TEAM 15
DEXTER FOWLER
COLORADO ROCKIES
REPRESENTING: COLORADO ROCKIES
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I. Introduction and Request for Hearing Decision

This brief analyzes relevant statistics, player attributes, team attributes, awards, player salaries, and other factors of the playing career of Dexter Fowler, centerfielder for the Colorado Rockies Baseball Club (the “Club” or the “Rockies”). The Major League Baseball (“MLB”) Collective Bargaining Agreement (“CBA”) between MLB Clubs and the MLB Players Association set the criteria to be considered in this arbitration hearing.¹

Under CBA Section VI(E), Part 10(a)-(b), specific areas of Fowler’s MLB service time are to be considered for purposes of this hearing: (1) the quality of Fowler’s contribution to the Rockies 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 Fowler; and (6) the recent performance record of the Rockies, including, but not limited to, its League standing and attendance as an indication of public acceptance.² The arbitration panel shall assign such weight to the evidence as shall appear appropriate given the circumstances, giving particular attention to, for comparative salary purposes, the contracts of players with MLB service not exceeding one annual service group above Fowler’s annual service group.³ Evidence of the following shall not be considered: the financial position of the Club, press comments and material on the performance of the Rockies or Fowler, or offers made by either Fowler or the Rockies prior to arbitration.

On behalf of the Rockies, we respectfully ask that the arbitration panel consider the

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² Id. at § 10(a)
³ Id.
analysis here and in oral hearing to find that Fowler is entitled to receive $4.0 million, $1.65 million more than his 2011 contract of $2.35 million, and $600,000 less than Fowler’s last request to this arbitration panel of $4.6 million.

II. Quality of Player’s Contributions Over the Past Season

On the heels of two average seasons, Fowler had his most productive season in 2012. In 143 games, Fowler had 454 at bats ("AB") and 530 plate appearances ("PA").\(^4\) In those PA, he had a .300 batting average ("BA"), with a .389 on-base percentage ("OBP"), a .474 slugging percentage ("SLG"), and a .863 on-base plus slugging percentage ("OPS").\(^5\) Fowler accumulated 136 hits, 13 home runs ("HR"), 53 runs batted in ("RBI"), 72 runs scored, and 12 stolen bases ("SB").\(^6\) He also had 68 bases on balls ("BB") and 128 strikeouts ("SO").\(^7\) As the team's leadoff hitter, Fowler's tasks were to get on base, to get into scoring position, and to score runs. His OBP – an important statistic, as it measures how often Fowler got on base and had scoring potential – was the team’s highest; on the Rockies, he was first in BB, second in runs scored, and fourth in BA as well. However, his continued penchant for striking out and low SB overshadow these indications of a strong performance. His 2012 power numbers do not allay concern, as he was fifth in HR, fifth in SLG, and sixth in RBI on the team, nor does his fielding, which was below average.\(^8\) The Club would be remiss if it did not acknowledge Fowler's improvements from prior seasons and his valued role to the Rockies, but ultimately, he has not performed well enough as a leadoff hitter or as a centerfielder to justify his salary demands.

Overall, Fowler did not measure up to other outfielders in 2012. Though he did have the third best OBP among all qualifying centerfielders, he was only 17\(^{th}\) out of 23 in hits, 16\(^{th}\) of 23

\(^5\) Id.
\(^6\) Id.
\(^7\) Id.
\(^8\) http://www.baseball-reference.com/teams/COL/2012.shtml
in RBI, and 13th of 23 in HR. He was only 16th of 23 in runs, 17th of 23 in SB, and most importantly, had the second highest strikeout rate (“K%”) – striking out in 24.2% of his PA. When compared to all MLB outfielders, Fowler ranks near the top in only OBP and BA; out of 57 qualifying outfielders, he was 42nd in HR, 47th in RBI, 43rd in hits, 41st in runs scored, 31st in stolen bases, and 12th worst in K%. His fielding was also sub par, as his .978 fielding percentage (“FLD”) fell well below the MLB average for centerfielders (.991), ranking him last, and for outfielders (.988), ranking him 46th out of 51. His FLD and six errors – the second most among MLB centerfielders – mark his second worst defensive performances to date. Ultimately, Fowler trailed behind players that do not even hit leadoff in categories most important to a leadoff hitter, and lacked defensive prowess when compared to other outfielders.

Despite Fowler’s slash line (BA/OBP/SLG) of .300/.389/.474, he was one of the Major League’s least effective hitters in 2012 in terms of putting the ball in play. Fowler led the team in SO, posting a SO per game ratio of 0.9 for the second time in his career; he also had a career-high strikeout rate of 24.2%, placing him ahead of 121 of the 143 qualifying players in MLB in K%. Because Fowler had a .390 batting average on balls in play – almost 100 points over the league average – he squandered chances to reach base because he struck out so often.

Fowler was not effective as a leadoff hitter, as he struck out 30 times in 104 first-inning PA, and had the worst first inning K% (28.8%) of any leadoff hitter in MLB and the highest overall K% of all 30 leadoff hitters in 2012. Moreover, Fowler failed to create scoring

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9 http://espn.go.com/mlb/stats/fielding/_/position/cf/order/false
10 Id.; A qualifying hitter has reached at least 502 plate appearances in the season.
11 Id.
12 Id.
13 Id.
14 http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/split.cgi?id=fowlede01&year=2012&t=b
15 http://www.fangraphs.com/leaders.aspx
16 Id.
17 Id.
opportunities for his team; he stole only 12 bases in 2012, the same as in 2011, in which he played 18 fewer games.\textsuperscript{18} He had the worst first-inning SB percentage of any leadoff hitter, stealing successfully once out of every four attempts, and ranked 23\textsuperscript{rd} for leadoff hitters with .08 steals per game.\textsuperscript{19}

Lastly, Fowler was much more productive at home than on the road. He had 10 HR, 39 RBI, and a line of .332/.431/.553 at home in 2012, compared to 3 HR, 14 RBI, and a line of .262/.339/.381 on the road.\textsuperscript{20} Clearly, Fowler is a better hitter when playing in the hitter-friendly confines of his home field, Coors Field, home to the most hits of any ballpark as well as the most runs scored in 2012, and arguably the best hitters’ ballpark in all of MLB.\textsuperscript{21} This disparity is particularly significant considering that Fowler plays half of his games on the road, and sees his BA and OBP drop a whopping .70 and .92, respectively, away from Denver.\textsuperscript{22}

III. Length and Consistency of Career Contributions (See Appendix A)

Fowler made his Major League debut on September 2, 2008 with the Colorado Rockies.\textsuperscript{23} Since that time, Fowler has played in 548 games over five seasons.\textsuperscript{24} His career performance has shown promise, but there have been areas of concern as well.

Fowler has struggled with strikeouts since becoming a full-time starter in 2009. He recorded a K\% of 22.4\%, 20.6\%, 23.1\%, and 24.2\%, from 2009 to 2012, respectively; his career K\% is 22.7\%, well above the league average of 18.4\% for the same period.\textsuperscript{25} Despite not having 500 AB in any season, he has had at least 100 SO in each (116, 104, 130, and 128, \ldots)

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Id.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Id.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Id.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} http://espn.go.com/mlb/stats/parkfactor/_/order/false
  \item \textsuperscript{22} http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/split.cgi?id=fowlede01&year=2012&t=b
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Id.
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Id.
  \item \textsuperscript{25} http://www.fangraphs.com/leaders.aspx?
respectively). These SO have troubled Fowler as a leadoff hitter over his career. From 2009 to 2011, he had first inning K% of 31.7%, 24.5%, and 29.5%, and did not have a BA or OBP to make up for it (.185 and .272, .144 and .238, and .183 and .321, respectively). In 2010, he was demoted to Triple-A, after he posted 35 SO and a lackluster .216 BA over 47 games; in 2011, after sustaining an injury and striking out 65 times in the first 54 games, Fowler stayed in Triple-A for 24 games so that he could work on his swing, his .238 BA, and his strikeout issues. In 2010 and 2011, he missed at least 29 games to work on hitting and plate discipline, yet alarmingly, his K% has increased in every season since 2010.

While Fowler’s 2012 season was his best, his earlier showings were just average. His 2010 BA (.266) and 2010 OBP (.347) were last of four qualifying Rockies, and his 2011 OBP (.363) was ranked third of four. His career numbers do not distinguish him from others in MLB either: his BA in 2009, 2010, and 2011 (.266, .260, and .266, respectively), were below the MLB average BA (.280, .273, and .272); his OBP in 2009, 2010, and 2011 (.363, .347, .363) were just over the MLB averages (.351, .341, .340). He has never hit for power, hitting only 15 HR over three seasons before 2012.

As expected, Fowler has performed better at home throughout the course of his career; however, he has hit overwhelmingly better at Coors Field than on the road. His career line at home is .295/.395/.487, while on the road it is significantly lower at .248/.331/.367. Again, these trends suggest that Fowler’s career numbers, like his 2012 statistics, may be inflated due to playing half of his games in one of, if not the most hitter-friendly ballparks in MLB. Moreover,

27 Id.
29 Id.
30 Id.
31 http://www.fangraphs.com/leaders.aspx
33 Id.
Fowler has not made up for this inconsistency with his fielding: the league average FLD over the course of Fowler’s career is .990,\textsuperscript{34} and, during that time, Fowler posted a FLD of .983 as a centerfielder, with a career worst .975 FLD in 2011.\textsuperscript{35}

IV. Past Player Compensation

In 2012, Fowler was arbitration eligible for the first time. The Rockies opted to avoid arbitration by agreeing with Fowler on a one-year deal worth $2.35 million; this was a $1.93 million increase from Fowler’s 2011 salary of $420,000.\textsuperscript{36} For a full breakdown of Fowler’s yearly salaries, see Appendix B.

V. Comparative Baseball Salaries (See Appendix C)

In 2012, the median salary for an outfielder was $1.388 million.\textsuperscript{37} In light of Fowler’s career contributions and future promise, the Rockies propose a salary of $4.0 million for the 2013 season, roughly three times the median salary for Fowler’s position. Fowler has countered with a proposed salary of $4.6 million. The midpoint between these offers is $4.3 million, meaning that if the arbitration panel finds that Fowler is worth even one dollar less than the midpoint, he must be awarded the team’s offer. The following section will show why the Rockies’ offer of $4.0 million is more appropriate in light of this midpoint and the salaries awarded to players with similar production and service time.

David Murphy provides the closest comparable for Fowler. Murphy entered his second year of arbitration eligibility following his 2011 season as an outfielder for the Texas Rangers.\textsuperscript{38} Over their careers, Murphy has clearly outperformed Fowler. Over 1797 AB, he tallied 58 HR, 258 RBI, and 504 hits and a line of .280/.339/.447; Fowler, over 1833 at bats, has just 497 hits.

\textsuperscript{34}Id.  
\textsuperscript{35}http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/f/fowlede01.shtml 
\textsuperscript{36}Id.  
\textsuperscript{37}http://content.usatoday.com/sportsdata/baseball/mlb/salaries/position/of/2012 
\textsuperscript{38}http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/m/murphda07.shtml
but 30 fewer HR and 90 fewer RBI, and a line of .271/.364/.427.\textsuperscript{39} While Murphy hit for more power, his production did not come at the expense of his plate discipline, as he recorded an impressive 16.6% K% compared to Fowler’s 22.7%, and had 151 fewer strikeouts.\textsuperscript{40} Further, Murphy posted a much more impressive K% of 13.9% in his platform year when compared to Fowler’s 24.2%, and struck out only 61 times – fewer than half of Fowler’s total.\textsuperscript{41} Murphy’s 2012 salary, considering his platform year and career contributions, was $3.625 million, $675,000 below the midpoint here.\textsuperscript{42} The Club is still offering Fowler more than Murphy, in spite of Fowler’s lower power, inconsistency and alarmingly higher K%; still, it would be inappropriate to award Fowler almost $1 million more than Murphy for a weaker performance.

Jason Bartlett, who entered his second year of arbitration eligibility after the 2009 season playing shortstop for Tampa Bay, provides another solid indication of the market value for a player of Fowler’s caliber.\textsuperscript{43} Despite their different positions, Fowler and Bartlett are comparable because both batted leadoff in their platform seasons, and both play positions that require similar levels of agility and range. However, Bartlett is better: he hit for more power in his platform year of 2009 than Fowler did in 2012, with 14 HR and 66 RBI, compared to Fowler’s 13 HR and 53 RBI; he also hit with better consistency, with a line of .320/.389/.490, compared to Fowler’s .300/.389/.474.\textsuperscript{44} As a leadoff hitter, Bartlett was particularly effective with an impressive 15.7% K% and only 89 SO, and was also a running threat, accumulating 30 SB.\textsuperscript{45} Fowler, by contrast, had a 24.2% K%, 30 more SO, and less than half of Bartlett’s SB.\textsuperscript{46}

Bartlett’s 2009 performance also earned him an AL All-Star Team selection, an honor that

\textsuperscript{39} “David Murphy Stats” and “Dexter Fowler Stats,” http://www.baseball-reference.com
\textsuperscript{40} Id.
\textsuperscript{41} Id.
\textsuperscript{42} Id.
\textsuperscript{43} “Jason Bartlett Stats” and “Dexter Fowler Stats,” http://www.baseball-reference.com
\textsuperscript{44} Id.
\textsuperscript{45} Id.
\textsuperscript{46} Id.
Fowler has yet to attain. Over the course of Bartlett’s career, he has also hit with more consistency than Fowler, with a line of .287/.350/.390 compared to Fowler’s line of .271/.364/.427, and has accumulated 86 more hits than Fowler in just 200 more AB. Again, Bartlett’s career K% of 13.9% beats Fowler’s 22.7%. Following his 2009 season, Bartlett received a $4 million salary for 2010, for a position with a median salary of $1.3 million at that time, almost exactly median salary for an outfielder today. Even with Bartlett’s better performance in his platform year and consistency over his career, Tampa Bay compensated Bartlett with a salary below the midpoint of the current arbitration hearing. As such, the arbitration panel should find that Fowler should receive the Rockies’s offer of $4.0 million.

A final comparable player to Fowler is Luke Scott, who entered into his second year of arbitration eligibility following the 2009 season. During his platform year, Scott posted 25 HR, 77 RBI, and a line of .258/.340/.488, compared to Fowler’s 13 HR, 53 RBI, and a line of .300/.389/.474. While Fowler’s BA and OBP were higher than Scott’s, Scott collected 22 more RBI and, more importantly, nearly doubled Fowler’s power. Further, Scott’s career BA (.264) and OBP (.350) are very similar to Fowler’s (.271 and .364, respectively), but he surpasses Fowler by almost 70 points in OPS, triples Fowler’s HR (28) with 76, and beats Fowler’s RBI (168) with 247. In 2010, Scott was awarded $4.05 million, $1.65 million more than in 2009; despite Scott’s career line and power numbers, his 2010 salary was still $250,000 below the midpoint here. Given that power hitters earn more money than leadoff hitters, and that Scott is a better power hitter, awarding Fowler’s requested salary - $550,000 more than Scott - would

47 Id.
48 Id.
49 Id.
50 Id.
52 Id.
53 Id.
be inappropriate.

VI. Existence of Physical or Mental Defects

Since becoming the starting centerfielder for the Club, Fowler has missed short stints of time for injuries. In 2011, he missed 33 games with an abdominal injury, playing only 125 games. In 2012, he suffered a sprained ankle in August, claiming that he “sprained it all the time,” and tendonitis in his wrist in September, which ended his season early. While Fowler fortunately has yet to suffer a major injury, it is unclear if these injuries will linger in 2013.

VII. Conclusion

Though Fowler has shown flashes of promise in 2012, one season alone is not adequate grounds to justify the pay raise that he seeks. Though he is a valued member of the Rockies and has demonstrated potential, Fowler has struggled to perform as an effective leadoff hitter and centerfielder. His continued propensity to strikeout and his low FLD affirm the Club’s concerns as valid, and the Club continues to be concerned that Fowler may not be able to perform reliably in his assigned roles. As such, the Rockies would prefer to see more evidence of Fowler’s growth next season. Still, the Rockies appreciate and recognize Fowler’s improvement in his 2012 season and are fairly compensating him for his contributions. Ultimately, however, he has not performed as well as players who have earned significantly less than $4.3 million, the midpoint here; awarding Fowler $300,000 more than the midpoint – and much more than better players – would be inappropriate. As such, the Rockies submit that Fowler be awarded a $1.65 million increase in salary to $4.0 million for the 2013 season.

56 http://blogs.denverpost.com/rockies/2012/08/22/dexter-fowler-avoids-break-ankle-days/12758/
57 http://www.denverpost.com/rockies/ci_21623165/rockies-dexter-fowler-deals-tendinitis-his-left-wrist
## VIII. APPENDICES

### Appendix A

**Dexter Fowler Year-by-Year Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>AB</th>
<th>PA</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>1B</th>
<th>2B</th>
<th>3B</th>
<th>HR</th>
<th>RBI</th>
<th>BB</th>
<th>SO</th>
<th>AVG</th>
<th>SB</th>
<th>K%</th>
<th>OBP</th>
<th>SLG</th>
<th>OPS</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>FLD %</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>0.183</td>
<td>0.154</td>
<td>0.339</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
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<td>0.266</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>0.363</td>
<td>0.406</td>
<td>0.770</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>0.266</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
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<td>0.410</td>
<td>0.757</td>
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<td>2011</td>
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<td>481</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>68</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>0.266</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>0.363</td>
<td>0.432</td>
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<td>2012</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>24.2%</td>
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<td>2129</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>260</td>
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<td>0.271</td>
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<td>0.791</td>
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### Appendix B

**Dexter Fowler Year-by-Year Salary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Increase From Prior Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>$401,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>$406,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>$424,000</td>
<td>$18,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>$2,350,001</td>
<td>$1,926,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>TO BE DETERMINED</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix C

**Comparative Baseball Salaries for Dexter Fowler**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Salary in 2012</th>
<th>Salary in 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dexter Fowler</td>
<td>Colorado Rockies</td>
<td>3.144 years</td>
<td>$2.019 mm</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Murphy</td>
<td>Texas Rangers</td>
<td>4.078 years</td>
<td>$2.400 mm</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke Scott</td>
<td>Baltimore Orioles</td>
<td>3.144 years</td>
<td>$2.325 mm</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason Bartlett</td>
<td>Tampa Bay Devil Rays</td>
<td>4.086 years</td>
<td>$1.981 mm</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All statistics and salaries obtained from [http://www.baseball-reference.com](http://www.baseball-reference.com)*

*Career Highs in FLD are for seasons in which the player started the majority of the games for his team*

*Career Totals are up until each player's second year of arbitration eligibility*