Dexter Fowler v. Colorado Rockies

Submission on Behalf of the Colorado Rockies

Midpoint: $4.3 million

Submission by: Team 12
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**Table of Authorities**

Baseball Prospectus, Prospectus Entertainment Ventures, LLC,  
http://www.baseballprospectus.com


I. **Introduction and Request for Hearing Decision**

This brief analyzes relevant contributions of the playing career of Dexter Fowler (“Mr. Fowler”), centerfielder for the Colorado Rockies (the “Club,” or the “Rockies”), for an arbitration hearing governed by the Major League Baseball Collective Bargaining Agreement (“CBA”). Under CBA Section VI (F), Part 12(a)-(b), the established criteria to be considered in this arbitration hearing in determining the Player’s salary includes: (1) the quality of Player’s contribution to the Club during the past season – including, but not limited to, his overall performance, special qualities of leadership, and public appeal; (2) the length and consistency of his career contributions; (3) his past recorded compensation figures; (4) comparative baseball salaries; (5) the existence of any mental or physical defects on the part of the Player; and (6) recent performance of the Club.

Mr. Fowler has shown signs of great potential, and the Rockies see him as a valuable member of their team; however, the Rockies are concerned with his inability to consistently perform at a particular spot in the batting order, along with his inconsistent defense. Based on the evidence mentioned in this brief and in oral argument, Mr. Fowler is fairly entitled to receive a salary below the $4.3 million midpoint between the Club’s offer and his own. The Rockies respectfully request that the arbitration panel award Dexter Fowler $4.0 million.

II. **Quality of the Player’s Contribution During the Past Season**

In Mr. Fowler’s four-plus years as centerfielder for the Rockies, he has undoubtedly proven himself as a valuable commodity for the Club. Mr. Fowler had a successful year at the plate, as he finished second in batting average (.301) among centerfielders who bat leadoff,
trailing only Rookie of the Year Mike Trout. Mr. Fowler’s On-Base Percentage (“OBP”) was also .049 above the league average for leadoff batters. A major area of concern, however, is his lack of run production from the leadoff spot. Mr. Fowler only stole 6 bases in 296 plate appearances batting first in the lineup, ranking him 23rd in the MLB. He also struck out 39 more times than the average MLB leadoff batter (when comparing Mr. Fowler’s at-bats to the league average), while finishing below the league average in runs scored. Mr. Fowler led all centerfielders by batting an impressive .379 in the 7th, 8th, and 9th innings; however, with an overall average of .300, his offensive production in the first six innings needs significant improvement. Mr. Fowler also led all MLB centerfielders with a .342 average with runners on bases, but as a leadoff hitter, the Club would like for Mr. Fowler to increase his average when there are no runners on base (currently .274), since he will leadoff every single game.

Perhaps the Club’s biggest area of concern for Mr. Fowler is on the defensive side of ball. Mr. Fowler had the lowest fielding percentage of any centerfielder in the league in 2012 (.978), while also finishing below the league average in outfield assists.

### III. Length and Consistency of Career Contributions

Mr. Fowler came to Colorado with high expectations, as he was selected to play in the 2008 MLB Futures Game, as well as participating in the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing,
China as a member of Team USA. Over his four full seasons in Colorado, Mr. Fowler’s batting average and OBP have steadily increased, along with his homerun production. Mr. Fowler’s stolen bases have steadily decreased, while his strikeout totals remain high for a leadoff hitter. Again, defense has been a consistent problem, as Mr. Fowler has ranked in the top three in the league for errors committed by a centerfielder in three of his four full seasons.

Although Mr. Fowler’s offensive production is impressive, his inability to find a successful niche in the Rockies’ batting order causes the most concern for the Club. Mr. Fowler came through the minor leagues as a leadoff batter, a role the Rockies hope he fulfills for many years to come; however, as his power batting numbers increase and his run production numbers decrease, Mr. Fowler is beginning to transform out of being a leadoff batter. This might prove beneficial long-term, but with Mr. Fowler bouncing between batting order positions during the 2012 season, the Club is unsure of his future reliability offensively. The Club would prefer to see more evidence of this transformation before greatly increasing Mr. Fowler’s salary. The Rockies firmly believe that Dexter Fowler is a part of the puzzle to increase the Club’s future success; however, they are unsure at the current time what piece he is going to be.

IV. Past Player Compensation

Over his first three seasons with the Club, Mr. Fowler earned close to the league minimum in each season, going from $401,000 in 2009, $406,000 in 2010, to $424,000 in 2011. After the 2011 season Mr. Fowler was eligible for salary arbitration, and he negotiated

12 http://colorado.rockies.mlb.com/team/player.jsp?player_id=451594#gameType='R'&sectionType=splitsCareer&statType=1&season=2012&level='ALL'
13 Id.
14 Id.
15 Id.
16 http://www.baseballprospectus.com/card/card.php?id=47493
his salary up to $2,350,000 for the 2012 season based on his past performance with the Rockies.  

V. Comparative Baseball Salaries

The Rockies are relying on Dexter Fowler to maintain his strong career statistics, but his inconsistency was not enough to warrant such a substantial increase in compensation. Comparison to similar centerfielders and leadoff hitters illustrates the needed production and consistency for the Rockies to accommodate such a request. The following comparisons will illustrate Dexter Fowler’s true value, based on the performances of other similar players.

a. Grady Sizemore ($4.77 million in 2009)

Comparing the performance of Mr. Fowler to that of Cleveland centerfielder Grady Sizemore illustrates the value or Mr. Fowler, which does not exceed the midpoint of $4.3 million. Sizemore entered into his second year of arbitration already making $3,000,000, above Mr. Fowler’s $2,350,000. Although Mr. Fowler’s average and OBP are higher than Mr. Sizemore’s 2008 numbers, Mr. Sizemore had significantly more doubles, homeruns, walks, runs, and stolen bases than Mr. Fowler. Mr. Sizemore was named an All-Star in 2008 along with winning a Gold Glove for centerfield. Because Mr. Sizemore’s 2009 compensation is not drastically far above the $4.3 million midpoint, the value assessed to Mr. Fowler should fall short.

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17 Id.
18 http://www.baseballprospectus.com/card/card.php?id=31664
Table 1: Comparative Batting Statistics between Dexter Fowler and Grady Sizemore

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<th>3B</th>
<th>HR</th>
<th>RBI</th>
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<th>SO</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>SB</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sizemore (2008)</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>.268</td>
<td>.374</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>38</td>
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b. Curtis Granderson ($3.50 million in 2009)

Comparing the performance of then Detroit centerfielder Curtis Granderson to Mr. Fowler, shows that although Mr. Fowler deserves compensation equal to Mr. Granderson’s second arbitration, it should still not surpass the $4.3 million midpoint. In 2008, Mr. Granderson batted .020 lower than Mr. Fowler, but he also performed better in almost every other statistical category. Mr. Granderson only received $3.50 million the year following his second arbitration, and although a higher batting average serves in Mr. Fowler’s favor, the Club does not believes it deserves an additional $800,000 in compensation.

Table 2: Comparative Batting Statistics between Dexter Fowler and Curtis Granderson

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Granderson (2008)</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>.280</td>
<td>.365</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>112</td>
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c. Michael Bourn ($4.40 million in 2011)

In 2011, Michael Bourn of the Houston Astros received compensation of $100,000 higher than Mr. Fowler’s midpoint. Mr. Fowler performed better than Mr. Bourn in every statistical category than Mr. Bourn except for hits, doubles, runs scored, and stolen bases. Mr. Bourn was

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20 [http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/g/grandcu01.shtml](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/g/grandcu01.shtml)
also named an All-Star and won a Gold Glove for his performance during the 2010 season. Mr. Bourn performed the essential leadoff batter roles more efficiently than Mr. Fowler during that season, as he helped generate runs by stealing bases and putting the ball into play more than Mr. Fowler did during the 2012 season. Although Mr. Fowler’s comparable offensive statistics might merit comparable compensation, his inconsistent defensive play in centerfield places his assessed value below the midpoint of $4.3 million.

| Table 3: Comparative Batting Statistics between Dexter Fowler and Michael Bourn |
|-----------------|----------|------|------|----------------|--------|------|------|------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                 | G       | PA   | AB   | AVG  | OBP    | H     | 2B   | 3B   | HR   | RBI   | BB    | SO    | R     | SB    | CS    |
| Bourn (2010)    | 141     | 605  | 535  | .265 | .341   | 142   | 25   | 6    | 2    | 38    | 59    | 109   | 84    | 52    | 12    |

d. Angel Pagan ($3.50 million in 2011)

Perhaps the best comparison to Mr. Fowler is current San Francisco centerfielder Angel Pagan. Mr. Fowler and Mr. Pagan are the only switch-hitting centerfielder leadoff hitters in the Major Leagues. In 2010, while playing with the New York Mets, Mr. Pagan had a year very comparable to Mr. Fowler’s 2012 season. Mr. Pagan batted nearly .300 (.290), and had equal or better stats than Mr. Fowler in every category except triples, homeruns, and walks. Mr. Pagan’s compensation the following season (2011) was only $3.50 million, well below Mr. Fowler’s current midpoint of $4.3 million. Because these two centerfielders posted similar

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25 http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/split.cgi?id=paganan01&year=2010&t=b
26 http://www.baseballprospectus.com/card/card.php?id=PAGAN19810702A
marks across the board in their respective seasons, Mr. Fowler’s assessed value should be relatively close to Mr. Pagan’s $3.5 million, thus far below his midpoint.

### Table 4: Comparative Batting Statistics between Dexter Fowler and Angel Pagan

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<th>SB</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fowler (2012)</strong></td>
<td>143</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>.300</td>
<td>.389</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pagan (2010)</strong></td>
<td>151</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>.290</td>
<td>.340</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>37</td>
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VI. **Existence of Physical or Mental Defects**

Although no injuries have kept him on the disabled list for more than fourteen consecutive games, the Club’s primary concern for Mr. Fowler’s health is the recurring nature of a right ankle sprain. Mr. Fowler has missed games due to sprains on five separate occasions within the past year, which perhaps could be part of the reason for his lower stolen base total for the 2012 season. Mr. Fowler has suffered other minor abdominal and leg injuries within the past four seasons, although none seem to have directly affected his production, aside from his stolen bases. A more consistent performance from Mr. Fowler for an entire season is necessary to validate such a high asking price for both a leadoff hitter and centerfielder, considering his current base running totals fall well below the MLB average for leadoff hitters.

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VII. Recent Performance by the Club

Mr. Fowler has been the starting centerfielder for the Rockies in his 4 full seasons in Colorado. In his first full season in 2009, the Rockies finished second in the National League Western Division, while winning the NL Wild Card. The Rockies ultimately lost to the Philadelphia Phillies in the Division Series. Over the past three seasons, the Rockies’ record has steadily decreased from 83 wins in 2010, to 73 wins in 2011, and only 64 wins this past season.

The Rockies’ recent struggles seem to be from pitching and defense, as the Club posted the highest team Earned Run Average and lowest team fielding percentage in the MLB this past season. Offensively, the Rockies were 6th in the MLB in runs scored and 2nd in team Batting Average in the MLB in 2012. The Club is confident that Mr. Fowler played a large role in the team’s offensive success this past season; however, his inability to find a niche in the batting order leaves many questions for the future. Also, the Club believes Mr. Fowler has the ability to become one of the premier defensive centerfielders in the MLB, but he must become more consistent as his career moves forward to do so.

VIII. Conclusion

Through his four-plus years in the Major Leagues, Dexter Fowler has shown signs of greatness, and the Rockies look forward to a bright future for their centerfielder. However, the Club is still patiently waiting on him to overcome his defensive inconsistency and to find a spot in the batting order where he can reach his full potential.

32 http://espn.go.com/mlb/stats/team/_/stat/pitching
33 http://espn.go.com/mlb/stats/team/_/stat/fielding/year/2012/seasontype/2
34 http://espn.go.com/mlb/stats/team/_/stat/batting
35 http://espn.go.com/mlb/stats/team/_/stat/batting/sort/avg/order/true
Based on the evidence provided in this brief and in oral argument, the Colorado Rockies respectfully request that this panel find the Club’s offer of $4.0 million to be an appropriate salary for Dexter Fowler for the 2013 season.