

**NHL SALARY ARBITRATION**

**BETWEEN:**

**CARL GUNNARSSON**

**– AND –**

**THE TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS**

**BRIEF IN SUPPORT OF THE TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS**

**Team 16  
“Club”**

## Table of Contents

I: INTRODUCTION .....	2
II: PLAYER .....	2
(A) Overview of Career .....	2
(B) Statistics .....	2
(C) Games Played and Injuries .....	4
(D) Length of Service and Value to Club .....	5
(E) Qualities, Off-Ice Work and Public Appeal .....	5
III: COMPARABLES .....	5
(A) Comparable 1: Mark Fayne .....	6
(B) Comparable 2: Mark Fraser .....	7
(C) Comparable 3: Jake Muzzin .....	8
IV: CONCLUSION .....	9

## **I: INTRODUCTION**

The following brief has been prepared on behalf of the Toronto Maple Leafs (“the Club”), as part of the salary arbitration for defenseman Carl Gunnarsson (“the Player”). The information outlined in this brief conforms to the evidentiary rules of the NHL Collective Bargaining Agreement<sup>1</sup> and begins in section two with an overview of the Player, followed by his NHL career statistics. This will be supplemented by his injuries and games missed in relation to how many games he has played for his career. Finally an analysis of the Player’s value, service and contribution to the Club will be discussed along with his special qualities, off-ice work and public appeal. The third section concerns comparable players which are outlined and discussed with reference to the Player and the current arbitration hearing. This brief concludes with the submission that any award received by the Player be less than \$3.15 million per year.

## **II: PLAYER**

### **(A) Overview of Career**

Carl Gunnarsson is a 6’2 196 pound defenseman. He was drafted by Toronto in 2007 as the 194<sup>th</sup> overall pick out of 211 players, going in the 7<sup>th</sup> round. He did not play for the Club until 2009, at which point he played 12 games in the AHL. The 26 year old has 4 years of NHL experience and only one series of playoff experience coming during the 2012-2013 season.

### **(B) Statistics**

The Player had a slow start to his career. He played just over half of the season’s games in his first year with the Maple Leafs, as some time was spent in the AHL. His numbers for goals and assists were around his career average during his first season, but his hits, which are a

---

<sup>1</sup> 2012 NHL CBA, Article 12, [http://cdn.agilitycms.com/nhlpacom/PDF/NHL\\_NHLPA\\_2013\\_CBA.pdf](http://cdn.agilitycms.com/nhlpacom/PDF/NHL_NHLPA_2013_CBA.pdf)

mark of a good defenseman, were quite low. He has not rebounded in terms of his goals and assists for his career since they are exceptionally low each year, but given his position it is understandable since his objective is not to score but rather to provide defensive support. The high point of his career was the 2011-2012 season, in which his statistics were decent at best. While he did achieve a career high in games played and hits, his plus/minus rating was dismal and career low of -9. He rebounded in the 2012-13 season by bringing up his +/- rating but he did not play many games.

**Figure 1: NHL/AHL Regular Season Career Statistics for Carl Gunnarsson<sup>2</sup>**

Year	Team	League	GP	G	A	PTS	+/-	PPG	PPA	PIM	Hits
2012-13	Toronto	NHL	37	1	14	15	5	0	0	14	78
2011-12	Toronto	NHL	76	4	15	19	-9	0	6	20	114
2010-11	Toronto	NHL	68	4	16	20	-2	1	3	14	63
2009-10	Toronto	NHL	43	3	12	15	8	0	2	10	46
2009-10	Toronto	AHL	12	0	2	2	-2	0	-	2	-
<b>Totals</b>			<b>236</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>301</b>

The Player's performance in the playoffs is even more unimpressive. While he did manage to stay on the roster for all seven of the Leaf's playoff's games, his contribution should not be regarded as positive. He only had one assist, and had a dismal +/- rating of -7 in the only playoff series of his career, which decreases his value as an optimal performer during important games.

**Figure 2: NHL Playoffs Statistics for Carl Gunnarsson<sup>3</sup>**

Season	Team	GP	G	A	P	+/-
2012-2013	<b>Maple Leafs</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-7</b>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.tsn.ca/nhl/teams/players>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.tsn.ca/nhl/teams/players>

### (C) **Games Played and Injuries**

The main issue that the Player seems to exhibit is his inability to complete a full regular season schedule. The Player has never completed 82 games in his career as his highpoint was 76 games. This did not raise his statistics and actually hurt his performance with regards to his +/- rating, suggesting that when it comes to playing a full season, he may not be able to do so. In terms of the lock-out shortened 2012-13 season, the league commissioned 48 games of which the Player only managed to play in 37. This was due to a host of injuries, detailed in figure 3 below.

The list of injuries throughout his career has grown to the point that he is averaging two injuries a year since his second year in the league. If one looks closely at his most recent injury, concerning his hip, he missed the last 3 games of the regular season, and it was a recurring injury from earlier in the year from which he missed 8 games. It is unclear if this injury will continue to plague him later in his career.

Overall, the Player has suffered numerous injuries on multiple parts of his body. This has resulted in the Player's injuries leading to more missed games and a concern about his inability to stay healthy on a consistent basis. Additionally, the Player's inability to complete even a shortened season is problematic given the rigours associated with an 82 game season.

**Figure 3 - Career Injury Report - Carl Gunnarsson<sup>4</sup>**

<b>Season</b>	<b>Type of Injury</b>	<b># of Games Missed</b>
<b>2012-2013 Season</b>	Hip	3
	Hip	8
<b>2011-2012 Season</b>	Separated Shoulder	2
	Ankle	3
<b>2010-2011 Season</b>	Hand	1
	Hyperextended Elbow	22
<b>Total Games Missed</b>		<b>39</b>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.tsn.ca/nhl/teams/players>

**(D) Length of Service and Value to Club**

While the Player has been with the club for four years since his entry into the NHL, his value to the club is not exceptional. He is not the team's top defenseman, which would be suggested if he were to obtain a higher salary than the mid-point provided, and he does not play a leadership role for the Club. While he was among the Club's leaders in hits last year, his lack of outstanding performances and his pattern of injuries diminish his overall value to the Club.

Furthermore, success is measured in terms of ability to win, and winning is done mainly in the Playoffs. When the Club needed to win during the 7 game series against the Boston Bruins, the Player was unable to bring much value to the team. He did not make a meaningful contribution and arguably hurt the team with his play as evidenced above in Figure 2.

**(E) Qualities, Off-Ice Work and Public Appeal**

Gunnarrson did make a valuable contribution to International Hockey having won a bronze medal for Sweden during the World Championship<sup>5</sup>. However, he is not known for charitable work in the Leafs community and does not have the fan following that other Club players may have.

### **III: COMPARABLES**

In this section, a comparison of the Player will be done with other defenseman around the league who are eligible for salary arbitration this year or were eligible last year. In each section the brief outlines and compares general information such as height, weight, age, number of seasons and salary of the respective Players. There is also a comparison of both the Player and their counter-parts' career statistics, as well as a comparison of their most recent years of play.

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.tsn.ca/nhl/teams/players>

Both of these are listed in figures below for reference. Ultimately, through an analysis of all the factors, one should conclude that Gunnarsson's midpoint salary is too high to be considered.

**(A) Comparable 1: Mark Fayne**

First, a close comparable to the Player is Mark Fayne a 26 year old, 6'3, 210 pound defenseman for the New Jersey Devils. Fayne has been in the NHL for three years and has amassed respectable statistics. Throughout Fayne's career he has steadily been able to have a positive +/- rating at 12 which is much higher than the Player at hand whose career average is 3. Furthermore, many of the other statistics such as goals and assists for their careers are quite similar as well their statistics for the last two years, where shots and points are around the same number. Although Fayne's hits and blocks are lower on average than Gunnarsson's, this may be why the Player should get a slightly higher salary, but not a considerable amount higher than Fayne since they are virtually the same in all other areas. The main difference seems to be that Fayne has been able to play a full 82 game season and the Player has not been able to do so in his entire career which supports the concern of the Player's ability to be around for an entire season.

Given the similar numbers discussed above and shown in the figures below, it is interesting to note that Fayne received a 2 year \$2.6 million<sup>6</sup> salary during last year's off season. This equates to \$1.3 million per season, which is considerably less than the 3 year \$9.45 million deal of Gunnarsson worth \$3.15 million per season. Since the statistics of both players are similar there is no reason why the Player should receive more than double Fayne's salary.

**Figure 4: Career Comparison – Fayne and Gunnarsson<sup>6</sup>**

<b>Player Name</b>	<b>GP</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>PTS</b>	<b>+/-</b>	<b>PPG</b>	<b>SHG</b>	<b>Hits</b>
Mark Fayne	170	9	28	37	12	0	1	160
Carl Gunnarsson	226	12	57	69	3	1	0	303

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>

**Figure 5: 2 Year Comparison – Fayne and Gunnarsson<sup>7</sup>**

Year	Team	Name	GP	G	A	PTS	+/-	Shots	Hits/GP	Blocks/GP
2012-13	TOR	Gunnarsson	37	1	14	15	5	28	2.11	1.92
2011-12	TOR	Gunnarsson	76	4	15	19	-9	89	1.50	2.00
2012-13	NJ	Fayne	31	1	5	6	6	34	0.81	1.29
2011-12	NJ	Fayne	82	4	13	17	-4	94	1.02	1.07

**(B) Comparable 2: Mark Fraser**

Secondly, another comparable to the Player is Mark Fraser, a 26 year old, 6'4, 220 pound defenseman who like the Player, also plays for the Maple Leafs. He is a 5 year veteran of the NHL and although his career statistics when it comes to points, assists and goals are lower than the Player's, this is not a problem as their role on the team is to play defense. Moreover, when looking at last season there is less of a difference, and Fraser was available for more games.

Furthermore, the main differences between the two players seems to be that when it comes to making an on-ice difference Fraser is very important to his teams success. His +/- rating for his career is 20 and from last season which was 18, which is considerably higher than Gunnarsson's 3 as well his rating from last season which was 5. Furthermore, since hits and blocks are essential to playing the defenseman position, it is interesting to note that Fraser's career hits are almost 40 higher than the Player at hand while playing 81 fewer games. In 2012-13, there was a marked difference in hits and blocks, as Fraser blocked 31 more shots and delivered 75 more than the Player. These stats are key to assessing the value of a defenseman.

Given the higher numbers exhibited by Fraser than Gunnarsson when it comes to statistics supporting the playing of the defenseman position, it is interesting to note that Fraser received a 1 year \$1.275 million salary for this year's arbitration. This is considerably less than

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>



what the Player is receiving who, when compared on a yearly basis, is making \$3.15 million per season, about 2.5 times more than Fraser. Since Fraser's defensive statistics are considerably better than Gunnarsson, there is no reason why the Player should receive such a higher salary.

**Figure 6: Career Comparison – Fraser and Gunnarsson<sup>8</sup>**

Player Name	GP	G	A	PTS	+/-	PPG	SHG	Hits
Carl Gunnarsson	226	12	57	69	3	1	0	303
Mark Fraser	145	3	13	16	20	0	0	342

**Figure 7: Recent Season Comparison – Fraser and Gunnarsson<sup>9</sup>**

Year	Team	Name	GP	G	A	PTS	+/-	Shots	Hits	Hits/GP	Blocks	Blocks/GP
2012-13	TOR	Gunnarsson	37	1	14	15	5	28	78	2.11	71	1.92
2012-13	TOR	Fraser	45	0	8	8	18	33	153	3.40	102	2.27

**(C) Comparable 3: Jake Muzzin**

Finally, the last comparable to the Player is Jake Muzzin a 24 year old, 6'3, 214 pound defenseman for the L.A. Kings. He is a 3 year NHL veteran, who is now beginning to play more games as evidenced by his 2012-13 season. Although his career stats are lower than the Player's, it is understandable given his young age and his ability to improve. Of note despite his lesser experience than the Player, Muzzin has a higher +/- rating and like the other players compared above, is a major point in favour of being a quality defenseman which is lacking in the Player.

During the most recent season, Muzzin's +/- rating was 11 higher than the Player, as well as having played in more games during that season. Moreover, Muzzin seems to be a better overall player as he scored 6 more goals than the Player and had a much higher shooting output. This is important considering that his defense did not suffer, since the hits are similar for both players.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>

Given the similar numbers shown by Muzzin and Gunnarsson, as well as the fact that Muzzin appears to be a better overall player mixing in important offense with tight defense, it is apparent that the Player should not be paid at such high level when compared to others who play similar positions. Muzzin received a 2 year \$2 million salary during the off season, which is \$1 million a year, again considerably less than what the Player is receiving. The fact that Gunnarsson is making over 3 times more than Muzzin demonstrates that Gunnarsson should be awarded less than \$3.15 million.

**Figure 8: Career Comparison – Muzzin and Gunnarsson**<sup>10</sup>

Player Name	GP	G	A	PTS	+/-	PPG	SHG	Hits
Carl Gunnarsson	226	12	57	69	3	1	0	303
Jake Muzzin	56	7	10	17	14	3	0	92

**Figure 9: Recent Season Comparison – Muzzin and Gunnarsson**<sup>11</sup>

Year	Team	Name	GP	G	A	PTS	+/-	PPG	PPA	Shots	Shot %	Hits
2012-13	TOR	Gunnarson	37	1	14	15	5	0	0	28	3.57	78
2012-13	LA	Muzzin	45	7	9	16	16	3	4	77	9.09	70

#### IV: CONCLUSION

Through an analysis of Carl Gunnarsson's career, the immense concern about his future health due to his various injuries, and the comparison of him and other NHL defenseman, it is clear that the Player's midpoint salary is too great. He is currently making at least double what others are making in similar positions, while those players exhibit the same if not considerably better statistical qualities than the Player has shown in recent years. Accordingly, the Club respectfully submits that the Player's salary award should be less than \$3.15 million per season.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.nhl.com/ice/playerstats.htm>