Team Number 6

Ike Davis v. New York Mets

Side represented: Ike Davis
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I. Introduction

This brief demonstrates that contributions of Ike Davis to the New York Mets to prove he should be awarded his request of 3 million dollars at the upcoming Salary Arbitration hearing. The hearing will be conducted according to article VI(E)(10)(a) of the Major League Baseball Collective Bargaining Agreement, which allows for five criteria to demonstrate a player’s value to his club.1 Those five categories are the players past performance and consistency, mental and physical health, history of past compensation, the teams performance, and comparisons to the salaries of other comparable players.2

Using proof from all five of those categories it is clear that Ike Davis is worth a salary above the midpoint of 2.7 million and should be awarded his request of 3 million dollars for the 2013 season. The first four criteria will be used to demonstrate the quality contribution Ike Davis has made to the Mets over the past few seasons and the fifth, player comparisons, will prove that his contribution is worth the 3 million dollar figure.

II. Ike Davis

Performance and Consistency

Ike Davis is a strong, power hitting first baseman for the New York Mets. This is his first time eligible for arbitration as he qualified as a “Super Two” this season despite a service time of just 2.168.3 At 25 years old, Davis is one of the most promising and exciting players on the Mets roster.

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2 Id.
3 http://www.baseballprospectus.com/card/card.php?id=DAVIS19870322A
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Davis finished the 2012 season with a batting average of .227, an on base percentage of .308 and a slugging percentage of .462, which at first glance appears to be a down year.\(^4\) However, when you factor out the first two months when Davis arguably shouldn’t have been active, as we will address in the next section, Davis actually had a very strong season with a batting average of .253, an on base percentage of .341 and an impressive slugging percentage of .536.\(^5\) Davis did all this and added 27 home runs over the course of his last 413 plate appearances. Despite his illness during the first two months of the 2012 season, Davis demonstrated the steady statistical improvement one would expect from a top prospect and improved upon his previous two breakout seasons while hitting primarily in the clean up spot, putting up impressive home run numbers in 2012, his platform year for the purposes of this arbitration.

Davis finished near the top of the National League in home runs (5\(^{th}\) with 32) and AB per Home Run (3\(^{rd}\) in the NL at 16.2), making him one of the most formidable power threats in the National League. He also finished with a .994 fielding percentage, higher than the league average – evidence of his premier defense at first base.\(^6\)

Davis’s power numbers are especially impressive given that the Mets play their home games at Citi Field. Since opening in 2009, Citi Field has been consistently ranked as one of the least home run friendly ballparks in the Majors.\(^7\) Thus, Davis’s home run totals look even

\(^{4}\) http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/split.cgi?id=davisik02&year=2012&t=b

\(^{5}\) Id.

\(^{6}\) Id.

\(^{7}\) http://bleacherreport.com/articles/359590-2010-mlb-predictions-the-toughest-stadiums-to-hit-home-runs
stronger when you consider that he plays half of his games in a ballpark with such a distinct disadvantage.

**Mental and Physical Health**

Throughout his 3 season career, Davis has had only two ailments that has affected his performance: an ankle injury in 2011 and a lung infection during the first months of the 2012 season.\(^8\) Outside of those two incidents, Davis played in an impressive 147 games in 2010 and 156 games in 2012. He only missed significant time once during his three years in the majors, a result of a freak accident. During the 2011 season, Davis sustained an ankle injury on May 10\(^{th}\) in a collision with third baseman David Wright in what appeared to be a routine popup. After being misdiagnosed several times by the Mets staff, the injury ended up costing Davis the rest of the 2011 season, a season in which he was on pace for impressive numbers.\(^9\)

During the first two months of the 2012 season, Davis was ill with a rare lung disease that was believed to be Valley Fever.\(^10\) Valley Fever is a fungal infection found in desert regions of the Southwest in which the fungus is released from the soil and inhaled. The illness had a clear impact on Davis’s play. Despite the presence of the disease’s symptoms during spring training, the Mets waffled over the decision to pull Davis from the lineup and ended up allowing him to continue to play through it. While people around the league felt Davis should have been pulled from the lineup while he was ill, he continued on, to the detriment of his 2012 numbers. Much like his injury in 2011, organizational decisions at the top of the club cost Davis, and that is reflected in his numbers.\(^11\) Upon receiving a clean bill of health in 2012, Davis’s numbers

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\(^10\) Id.

\(^11\) Id.
jumped back up to and beyond the levels from his first two seasons. He hit a National League-leading 20 home runs in the second half of the season.\textsuperscript{12}

Despite his illness and rehabilitation from the 2011 injury, Davis had the third most appearances defensively at 1\textsuperscript{st} base in the NL in 2012.\textsuperscript{13} Davis has had the misfortune of two freak incidents with his health in his short career. Yet both times he has shown to be resilient and come back stronger than ever, an indication that he is not a health risk going forward.

\textbf{Past Compensation}

For the first three years of his career from 2010 to 2012, Davis made just slightly more than the league minimum salary. Davis was paid $400,000 in 2010 (at the minimum), $432,000 in 2011 ($18,000 above the minimum), and $506,690 in 2012 ($26,690 above the minimum). As is the case with similarly situated players, Davis stands to receive a significant increase in salary in his first year of arbitration eligibility.\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{Team Performance}

The Mets have not made the playoffs in any of Davis’s three seasons and haven’t been in the postseason since 2006. Last season, the club finished with a record of 74-88.\textsuperscript{15} As a young first baseman, Davis has contributed to the club’s modest successes. He is not however connected to the complicated factors, including financial issues, bad pitching, high injury rates and a poor supporting cast, which have resulted in a poor record over the past few seasons. It should also be noted that Davis’s contributions to the organization go deeper than his statistics.

Davis was a highly touted player before he broke into the major leagues because he is the son of former MLB pitcher Ron Davis. He has been a fan favorite since his breakout rookie

\textsuperscript{12} \url{http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/split.cgi?id=davisik02&year=2012&t=b}
\textsuperscript{13} Id.
\textsuperscript{14} Id.
\textsuperscript{15} \url{http://www.baseball-reference.com/teams/NYM/}
season, which led fans to start the “We like Ike” campaign that has been a strong marketing tool for the Mets. His popularity has soared through overcoming the freak injuries and illness he has faced, leaving him as a sort of folk hero amongst Mets fans, a quality which is hard to quantify but should be considered when evaluating a player’s value to the club in accordance with the MLB collective bargaining agreement.16

III. Player Comparisons

Davis is eligible for arbitration this year for the first time under the Super 2 designation. There have not been many first basemen that have faced arbitration with the Super 2 designation so, for the purposes of comparison, he is most comparable to a player with 3+ years of service that is eligible for arbitration for the first time. Davis hits for power and is a solid defensive first baseman. Mike Jacobs and James Loney fit that description as well throughout their careers and in their platform years.

Mike Jacobs

Mike Jacobs (2006 – 2008)

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<td>119</td>
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Mike Jacobs was the starting first baseman for the Florida Marlins for the 2008 season. He was traded by the Marlins to the Kansas City Royals on October 31, 2008. In early 2009, during his first offseason with arbitration eligibility, Jacobs agreed with the Royals on a 2009

16 http://2guystalkingmetsbaseball.com/?p=2910
salary figure of 3.275 dollars. In his 2008 platform year, he hit .247 with a .514 SLG percentage and 32 HRs while posting a below average fielding percentage of .988.

Jacobs’ numbers are in line with those of Davis. Both Jacobs and Davis hit 32 home runs in their platform year with almost identical numbers of doubles and triples. Davis actually posted a higher on-base percentage than that of Jacobs. Davis also played in more games in his platform year than did Jacobs, who missed time for a multitude of minor injuries.

Ike Davis 2012 Split Numbers

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<td>64</td>
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<td>.542</td>
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The one statistical category where Jacobs posted higher numbers than Davis was in batting average. For the entire platform season, Jacobs posted a .247 to Davis’s .227. Yet if you factor out the 2 months in the beginning of the season where Davis was ill and instead look only at the more relevant numbers in the second half of the season, Davis had both a higher batting average than Jacobs and hit more home runs. Even if Davis’s first two months are included, both players’ career averages at the time of arbitration are similar at just above .250. It is clear that Davis is easily worth the 3 Million he is seeking, which is less than the 3.25 awarded to Jacobs, who had similar numbers and his own issues with staying in the lineup.

17 http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/split.cgi?id=jacobmi02&year=2008&t=b
18 Id.
19 http://www.baseballprospectus.com/card/card.php?id=JACOBS19801030A
20 Id.
21 http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/split.cgi?id=davisik02&year=2012&t=b
James Loney


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<td>7</td>
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James Loney was the starting first baseman for the Los Angeles Dodgers in 2010 when he reached his first year of arbitration eligibility. After strong seasons in 2008 and 2009, Loney was awarded a $3.1 Million salary for the 2010 season.\(^{22}\) Though 2009 acted as Loney’s platform season, his full body of work was also considered, as it will be for Davis, as he was eligible for arbitration for the first time in 2010.

Like Davis, Loney played first base and put up strong numbers in the seasons preceding his arbitration. In his 2009 platform year he played in 158 games hitting .281 with 13 home runs and an SLG of .399.\(^{23}\) Loney was considered a rising star and having put up similar numbers in 2008 and facing the prospect of arbitration, the Dodgers agreed to an increase in salary from $465,000 to $3.1 Million for the 2010 season.\(^{24}\)

Loney’s numbers are similar to that of Davis. In the two years leading up to arbitration, Loney had an on-base percentage of .347 and a slugging percentage of .416, while knocking in a total of 26 home runs. Compare that to the two full season of Davis leading up to arbitration (2010 and 2012) where Davis had an on-base percentage of of .330 and a slugging percentage of .451, while knocking in a total of 51 home runs.\(^{25}\) Davis hit nearly double the home runs in the years leading up to arbitration and did it in 16 fewer games.\(^{26}\)

While Davis hit far more home runs, Loney hit for a better average during these years, posting a .281 batting average in his platform year to Davis’s .227. However if the two months of


\(^{23}\) Id.

\(^{24}\) Id.

\(^{25}\) Id.

\(^{26}\) [http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/split.cgi?id=davisik02&year=2012&t=b](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/split.cgi?id=davisik02&year=2012&t=b)
2012 when Davis was sick and should not have been playing are factored out, their averages are much more comparable. The discrepancy in batting average can also be accounted for by the different styles of the two players as Davis is a more productive power hitter and Loney hits for average. However in their platform years, both players drove in 90 runs. Despite their different approaches, they were both equally effective in getting the job done.

One difference between Loney and Davis is that while Davis has continued to improve on his numbers, from 19 home runs in his first season to 32 in his platform year, Loney has not shown the same improvement. While Loney’s numbers are fairly consistent from the 2008 and 2009 seasons, his batting average and slugging percentage actually dropped slightly in his platform year.\(^{27}\) While consistency is good, he likely would have been rewarded with a higher salary than the $3.1 Million had he shown some improvement and potential for growth in his platform year, as Davis has shown. With his strong numbers and consistent improvement, it is clear then that Davis is more than worth the $3 Million he is asking for.

**IV. Conclusion**

Ike Davis should be paid $3 million for the 2013 season because of his performance during his 2012 platform year and his career body of work. Davis drastically improved his home run total while continuing to develop into a top defensive first baseman. Davis has not only improved every season but has done so despite multiple set backs due to factors outside of his control. Davis has posted two seasons with very few games missed while going through two bizarre injuries and illnesses. If anything, his time missed, and the fashion in which he missed it, should only make his strong numbers and continuous improvement that much more impressive.

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He will be a star for the Mets organization for years to come and has earned at least the 3 million dollar salary he is seeking.