game on the season increases to a respectable 0.42. Given that Lars Eller has been a better point producer over the past 3 years, and far more of his points come from goals Mr. Eller is the superior offensive talent.

Mr. Eller has produced 1.33 hits per game, whereas Mr. Frolik has produced only 0.7 hits per game. Mr. Eller has contributed 0.59 per game to Mr. Frolik's 0.46. While Mr. Eller's +/- rating of -14 is lower than Mr. Frolik's +11, the Canadiens' faith in Mr. Eller's defensive play is illustrated in the fact that in his platform season, he was started in the defensive zone in 43% of his shifts and ended 46% of his shifts in the offensive zone, showing an ability to play responsibly defensively and move the puck into the offensive zone²⁵. Mr. Frolik started greater than half of his shifts in the offensive zone (51%), with fewer than half ending in that end (47% offensive zone finish).²⁶

²⁵ <http://www.behindthenet.ca>

²⁶ <http://www.behindthenet.ca>

Given that Mr. Eller has been a better offensive and defensive player over the past 3 years, and given that he is progressing in his skill while Mr. Frolik is regressing, Mr. Eller should be awarded a salary well above Mr. Frolik's award of \$3.3 million average annual value..

B. Patrik Berglund

Table 4: Career Statistics for Patrik Berglund²⁷

Season	GP	G	A	P	+/-	PIM	BS	Hits
2008-2009	76	21	26	47	19	16	14	58
2009-2010	71	13	13	26	-5	16	11	70
2010-2011	81	22	30	52	-3	26	33	116
2011-2012	82	19	19	38	4	30	36	97
2012-2013	48	17	8	25	-2	12	24	53
2013-2014	78	14	18	32	10	38	30	88
Career	436	106	114	220	23	138	148	482

Patrik Berglund is a forward for the St. Louis Blues, taken in the first round of the 2006 entry draft, one year before Mr. Eller and in the same round. Mr. Berglund was signed to a 3 year SPC before the start of the 2014-2015 season. Each player is relied on as point producers for their team that can also produce defensively, therefore Mr. Berglund is a valid comparable.

Much like the offensive analysis with Mr. Frolik, Mr. Berglund has out-produced Mr. Eller when their careers are taken as a whole, but when considering the past 3 seasons, he is not far ahead of Mr. Eller offensively. Mr. Berglund has 0.5 points per game on his career to Mr. Eller's 0.36, however, when considering the past 3 seasons, Mr. Berglund has accumulated 0.46 points per game to Mr. Eller's 0.42. When considering regular season and playoff performance in their platform years, Mr. Berglund accumulated 0.39 to Mr. Eller's 0.42. Therefore, while Mr.

²⁷ <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473534&docid=TeamPlayerBio:13984#&navid=nhl-search>

Berglund has out-performed Mr. Eller over his career, they have had near identical statistics over the past three years, with Mr. Eller having a better platform season.

When considering defensive statistics, it is clear that Mr. Eller has an edge. Mr. Eller's 1.33 hits per game over his career and his 0.59 blocked shots per game are much higher than Mr. Berglund's 1.11 hits and 0.34 blocked shots. Additionally, Mr. Berglund starts 56% of his shifts in the offensive zone, but only finishes 54% of his shifts there²⁸. Mr. Eller advances his team by starting in the offensive zone only 43% of his shifts, but finishing there 46% of the time²⁹. It is quite apparent on these statistics that Mr. Eller is the more valuable player defensively.

Mr. Berglund's contract with the Blues is worth \$3.7million average annual value. It would only be fair to award Mr. Eller similar compensation given their offensive similarity in the past 3 seasons, along with Mr. Eller's greater defensive responsibility.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Lars Eller is a developing player, reaching career highs in powerplay and shorthanded minutes in his platform season; a platform season in which he also lead his team in hits. He has had no significant recurring injuries and has played in greater than 90% of the regular season games in each of his years in the league. He is offensively and defensively better than Michael Frolik, who earns \$3.3million per year, and he is similar offensively and better defensively than Patrik Berglund, who was awarded \$3.7million per year. Due to the statistical comparison to the above-noted players, \$3.6 million is established fair market value for Lars Eller.

²⁸ <http://www.behindthenet.ca>

²⁹ <http://www.behindthenet.ca>