2013 National Baseball Arbitration Competition

Tommy Hanson vs. Atlanta Braves

Submission on Behalf of Atlanta Braves

Submission by: Team 1
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I. Introduction and Request for Hearing Decision

The purpose of this brief is to analyze the attributes of Tommy Hanson (the “Player” or “Mr. Hanson”), a right-handed starting pitcher, and to demonstrate that the salary offer presented to Mr. Hanson by the Atlanta Braves (the “Club” or the “Braves”) is the appropriate figure. The Braves are offering $3.5 million for the 2013 season, while Mr. Hanson is requesting $4.3 million. According to the Major League Baseball (“MLB”) Collective Bargaining Agreement (“CBA”), the arbitration panel is expected to focus on the following criteria to determine the salary of Mr. Hanson: the quality of the Player’s contribution to the Club during the past season, the length and consistency of the Player’s career contribution, the record of the Player’s past compensation, comparative baseball salaries, physical or mental defects of the Player, and the recent performance of the Club.\(^1\) Under the CBA, players with between three and six years of Major League service time are eligible for arbitration. Tommy Hanson has completed 3.120 years of Major League service time and is therefore arbitration-eligible for the first time.\(^2\)

II. Quality of the Player’s Contribution to his Club During the Past Season

During the 2012 season, Tommy Hanson’s pitching faltered greatly, continuing a consistent decline in his performance since his rookie year. Mr. Hanson had a 2012 earned run average (ERA) of 4.48, which ranked him fifth-worst of the 46 National League starting pitchers who pitched sufficient innings to qualify for consideration for year-end awards\(^3\) and 70\(^{th}\) out of all 88 qualified MLB pitchers (see Table 1).

Mr. Hanson struggled in all aspects of his pitching during his platform season. One of the most important measures of a pitcher’s efficiency is his average of walks plus hits per inning

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3 In order to qualify for year-end titles in averaged categories such as ERA, a pitcher must average at least one inning pitched for each game his team plays during the season (normally, 162). MLB Statistics Glossary, ESPN, http://sports.espn.go.com/mlb/news/story?page=stats/glossary.
pitched (WHIP). As its name implies, this statistic measures how well a pitcher keeps runners from getting on base. Mr. Hanson’s 2012 WHIP was 1.45, which was next-to-last among qualified NL pitchers and sixth-worst among all qualified MLB pitchers. Similarly, a pitcher’s control and dominance over hitters can be measured by his strikeouts-to-walks ratio (K/BB). Mr. Hanson’s platform season K/BB ratio was 2.27, the lowest of his career, putting Mr. Hanson in the bottom third of qualifying pitchers both in the NL and in MLB.

Another way to assess the value of the Player’s contribution to the Club during a given season is wins above replacement (WAR). WAR is a more complicated statistic than ERA or WHIP, and it provides an approximation of the number of additional games a team won during a season by having a given player in his position rather than an average player at the AAA level of the minor leagues.4 Tommy Hanson’s platform season WAR was -0.9, meaning that the Club would have been better off had Mr. Hanson been replaced by a minor leaguer. As with WHIP, Mr. Hanson’s WAR was second-worst among NL starters and sixth-worst of all MLB starters.

| Table 1: Tommy Hanson’s Platform Season Performance |
|------------------------------------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
|                                           | ERA   | WHIP   | K/BB   | WAR    |
| Tommy Hanson (2012)                      | 4.48↓ | 1.45↓  | 2.27↓  | -0.9↓  |
| NL Rank6 of 46                           | 42nd  | 45th   | 35th   | 45th   |
| MLB Rank7 of 88                          | 70th  | 83rd   | 64th   | 83rd   |

↑ - Career Best  ↓ - Career Worst

Mr. Hanson did win a career-high 13 games during the 2012 campaign against 10 losses, giving him a .565 winning percentage. Wins and losses, while officially attributed individually to the pitcher, are heavily dependent on both the offensive performance of the team and the relief

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5 Tommy Hanson, supra note 2.
pitching that follows the pitcher of record’s exit from the game. They are therefore of limited value in assessing a pitcher’s value to his club.

Finally, injury marred the second half of Mr. Hanson’s 2012 season, causing his performance to suffer tremendously. Mr. Hanson went on the disabled list July 31 with a low back strain, missing two scheduled starts. Upon returning from the DL, Mr. Hanson started nine more games, going 1-5 with an ERA of 4.99. Mr. Hanson’s late-season performance was so disappointing that the Braves left him off of their postseason roster entirely.

III. Length and Consistency of Career Contributions

Tommy Hanson was selected out of Riverside Community College by the Braves in the 22nd round of the 2005 amateur draft. Mr. Hanson dominated the minor leagues before being called up by the Braves in 2009. Once at the Major League level, Mr. Hanson continued to shine, coming in 3rd in the 2009 NL Rookie of the Year voting.

Since then, though, the Club has been concerned by Mr. Hanson’s performance, which has progressively declined each season and raises significant questions about his value to the Braves moving forward. Mr. Hanson’s ERA has increased each season of his career, from 2.89 in 2009 up to 4.48 in 2012. His WHIP has also gone up, from 1.18 in 2009 to 1.45 in 2012. Mr. Hanson’s 2009 WAR was an impressive 3.7. Every year since, though, that number has fallen, to 2.6 in 2010, 1.2 in 2011, and into the negative numbers, -0.9 in 2012. Mr. Hanson was an

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11 Tommy Hanson, supra note 2.
12 Id.
13 Id.
extremely promising player when he joined the Major Leagues in 2009, but he has yet to live up to that promise.

IV. Comparative Baseball Salaries

Based on the salaries of recent statistically comparable first-time arbitration-eligible starting pitchers, the Braves’ offer of $3.5 million accurately reflects Mr. Hanson’s value and past and expected future contributions to the Club. This is amply demonstrated by comparisons to Max Scherzer, Justin Masterson, and David Price.

Max Scherzer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tommy Hanson (SP, Atlanta Braves)</th>
<th>Max Scherzer (SP, Detroit Tigers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Platform Season (2012)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 13↑ L 10 ERA 4.48↓ G 31</td>
<td>W 15↑ L 9 ERA 4.43↓ G 33↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS 31 IP 174.2 WHIP 1.45↓ K/BB 2.3↓</td>
<td>GS 33↑ IP 195.0 WHIP 1.35↓ K/BB 3.1↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Career</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 45 L 32 ERA 3.61 G 108</td>
<td>W 36 L 35 ERA 3.92 G 110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS 108 IP 635.0 WHIP 1.25 K/BB 2.7</td>
<td>GS 101 IP 617.0 WHIP 1.30 K/BB 2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Tommy Hanson vs. Max Scherzer

Midpoint: $3.9 million

Salary: $3.75 million

↑ - Career Best  ↓ - Career Worst

14 Id.
Mr. Hanson’s career and platform season contributions are remarkably similar to those of Detroit Tigers right-hander Max Scherzer. Scherzer began his career with the Arizona Diamondbacks before being traded to Detroit in December. Scherzer became arbitration-eligible for the first time following the 2011 season, avoiding arbitration by signing a one-year, $3.75 million contract with the Tigers.

Over the course of their respective careers, Scherzer and Mr. Hanson have appeared in virtually the same number of games, pitched nearly the same number of innings, and posted almost identical WHIP and strikeouts-to-walks ratios. Mr. Hanson does have a marginally better win-loss record and ERA than those of Scherzer, although these differences can be attributed in part to the offensive strength of the American League relative to that of the National League.

Mr. Hanson’s platform season mirrors that of Max Scherzer in virtually every statistical category. Each had the worst year of his career in terms of ERA and WHIP, with Scherzer posting slightly better numbers in each category. Each won more games than he had in any previous season, with Scherzer’s 15-9 record besting Mr. Hanson’s 13-10 mark. Scherzer also displayed more control in his platform season than did Mr. Hanson, posting a career-high 3.1 strikeouts-to-walks ratio while Mr. Hanson dipped to a career-low 2.3 strikeouts per walk.

Tigers’ management was confident enough in Scherzer’s abilities to call upon him to pitch in crucial situations during its 2011 playoff run. Scherzer started three road games against offensive juggernauts the New York Yankees and Texas Rangers. Scherzer sparkled in the Division Series, pitching six shutout innings in Yankee Stadium in Game 2 before being called upon as a reliever to hold the Tigers’ lead in the deciding Game 5. In the American League

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Championship Series Scherzer gave the Tigers another quality start,\textsuperscript{17} giving up three runs over six innings in Game 2. When the Braves made the playoffs in 2012, Mr. Hanson’s disappointing second-half performance led the Club to leave him off its playoff roster altogether.\textsuperscript{18}

Finally, whereas Mr. Hanson’s value to his Club is significantly diminished by injury concerns, Max Scherzer’s is not. Scherzer’s only missed Major League start came at the beginning of the 2009 season, when stiffness in his shoulder led the Tigers to skip Scherzer’s first turn in the pitching rotation as a precautionary measure.\textsuperscript{19}

Given the similarity of their platform year and career regular season contributions, Max Scherzer’s superior playoff performance, and the uncertainty regarding Mr. Hanson’s physical condition, Mr. Hanson is fairly entitled to a salary lower than the $3.75 million earned by Scherzer in his first season of arbitration eligibility.

\textbf{Justin Masterson}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & & & & & & & \\
\textbf{Tommy Hanson (SP, Atlanta Braves)} & \textbf{Midpoint: $3.9 million} & & & & & \\
\hline
\textbf{W} & \textbf{L} & \textbf{ERA} & \textbf{G} & \textbf{GS} & \textbf{IP} & \textbf{WHIP} & \textbf{K/BB} \\
\hline
Platform Season (2012) & 13$\uparrow$ & 10 & 4.48$\downarrow$ & 31 & 31 & 174.2 & 1.45$\downarrow$ & 2.3$\downarrow$ \\
Career & 45 & 32 & 3.61 & 108 & 108 & 635.0 & 1.25 & 2.7 \\
\hline
\textbf{Justin Masterson (SP, Cleveland Indians)}\textsuperscript{20} & \textbf{Salary: $3.825 million} & & & & & & \\
\hline
\textbf{W} & \textbf{L} & \textbf{ERA} & \textbf{G} & \textbf{GS} & \textbf{IP} & \textbf{WHIP} & \textbf{K/BB} \\
\hline
Platform Season (2011) & 12$\uparrow$ & 10 & 3.21 & 34 & 33$\uparrow$ & 216.0$\uparrow$ & 1.28 & 2.4$\uparrow$ \\
Career & 28 & 38 & 3.92 & 146 & 87 & 613.2 & 1.37 & 2.0 \\
\hline
$\uparrow$ - Career Best & $\downarrow$ - Career Worst \\
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

Cleveland Indians right-hander Justin Masterson also provides a useful comparison on which to base Mr. Hanson’s 2013 salary. Masterson became arbitration-eligible for the first time

\textsuperscript{17} A “quality start” is defined as one in which the starting pitcher pitches at least six innings and gives up three or fewer earned runs.
\textsuperscript{18} Braves set National League Wild Card roster, supra note 10.
\textsuperscript{19} See Max Scherzer (section Injury History), http://www.baseballprospectus.com/card/card.php?id=56753.
after the 2011 season, having completed 3.108 years of Major League service, avoiding
arbitration by signing a $3.825 million contract with the Indians for the 2012 season.21 Through
their respective platform seasons, Masterson and Mr. Hanson had thrown nearly the same
number of innings. Mr. Hanson has slightly better career ERA, WHIP, and K/BB figures than
does Masterson. Mr. Hanson has a far better win-loss record than did Masterson due to the fact
that Masterson plays on a bad Indians team. Like Mr. Hanson, Masterson’s only postseason
experience came in his rookie season. However, unlike Mr. Hanson, Masterson shined in the
playoffs, posting a 1.86 ERA over nine appearances.

In terms of their respective platform seasons, however, Masterson far outshines Mr.
Hanson. In 2011, Masterson had the best season of his Major League career, posting career highs
in wins, starts, innings pitched, and strikeouts-to-walks ratio. Masterson’s 2011 ERA was over a
full run less than Mr. Hanson’s 2012 figure, and Masterson’s also posted superior WHIP and
K/BB ratios. Finally, Masterson demonstrated great durability, pitching over 40 more innings in
2011 than did Mr. Hanson in 2012 and continuing his streak of having never missed a Major
League appearance due to injury.22

While Tommy Hanson’s career numbers are slightly better than those of Justin
Masterson, Masterson’s superior platform season and postseason performances, coupled with
Mr. Hanson’s ongoing injury issues, demonstrate that Mr. Hanson is due a salary for next season
lower than Masterson’s $3.825 million 2012 salary.

21 Id.
22 Justin Masterson (section Injury History), Baseball Prospectus,
Table 4: Tommy Hanson vs. David Price

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tommy Hanson (SP, Atlanta Braves)</th>
<th>Player's Request: $4.3 million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platform Season (2012)</td>
<td>13↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>David Price (SP, Tampa Bay Rays)</th>
<th>Salary: $4.35 million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platform Season (2011)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

↑ - Career Best  ↓ - Career Worst

David Price of the Tampa Bay Rays provides a third useful comparison. Price became eligible for arbitration for the first time after the 2011 season as a “Super Two,” avoiding arbitration by signing a one-year, $4.35 million contract with the Rays.

Price illustrates the type of performance that is worthy of a salary of this magnitude. Through his platform season, Price had finished second in the AL Cy Young Award voting (2010) and had twice been named to the AL All-Star team (2010-2011). Price has delivered in the most crucial of postseason situations, winning Game 2 and saving Game 7 of the 2008 American League Championship Series as a rookie and giving the Rays quality starts in two of three playoff starts against the Texas Rangers in 2010 and 2011. Price has maintained one of MLB’s best ERA’s over the span of his career despite playing in its most powerful division. Price had also, through his platform season, never missed a Major League start due to injury.

Though his platform season did not match his near-Cy Young performance a year earlier, David Price’s 2011 season was far better than was Mr. Hanson’s 2012 campaign. Price’s ERA

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24 Under the CBA, players who rank in the top 22% in total Major League service among players with more than two but less than three years of service are designated as “Super Twos” and become eligible for salary arbitration. 2012-2016 Basic Agreement, supra note 1.
25 David Price, supra note 22.
was full run better than Mr. Hanson’s, Price pitched nearly 50 innings more than did Mr.
Hanson, and Price’s WHIP and K/BB numbers were miles ahead of those posted by Mr. Hanson.

It is true that Mr. Hanson has pitched about 60 more innings than had David Price
through their respective platform seasons, but this minor difference is overshadowed by the
superior quality of Price’s overall contribution. Price has been recognized for his excellence in
ways that Mr. Hanson has not. Price’s platform season is far superior to that of Mr. Hanson.
Moreover, David Price’s career has not been marred by injury in the same way that Mr.
Hanson’s career has. There is simply no justification for Mr. Hanson’s request of a salary
equivalent to that of Mr. Price’s 2012 salary.

V. Past Player Compensation

As this is Mr. Hanson’s first season of arbitration eligibility, his past compensation has,
like that of nearly all similarly situated players, been at or near the Major League minimum. Mr.
Hanson was paid $435,000 in 2010, $456,500 in 2011, and $535,000 in 2012.27

VI. Existence of Physical and Mental Defects

Tommy Hanson’s injury history and consistent decrease in performance over the course
of his career indicate serious question about the Player’s future expected contributions to the
club. Mr. Hanson was on the disabled list for two months in 2011 due to tendonitis and a rotator
cuff strain and again in 2012 with a lower back strain,28 and his performance following his most
recent return from the DL seems to indicate that he is not fully healed.

Perhaps most telling, though, is the decrease in the velocity of Mr. Hanson’s fastball,
which has fallen from an average of 93.5 mph in 2010 to just 90.4 mph in 2012.29 This is

27 Tommy Hanson, supra note 2.
28 Tommy Hanson (section Injury History), supra note 10.
29 PITCHf/x Player Card: Tommy Hanson (Atlanta Braves), BrooksBaseball.net,
especially concerning for a pitcher such as Mr. Hanson who relies on the fastball as his primary pitch. Mr. Hanson is one of only 15 Major League pitchers to have pitched at least 200 innings in a season at age 23 or younger. While some of the pitchers on the list have soared to great heights after such arduous early work, other once-promising stars such as Carlos Zambrano, Dontrelle Willis, Scott Kazmir, and Mark Prior were never the same afterward. The Club is concerned that Mr. Hanson’s recent performance is evidence that he will join this latter group.

VII. Recent Performance of the Ball Club

In 2012, the Braves finished 94-68, losing to the St. Louis Cardinals 6-3 in the NL Wild Card Game. In 2011, the Braves failed to make the playoffs despite an 89-73 record after losing 18 of their final 27 games. In 2010, the Braves won the NL Wild Card with a 91-71 record before losing the NLDS to the San Francisco Giants in four games. In 2009, the Braves finished third in the NL East with an 86-76 record.

VIII. Summary

Tommy Hanson was a promising prospect in 2009, but he has yet to live up to that promise. Mr. Hanson’s pitching has drastically declined in almost all areas of measurement since his rookie year. His previous injuries and high pitch count early in his career put him at risk for future injuries and continued poor pitching. These factors suggest that 2012 was not a fluke season in an otherwise successful career but a red flag that raises significant questions about the Player’s future value. The $3.5 million salary the Braves are offering is appropriate considering Mr. Hanson’s career arc, injury risk, and the salaries of comparable players such as Max Scherzer, Justin Masterson, and David Price.

30 See id.