2013 National Baseball Arbitration Competition

Tommy Hanson v. Atlanta Braves
Submission on behalf of the Tommy Hanson
Midpoint: $3.9 million
Submission by Team 14
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I. Introduction and Request for Hearing Decision

This brief analyzes the contributions of starting pitcher Tommy Hanson ("Player" or "Hanson") to be reflected in his 2013 contract with the Atlanta Braves ("Braves"). Pursuant to the Major Leagues Baseball ("MLB") Collective Bargaining Agreement ("CBA"), the Player submits the issue of his 2013 salary to final and binding arbitration. The CBA establishes the following criteria shall be considered in determining the player’s award: 1) the quality of the 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 contribution; 3) the record of the player’s past compensation; 4) comparative baseball salaries; 5) the existence of physical or mental defects on the part of the player; and 6) the recent performance of the club.¹

Hanson has accrued 3.120 years of MLB service time, entitling him to file as first-year arbitration eligible. The evidence of his past successes and future potential presented in this brief and forthcoming oral argument demonstrates that Hanson is fairly entitled to a salary exceeding the $3.9 million midpoint between his final offer and that of the Braves. Hanson respectfully requests that that arbitration panel find that he is entitled to a 2013 salary arbitration award of $4.3 million.

II. Quality of the Player’s Contributions to the Braves in 2012

Tommy Hanson received the honor of being the Braves opening day starter in 2012. In his platform season, Tommy Hanson established a new career high with 13 wins.² Hanson made 31 starts and played a pivotal role on a playoff team as one of the Club’s most prominent

He recorded the second most innings and strikeouts in a single season for his career, while also posting his second best strikeouts per nine innings. Hanson’s wins, games started and strike out totals all ranked in the top 45 of MLB starting pitchers. Additionally, he struck out over 21% of the batters he faced during the season, which is on par with elite pitchers such as Tim Lincecum who struck out 23% of the batters he faced last year. These statistics become all the more impressive while recognizing that he was only several months removed from a slight rotator cuff tear and tendinitis in his pitching shoulder.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tommy Hanson’s Platform Season</th>
<th>DOB: August 28, 1986</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MLB Service: 3.120 years</strong></td>
<td><strong>GS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidenced by Hanson’s first half and second half statistics, the increase in ERA may be, at least partially, attributed to a significant increase in innings from the prior season. After the Club shut down Hanson in August 2011 after pitching 130.0 innings, Hanson pitched 174.2 in 2012, a 44.2 innings increase. In the first half of the season, Hanson pitched to a 3.71 ERA in 106.2 innings.

Although, he pitched to a 5.69 ERA in 68.0 innings in the second half of the season, Hanson’s rise in ERA is partially attributable to a lower back strain that landed him on the disabled list from July 31, 2012 until August 17, 2012. Furthermore, the months in which

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3 Id.  
4 Id.  
Hanson recorded his highest ERA’s were July and August, directly preceding and following the strain.\textsuperscript{11} Prior to the strain, Hanson was leading the NL in starts.\textsuperscript{12} Importantly, although Hanson battled a nagging lower back strain and his statistics deviated slightly from his excellent career averages, he still landed among the NL leaders in numerous categories and participated as a key contributor on a playoff team. Hanson started the most games for the Braves, finished second in wins, and lead the staff in strikeouts.\textsuperscript{13} Hanson’s contributions to the Braves are further illustrated through their 20-11 record, resulting from Hanson’s starts.\textsuperscript{14}

III. Length and Consistency of Career Contributions

During his three years of service time, Hanson has 45 wins against only 32 losses.\textsuperscript{15} Hanson started his career with 4 consecutive seasons of 10 or more quality starts, starting in over 20 games in each season.\textsuperscript{16} Over those seasons, Hanson is one of only 6 starters in the National League to record 3 seasons with an ERA under 3.60 while starting over 20 games.\textsuperscript{17} Hanson posted an ERA lower than the league average in 3 of his first 4 seasons. Throughout his career, Hanson has shown that he possesses the skills that portend improvement – namely, his strikeout rate. He is the Braves all-time leader in strikeouts per nine innings, ahead of pitching greats Greg Maddux and Tom Glavine.\textsuperscript{18} Hanson is also seventh in Braves history in strikeout to walk ratio.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{11} Id. \\
\textsuperscript{12} Tommy Hanson Player Page, Baseball Reference, http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/h/hansoto01.shtml \\
\textsuperscript{13} Atlanta Braves Pitching Statistics, ESPN, http://espn.go.com/mlb/team/stats/pitching/_/name/atl/seasontype/2/cat/gamesStarted/order/true/atlanta-braves \\
\textsuperscript{14} Tommy Hanson Game Log, Baseball Reference, http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/gl.cgi?id=hansoto01&l=t=p&year= \\
\textsuperscript{15} Supra Note 12 \\
\textsuperscript{16} Tommy Hanson Player Page, Baseball Prospectus, http://www.baseballprospectus.com/card/card.php?id=52080 \\
\textsuperscript{17} Supra Note 12 \\
\textsuperscript{19} Id.
Tommy Hanson’s Career

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>GS</th>
<th>IP</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>ERA</th>
<th>SO</th>
<th>SO/BB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>127.2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>202.2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>130.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>174.2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>635.0</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ranked number 4 on *Baseball America’s* Top 100 Prospects list after an outstanding 2008 season in the minors, Hanson debuted on June 7, 2009 and immediately went on to be named the NL Rookie of the Month. Despite spending the first two months of the season in the minors, Hanson finished third in the NL Rookie of the Year voting while leading all rookies in ERA, strikeouts per inning, WHIP, and opponent’s batting average. It was a stellar debut season to say the least.

Hanson carried over the success of his first-year and posted the best season of his career in 2010. During that season he started the second most games in the NL, finished in the NL’s top 20 for strikeouts, complete games, ERA, WHIP, and opponent’s batting average. In 2010, Hanson became the 15th pitcher since 2003 to pitch 200 innings in a season at age 23 or younger. In 2011, Hanson set a new career high with 14 strikeouts in a single game. Before an injury cut his 2011 season short, Hanson led the NL in opponent’s batting average (.190), was fourth in ERA (2.44), third in strikeouts per nine innings (9.5), second in WHIP (1.016), and tied for third in wins. Somehow, he was not selected to the NL All-Star team.

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22 Tommy Hanson Player Page, MLB.com, http://losangeles.angels.mlb.com/team/player.jsp?player_id=462102#gameType=R&sectionType=career&statType=2&season=2012&level=ALL
24 Supra Note 16.
Despite his shortened season in 2011, Hanson bounced back in 2012 to pitch at an above-average level. He began the season with a record of 12-5 before being placed on the disabled list with a lower back strain. Hanson returned to finish the season strong, ultimately establishing a new career high with 13 wins. Overall, Hanson has consistently pitched at a significantly above-average level throughout his career.

IV. Past Player Compensation

Tommy Hanson was drafted in 2005 as a “Draft and Follow” and upon signing his contract, he received a $325,000 bonus.\textsuperscript{28}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
Year & Salary\textsuperscript{26} & League Minimum\textsuperscript{27} \\
\hline
2010 & $435,000 & $400,000 \\
2011 & $456,500 & $414,500 \\
2012 & $535,000 & $480,000 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Despite being one of the best young pitchers in the major leagues, Hanson has received only slight salary increases each year. His salary has remained close to the league minimum while his performance over his 3.120 years of service reflects a top of the rotation starting pitcher, therefore qualifying him for a salary commensurate with his contributions.

V. Comparative Baseball Salaries

Hanson’s consistent performance throughout this career is impressive for the volume of statistics accumulated. However, comparisons to similar players provide the most tangible and compelling indications of Hanson’s value. These comparisons clearly indicate Hanson’s value is above the $3.9 million midpoint and that this panel should therefore decide in his favor.

A. Mike Pelfrey ($500,000 in 2010/$3,950,000 in 2011)

Comparing Hanson to Mike Pelfrey, a starting pitcher on the New York Mets at the time, illustrates Hanson’s value as greater than the $3.9 million midpoint. Pelfrey became arbitration

\textsuperscript{26} Id.
\textsuperscript{27} MLB Collective Bargaining Agreements (2007-2011; 2012-2016).
\textsuperscript{28} Tommy Hanson Player Page, Baseball Prospectus, http://www.baseballprospectus.com/card/card.php?id=52080. “Draft and follow” was a process where a team could sign a player, send them off to junior college and then sign them the following season after closely watching their development. The system was eliminated at the end of 2006 (http://mlb.mlb.com/news/article.jsp?ymd=20070531&content_id=1997066&xkey=draft2007&fext=.jsp).
eligible for the first time at the conclusion of the 2009 season, in which he played for a salary of $500,000. This is amount is similar to Hanson’s $535,000 salary in 2011. Pelfrey and the Mets ultimately settled on $3.95 million for the 2010 season, eclipsing the present midpoint. Despite having similar platform seasons, Hanson’s career numbers are simply better than Pelfrey’s.

Accordingly, Hanson deserves a salary on par with Pelfrey’s, thereby exceeding the midpoint.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparative Pitching Statistics Between Tommy Hanson and Mike Pelfrey</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pelfrey</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Platform:** Both players posted above average numbers during their platform seasons. Though Pelfrey’s numbers appear to be better than Hanson’s, a closer analysis reveals that they are quite similar. Although Pelfrey had the best season of his career, Hanson built upon his past success and ranked among the top 25 in the NL for games started, strikeouts, and wins. Hanson also struck out nearly 50 more batters (1.5/start) than Pelfrey, exhibiting significantly better control. Remarkably, Hanson was able to accumulate these statistics despite having to miss a few starts.

**Career:** Despite starting less games and pitching less innings over their respective careers, Hanson accumulated more wins in less service time than Pelfrey. Additionally, Hanson accrued less losses and posted a significantly lower ERA. This demonstrates that Hanson was consistently above average throughout his service time while Pelfrey, despite a good platform season, was markedly inconsistent. Furthermore, Hanson recorded over 200 more strikeouts and a drastically better career strikeout to walk ratio. Hanson not only possesses better control than Pelfrey, but also has the ability to overpower hitters. An above average strikeout to walk ratio, such as the one Hanson possessed, is a strong predictor of future success.
Overall, their platform seasons were similar but because Hanson had a substantially better career, Hanson’s value exceeds Pelfrey’s. Therefore, any increase to his salary should at least be commensurate with Pelfrey’s and necessarily exceed the $3.9 million midpoint.

B. Chad Billingsley ($475,000 in 2009/$3,850,000 in 2010)

Billingsley and Hanson are near perfect comparisons as they had similar careers and platform seasons. Prior to becoming arbitration eligible, Billingsley played for a $475,000 salary in 2009. Billingsley and the Dodgers ultimately settled on a one-year/$3.85 million salary for the 2010 season, an increase of 710%. Similarly, Hanson has submitted a $4.3 million offer or a 703% increase. Therefore, like Billingsley, Hanson should receive a salary increase commensurate with his performance.

| Comparative Pitching Statistics Between Tommy Hanson and Chad Billingsley |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Platform                   | MLS | GS  | W  | L  | IN  | ERA | SO  | SO/BB | GS  | W  | L  | IN  | ERA | SO  | SO/BB |
| Hanson                     | 3.120 | 31  | 13 | 10 | 174.1 | 4.48 | 161 | 2.27 | 108 | 45 | 32 | 635.0 | 3.61 | 592 | 2.71 |
| Billings.                  | 3.110 | 32  | 12 | 11 | 196.1 | 4.03 | 179 | 2.08 | 100 | 47 | 30 | 634.0 | 3.54 | 580 | 2.01 |

**Platform**: Billingsley’s performance in his platform season, like Hanson’s, slightly departed from his career averages. His ERA rose from the previous year, his win total decreased, and he finished with an overall win-loss record close to .500. However, similar to Hanson’s platform season, he was able to maintain strong strikeout numbers and actually improved his overall control. Even more analogous, Billingsley finished ranked near the top of the NL in games started, strike outs, and wins.

**Career**: As Billingsley and Hanson shared similar platform seasons, they also share similar career numbers. Both started 100 games or more, posted 45 wins or more, pitched over 630 innings, had career ERA’s under 3.65, and struck out at least 580 betters. Looking at their career numbers, it is very difficult to differentiate between the two players. At worst, Tommy Hanson is Chad Billingsley.
Due to his strong body of work throughout his career, despite a slight performance dip in his platform season, Billingsley received a 710% salary increase. Accordingly, Hanson should be valued similarly, as their arbitration cases are virtually synonymous therefore pushing Hanson’s salary far beyond the midpoint.

C. Joe Saunders ($475,000 in 2009/$3,700,000 in 2010)

Comparing Hanson to former Angels starting pitcher Joe Saunders also illustrates Hanson’s value to be greater than the $3.9 million midpoint. Hanson not only had a better platform season, but also holds significantly better career numbers and should be valued considerably higher. Prior to his arbitration hearing, Saunders and the Angels agreed to a salary of $3.7 million, an increase of 679%. While the salary settled upon is slightly below the present midpoint, it is important to note the percentage by which Saunders’ salary was increased. Since Hanson outperformed Saunders in their respective platform years and over their careers, Hanson should receive, at worst the same increase and truthfully much more. Either would bring his salary significantly above the midpoint.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparative Pitching Statistics Between Tommy Hanson and Joe Saunders</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Platform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLS</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saund.</td>
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</table>

**Platform:** Saunders low strikeout numbers and low strike out to walk ratio indicate he frequently pitched to contact; meaning much of his success was dependent upon the performance of other players. Saunders accumulated more wins despite a higher ERA, which highlights the problem of looking solely at win totals to judge performance. Saunders allowed more runs per nine innings than Hanson but still managed a greater win total when, generally, one would expect the opposite. Had Hanson played his platform season on the Angels, or vice versa, the won-lost totals may have been reversed. Hanson pitched to a lower ERA, struck out more batters and
exhibited better control. Accordingly, the peripheral statistics are much more compelling to decipher who had a better overall season and give an edge to Hanson.

**Career:** Over their respective careers, Hanson significantly outperformed Saunders. Though accumulating similar win totals, Hanson started more games, pitched 64 more innings, had a considerably lower ERA and over 260 more strikeouts. Further, Hanson exhibited significantly better control through his extremely impressive strikeout to walk ratio. While Saunders exhibited an average to below average strike out to walk ratio, Hanson’s borders on elite. Getting beyond the win total, Hanson has provided more value to his team by pitching more frequently. Over nearly the same service time, Hanson pitched the equivalent of nearly 8 additional games and still prevented more runs from scoring.

Therefore, based on their platform seasons and careers, Hanson deserves a higher salary increase and should be valued significantly higher than Saunders. A salary increase of even the same percentage would still push Hanson’s salary past the midpoint.

**VI. Existence of Physical or Mental Defects**

While Hanson suffered an injury to his throwing shoulder in the second half of the 2011 season and made a brief trip to the DL in 2012, he does not maintain any physical or mental defects that would justify devaluing his salary in this arbitration hearing. To alleviate any concerns about his throwing shoulder, Hanson made 31 starts in 2012, placing him in the top 25 of all NL starting pitchers. Additionally, Hanson has thrown the same pitches at the same frequency and very similar velocity as he did before.\(^{29}\) Overall, Hanson started over 20 games in each of his first four seasons and has proven to be a reliable starting pitcher, determined to take the ball every fifth day and perform at an above-average level.

VII. Recent Performance of the Club

Over the past four seasons, the Atlanta Braves won 86 (2009), 91 (2010), 89 (2011), and 94 (2012) games. The Braves finished second in their division each of the past three seasons, making the playoffs in 2010 and 2012. While unable to replicate the success of 14 division titles in 15 years from 1991-2005, the Braves are one of only 9 teams to make the playoffs in 2 of the past 3 seasons. Hanson has been featured at the forefront of the team’s recent success. The Atlanta Braves’ success hinges largely on their pitching. Having given up 641 runs or less in each of the past four seasons, Hanson has made at least 20 starts in each of those respective seasons while pitching at an above-average level. It is fair to say that Hanson has been just as important to the Braves success as any other player in the organization.

VIII. Conclusion

Tommy Hanson has proven himself to be one of the best young starting pitchers in all of baseball. His performance has been both consistent and impressive throughout his career. Hanson has been a staple in the rotation on a Braves team that finished with a winning record in each of the last four seasons, making the playoffs twice. With his shoulder injury of 2011 fully behind him, Hanson showcased his abilities as a member of the Braves starting pitching rotation and is poised to remain a key contributor in 2013.

Based on the evidence outlined in this brief and in the forthcoming oral argument, Tommy Hanson respectfully requests that this panel find in his favor and grant his arbitration request for a $4.3 million salary for the 2013 season.