2013 National Baseball Arbitration Competition

Dexter Fowler v. Colorado Rockies
Submission on behalf of The Colorado Rockies
Midpoint: $4.3 million
Submission by: Team 19
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I. Introduction and Request for Hearing Decision

This brief analyzes relevant statistics, attributes, awards, player salaries, and other factors of the playing career of Dexter Fowler (“Mr. Fowler”), center-fielder for the Colorado Rockies (“the Team”). The Major League Baseball Collective Bargaining Agreement (“CBA”) set the criteria to be considered in this arbitration hearing. Under CBA Section VI (F), Part 12(a)-(b), the scope of permissible information for this hearing regarding Mr. Fowler’s MLB service includes: (1) the quality of Mr. 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 Mr. 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. The arbitration panel shall also give particular attention to, for comparative salary purposes, the contracts of players with MLB service not exceeding one annual service group above Mr. Fowler’s annual service group. Respectfully, The Colorado Rockies request that the Arbitration Panel find that Mr. Davis is entitled to receive the Team’s offer of $4 million.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ike Davis- Platform Season</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>HR</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>RBI</th>
<th>BB</th>
<th>SO</th>
<th>AVG</th>
<th>OBP</th>
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<tr>
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<td>156</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>90</td>
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<td>310</td>
<td>.252</td>
<td>.336</td>
<td>.461</td>
<td>.797</td>
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The Team is impressed with the solid numbers Mr. Fowler contributed during this past season, his best season to date. Mr. Fowler put up career bests in various statistical categories, including batting average (.300), on base percentage (.389), runs batted in (53), home runs (13),

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and hits (136). This increased production is particularly surprising in light of his prior three seasons, where his statistics remained remarkably consistent year to year. An analysis of Mr. Fowler’s 2012 season reveals, however, that some of these improved numbers are inflated due to various forces. In addition, Mr. Fowler continues to struggle in some key statistical categories that are holding back his overall value.

Mr. Fowler’s .300 batting average and .389 on base percentage was a vast improvement from his previous career highs of .266 and .363 respectively. While some of this may be fairly attributed to Mr. Fowler improving, a substantial portion of this increase can be attributed to his MLB leading .390 batting average on balls in play (“BABIP”), which is .041 points above his career average of .349. This level is simply not sustainable. Even a regression to a BABIP number above his career average will affect his numbers across the board, including batting average, OBP, hits, RBIs, and any other statistics reliant on hits. A fair valuation of Mr. Fowler’s season must take this into consideration.

Another factor inflating Mr. Fowler’s production is his playing in the most hitter-friendly park in all of baseball, Coors field. A look at hitting statistics at Coors field compared to all other baseball stadiums confirms this notion. In 2012, playing at Coors field increased hitting by almost 28%, run scoring by 58%, and home runs by 49%. This boost in production as it relates to Mr. Fowler himself becomes clear when looking at his statistics at home compared to his statistics on the road.

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3 Id.
4 BABIP is a measurement of how many balls that a batter hits in play goes for hits. If a player’s BABIP is higher or lower than his usual average, he can expect that it will regress back to their career rate. The league average is typically between .290 and .310. This statistic is useful in analyzing whether a player’s cold or hot streak is due to a temporary spike or decline in BABIP. “BABIP,” Fangraphs, www.fangraphs.com/library/index.php/offense/babip/
6 “Dexter Fowler: The Improvement is Real, SB Nation, http://www.faketeams.com/2012/12/28/3809972/dexter-fowler-is-there-more-or-one-year-fluke
As the chart demonstrates, Mr. Fowler is significantly worse in every statistical category listed when he plays away from home. Of particular note is the large drop in RBIs (-25), hits (-26), batting average (-.070), OBP (-.092), and total bases (-55). These statistics prove that a substantial portion of Mr. Fowler’s solid 2012 statistics can be attributed to Coors field. That fact, in conjunction with Mr. Fowler’s league leading BABIP, must be taken into consideration when evaluating the true value of his 2012 season.

Finally, a close analysis of Mr. Fowler’s 2012 numbers reveals that he struggled in some key areas. First, despite his speed, Mr. Fowler only managed to steal 12 bases while getting caught 5 times. This is tied for the lowest total of his career and down significantly from the 27 he stole in 2009. The Team would like to see more production in this area from the leadoff position. Second, Mr. Fowler struck out a career-high 24.2% of his at bats this year. This is a high percentage for any player and could negatively affect his offensive impact when his BABIP regresses to a more sustainable number. Finally, Mr. Fowler scored only 72 runs this season, tied for 44th in the NL. This is a 12 run drop from the previous season and below what the Team would like to see from their leadoff hitter.

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9. Id.
10.Id.
11.“MLB Batting Stats,” ESPN, espn.go.com/mlb/stats/batting/_/year/2012/seasontype/2/league/nl
12.Id.
In sum, there is no doubt that Mr. Fowler had a strong 2012 season. However, the Team requests that Mr. Fowler’s extreme BABIP, disproportional home statistics, and other statistical weaknesses be taken into consideration when placing an appropriate value on his production.

III. Length and Consistency of Career Contributions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dexter Fowler</th>
<th>Season</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>2B</th>
<th>3B</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>HR</th>
<th>RBI</th>
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<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.154</td>
<td>0.185</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>115</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>116</td>
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<td>0.266</td>
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<td>125</td>
<td>128</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.266</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>68</td>
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<td>50</td>
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<td>260</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>0.271</td>
<td>0.364</td>
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After being drafted in the 14th round of the 2004 amateur draft and being called up to the major leagues briefly in 2008, Mr. Fowler became a regular in 2009. Over the next three seasons, Mr. Fowler put up remarkably consistent numbers. His batting average, OBP, walks, RBIs, hits, runs, strike outs and slugging percentage never wavered in either direction significantly. He also consistently missed between 27 and 37 games because of various injuries, benchings, and demotions to the minor leagues. In both 2010 and 2011, Mr. Fowler lost his starting role and was sent to the minor leagues to work on his approach. Mr. Fowler was able to play in 143 games this past season, a career high for him, but still missed time due to a wrist injury.

Mr. Fowler’s career stats show a solid player who was consistent in both the positive and negative aspects of his game for the three years preceding his platform season. In that season, he

14 Id.
was able to increase his statistical totals in many categories, but still remained in line with his previous career averages in many aspects of his game.

In sum, the Team expects that Mr. Fowler will continue to perform in line with his career averages. Mr. Fowler was consistent and getting incrementally better up until his platform season. As discussed above, however, his platform season statistics were skewed upward by factors that will be extremely difficult to duplicate. His career statistics and averages are the best way to value Mr. Fowler because they reflect the player Mr. Fowler has been for the bulk of his career. His platform season, an outlier compared to the previous three, should only be given weight in proportion to his entire career. Mr. Fowler’s statistics as a whole suggest that he will regress back towards the performance he displayed in previous seasons. Therefore, using his career averages to value him will reward him for his 2012 season while accounting for the player he has been for the bulk of his career.

IV. Past Player Compensation

In his first three seasons, Mr. Fowler was paid just above the league minimum at $401,000 in 2009, $406,000 in 2010, and $424,000 in 2011. He then became arbitration eligible as a super-two for the 2012 season. The Team and Mr. Fowler avoided arbitration by agreeing to a one-year, $2,350,000 contract for the 2012 season, a substantial raise of 454%. This increase reflected the Team’s commitment to Mr. Fowler and the expectation that his numbers would improve enough to justify the generous contract.

19 Id.
V. Comparative Baseball Salaries

In order to properly compare previously arbitration eligible players to Mr. Fowler, a couple things must be taken into consideration. First, this is Mr. Fowler’s second year of arbitration eligibility at 3.168 years of service time because he was a super two. As such, special attention should be paid to comparables who had similar service time, but were only first time arbitration eligible. The difference in awarded salaries between first and second time arbitration eligible players is not always commensurate, even if they have the same amount of time in the league. Second, Mr. Fowler has played his entire major league career at Coors Field. As discussed above, it is an objective truth that offensive statistics are skewed upwards when playing in that stadium. This is an inherent advantage for Mr. Fowler when directly comparing statistics, and it should be taken into consideration.

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In 2011, B.J. Upton entered into his second year of arbitration eligibility as a 26 year-old centerfielder and agreed to a $4.825 million contract. Mr. Upton went was paid $3 million the previous season after going through an arbitration hearing and losing. It was a 62.5% raise in salary between his first and second year of arbitration.

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Entering his first year of arbitration eligibility, Mr. Upton was a highly touted player and viewed as having a high upside due to being the second overall pick in the 2002 amateur draft.\(^{23}\) He already had multiple productive seasons under his belt, including his 2007 season where he hit 24 home runs with 82 RBIs in only 129 games while putting up a slash line of .300/.386/.508. Mr. Upton’s 3 seasons leading into his first year of arbitration eligibility as a whole were substantially better than Mr. Fowler’s as well. He had more hits (422 to 357), runs (250 to 230), home runs (44 to 15), stolen bases (108 to 52), walks (219 to 192), doubles (95 to 84), and a better average (.270 to .264). This was done despite the fact that Mr. Fowler played in Coors Field, the best hitter’s park in baseball, and Mr. Upton’s platform season was flat by his lofty standards. Because of his overall superior performance, Mr. Upton was awarded $3 million in his first year of arbitration eligibility compared to Mr. Fowler’s $2.35 million.

In the platform season of his second year of arbitration eligibility, Mr. Upton rebounded in many categories, increasing his run total (89 from 79), RBIs (62 from 55), home runs (18 from 11), walks (67 from 57), OBP (.322 from .313), and slugging (.424 from .373). He also maintained his stellar stolen base total of 42. These are solid numbers, but down from many of his career highs. Still, because of his immense potential and career-long production, Mr. Upton was rewarded a healthy 62.5% raise and received a $4.825 million contract, which is just above what Mr. Fowler is requesting.

To reach the $4.3 million dollar midpoint, Mr. Fowler would need to see an 83% raise in his salary. Mr. Fowler has not nearly had the career production that Mr. Upton has, as he bests Mr. Fowler in nearly every run producing category except average and OBP, and he was only given a 62.5% raise for his stellar body of work. In addition, Mr. Upton’s second platform season, while not his finest, was in many aspects better than Mr. Fowler’s second platform season.

season, which was clearly his best. In those seasons, Mr. Upton had more doubles (38 to 18), home runs (18 to 13), runs (89 to 72), RBIs (62 to 53), and stolen bases (42 to 12). Finally, Mr. Upton has been more reliable. He played in more games in each of the 3 seasons preceding his second platform season than Mr. Fowler has in any of his seasons. While Mr. Fowler should be rewarded for his strong play this past season, he is not entitled to make nearly as much, or receive a much larger raise than Mr. Upton, who has been a stronger player for a longer time. A robust platform season is important, but it does not outweigh a large body of work.

<p>| Michael Bourn - MLST 4.028 - $4.4 million - 2nd Time Arbitration Eligible |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
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<th>R</th>
<th>HR</th>
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<td>173</td>
<td>0.263</td>
<td>0.331</td>
<td>0.348</td>
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In 2011, Michael Bourn entered into his second year of arbitration eligibility as a 28 year-old centerfielder coming off his second consecutive gold glove and a trip to the all-star game. Mr. Bourn is an excellent comparable to Mr. Fowler as he was paid $2.4 million in his first arbitration eligible season (only $50,000 more than Mr. Fowler), and received $4.4 million going into his second year of arbitration eligibility, a mere $100,000 above the midpoint here.

Mr. Bourn is a stereotypical leadoff hitter who does not hit for very much power, but is able to get on base and advance using his speed. In the three seasons preceding his second platform season, Mr. Bourn stole 52, 61, and 41 bases respectively, leading the NL twice. This makes a direct statistical comparison of the two players difficult, because a speedy leadoff hitter’s value is not always translated into pure statistics. Mr. Fowler is also a leadoff hitter, but relies more on driving the ball than advancing on the base paths, as evidenced by his surprisingly

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25 Id.
26 Id.
low steal totals the past 3 years (12, 12, 13). The best indication of this unseen value is the fact that Mr. Bourn was invited to the all-star game in his second platform year while playing in the same league at the same position as Mr. Fowler. Mr. Fowler was not invited to the all-star game this past season even though he seemingly had better all-around statistics than Mr. Bourn when he made the all-star game. This makes sense when looking at a few things. First, Mr. Bourn had better statistics that relate directly to the leadoff position: steals (52 – 12), runs (84 to 72), hits (142 to 136), and doubles (25 to 18). Productive, traditional leadoff hitters are a rare commodity in this day and age and should be valued accordingly. Second, Mr. Bourn is an excellent center fielder and had just won a gold glove the year before, while Mr. Fowler is not regarded as top outfielder.

Taking into consideration all of these factors, it is clear that Mr. Bourn is a more valuable player than Mr. Fowler. He is a productive leadoff hitter without the luxury of playing in Coors Field, a league leading base stealer, an all-star, and a gold glove centerfielder. Accordingly, Mr. Fowler should be valued well below Mr. Bourn, who received $4.4 million in 2012. This would put Mr. Fowler squarely under the midpoint.

VI. Physical or mental defects

Mr. Fowler’s 143 games this season was a career high after averaging just under 131 games the previous three years. This is partly due to the fact that Mr. Fowler has consistently dealt with nagging injuries. This past season, Mr. Fowler was kept out at various times with a right ankle injury, the flu, and blurred vision. He has also spent time on the DL in the past with

28 This is easily seen by the popular sabermetric, Wins Above Replacement (WAR). Mr. Bourn’s 2010 WAR alone, 5.3, is more than Mr. Fowler’s 2012 and 2011 combined (5 total). Mr. Bourn’s WAR was an impressive 4.7 in 2009 as well. Id.; “Dexter Fowler,” Baseball-Reference, www.baseball-reference.com/players/f/fowlede01.shtml
an abdominal injury and a bone bruise on his right knee. The Team fully expect that Mr. Fowler will continue the trend of having to take time away periodically due to nagging injuries and request that it is taken into consideration when placing a value upon him.

VII. Recent Performance of the Club

The Colorado Rockies’ season cannot be described as anything less than disappointing. The Team finished in last place with a record of 64-98, the worst in franchise history. It was the second losing season in a row for the Team, and the third season since its last playoff appearance in 2009. The stadium drew 2,630,458 fans, down almost 3500 fans a game from the last season. Neither the Team’s record nor attendance failures can be fairly attributed to Mr. Fowler.

VIII. Conclusion

The Colorado Rockies are proud of the way Mr. Fowler performed last season, especially in light of his career up until this point. While the Team is hopeful that Mr. Fowler will be able to sustain this level of play, an analysis of Mr. Fowler’s statistical data shows that it is most likely unsustainable. Furthermore, Mr. Fowler gets a large boost in his production because he plays at Coors Field, and this is reflected in his home versus away splits. These statistics, in conjunction with Mr. Fowler’s inability to play an entire season and his unfavorable comparison to players valued near the midpoint, are persuasive evidence that Mr. Fowler’s value lies somewhere below the $4.3 million midpoint at issue here. The Colorado Rockies respectfully request that this Arbitration Panel to find the same.