2013 National Baseball Arbitration Competition

Ike Davis v. New York Mets
Submission on Behalf of Ike Davis
Midpoint: $2.7 million
Submission by: Team 26
Table of Contents

I. Introduction and Request for Hearing Decision......................................................... 2
II. Quality of Ike Davis’s Contributions During Past Season........................................... 3
III. Existence of Physical or Mental Defects................................................................. 5
IV. Length and Consistency of Career Contributions..................................................... 6
V. Recent Performance of the Club.................................................................................. 6
VI. Comparative Baseball Salaries.................................................................................. 7
VII. Past Compensation.................................................................................................... 10
VIII. Conclusion................................................................................................................ 10

List of Main Sources


I. Introduction and Request for Hearing Decision

This brief analyzes the contributions of left-handed first basemen Ike Davis (“Davis”) to determine the appropriate compensation paid by the New York Mets (“Mets”) during the upcoming 2013 season. The Major League Baseball (“MLB”) Collective Bargaining Agreement (“CBA”) agreed to by the team owners and the MLB Players Association set the parameters of what qualitative and quantitative information is to be considered in this arbitration hearing.\(^1\)

Under the CBA Article VI(E), §10(a)-(b), the relevant criteria to be considered in this arbitration hearing is as follows: “(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 any physical or mental defects; and (6) the recent performance record of the Club, including but not limited to its League standing and attendance as an indication of public acceptance.”\(^2\) “The arbitration panel shall give particular attention, for comparative salary purposes, to the contracts of Players with Major League service not exceeding one annual service group above the Player’s annual service group.”\(^3\) Criteria that will not be admissible according to the CBA include the following: “(1) the financial position of the Player and the Club; (2) press comments, testimonials or similar materials bearing on the performance of either the Player or the Club, except that recognized annual Player awards for playing excellence shall not be excluded; (3) offers made by either

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2. Id. at § 10(a)
3. Id.
Player or Club prior to arbitration; (4) the cost to the parties of their representatives, attorneys, etc.; and (5) salaries in other sports or occupations.\footnote{Id. at § 10(b)}

Davis has accumulated 2.168 years of MLB service making him eligible for his first year of arbitration.\footnote{5} The Mets are submitting a low salary figure of $2.4 million while Davis has requested a modest $3 million. Based on the prior success that Davis has demonstrated as well as the premium salaries given to other first basemen with similar statistics the arbitration panel should find sufficient evidence that Davis is entitled to a salary greater than the $2.7 million midpoint and thus grant his request of $3 million.

**II. Quality of Ike Davis’s Contributions During Past Season**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ike Davis- New York Mets</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>2B</th>
<th>HR</th>
<th>RBI</th>
<th>BB</th>
<th>AVG</th>
<th>OBP</th>
<th>SLG</th>
<th>OPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2012 SEASON</strong></td>
<td>156</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.227</td>
<td>.308</td>
<td>.462</td>
<td>.771</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A team wins by scoring more runs than their opponent. It is that simple. Thus, it is essential for any team to possess a player that has the ability to drive in runs at an elite level. The table above\footnote{6} is confirmation of Davis’s ability to do just that. With 32 home runs and 90 runs batted in (“rbis”) through 156 games played Davis was among the most durable and elite run producing first basemen in the National League (“NL”). These impressive numbers ranked against all other NL first basemen show Davis as the sole leader in games played, 2\textsuperscript{nd} in home runs (trailing the leader by only 1 home run), and 4\textsuperscript{th} in rbis.\footnote{7} These numbers are especially impressive when considering half of Davis’s games were played in the Mets home ballpark, CitiField. In 2012, Citified was rated the 7\textsuperscript{th} hardest place to score runs when comparing the rate

\footnote{Id. at § 10(b)} \footnote{http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/d/davisik02.shtml#trans} \footnote{Sortable Stats from MLB, MLB Advanced Media, L.P., www.mlb.com.} \footnote{Id.}
of runs at home vs. the rate of runs on the road. Furthermore, while it cannot be ignored that Davis had a below average Batting Average ("BA"), On Base Percentage ("OBP"), Slugging Percentage ("SLG"), and On Base Plus Slugging Percentage ("OPS") it is important to analyze these numbers further over the course of the entire season.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPLIT</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>2B</th>
<th>HR</th>
<th>RBI</th>
<th>BB</th>
<th>AVG</th>
<th>OBP</th>
<th>SLG</th>
<th>OPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.185</td>
<td>.241</td>
<td>.309</td>
<td>.550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.154</td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>.282</td>
<td>.496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.264</td>
<td>.363</td>
<td>.563</td>
<td>.926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.221</td>
<td>.257</td>
<td>.537</td>
<td>.794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>.287</td>
<td>.370</td>
<td>.517</td>
<td>.887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.228</td>
<td>.365</td>
<td>.494</td>
<td>.858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.333</td>
<td>.429</td>
<td>.750</td>
<td>1.179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre All-Star</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>.271</td>
<td>.388</td>
<td>.659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post All-Star</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>.255</td>
<td>.346</td>
<td>.542</td>
<td>.888</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above clearly indicates that while Davis struggled mightily in April and May he played significantly better over the remainder of the year. It is no secret professional baseball is often referred to as a “what have you done for me lately” profession so it is imperative to consider the stark improvement in Davis’s numbers over the last 75 games (Post All-Star break) compared to the first 81 games (Pre All-Star break) as shown in the table. The BA, OBP, SLG, and OPS over the second half of the season uniformly showed substantial progress. Davis reached base more frequently both via hits (.201BA to .255BA) and walks (.271OBP to .346OBP) and combined with more extra base hits (.388SLG to .542SLG) resulted in a much-

8 [http://espn.go.com/mlb/stats/parkfactor](http://espn.go.com/mlb/stats/parkfactor)
9 [http://newyork.mets.mlb.com/team/player.jsp?player_id=477195#gameType='R'&sectionType=splitsCareer&statType=1&season=2012&level='MLB']
improved OPS (.659OPS to .888OPS). Every team wants to see a young player such as the 25 year old Davis improve as more service time is accrued to show the player will continue to grow as a player and maintain a high potential for increased production. Davis did just that as the 2012 season progressed.

III. Existence of Physical or Mental Defects

Ike Davis has show great durability over his career. He has no known mental defects and no recurring or chronic physical defects. His first notable injury came in the summer of 2007 when he required left wrist surgery for a bone spur, however, he was recovered in time for his junior season at Arizona State University in 2008.\(^\text{10}\) In 2011, his 2\(^{\text{nd}}\) season with the Mets, he collided with a teammate and suffered a fluke injury involving cartilage damage in his ankle. The injury did not require surgery but it did force a prolonged rehab causing Davis to play only 36 games that year.\(^\text{11}\) In March 2012, Davis was believed to be ill with Valley Fever, which, if severe can cause tremendous fatigue among other problematic symptoms.\(^\text{12}\) As noted earlier, Davis returned in 2012 to lead all NL first basemen in games played with 156. While the illness may have impacted his preparation for the 2012 season causing the slow statistical start discussed in section II, he only further displayed his great resolve with his 156 games played and improved performance as the season progressed. What impact the illness had is purely speculative and largely indeterminable.

\(^{10}\)http://www.baseballamerica.com/today/college/season-preview/2008/265645.html

\(^{11}\)http://espn.go.com/blog/new-york/mets/post/_/id/36491/ike-davis-recovering-well-from-ankle-woes

IV. Length and Consistency of Career Contributions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>2B</th>
<th>HR</th>
<th>RBI</th>
<th>BB</th>
<th>AVG</th>
<th>OBP</th>
<th>SLG</th>
<th>OPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>.264</td>
<td>.351</td>
<td>.440</td>
<td>.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.302</td>
<td>.383</td>
<td>.543</td>
<td>.925</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above displays the first two seasons Davis had with the Mets. His rookie season was good enough for Davis to place 7th in the rookie of the year voting. Playing nearly a full season his rookie year Davis immediately showed the production necessary to be a MLB mainstay. His 19 home runs were good enough for 2nd on the Mets roster in 2010, same for his 71 rbis, 33 doubles, and .791OPS. He also led the team in walks that year while placing 4th in runs and hits. He clearly established himself as one of the Mets best hitters despite being only a rookie. Moreover, he tied for the NL rookie lead in home runs, was 2nd in runs scored, and 3rd in rbis. Somehow, despite a great rookie season, Ike Davis was on pace to eclipse all of these totals in 2011 before his unfortunate fluke collision shortening his season. Those 147 and 36 games is not a large sample size Ike Davis quickly demonstrated his staying power has a potential premier MLB first basemen.

V. Recent Performance of the Club

The Mets finished 74-88 in 2012, 77-85 in 2011, and 79-83 in 2010. Ike Davis has yet to have had the chance to showcase his abilities in the postseason. In fact, the Mets have not made the playoffs since winning the NL East in 2006. It is fair to characterize the Mets as a

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13http://newyork.mets.mlb.com/team/player.jsp?player_id=477195#gameType='R'&sectionType=career&statType=1&season=2012&level='MLB'
14http://www.baseball-reference.com/awards/awards_2010.shtml#NLroy
16Id.
17http://www.baseball-reference.com/awards/awards_2010.shtml#NLroy
18http://espn.go.com/mlb/standings
rebuilding franchise as they await for greater flexibility once several underperforming high priced contracts are off the books. Ike Davis has been expected to be a cornerstone in the rebuilding process from the time he was drafted in the 1st round by the Mets in 2008¹⁹ and those expectations remain to this day.

VI. Comparative Baseball Salaries

In 2012, the average salary in MLB rose for the 8th consecutive year settling in at $3,213,479 while the highest paid position among regulars on average was first basemen at $8.6 million.²⁰ Ike Davis, a regular at first base is asking for below the 2012 average salary and well below what the average first basemen make. A look at several salaries of comparable first basemen will provide further evidence that Ike Davis is worth at least the requested $3 million whether looking at veterans or players with a year or two of Davis’s 2.168 years of service time.

A. Carlos Pena ($7.25mil in 2012)

Carlos Pena signed for one year at $7.25 million in 2012 with Tampa Bay.²¹ In 153 games during 2011 while playing for the Chicago Cubs, Pena had 72 runs, 111 hits, 27 doubles, 28 home runs, 80 rbis, a .225BA, .357OBP, .462SLG, and .819OPS.²² Compared to Davis’s 2012 season Pena bettered him by 6 runs, 1 double, .049OBP, and .042OPS. However, Davis played 3 more games, had 7 more hits, 4 more home runs, 10 more rbis, hit for a slightly better BA and they tied in SLG. Clearly, their seasons, overall, were very similar to each other yet Pena lands a contract worth $7.25 million while Davis is asking for only $3 million. Granted, the main difference is Pena 11 years of service to that point and the benefit of the free agency market. Yet, at 33 years old one would presume Pena was no longer in his prime and should

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¹⁹ http://www.baseball-almanac.com/players/player.php?p=davisik02
²¹ http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/p/penaca01.shtml#contracts
²² Id.
gradually decline while Davis, at 25, has his best days ahead of him. Pena’s numbers did substantially decline during the 2012 season, in which Davis outhit him in just about every area.

**B. Conor Jackson ($3.05mil in 2009 / 3.067 service time)**

In 2009, Arizona and Conor Jackson avoided his first year of arbitration by agreeing to a one year $3.05 million contract. Ike Davis finds himself in the same position regarding arbitration and is asking for less than Jackson agreed to despite average salaries increasing since 2009. Conor Jackson did do a better job of getting on base than Davis given his .300BA with a .376OBP but his SLG was worse and given that first base is traditionally a spot reserved for run producers the fact Jackson hit only 12 home runs and had only 75 rbis in 144 games during 2008 is potentially detrimental to any lineup. As shown repeatedly, Davis excels in these run-producing stats.

**C. Casey Kotchman ($2.885mil in 2009 / 3.144 service time)**

In 2009, Casey Kotchman avoided arbitration with Atlanta by agreeing to a one year $2.885 million contract. A figure that is higher than the midpoint in this arbitration for a player that had only about one more year of service time. In 2008, Kotchman compiled 14 home runs and 74 rbis through 143 games while amassing a SLG and OPS all well short of what Davis was able to produce in 2012 at .410 and .738 respectively. In 2010, Kotchman avoided arbitration again by signing for $3.5175 million despite his offensive numbers taking a significant decline to 7 home runs, 48 rbis and a .721OPS after 126 games in 2009. Numbers that are half of what Davis just produced.

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27 Id.
D. Mike Jacobs ($3.275mil in 2009 / 3.047 service time)

Mike Jacobs power numbers in 2008 were almost identical to Davis’s 2012 numbers as Jacobs hit 32 home runs and had 93 rbis with 67 runs scored through 141 games. That ties Davis in home runs and surpasses him in runs by 1 and rbis by 3. However, Davis had a .308OBP compared to the .299OBP Jacobs put up meaning Davis did get on base more by a small margin. Nevertheless, Jacobs avoided arbitration by agreeing to a $3.275 million contract with Kansas City.

E. Sean Casey ($3mil in 2001 / 3-4 service time)

Sean Casey is the only example of a first basemen that went to arbitration without settling and asked for a similar amount to Davis since the turn of the century. It was the first year he was eligible for arbitration and he won his $3 million request. In 2000, the average MLB salary was estimated to be $1,998,034, which is over $1 million less than today’s average. Yet, Sean Casey still won $3mil after he hit 20 home runs and 85 rbis with 69 runs scored through 133 games. The runs scored beat Davis by 7 while the others fall short. Sean Casey was a very talented hitter as he had a .310BA, .369OBP, .458SLG, and .827OPS, all better than Davis except for the SLG. Davis still proved the more healthy and power productive first basemen and given the significant rise in salaries since 2001 one would think Davis deserves at minimum a salary won in 2001 by a player who may have been better at getting on base but was very comparable in terms of runs scored and rbis. Runs are how ballgames are won after all.

29 http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/wire?section=mlb&id=3914809
30 http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/c/caseyse01.shtml
32 http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/c/caseyse01.shtml
VII. Past Compensation

In Davis’s three seasons with the Mets, he earned salaries of $400,000, $432,000 and $506,690. The minimum salary allowed in 2010 was $400,000, in 2011 it was $414,000 and in 2012 $480,000. Thus, Ike Davis has earned exactly or close to the MLB minimum each season he has been with the Mets despite his high productivity.

VIII. Conclusion

Ike Davis put his power and run producing potential on full display in 2012 with an elite 32 home runs and 90 rbis while reaffirming any concerns about his durability by playing through an early season illness and slump toward 156 games played. In regards to NL first basemen, he was the best in games played, 2nd in home runs and 4th in rbis at a position whose regulars earn, on average, more than any other position at over $8 million and in a league where the average salary has risen 8 straight years and is now over $3 million. Ike Davis is requesting a below average salary for above average production. While his BA, OBP, SLG, and OPS in 2012 did leave more to be desired, those numbers significantly improved during the second half of the year and were significantly better during his first two seasons. I ask the panel, what is more likely? Are the 2 very poor months to start 2012 while Ike Davis was coming off an ankle injury and may have had Valley Fever the rule or the exception? This, as opposed to the other 10 plus months that saw exceptional, mostly consistent, production. The Mets have one of the best power hitters at a position that often demands power in a ballpark that caters to pitchers. Normally, this comes at a great premium (see Carlos Pena). In fact, it is nearly impossible to find a first basemen from the last ten years with run producing numbers anywhere near what

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33 http://www.baseball-almanac.com/players/player.php?p=davisik02
Davis did who did not receive at least this $2.7 million midpoint whether in arbitration or settling before arbitration regardless of their service time. For these reasons we ask the arbitration panel award Ike Davis $3 million.