2013 National Baseball Arbitration Competition

Tommy Hanson v. Atlanta Braves
Submission on Behalf of Tommy Hanson
Midpoint: $3.9 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 Tommy Hanson (“Mr. Hanson”), a starting pitcher for the Atlanta Braves (“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. Hanson’s MLB service includes: (1) the quality of Mr. Hanson’s contribution to the Braves 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. Hanson; and (6) the recent performance record of the Braves, 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. Hanson’s annual service group. Respectfully, The Atlanta Braves request that the Arbitration Panel find that Mr. Hanson is entitled to receive the player’s request of $4.3 million.

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

While Mr. Hanson did not have the quality of season the Braves had come accustomed to, he still turned in a solid effort to help the Braves achieve a 94-68 record and reach the NL wild card playoff game.¹ Even though he struggled at points, the Braves were able to put together

an outstanding 20-11 record in games Mr. Hanson started. A close analysis of Mr. Hanson’s statistics reveals that these struggles can be fairly attributed to a midseason lower back strain that landed him on the disabled list for 17 days. This analysis also reveals a set of positive indicators that suggest Mr. Hanson will be able to return to his usual form this upcoming season.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
<th>W</th>
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<th>ERA</th>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>8.3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>45</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>576</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>8.39</td>
<td>1.25</td>
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Even with an ERA above his career norms, Mr. Hanson was able to put up 13 wins against only 10 losses while striking out an impressive 8.3 batters per 9 innings of play. It was not until mid-July that Mr. Hanson’s performance began to slip, followed by a trip to the disabled list. Up until that point, Mr. Hanson was having a strong season. In his first 10 starts, he was 5-3 with a 3.12 ERA and 50 strike outs in 57 innings. At the all-star break, he had a record of 10-5 with 3.71 ERA, finishing out the half with a quality start against the Philadelphia Phillies. He struggled in his first two games after the break, but was able to bounce back and pick up a victory in his next 2 games despite pitching through a lower back strain that would soon land him on the DL. Even with this injury, Mr. Hanson was able to pitch for a solid 174.2 innings. The end of Mr. Hanson’s season also indicated that he was beginning to round back into form after getting sidetracked with his injury. His combined September and October ERA was

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5 Id.
7 Id.
8 Id.
the best monthly ERA he had since June, before his back started to affect him.\(^{10}\) He also had his best strikeout to walk ratio (3.5:1) of the entire year over the last month of the season.\(^{11}\) All the statistics discussed here indicate that Mr. Hanson was his same, dominant self when he wasn’t being affected by his minor back injury.

**III. Length and Consistency of Career Contributions**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Tommy Hanson - Career</th>
<th>Season</th>
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<tr>
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<td>116</td>
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<tr>
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<td>86</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>7.68</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
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Before being sidetracked this past season, Mr. Hanson was undoubtedly one of the top young pitchers in the league. The Braves acquired Mr. Hanson in the 22nd round of the 2005 amateur draft, and he burst on the scene with a stellar rookie campaign in 2009.\(^{13}\) After being called up from the minors on June 7, Mr. Hanson proceeded to go 4-0 for the month, ending it with three consecutive shutouts.\(^{14}\) He would not taste his first defeat until July 25th, his eighth start of the season.\(^{15}\) He finished the season with a stellar 11-4 record and a 2.89 ERA, the seventh best for a starting pitcher with at least 120 innings pitched.\(^{16}\) He continued his impressive pitching in 2011, where he had a 3.33 ERA and 1.17 WHIP while pitching over 200 innings. Unfortunately, his low win total did not reflect his level of performance. Mr. Hanson’s 2011 season was gearing up to be his best yet before a shoulder injury robbed him of a stellar

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\(^{11}\) Id.


\(^{13}\) Id.


\(^{15}\) Id.

\(^{16}\) “2009 Pitching Stats,” ESPN, espn.go.com/mlb/stats/pitching/_/year/2009/league/nl/order/false/minip/120
campaign. In the first half of that year, before his shoulder began to bother him, Mr. Hanson was a Cy-Young candidate with a 10-4 record, 2.44 ERA, 1.013 WHIP, 9.5 strike outs per nine innings, and a dominant 3.11 strike out to walk ratio.\(^{17}\) The last game of the season alone, before he went on the DL, inflated his solid 3.20 ERA to 3.60.\(^{18}\) When healthy, there are not many pitchers capable of performing like Mr. Hanson on any given night.

Mr. Hanson’s 3.29 ERA and 1.179 WHIP over the first three years of his career is nothing short of outstanding. Even with his midseason struggles in 2012, Mr. Hanson has a rock-solid 3.61 ERA, almost 60% winning percentage, and 8.4 strikeout to walk ratio in his career.\(^{19}\) Those are top of the rotation statistics. Unfortunately, Mr. Hanson has run into some minor injuries that keep these, still impressive, statistics from being outstanding.

At this point, it is appropriate to address what many people perceive as a weakness in Mr. Hanson’s statistics: a lack of wins. Wins are not always probative of how a player actually pitched, and should not be given too much weight when valuing a pitcher. For instance, on April 25, 2010, Mr. Hanson was cruising through the game with 8 strike outs and no earned runs through 5 innings when the game ended due to weather.\(^{20}\) Mr. Hanson earned a loss in that game because a throwing error allowed the first and only unearned run to score.\(^{21}\) Similarly, over the course of four consecutive starts in August 2010, Mr. Hanson gave up a total of 3 earned runs while pitching at least seven innings each game.\(^{22}\) He did not receive a single win for his stellar

\(^{19}\) Id.
\(^{21}\) Id.
\(^{22}\) Id.
work, but instead got charged with a loss and three no-decisions. Unlike some other statistics, wins are often reliant upon factors that are completely out of a pitcher’s control. Therefore, the weight afforded to them should be proportional to their limited predictive value.

In sum, Mr. Hanson is an outstanding pitcher, and has been since he entered the league. Admittedly, some of his numbers are inflated due to some struggles he endured while battling injuries. The fact that the numbers are still strong enough to compare to other top pitchers in the game, despite the injuries, makes them even more impressive. Mr. Hanson has performed as a front of the line starter throughout his time in the leagues, and he should be valued as such.

IV. Past Player Compensation

Mr. Davis is entering his first year of arbitration eligibility, and as such, his salary has been near the league minimum up until this point. Mr. Hanson was paid $435,000 for his services in 2010, $456,500 in 2011, and $535,000 in 2012. That is $35,000 above the league minimum for 2010, $42,500 above it for 2011, and $55,000 above it for 2012. Mr. Hanson has made a modest total of $1,426,500 in yearly salary to date.

V. Comparative Baseball Salaries

The MLB collective bargaining agreement provides that “comparative baseball salaries” of similarly situated players can be used to help fairly determine the value of a player. For a player to be sufficiently comparable to Mr. Hanson, and therefore probative of his value, they must share a few common characteristics. That player must be a starting pitcher, have been first-year arbitration eligible, have 3+ years of service time, and have been paid a one-year contract similar in number to the $3.9 million midpoint here. The following comparisons fit these criteria.

23 Id.
26 MLB Collective Bargaining Agreement, Article VI, Section E, Part 10(a)
Max Scherzer is a particularly apt comparison to Mr. Hanson. He was one year older at the time he went into arbitration, signed a deal worth $150,000 less than the $3.9 million dollar midpoint here, started one more game (109 to 108), and pitched 18 less innings than Mr. Hanson (617 to 635). With that in mind, a comparison of their career totals indicates that Mr. Hanson should be valued significantly higher than Mr. Scherzer. While Mr. Scherzer has a nominal amount of additional strikeouts (+6) and less walks (-9), Mr. Hanson has 9 more wins, a lower ERA, a lower WHIP, and has given up less hits over the course of his career. It is fair to say that Mr. Hanson’s statistical advantages over Mr. Scherzer outweigh the single digit advantages he has in walks and strikeouts. What also makes this a particularly good comparison is the fact that both pitchers struggled, according to their own lofty standards, in their platform years. Both pitchers’ ERAs and WHIPs were career highs. If we remove this outlier season and compare the pre-platform season career numbers, Mr. Hanson comes out ahead in ERA (3.28 to 3.70), WHIP (1.175 to 1.287), and wins (32 to 21). Finally, Mr. Scherzer never reached the level of dominance Mr. Hanson did during the first three years of his career. Any of Mr. Hanson’s WHIPs from his first three seasons would be career highs for Mr. Scherzer. Mr. Hanson’s career best ERA of 2.89 is also better than Mr. Scherzer’s best of 3.05, and he did it over the course of 127.2 innings compared to Mr. Scherzer’s 56. Simply put, Mr. Hanson’s ceiling is higher than Mr. Scherzer’s.

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Taking into consideration that Mr. Hanson’s better career numbers and higher ceiling, it is clear that Mr. Hanson’s value is well above the $3.75 million Mr. Scherzer was awarded, and well above the modest increase it would take to reach the $3.9 million midpoint.

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<th>IP</th>
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<td>604</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>1.37</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Justin Masterson is another good comparison for Mr. Hanson, as he was the same age as Mr. Hanson when he was arbitration eligible for the first time, received a $3.825 million dollar contract (just $75,000 under the midpoint here), and pitched in only 21 less innings. As seen in the previous comparison, Mr. Hanson’s statistics reveal a decidedly more valuable player.

It should be noted that Mr. Masterson began his career as a starter, but was moved to the bullpen and did spot starts until 2010 when he again became a full time starter. Overall, Mr. Hanson has a better ERA (3.61 to 3.91), a better WHIP (1.252 to 1.37), and more strikeouts (592 to 485). In his first full year of starting in 2010, Mr. Masterson went 6-13 with a 4.70 ERA, which is a higher ERA and more losses than Mr. Hanson ever had in his longer career as a starter. Mr. Masterson had his best season as a starter in 2011, going 12-10 with a 3.21 ERA and a 1.278 WHIP, but that best season is only on par with what Mr. Hanson did in his first three seasons. These seasons average out to a 3.28 ERA, a 1.175 WHIP, and just under 11 wins, extremely similar numbers to Mr. Masterson’s best season. Mr. Masterson was awarded $3.85 million for one solid season as a starter. Mr. Hanson has met this level of production for three out

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his four years in baseball and should be valued at well above Mr. Masterson’s 2012 salary, putting him above the midpoint.

Joe Saunders - MLST 3.013 - $3.7 million - 2010 First-Time Arbitration Eligible

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Season</th>
<th>W</th>
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<td>187</td>
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<td>184</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>1.37</td>
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Joe Saunders is a good comparison for Mr. Hanson, as he was under 30 the first time he was arbitration eligible, received a $3.7 million dollar contract ($200,000 under the midpoint here), and pitched in only 64 innings less. Outside of his win total, Mr. Hanson beats Mr. Saunders is almost every statistical category, and is a far more valuable player.

Mr. Saunders does have 3 more wins than Mr. Hanson, but as discussed above, that statistic alone does not give a good overall view of the pitcher. In 2009, Mr. Saunders’ ERA of 4.60 was well above the league average of 4.01, his WHIP of 1.430 suggested a pitcher struggling to keep men off base, and he gave up over a hit an inning (202 hits in 186 IP). He won 16 games despite those numbers. This must be taken into consideration when comparing his value of that to Mr. Hanson’s.

Mr. Hanson outpaces Mr. Saunders in career ERA (3.61 to 4.22), WHIP (1.252 to 1.370), hits allowed (576 to 599 with 64 more innings pitched), strikeouts (592 to 328) and innings pitched (635-571). In addition, Mr. Hanson’s WHIP in his first three seasons were all lower than Mr. Saunders’ best season. Outside of Mr. Saunders’ inflated win totals, there is no indication that he isn’t significantly less valuable as a pitcher than Mr. Hanson. This should be reflected by

valuing Mr. Hanson well above Mr. Saunders’ $3.7 million 2010 salary and the $3.9 million midpoint.

VI. Physical or mental defects

Mr. Hanson has admittedly had some injury issues the past couple seasons, but none of them have been serious enough to require surgery. In 2011, Mr. Hanson was shut down for the season in August and was later diagnosed with a small rotator cuff tear that did not require surgery.32 It should be noted that these types of injuries are common among pitchers and is not the same as a fully torn rotator cuff that requires major surgery.33 Mr. Hanson was fully able to come back from the injury and pitch strongly at the beginning of the 2012 season before another minor injury crept up. Mr. Hanson spent 17 days on the disabled list with a lower back strain in August 201234, but was able to come back and finish the season.

Mr. Hanson is looking forward to beginning the 2013 season with these injuries behind him so he can continue to dominate opposing hitters as he has for most of his young career. He fully expects to pitch the entire 2013 season at that level.

VII. Recent Performance of the Club

The Atlanta Braves finished the season with a 94-68 record and participated in the first ever NL wild card game versus the St. Louis Cardinals.35 Unfortunately, the Braves lost 6-3 due in part to a controversial infield fly rule that hampered a potential Braves rally. The Braves were an excellent 20-11 in the games that Mr. Hanson started36, but unfortunately he did not have an

33 Id.
opportunity to pitch in the brief playoff series. The stadium drew an estimated 2,420,171 people on the season for a small year over year increase.37

VIII. Conclusion

Simply put, Mr. Hanson is a dominant pitcher when he is healthy. In the 3 years preceding his 2012 season, there were not many pitchers in baseball who could put up numbers similar to Mr. Hanson’s on a start by start basis. The injury concerns regarding Mr. Hanson are overblown, as he has never required surgery and has come back strong following each of his injuries the last two seasons. Mr. Hanson’s own statistics and the statistics of his comparables prove that Mr. Hanson is a top of the line starter and worth every cent of his $4.6 million dollar offer. Mr. Hanson respectfully requests that this Arbitration panel finds his value well above the $4.3 million midpoint.

37 www.baseball-reference.com/teams/ATL/attend.shtml