2013 Baseball Arbitration Competition

Tommy Hanson v. Atlanta Braves
Submission on Behalf of Atlanta Braves
Player Bid: $4.3 million
Team Bid: $3.5 million
Midpoint: $3.9 million
Submission by Team 23
Table of Contents

I. Introduction and Request for Hearing Decision ..........................................................1
II. Quality of Hanson’s contribution to the Braves in 2012 ...........................................2
III. Length and Consistency of Hanson’s Contribution to the Braves ..............................5
IV. Comparative Salaries .................................................................................................8
V. Summary and Conclusion .........................................................................................10

List of Sources


ESPN, ESPN Inc., www.espn.go.com

Fangraphs, Fangraphs Inc., www.fangraphs.com

MLB, MLB Advanced Media, L.P., www.mlb.com

I. Introduction and Request for Hearing Decision

The purpose of this brief is to provide the relevant information to the arbitration panel to determine the salary of Tommy Hanson (“Hanson” or “Player”) for his 2013 contract with the Atlanta Braves (“Braves” or “Team”). All players with more than three years of Major League Service Time are eligible for salary arbitration under the Major League Baseball (“MLB”) Collective Bargaining Agreement (“CBA”). The CBA provides that the arbitration panel (“Panel”) may look at six factors in determine its arbitration award: (1) the quality of the Player’s contribution to his 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) the record of the Player’s past compensation; (4) comparative baseball salaries; (5) the existence of any physical or mental defects on the part of the Player; and (6) the recent performance record of the Club. The player and team may submit any evidence relevant to the aforementioned criteria, and the arbiters will assign appropriate weight to each piece of evidence.

The Braves request the arbitration panel considers the information presented below, particularly Hanson’s 2012 statistics, lack of consistency, and the salaries of other similarly situated players. Based upon the relevant evidence, Hanson is entitled to a salary below the $3.9 million midpoint, and therefore the Panel should find Hanson is entitled to the Team’s offer of $3.5 million for 2013.

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1 MLB Collective Bargaining Agreement
2 MLB Collective Bargaining Agreement, Article IV, Section E, Part 10 (a)
3 Id.
II. Quality of Hanson’s Contribution to the Braves in 2012

On the surface, Hanson had a successful 2012 campaign. Hanson excelled out of the gate, going 10-5 with a 3.71 ERA in the first half.\(^4\) Hanson’s 161 strikeouts ranked him 43rd in the league.\(^5\)

Table 1\(^6\): 2012 Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Win</th>
<th>Loss</th>
<th>Starts</th>
<th>IP</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>BB</th>
<th>ERA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>174.2</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, upon closer review, Hanson’s stats are not as impressive as they appear. Although the Player had 13 wins, 9 of those wins were against teams at or below .500 in 2012,\(^7\) including 3 wins against the Miami Marlins (69-93) and 1 against the Houston Astros (55-107).\(^8\) Also, 9 of Hanson’s 13 wins came in games in which the Braves scored 6 or more runs.\(^9\) In fact, in those 9 wins, Hanson posted an ERA of 5.03\(^10\), indicating that the team won despite his performance, not because of it.

Further discouraging statistics include Hanson’s walks and hits per inning pitched (“WHIP”) of 1.45, ranking him 83\(^{rd}\) out of 88 eligible pitchers\(^11\), as well as the fact that Hanson gave up 31 stolen bases, the third highest tally in the league.\(^12\) To compare, the Braves starter who gave up the second most stolen bases was Mike Minor, who only allowed 10 stolen bases all

\(^4\) Tommy Hanson Player Page, Baseball Reference, http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/split.cgi?id=hansoto01&year=&t=p
\(^6\) Tommy Hanson Stats, ESPN, http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/stats/_/id/30191/tommy-hanson
\(^7\) Tommy Hanson Game-by-Game Stats, ESPN, http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/gamelog/_/id/30191/tommy-hanson
\(^8\) MLB Standings 2012, ESPN, http://espn.go.com/mlb/standings
\(^9\) Tommy Hanson Run Support, Baseball Reference, http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/split.cgi?id=hansoto01&year=&t=p#rs
\(^10\) Id.
season. This shows that Hanson’s abnormally high rate of stolen bases are directly attributable to his inability to keep runners from stealing and not related to his catcher’s ineptitude. Hanson’s inability to keep runners from stealing clearly hurts his value to the team. Additionally, Hanson gave up 27 homeruns in 2012, tied for the 15th most in the league. However, Hanson only pitched 174.2 innings, whereas the pitchers he tied with pitched 219.0 and 185.1 innings respectively. Therefore, Hanson’s home run statistics could have been even worse if he had pitched more innings.

Tommy Hanson’s performance suffered both late in games and late in the season. Despite making a respectable 31 starts in 2012, Hanson only averaged 5.2 innings per start, and didn’t pitch a single complete game all season. Hanson was the only Brave’s pitcher who only appeared as a starter, made more than 10 starts and averaged less than 6.0 innings per start. When examining the Player’s statistics in late inning situations, it is clear why Hanson averaged so few innings per starts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inning</th>
<th>IP</th>
<th>ERA</th>
<th>BAA</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>BB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>93.0</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>.243</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>.295</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>.342</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hanson’s ERA rose dramatically after the third inning, as did his opponent’s batting average. Even though he pitched over twenty fewer innings in the 4-6 range than the 1-3, Hanson walked only 8 fewer batters in that time. So, despite winning 13 games and posting decent statistics,

13 Id.
16 Tommy Hanson Stats, ESPN, http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/stats/_/id/30191/tommy-hanson
18 Tommy Hanson by inning split, Baseball Reference, http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/split.cgi?id=hansoto01&year=&t=p#innng
19 BAA stands for batting average against
Tommy Hanson was unable to contribute to his team with any consistency after the third inning. Further, Hanson’s inability to pitch late into games put an undue strain on the Braves’ bullpen, hurting the team throughout the season.

Hanson’s late inning struggles are indicative of several things, all of which point to his being entitled to a salary below the $3.9 million midpoint. First, it shows that he lacks the variety of pitches to continue to keep hitters off balance the second and third time that he faces each batter. Second, it indicates a lack of conditioning, as Hanson’s performance clearly lacks as he fatigues in later innings. Either way, Tommy Hanson’s late inning statistics show that he is not entitled to be paid as a top of the rotation starter until he puts together a season where he can pitch consistently and successfully into the late innings.

In addition to struggling late in games, Hanson also struggled late in the season while the Braves were fighting for a playoff spot.

Table 3: Second-Half Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Win</th>
<th>Loss</th>
<th>Starts</th>
<th>IP</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>BB</th>
<th>ERA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the second-half of the season, Hanson only won 3 games, compared to 10 in the first half, and all 3 wins came against the lowly Miami Marlins. Further, Hanson’s ERA spiked from 3.71 in the first-half up to 5.69 in the second-half, and his BAA jumped from .254 to .296. Hanson poor late season performance was capped off by his October 2 start against the

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20 Tommy Hanson Half Season Stats, Baseball Reference, http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/split.cgi?id=hansoto01&year=&t=p#half
21 Tommy Hanson Game-by-Game Stats, ESPN, http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/gamelog/_/id/30191/tommy-hanson
22 Tommy Hanson Half Season Stats, Baseball Reference, http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/split.cgi?id=hansoto01&year=&t=p#half
23 Id.
Pirates, in which he gave up 5 earned runs in 6 innings.\textsuperscript{24} Because of his late season woes, Hanson was left off the Braves postseason roster.\textsuperscript{25}

Tommy Hanson had an adequate 2012 campaign, notching 13 wins, 161 strikeouts and a 4.48 ERA. However, given his low number of innings per start, his struggles beyond the third inning, and his poor second-half of the season, Hanson’s statistics do not warrant a salary above the midpoint of $3.9 million. Therefore the Braves requests that the Panel award Hanson the Team’s offer of $3.5 million.

\section*{III. Length and Consistency of Hanson’s Contribution to the Braves}

Tommy Hanson has posted impressive cumulative statistics in his first four seasons with the Braves. However, his statistics have steadily declined over that period, and given his late season struggles and his injury history, it is unclear to the Team whether he can consistently contribute at a high level. Therefore Hanson is not entitled to a salary above the $3.9 million midpoint.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Year & W & L & GS & IP & ERA \\
\hline
2009 & 11 & 4 & 21 & 127.2 & 2.89 \\
2010 & 10 & 11 & 34 & 202.2 & 3.33 \\
2011 & 11 & 7 & 22 & 130.0 & 3.60 \\
2012 & 13 & 10 & 31 & 174.2 & 4.48 \\
Career & 45 & 32 & 108 & 635.0 & 3.61 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Career Statistics}
\end{table}

The first reason why Tommy Hanson’s consistency is questionable is the negative trends in ERA over his four seasons with the Braves. First, Hanson’s ERA has increased each season he has been with the Team, from a sterling 2.89 in his rookie campaign, all the way up to 4.48 in

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{24} Tommy Hanson Game-by-Game Stats, ESPN, http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/gamelog/_/id/30191/tommy-hanson
\textsuperscript{26} Tommy Hanson Stats, ESPN, http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/stats/_/id/30191/tommy-hanson
\end{flushright}
2012. Over that same time period, Hanson’s win total has been steady, but given the promise he showed going 11-4 in his first year, his low win totals are disappointing, especially given the salary he has requested.

Additionally, Hanson’s statistics have been inconsistent in other categories, especially innings pitched and games started. Hanson was called up to the majors in June of 2009, making 21 starts and pitching 127.2 innings. 2010 was Hanson’s only full season without injury, and he racked up an impressive 34 starts and 202.2 innings pitched. Hanson spent time on the DL in both 2011 and 2012, starting 22 and 31 games respectively, and pitching 130.0 and 174.2 innings in those years.

Hanson’s inconsistent number of starts and innings pitched due to injury cast a serious doubt over his ability to produce consistently at the high level he showed in his first three seasons. Hanson’s injury history indicates he is unlikely to produce consistently for three reasons. First, his DL stints in 2011 and 2012 are both based on the same cause. In 2011 Hanson went on the disabled list on August 7, and did not pitch again that season. Although he was placed on the DL for tendonitis in his throwing shoulder, Hanson believed that the shoulder pain was actually a result of a back ailment that he battled since the middle of the 2010 season. On July 31, 2012, Hanson again went on the DL with back problems. Because, according to Hanson, he has battled back issues since mid-2010 which have put him on the DL twice (including missing two months in 2011), it is unclear if the will ever be able to consistently

provide the number of starts and innings that a starter commanding a salary above $3.9 million should provide.

Additionally, the timing of the 2011 and 2012, as well as the late season statistical drop-offs in those years indicate that Hanson lacks the conditioning to be a consistent contributor. Hanson’s trips to the DL were less than a week apart in 2011 and 2012, indicating that by late July or early August Hanson cannot stay on the field. Further supporting Hanson’s lack of conditioning is his poor second-half statistics.

Table 5: Second-Half Statistics 2011-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Win</th>
<th>Loss</th>
<th>Starts</th>
<th>IP</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>BB</th>
<th>ERA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hanson’s abysmal second-half statistics in the last two seasons indicate that he lacks consistency, which may be cause by continued back problems, poor conditioning, or a combination thereof.

Finally, it is unclear whether Hanson will be able to return to form in 2013. As previously stated, Hanson has only pitched one full season. In 2009 Hanson was called up in June, and he spent time on the disabled list in 2011 and 2012. Therefore, the team lacks a sufficient sample size to determine whether Hanson can be a consistent contributor. Further obfuscating Hanson’s return to form is his steady drop in velocity since 2010.

Table 6: Velocity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fastball Velocity</td>
<td>92.7</td>
<td>91.1</td>
<td>89.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although some of Hanson’s statistics in 2012 were consistent with his career numbers, it is doubtful he will continue to perform at a high level given his marked decline in velocity over the past three seasons. Hansen is a power pitcher, relying on his fastball and slider to strike out

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31 Tommy Hanson Half Season Stats, Baseball Reference, http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/split.cgi?id=hansoto01&year=&t=p#half
hitters. If his velocity continues to decline, it is unlikely he can perform consistently at the level he showed in 2010 and 2011.

Given Hanson’s rising ERA, inconsistent workload, recurring injuries, second-half struggles, and dropping velocity, the Braves do not have a large enough sample size judge the consistency of Hanson’s contribution. The Braves request that Hanson be awarded the Team’s bid of $3.5 Million, which is a fair salary given his inconsistent contributions.

IV. Comparative Salaries

Given the reduced number of innings Hanson has pitched due to his injury history, as well as the statistical inconsistency he has shown throughout his four seasons, it is most informative for comparative salary purposes to compare Hanson’s 2012 statistics with other platform seasons. Two pitchers, Justin Masterson and Max Sherzer, stand out because they had better platform seasons and still earned less than the $3.9 million midpoint the following season.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7: Masterson</th>
<th>Salary: $3.825 Million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justin Masterson(^{33}) 3.108 MLST</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platform (2011)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tommy Hanson(^{34}) 3.120 MLST</td>
<td>Platform (2012)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Justin Masterson is also a right-handed starting pitcher. Masterson posted a similar win-loss record in his platform year, and had a similar amount of MLST. However, Masterson was able to start 33 games to Hanson’s 31, and pitched 216.0 innings to Hanson’s 174.2, mostly because Masterson did not spend any time on the DL in his platform year. Further, Masterson posted a far better ERA and walked fewer batters than Hanson while posting comparable strikeout numbers. Despite having far superior statistics, Masterson only received $3.825 million after his stellar 2011 campaign, less than the $3.9 million midpoint in this case.


\(^{34}\) Tommy Hanson Player Page, Baseball Reference, http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/h/hansoto01.shtml
Max Scherzer is also an apt comparison for Tommy Hanson. Scherzer and Hanson both had similar MLST before their first arbitration, and posted very similar ERAs in their platform season. However, Scherzer started 33 games and pitched 195.0 innings, compared to Hanson’s 31 starts and 172.4 innings. Scherzer, despite pitching more innings, walked 25 fewer batters while compiling 15 more strikeouts than Hanson, and won 15 games to Hanson’s 13. Scherzer’s 2011 statistics earned him a raise from $600,000 in 2010 to $3,750,000 in 2011, an increase of 525%. Tommy Hanson earned $535,000 in his platform season. Even if his platform season was as good as Scherzer’s, an equivalent salary increase would only justify a salary of $3,343,750.

Further, Masterson and Scherzer commanded a higher salary than Hanson going into their first arbitration for two reasons. First, neither Masterson nor Scherzer had been on the disabled list prior to their first arbitration, whereas Hanson has been on the DL twice, once missing nearly two months. Second, Masterson and Scherzer compiled their impressive platform seasons in the American League where they had to face a designated hitter nearly every game, where Hanson pitched in the National League, and was fortunate enough to face the opposing pitcher in almost every start. Because Masterson and Scherzer, right-handed pitchers with commensurate MLST and better platform seasons received salaries below the $3.9 million

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36 Id.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8: Scherzer</th>
<th>Salary: $3.75 Million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max Scherzer 3.079 MLST</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platform (2011)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tommy Hanson 3.120 MSLT</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platform (2012)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
midpoint, the Panel should find in favor of the Braves and award Hanson the Team’s offer of $3.5 million in 2013.

V. Summary and Conclusion

Tommy Hanson has shown flashes of brilliance in his short career and clearly deserves a salary above the $535,000 he earned in 2012. The Braves have offered him $3.5 million in 2013, representing a 554% salary increase. The midpoint between the two sides in this arbitration proceeding is $3.9 million.

Tommy Hanson’s contribution to the Braves in 2012 was his worst season as a professional; he averaged only 5.2 innings per start and had an ERA of 4.48. Hanson was still able to win 13 games, but under very favorable circumstances, and he was near bottom of the league in home runs and stolen bases allowed. Further, Hanson’s production dropped off late in games and late in the season. Additionally, Hanson’s production has been inconsistent throughout his four seasons, and the sample size of his production has been limited due to recurring back injuries. Those factors, combined with his diminishing velocity cast doubt on Hanson’s ability to be a consistent contributor to the Atlanta Braves. Further, situated players like Justin Masterson and Max Scherzer had superior platform seasons to Hanson’s, and still received salaries below the $3.9 million midpoint. For all these reasons, the Braves respectfully request that the Arbitration Panel award Tommy Hanson the Team’s offer of $3.5 million for 2013.