2013 NATIONAL BASEBALL ARBITRATION COMPETITION

Dexter Fowler v. Colorado Rockies (MLB)

SUBMISSION ON BEHALF OF DEXTER FOWLER

Submission by: Team 8
This brief focuses on the career of Mr. William Dexter Fowler (“Fowler”), centerfielder for the Colorado Rockies (“Rockies” or the “Club”). This document’s purpose is to determine the appropriate salary for Fowler for the 2013 season. Fowler has proposed a salary of $4.6 million, while the Rockies have countered with a proposal of $4.0 million. The midpoint between the two proposed salaries is $4.3 million.

The criteria considered for arbitration is listed in the Major League Baseball (MLB) Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between the MLB Players Association and MLB Clubs.¹ Article VI(E), Section 10(a)-(b) of the CBA specifically lists the areas of performance to be examined: (1) contributions to the Club during the past season; (2) length and consistency of his career contributions; (3) past compensation; (4) comparative baseball salaries; (5) existence of any physical or mental defects; and (6) the recent Club performance.² Fowler respectfully requests the arbitration panel to consider the following analysis and oral hearing to conclude that he is entitled to a 2013 salary arbitration award of $4.6 million.

Fowler is predominately a centerfielder and leadoff hitter in the Colorado Rockies’ lineup. He was drafted by the Rockies in 2004 and has accrued 3.168 of MLB service time.³ Over the past four MLB regular seasons, Fowler has performed at a high level on a team that has transitioned from a playoff contender to rebuilding.⁴ Despite the team’s transition, Fowler has continued to provide great speed in the outfield and on the bases, while posting a .300 batting

² Id.
average during the 2012 season.\textsuperscript{5} Fowler is a valuable cog at the top of the Rockies’ offensive lineup, providing a valuable combination of hitting and speed.

This brief will prove that Fowler deserves his requested salary by examining (I) the length and consistency of his performance; (II) his 2012 contributions to the Rockies; (III) his past compensation; and (IV) his comparative salary to other players.

\textbf{I. LENGTH/CONSISTENCY OF FOWLER’S CAREER FOR THE ROCKIES}

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Fowler was drafted by the Rockies in 2004 and became an everyday starting outfielder beginning in 2009. Since 2009, Fowler continually improved his overall game. As a rookie, he batted .266, had a .363 on base percentage (“OBP”), .406 slugging percentage (“SLG”), .770 OPS (OBP + slugging), 67 walks, and 27 stolen bases.\textsuperscript{7} Fowler finished eighth in Rookie of the Year voting.\textsuperscript{8} He ended 2009 fifth in the National League in triples and sixth in stolen bases.\textsuperscript{9}

In 2010 and 2011, his hitting remained consistent across the board with improvements in hits, triples, homeruns and runs batted in (“RBIs”).\textsuperscript{10} Fowler finished first in triples in the

\textsuperscript{5} \textsc{Baseball Reference}, http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/f/fowlede01.shtml (last visited on Jan. 6, 2013).
\textsuperscript{6} Id.
\textsuperscript{7} Id.
\textsuperscript{8} Id.
\textsuperscript{9} Id.
\textsuperscript{10} Id.
National League in 2010 with 14 and third in 2011.\textsuperscript{11} Fowler has remained offensively consistent and even improved his batting numbers in several categories including batting average, OBP, SLG, OPS, homeruns, RBIs, and hits from 2009 through 2011.\textsuperscript{12}

Fowler’s improvement as a switch-hitter makes him a unique asset. From 2009 to 2011, he frequently batted on both sides of the plate. Fowler’s batting averages as a left-handed batter and as a right-handed batter were .240 and .321 in 2009, .260 and .260 in 2010, .270 and .254 in 2011, respectively.\textsuperscript{13} As will be discussed in the next section, these numbers peaked in 2012.

Fowler provides consistency and range in the outfield as well. His fielding percentages were .984, .996, .975, and .978, respectively, from 2009-2012.\textsuperscript{14} What is more impressive is Fowler’s range factor.\textsuperscript{15} “Ideally range factor would always be computed using innings played…”\textsuperscript{16} Thus, Fowler’s range factor the past four seasons per nine innings is 2.32, 2.29, 2.64, and 2.29.\textsuperscript{17} This has provided consistency in the outfield and Fowler’s 2011 range factor was second in the National League.\textsuperscript{18} Fowler maintained consistent, improved play over the course of the last four seasons. As a leadoff hitter, he batted .300 and led the team in OBP. He brings a unique skill set involving hitting, speed and switch-hitting. These skills have placed Fowler as an emerging power in the outfield and show he deserves his proposed salary.

\textbf{II. Fowler’s 2012 Contributions to the Rockies}

Fowler’s 2012 statistics show that he has become an emerging force in baseball and a significant contributor to the Colorado Rockies. Fowler finished among team leaders in nearly

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} \textit{Id.}
\item \textsuperscript{12} \textit{Id.}
\item \textsuperscript{13} \textit{Id.}
\item \textsuperscript{14} \textsc{Baseball Reference}, http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/f/fowlede01.shtml, (last visited Jan. 6, 2013).
\item \textsuperscript{15} “Range factor” is calculated by dividing putouts and assists by number of innings or games played at a defensive position. Range factor is premised on the notion that the total number of outs that a player participates in is more relevant in evaluating a player’s defensive play than fielding percentage.
\item \textsuperscript{16} \textsc{Baseball Reference}, Baseball-reference.com/about/field_glossary.shtml, (last visited Jan. 6, 2013).
\item \textsuperscript{17} \textsc{Baseball Reference}, http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/f/fowlede01.shtml (last visited Jan. 6, 2013).
\item \textsuperscript{18} \textit{Id.}
\end{itemize}
every offensive category. Predominately batting as the leadoff hitter, he led the team in OBP at .389.\(^\text{19}\) Moreover, he led the team in triples and walks.\(^\text{20}\) Fowler was second on the team in runs (72), and OPS (.863).\(^\text{21}\) In addition, Fowler was third on the team in hits (136), steals (12), and fourth in batting average (.300).\(^\text{22}\) Additionally, Fowler brings a unique skill set because he hits effectively from either side of the plate and against both right-handed and left-handed pitchers. As a left-handed batter, he hit .293 and .315 as a right-handed batter.\(^\text{23}\) Fowler is a solid hitter when it counts. He batted .298 with runners in scoring position and .342 with men on base.\(^\text{24}\) Fowler is unique as well in the sense that he becomes a better batter as the game wears on. In the 6\(^{\text{th}}\), 7\(^{\text{th}}\), 8\(^{\text{th}}\), 9\(^{\text{th}}\) and extra innings, Fowler batted .288, .327, .378, .441, and .500, respectively.\(^\text{25}\)

**III. FOWLER’S PAST COMPENSATION**

Fowler’s salary over the 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 seasons correlate with his improved play. Beginning in 2009, his salary was $401,000, $406,000, $424,000, and $2.35 million, respectively.\(^\text{26}\) During the past season, Fowler put up the best offensive numbers of his career and continues to show range in the outfield and speed on the bases. Considering his game has continued to ascend, his production demonstrates he is deserving of his proposed $4.6 million.

**IV. FOWLER’S COMPARATIVE SALARY TO OTHER MLB PLAYERS**

When comparing Fowler’s accomplishments during the first four years of his career to other players, it needs to be noted that Fowler is a Super Two.\(^\text{27}\) For purposes of persuasion,

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\(^{20}\) Id.

\(^{21}\) Id.

\(^{22}\) Id.


\(^{24}\) Id.

\(^{25}\) Id.


\(^{27}\) Id.; MLB PLAYERS, mlb.mlb.com/pa/info/faq.jsp#arbitration, (last visited Jan. 6, 2013) (“In addition, a player can be classified as a “Super Two” and be eligible for arbitration with less than three years of service. A player with at
greater weight is given when comparisons are made to players of the same service time. In addition, Fowler is eligible for arbitration for the second year. The players described below had the same service time and were in their second year of arbitration eligibility. Comparisons with these players will show that Fowler deserves a modest raise from $2.35 million to $4.6 million.

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Hunter Pence (“Pence”), who ended the 2012 season with the San Francisco Giants, was playing for the Houston Astros when he agreed to $6.9 million for the 2011 season during his second year of arbitration eligibility. In terms of batting, although Pence outperformed Fowler in power with more homeruns (25 vs. 13) and RBIs (91 vs. 53) during his platform season of 2010, Fowler is comparable or has outperformed Pence in many other categories. For instance, in 2010, Pence batted .282, had a SLG of .461, and an OPS of .786, whereas during Fowler’s platform season of 2012, his numbers were .300, .474, and .863. Moreover, during the 2009-2012 seasons, Fowler walked 67, 57, 68, and 68 times, respectively; while during the 2007-2010 seasons, Pence walked 26, 40, 58, and 41 times, respectively. Although in 2010 Pence had 93 runs, this appears to be an anomaly because in the 2007, 2008 and 2009 seasons he had 57, 78, 69.

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and 76 runs, respectively.\textsuperscript{32} Fowler has been more consistent and even more productive during 2009-2012 in runs with 73, 73, 84, and 72 runs respectively.\textsuperscript{33} As can be seen, even though Pence outperformed Fowler in the categories of home runs and RBIs during his platform season, Fowler was equal to if not superior to Pence in terms of batting average, slugging percentage, OPS, walks and runs. This evidence presents a strong argument for Fowler’s modest request of $4.6 million as compared to Pence’s $6.9 million salary in 2011.

Fowler was superior to Pence in terms of range and competitive in speed. In 2009 and 2010, Pence had a range factor per 9 innings of 2.29 and 2.17, while during 2011 and 2012 Fowler had a range factor per 9 innings of 2.64 and 2.29, respectively.\textsuperscript{34} Pence and Fowler seem comparable in terms of stolen bases posting similar numbers in four seasons, and Fowler may show greater potential as he had 27 stolen bases in 2009, while Pence never had more than 18 stolen bases during 2007-2010.\textsuperscript{35}

Finally, it is an asset for any Club to possess clutch hitters and switch hitters. Pence and Fowler are comparable to each other in many categories of clutch hitting. Pence was a superior hitter during his 2010 platform season when he batted .265 and .323 when there were two outs with runners in scoring position or it was a tie game, while Fowler batted .234 and .264 in the same situations in 2012.\textsuperscript{36} However, in late and close plate appearances\textsuperscript{37} or when the Rockies were within 1 run, Fowler batted .300 and .312 respectively in 2012, while Pence batted .266 and

\textsuperscript{37} Baseball Reference, http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/split.cgi?id=fowlede01&year=2012&t=b, (last visited Jan. 7, 2013) (stating “Late & Close are Plat appearances in the 7th or later with the batting team tied, ahead by one, or the tying run at least on deck.”).
.288 in the same situations in 2010.\textsuperscript{38} Given the above statistics, Fowler is deserving of his proposed $4.6 million salary and certainly a salary in excess of the $4.3 million midpoint.

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Alex Rios began his career with the Toronto Blue Jays in 2005 and is currently under contract with the Chicago White Sox.\textsuperscript{40} His platform season of 2007 with the Blue Jays earned him a pay increase of $4.835 million from $2.535 million the year before.\textsuperscript{41} Rios’ salary situation in 2007 is comparable to Fowler’s proposed $4.6 million salary from $2.35 million.\textsuperscript{42} Whether it is batting or fielding, Fowler’s 2012 season measures up to Rios’ 2007 season. Rios was a more powerful hitter in his platform season of 2007 as he hit 24 homeruns and had 85 RBIs to Fowler’s 13 and 53.\textsuperscript{43} However, in 2012 Fowler had numbers of .300, .389, and .863 for batting, OBP and OPS, while Rios’ numbers were .297, .354, and .852 in 2007.\textsuperscript{44}

Even though Rios had a more productive platform year than Fowler in terms of hits and runs, those years appear to be an anomaly. During the 2004-2007 seasons, Rios had 122, 126, 136, and 191 hits and 55, 71, 68, and 114 runs.\textsuperscript{45} Fowler’s numbers during the 2009-2012 seasons


\textsuperscript{41} Id.


were 115, 114, 128, and 136 hits and 73, 73, 84, 72 runs.\textsuperscript{46} The discrepancy between the two during their platform years can be attributed in part to Rios playing in 161 games versus Fowler’s 143, and given the same amount of opportunities, Fowler was just as productive as Rios, evidenced by similar numbers over previous seasons. Moreover, Fowler had more triples than Rios with 10, 14, 15, and 11 triples over the past four seasons compared to Rios’ 7, 6, 6, and 7 triples in the 2004-2007 seasons.\textsuperscript{47} In terms of clutch hitting, Fowler was equal to if not superior to Rios. In 2012, Fowler batted .298 with runners in scoring position and .342 with men on base, while Rios batted .283 with runners in scoring position and .285 with men on base in 2007.\textsuperscript{48} In addition, Fowler batted .234, .300, and .312 when there were two outs with runners in scoring position, in late and close plate appearances, and when the Rockies were within one run respectively.\textsuperscript{49} Rios, on the other hand, did not bat as well in 2007 in the same situations going .212, .264, and .302.\textsuperscript{50}

During their respective platform seasons, Rios and Fowler had similar fielding numbers, including near-identical fielding percentages. However, in terms of range factor Fowler is superior to Rios as his range per nine innings in the 2009-2012 seasons was 2.32, 2.29, 2.64, and 2.29 respectively while Rios’ range factor during the 2004-2007 seasons was 2.14, 2.17, 2.12, and 1.90 respectively.\textsuperscript{51}

Although Rios is more of a power hitter than Fowler, Fowler is equivalent to Rios in batting average and superior to Rios in terms of OBP, OPS, switch-hitting, clutch hitting, and range factor out in the field. Remember Rios was awarded $4.8 million for his 2007 platform seasons and considering the evidence above, Fowler is deserving of his requested $4.6 million.

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Another comparable outfielder is Melky Cabrera who began his career with the New York Yankees and earned $3.1 million in 2010 for his 2009 platform season. Fowler was a superior batter in nearly every offensive category. In 2012, Fowler had a batting average, OBP, SLG and OPS of .300, .389, .474, and .863, while Cabrera put up .274, .336, .416, and .752 in the same categories in 2009. Moreover, Fowler had more hits (136 vs. 133) and scored more runs (72 vs. 66) than Cabrera. Both players are consistent switch-hitters, but Fowler was a better overall switch hitter. Fowler hit .293 as a left-handed batter versus right-handed pitchers, while Cabrera hit .277, and Fowler hit .315 as a right-handed batter versus left-handed pitchers, while Cabrera hit .268. In addition, Fowler boasts superior numbers in clutch hitting categories

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including when there are two outs with runners in scoring position, in late and close plate appearances, when it is a tie game, when the Club is within one run, and when men are on base.\textsuperscript{57}

In addition, Fowler seems to have superior speed to Cabrera as Fowler stolen more bases over the seasons of 2009-2012 compared to Cabrera’s 2006-2009 seasons and had 10, 14, 15, and 11 triples in those same seasons as compared to 2, 8, 1, and 1 for Cabrera.\textsuperscript{58} Although Cabrera bested Fowler in putouts and fielding percentage, Fowler clearly boasts superior numbers in every offensive category showing he is deserving of his proposed $4.6 million salary.

\textbf{V. CONCLUSION}

Dexter Fowler has emerged as a power in the outfield in the MLB and an integral cog in the Rockies’ lineup. Fowler consistently improved over the past four seasons providing hitting and a high OBP at the top of the order. His superb abilities in switch hitting, range factor and speed make him a unique asset in any lineup. Awarding Fowler his $4.6 million proposed salary would correlate with his skills and contributions on the field. If he continues to improve as he has since becoming a starter for the Rockies, he is likely to outperform this new salary, making this offer a bargain. Even if Fowler’s 2012 season is the peak of his abilities, he remains a talented centerfielder with a unique skillset at a reasonable price. His age and past production suggest he is not done improving. In consideration of the CBA criteria analyzed here, Fowler respectfully asks the arbitration panel to decide in his favor and award a 2013 salary of $4.6 million.

\textsuperscript{57}\textit{Id.}