

IN THE MATTER OF SALARY ARBITRATION

BETWEEN:

DERICK BRASSARD

(“THE PLAYER”)

- AND -

THE NEW YORK RANGERS

(“THE CLUB”)

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THE PLAYER’S BRIEF

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TEAM 4

Counsel for “THE PLAYER”

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## **1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

[1] This brief pertains to a matter of salary arbitration between Derick Brassard (“Brassard” or “the Player”) and the New York Rangers (“the Rangers” or “the Club”) pursuant to Article 12 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (“CBA”) between the National Hockey League (“NHL”) and the National Hockey League Players’ Association (“NHLPA”) entered into on February 15, 2013.

[2] The following brief will establish the fair value of Derick Brassard as a center in the National Hockey League. This brief will examine Brassard’s career performance, his offensive statistics during his Platform Year of 2013-2014, and his additional intangible contributions to the Club that make Brassard a valuable commodity in the NHL marketplace. Based on the aforementioned criteria, this brief will conclude that Brassard should be awarded a one-year Standard Player’s Contract (“SPC”) with a value of no less than \$5.1 million.

## **2 OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF THE PLAYER**

[3] Brassard is a young top-six center with a high upside and great skating ability. He is the quintessential multi-tool player, with the skill and grit to adapt to any role the Club needs him in. Brassard was drafted in the 1<sup>st</sup> round, 6<sup>th</sup> overall by the Columbus Blue Jackets in the 2006 NHL Entry Draft.<sup>1</sup> Despite his sizeable 6’1”, 202 lb. frame, Brassard has the speed and hockey sense to beat opposing defensemen and get into favourable positions, either to set-up his teammate for a goal or to fire a shot on net himself. A single statistic does not accurately represent the value of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8473544&docid=TeamPlayerBio:44700#&navid=nhl-search>

Brassard – his value to the Club is in his role as a competent 2<sup>nd</sup> line center that performs in a number of different roles. Brassard’s career statistics are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Career Regular Season Statistics for Derick Brassard<sup>2</sup>**

Season	Team	GP	G	A	PTS	PPP	PPG	PP%	HTS
2007-08	CBJ	17	1	1	2	0	0.12	0	0
2008-09	CBJ	31	10	15	25	7	0.81	0.28	0
2009-10	CBJ	79	9	27	36	10	0.46	0.28	97
2010-11	CBJ	74	17	30	47	16	0.63	0.34	121
2011-12	CBJ	74	14	27	41	15	0.55	0.37	137
2012-13*	CBJ/NYR	47	12	17	29	11	0.62	0.38	83
2013-14	NYR	81	18	27	45	18	0.56	0.4	124
<b>Career</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>0.56</b>	<b>0.34</b>	<b>562</b>

\*Lockout-shortened season of 48 games.

[4] In the 2013-2014 season (the “Platform Year”), Brassard ranked fourth in both goals (18) and points (45) among all players on the New York Rangers’ roster. Further, he finished tied for first on his team in power play goals (7) and third on his team in power play assists (11). These impressive numbers come despite Brassard being seventh amongst all Rangers’ forwards, with an average time-on-ice of 15:48 per game.<sup>3</sup>

[5] Brassard’s value comes from his ability to fill gaps in a roster and provide support where needed on an ad-hoc basis. One area he excels, and continues to improve, is his ability to contribute on the power play. Looking at his career performance, Brassard’s percentage of points earned on the power play has steadily increased from 28% in 2008-2009 to 40% during the 2013-2014 season. Further, during his Platform Year he recorded his highest number of power play points to date with 18. If this trend continues Brassard could become the most important part of the New York Rangers’ 2<sup>nd</sup> power play unit in much need of improvement, placing 15<sup>th</sup> in the league during the 2013-2014 season.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nhl.com/ice/player.htm?id=8474189>; <http://sports.yahoo.com/nhl/players/3987/>.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

[6] A player that can contribute offensively is useful, but one that can also use his size and contribute to an effective forecheck is invaluable. Forwards that can finish their checks and accumulate hits create more opportunity for turnovers and scoring opportunities, bringing value to their team. Brassard plays a physical game, and was able to contribute an impressive 124 hits during the 2013-2014 season. This ranked fourth among all Rangers' forwards and helped cement his position as an "all-around player" that can contribute to all aspects of the game.

[7] NHL Clubs need players that can elevate their performance during the playoffs and give their team the chance to win the Stanley Cup. These "club players" are particularly important for teams that regularly reach the post-season, such as the New York Rangers, who have reached the postseason during eight of the last nine NHL seasons. Derrick Brassard has consistently elevated his play during the playoffs, with his career statistics (below in Table 2) revealing him as a strong asset during the post-season.

**Table 2: Career Playoff Statistics for Derick Brassard<sup>4</sup>**

Season	Team	GP	G	A	PTS	PPP	PPG	HTS
2012-13	NYR	12	2	10	12	3	1.00	28
2013-14	NYR	23	6	6	12	3	0.52	32
<b>Career</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0.63</b>	<b>60</b>

[8] The statistics in Table 2 show that in the 38-playoff games he has appeared in, Brassard has performed at a points-per-game pace (0.63) above his career average (0.56). Further, his 60 hits in 38 games represent a hits-per-game of 1.58. This is above the average for his Platform Year (1.53) or his career average (1.39). These statistics show that Brassard is a player that will raises his level of play during the postseason and elevate his performance in every aspect of his game.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.hockey-reference.com/players/b/brassde01-additional.html>.

### 3 SELECTION OF COMPARABLE PLAYERS

[9] In order to evaluate the value of Brassard in the NHL, it is necessary to compare his performance to other similar forwards in the league. The most relevant criteria to determine a proper comparison are age, career and Platform Year performance, NHL experience and the player's intangible contributions to their respective teams. In accordance with Article 12 of the CBA, counsel for the Player has selected several comparable players. These players are Bryan Little ("Little") and Sam Gagner ("Gagner").

### 4 COMPARISON TO COMPARABLE PLAYERS

**Table 3: Brassard v. Comparable Players - Platform Year Statistics<sup>5</sup>**

Player	Season	GP	G	A	PTS	PPP	PPG	HTS	FO%
Brassard	2013-14	81	18	27	45	18	0.56	124	.480
Little	2012-13*	48	7	25	32	5	0.67	32	.439
Gagner	2012-13*	48	14	24	38	15	0.79	35	.512

\*Lockout-shortened seasons of 48 games.

**Table 4: Brassard v. Comparable Players – Career Performance Statistics<sup>6</sup>**

Player	Season	GP	G	A	PTS	PPP	PPG	HTS	FO%
Brassard	2013-14	403	81	144	225	77	0.56	562	.464
Little	2012-13	404	99	128	227	71	0.56	246	.478
Gagner	2012-13	414	91	167	258	87	0.62	143	.450

**Table 5: Brassard v. Comparable Players – Contracts<sup>7</sup>**

Player	Current Age	Contract Length	Platform Year	AAV
Brassard	25	1 year	2013-2014	Unknown
Little	25	5 year	2012-2013	\$4,700,000
Gagner	24	3 year	2012-2013	\$4,800,000

[10] It is important to note that for both of the comparable players, their Platform Years occurred during the lockout shortened 2012-2013 season. While both Little and Gagner played in

<sup>5</sup> <http://sports.yahoo.com/nhl/players/3994/>; <http://sports.yahoo.com/nhl/players/4245/>.

<sup>6</sup> *Supra* note 5.

<sup>7</sup> <http://capgeek.com/player/593>; <http://capgeek.com/player/342>; <http://capgeek.com/player/23>.

all 48 games of the season, it is a relatively small sample size when compared to a full 82 game season. Further, playing a shortened season may have allowed the players to work harder and produce more points during that period than they normally would. As an example, Brassard produced significantly more during this shortened season than in his full Platform Year, at a pace almost comparable to Gagner and Little. See Table 6 below.

**Table 6: Brassard Lockout-shortened Season Statistics**

Player	Season	GP	G	A	PTS	PPP	PPG	HTS	FO%
Brassard	2012-13	47	12	17	29	11	0.62	83	.482

#### 4.1 DERICK BRASSARD v. BRYAN LITTLE

[11] Bryan Little is a 5'11" 185lb center for the Winnipeg Jets (formerly the Atlanta Thrashers prior to the 2010-2011 season). The Atlanta Thrashers drafted him in the 1st round, 12th overall in the 2006 NHL Entry Draft. Following his Platform Year in 2012-2013, Bryan Little signed a five-year SPC with an AAV of \$4.7 million per year. During his time with the Atlanta Thrashers/Winnipeg Jets, his team has not made the playoffs. As such, Little's value as a post-season player cannot effectively be evaluated.

[12] Both Little and Brassard have played a similar number of games, 403 games and 404 games, respectively. During this time their scoring statistics have been almost identical – each scoring at a pace of 0.56 points-per-game. While in some statistics, notably faceoff win percentage, Little has historically outperformed Brassard, it is important to look at the aggregate of all their stats to see the true value of a player. Both through his career and during his Platform Year Brassard has outperformed Little on the man advantage, with Brassard scoring 18 power play points to Little's prorated power play points of 8.4 for the 2012-2013 season. Further, Brassard's career hits are more than double Little's, despite each playing a similar amount of

games. This shows that while each provides similar value in five-on-five situations and in the faceoff dot, Brassard contributes more during the man advantage and helps his team's forecheck with a plethora of devastating hits.

[13] As shown in Table 5, Little signed a contract during the 2013 offseason for five years at an AAV of \$4.7 million. Brassard, a player with similar offensive numbers and the added value of his power play expertise, physicality and playoff experience, should command a moderately higher salary from arbitration. Brassard is simply a better all around player that can fulfill a variety of roles on any NHL club. The value of a player that can adjust his game and replace an injured center on a skilled first or second line, or a gritty possession based third or fourth line, cannot be overstated in a sport with an exceptionally long postseason and high injury rate.

#### 4.2 DERICK BRASSARD v. SAM GAGNER

[14] Sam Gagner is a 5'11" 202lb center for the Arizona Coyotes. Gagner was originally drafted by the Edmonton Oilers 6<sup>th</sup> overall in the 1<sup>st</sup> round of the 2007 NHL Entry Draft, and was traded to the Arizona Coyotes during the 2014 offseason. Gagner has played 414 games in the NHL to date and has recorded 258 points during this period. Gagner is a skilled but one-dimensional player that needs to fully round out his game if he is to become a more valued commodity in the NHL marketplace. Similar to Little he is yet to reach the postseason and remains an untested player in terms of playoff performance.

[15] Admittedly Gagner has out performed Brassard in terms of offensive statistics. While his Platform Year statistics are impressive, a fair evaluation of Gagner's worth would consider his



performance over a full NHL season. See Table 7 below that shows Brassard and Gagner's statistics during the last two full NHL seasons.

**Table 7: Brassard v Gagner Previous Two Full-season Statistics<sup>8</sup>**

Player	Season	GP	G	A	PTS	PPP	PPG	HTS	FO%
Brassard	2011-12	74	14	27	41	15	0.55	137	.451
-	2013-14	81	18	27	45	18	0.56	124	.480
Gagner	2011-12	75	18	29	47	12	0.63	21	.477
-	2013-14	67	10	27	37	7	0.55	33	.468

[16] When we compare the full-season statistics of Brassard and Gagner we can see that in terms of points and face-off-win-percentage the players are very similar. However, Brassard has outpaced Gagner in terms of hits and power play points. These numbers, in combination with the explanation of the “bump” that shortened seasons give player statistics (see paragraph 10 and Table 6), help show that Brassard contributes more to his team during a full NHL season.

[17] Following the 2012-2013 season Sam Gagner signed a 3-year contract with the Edmonton Oilers for an AAV of \$4.8 million. This contract represents the fair value of a skilled top-six forward in the NHL that is yet to prove his playoff worth or the ability to contribute when the opposing team has possession. With Brassard's comparable full-season statistics, his offensive capabilities alone would warrant a SPC of \$4.5-4.8 million. However, Brassard brings more to the table, with his improving power play skill, his elevated playoff experience, and his willingness to sacrifice his body to force turnovers. With the depth of perennial cup contenders such as Chicago, Boston and Los Angeles establishing the paradigm for the modern 23-player NHL roster it is invaluable that each player contribute more than simple pure scoring. Brassard is a player that will improve and flourish in this changing NHL, while players such as Gagner slowly become expendable.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://sports.yahoo.com/nhl/players/3987/>; <http://sports.yahoo.com/nhl/players/4245/>.

## 5 CONCLUSION

[18] Over the past few years the NHL has been steadily changing, with the modern NHL requiring a more complete player. Teams are replacing their enforcers in the aggregate, looking for skilled forwards that can contribute both offensively while finishing their hits and establishing a forechecking, possession based game. Brassard represents this seachange in the NHL. He is the hockey equivalent of the baseball's "five tool player". His pedigree is comparable to that of both Gagner and Little, with each drafted by their teams as one of the top 12 players drafted in their respective NHL Entry Drafts. Brassard's career statistics establish him as superior to both Little and Gagner in terms of overall value in the NHL marketplace, and his post-season statistics prove that he has the potential to increase his performance in high-pressure situations. A young player, the New York Rangers' investment in him could pay huge dividends if he is able to continue to improve his game.

[19] It is important to consider the NHL Marketplace and the value of Brassard to his Club, the New York Rangers. Having lost Brad Richards during the 2014 offseason, the Rangers have are faced with the need for a competent center that can contribute both with, and without, the puck. As a perennial playoff contender, the need for a player that can elevate their game and possibly replace an injured center on either the 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> line makes Brassard a more valuable asset. Based on an analysis of Brassard's career and Platform Year performance, comparison to similar centers Little and Gagner, and his intangible contributions to his Club, we respectfully request that the panel award Derick Brassard and SPC of at least \$5.1 million for the 2014-2015 NHL season.