2013 National Baseball Arbitration Competition

Dexter Fowler v. Colorado Rockies
Submission on Behalf of Dexter Fowler
Midpoint: $4.3 million
Submission by: Team 9
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Source List

BaseballProspectus, Prospectus Entertainment Ventures, LLC, www.baseballprospectus.com


CBS Sports, CBS Interactive, www.cbssports.com

The Denver Post, www.denverpost.com/rockies

ESPN, ESPN: The Worldwide Leader in Sports, espn.go.com

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


Rotoworld, NBC Universal Sports, www.rotoworld.com

SBNation, Vox Media, Inc., www.sbnation.com
I. Introduction

This brief analyzes the assets and contributions of switch-hitting centerfielder Dexter Fowler (“Mr. Fowler”) to be reflected in his 2013 contract with the Colorado Rockies (“the Rockies” or “the Club”). This arbitration hearing is governed by the Major League Baseball Collective Bargaining Agreement (“CBA”). The CBA establishes the following criteria for determining the player’s 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.¹ Mr. Fowler has reached 4.167 years of MLB service, and is Salary Arbitration Eligible (SAE) for the second time.

Mr. Fowler is a critical member of the Club and has shown considerable improvement in recent years. The evidence of Mr. Fowler’s past achievements and future potential presented in this brief supports the conclusion that Mr. Fowler is entitled to a salary above the $4.3 million midpoint between Mr. Fowler’s final offer and that of the Club. Mr. Fowler therefore respectfully requests that this panel find that he is entitled to a 2013 salary arbitration award of $4.6 million.

II. Length and Consistency of Career Contribution

In his relatively short career with the Rockies, Mr. Fowler has made significant contributions to the team and shown consistent improvement as the seasons have progressed. Notably, Mr. Fowler’s strength, as evidenced by his slugging percentage, has markedly increased

in each of his years in the major leagues. This increase has not come merely with experience, but has been the result of Mr. Fowler’s remarkable training efforts during the off season.\(^2\) Yet Mr. Fowler’s strength is not the only quality that has progressed steadily throughout his time in the major leagues. Mr. Fowler’s hitting ability has significantly increased as well, as he batted in more runs in each successive season.\(^3\)

Yet, while Mr. Fowler has made strides in improving his contributions to the Club, his performance has been strong over the course of his career, demonstrating his almost exclusively upside potential. In each of the four full seasons played by Mr. Fowler, he maintained an on-base percentage of at least .347, with an average of .364.\(^4\) Furthermore, Mr. Fowler’s career batting average of .271 highlights his valuable hitting ability.\(^5\)

**TABLE 1: Career Offensive Production\(^6\)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Games</th>
<th>Runs</th>
<th>RBI</th>
<th>HR</th>
<th>AVG.</th>
<th>OBP</th>
<th>SLG</th>
<th>OPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.154</td>
<td>0.185</td>
<td>0.154</td>
<td>0.339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.266</td>
<td>0.363</td>
<td>0.406</td>
<td>0.770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.260</td>
<td>0.347</td>
<td>0.410</td>
<td>0.757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.266</td>
<td>0.363</td>
<td>0.432</td>
<td>0.796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.300</td>
<td>0.389</td>
<td>0.474</td>
<td>0.863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0.271</td>
<td>0.364</td>
<td>0.427</td>
<td>0.791</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, Mr. Fowler’s has spent his entire career with the Rockies, after the Club brought him up from AA in 2009.\(^7\) Indeed, Mr. Fowler understands and respects that the Club has invested a lot of time in him, and he has accordingly strived to, and succeeded in. meeting and exceeding the Club’s expectations. Mr. Fowler certainly remains loyal to the Club, but also

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\(^4\) *Id.*

\(^5\) *Id.*

\(^6\) *Id.*

\(^7\) *Id.*
recognizes the value of his contributions and the value of his history with the Club.

III. Quality of the Fowler’s Contribution to the Club in 2012

Of course, like nearly any other sport, in baseball the strongest indicator of future success is recent performance. To the extent that Mr. Fowler has had a strong early career, his season in 2012 was his strongest by far. Despite a slow start at the beginning of the season, by all accounts Mr. Fowler had a breakout season in 2012. After lingering between .260 and .266 batting averages for the previous three seasons, Mr. Fowler ended the 2012 season with a .300 batting average, joining the ranks of elite hitters. Mr. Fowler managed career highs in home runs and RBIs with 13 and 53 respectively and increased his on-base and slugging percentages to highs of .389 (7th in the NL) and .474 respectively. Mr. Fowler was also 4th in the National League in triples, with 11.

| Table 2: Dexter Fowler’s Offensive Production |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Games | Runs | RBI | HR | AVG. | OBP | SLG | OPS |
| 143 | 72 | 53 | 13 | 0.300 | 0.389 | 0.474 | 0.863 |

On top of his offensive production in 2012, Mr. Fowler made impressive strides toward becoming a better, more consistent player. Mr. Fowler has become more coachable, tightened his left (.304)-right (.313) splits, and devoted himself to improving his strength and agility in the offseason. Furthermore, Mr. Fowler demonstrated throughout the 2012 season his capacity to become a balanced player for the Rockies. As one analyst noted, there are not many center-

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9 http://www.denverpost.com/rockies/ci_22094480/colorado-rockies-dexter-fowler-will-tender-contracts-four-others
fielders that are capable of covering the vast outfield at Coors Field as well as Fowler does, while simultaneously delivering power hitting and patience at the plate, as evidenced by his impressive slugging percentage of .474 and on-base percentage of .389 in 2012.13

IV. Existence of Career-Limiting Mental or Physical Problems

In addition to past performance, another key indicator of the future success of a player is the existence of any physical or mental problems that would inhibit his future performance. In addition to performing strongly throughout his career and putting together a breakout performance last season, Mr. Fowler has no lingering injuries that have the potential to limit his future career. Each of Mr. Fowler’s previous injuries that led to missed games is listed below in Table 3. As shown in the Table, all but two of the injuries occurring over the course of Mr. Fowler’s career were listed day-to-day, and the vast majority of these were minor contusions from fouled balls or fielding efforts. While a particularly severe knee contusion in 2009 and a strained abdomen in 2011 landed Mr. Fowler on the 15-day disabled list, neither of these injuries presented any persistent problems for Mr. Fowler and he returned to full strength after missing 14 games in each case.14 Most recently, this past season, Mr. Fowler did not bat in the final eleven games of the 2012 season due to tendonitis in his right wrist,15 but there is no indication that this injury will have a lasting impact on Mr. Fowler’s career. On the whole, therefore, Mr. Fowler’s injuries have either not been serious and listed as day-to-day or been somewhat more serious, requiring a marginally longer recovery time but having no lasting effects on Mr. Fowler’s performance.

13 Id.

Team 6 – Washington Nationals
Table 3: Injuries over the Course of Mr. Fowler’s Career\(^{16}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Nature of Injury</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/24/2012</td>
<td>Tendonitis in Right Wrist; Out for Season as a Batter, Remained Defensive Replacement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/16/2012</td>
<td>Stiff Back; Day-to-Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/22/2012</td>
<td>Sprained Ankle; Day-to-Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/10/2011</td>
<td>Knee Contusion; Day-to-Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/5/2011</td>
<td>Strained Abdomen; 15-day DL(^{17})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/11/2011</td>
<td>Bruised Knee; Day-to-Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/16/2011</td>
<td>Right Quadriceps Strain; Day-to-Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/1/2010</td>
<td>Bruised Left Hip and Ribs While Making Game-Saving Catch; Day-to-Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/25/2009</td>
<td>Knee Contusion; 15-Day DL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/11/2009</td>
<td>Knee Contusion; Day-to-Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/6/2009</td>
<td>Knee Contusion; Day-to-Day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V. Past Compensation

In his first three seasons, Mr. Fowler’s compensation remained near the league minimum, hovering around $400,000.\(^{18}\) However, after Mr. Fowler finished the 2011 season strong following the all-star break, the Club decided to more than quadruple Mr. Fowler’s salary for the 2012 season.\(^{19}\) In agreeing to this large increase in Mr. Fowler’s salary, the Club clearly recognized the potential Mr. Fowler had shown by hitting .289 and maintaining a .381 on-base percentage in the latter half of the 2011 season.\(^{20}\) However, the Club understandably remained somewhat uncertain whether this streak of outstanding performance could be sustained. This doubt, of course, was reflected in Mr. Fowler’s salary increase, even as large as it was. As

\(^{20}\) Id.
discussed above, however, Mr. Fowler demonstrated in 2012 that his salary increase was well earned. Indeed, Mr. Fowler outpaced even his astounding performance in the latter half of the 2011 season, improving his batting average to .300 and his on-base percentage to .389.\textsuperscript{21} Thus, not only did Mr. Fowler ease the Club’s concerns that his outstanding performance could not be sustained, he showed that his performance could even be improved. These dual demonstrations accordingly instruct a commensurate salary increase above the mid-point between the Club’s offer and that of Mr. Fowler.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Past Salaries\textsuperscript{22}}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
Year & Salary  \\
\hline
2009 & $401,000  \\
2010 & $406,000  \\
2011 & $424,000  \\
2012 & $2,350,000 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\section*{VI. Comparative Salaries of Equivalent Players}

When comparing Mr. Fowler to similarly performing center fielders, Mr. Fowler’s request of $4.6 million proves strikingly appropriate. In light of the augmented negotiating freedom players have following their sixth year in the league, as well as the benefits that come with experience in the league, one prudent avenue of comparison is against Center Fielders at similar points in their careers. Table 4 therefore provides the fourth-year performance of eight similarly skilled center fielders, as well as their fifth-year salary. As one can see, a couple of these players slightly outmatched Mr. Fowler in their fourth years in the league. Jacoby Ellsbury, for example, had an outstanding fourth year in 2011, hitting .321 with 32 home runs and 105 RBIs.\textsuperscript{23} While

\textsuperscript{22} Id.
Ellsbury marginally outperformed Mr. Fowler, he was compensated accordingly, earning $8,050,000 in his fifth season—almost twice the salary Mr. Fowler is requesting.\textsuperscript{24}

Of the comparably skilled players listed, Ellsbury was the only player to maintain a batting average higher than Mr. Fowler in his fourth year, yet in their fifth years, six of these eight players earned more than Mr. Fowler’s salary request of $4.6 million. The two players that did not earn more than Mr. Fowler—Rajai Davis and Michael Bourn—had fewer RBIs and home runs as well as significantly worse batting averages, on-base percentages, and slugging percentages.

Likely the strongest comparison to Mr. Fowler is Denard Span, a center fielder who also happened to play his fourth season in 2012. Although Span’s numbers are similar, Fowler outperformed Span in every category, batting in 12 more runs, 9 more home runs, and maintaining a higher batting average, on-base percentage, and slugging percentage. Given this outperformance across the board, one can certainly not deny that Fowler is at least as valuable as Span, especially given Mr. Fowler’s lack of lingering injuries. In 2013, Span’s fifth year, he will earn $4.75 million. Accordingly, Mr. Fowler’s request of $4.6 million seems imminently reasonable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player (4th Year Performance, 5th Year Salary)</th>
<th>RBI</th>
<th>HR</th>
<th>AVG.</th>
<th>OBP</th>
<th>SLG</th>
<th>Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rajai Davis (2010 Stats, 2011 Salary)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.284</td>
<td>0.320</td>
<td>0.377</td>
<td>$2,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtis Granderson (2009 Stats, 2010 Salary)</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0.249</td>
<td>0.327</td>
<td>0.453</td>
<td>$5,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.J. Upton (2010 Stats, 2011 Salary)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.237</td>
<td>0.322</td>
<td>0.424</td>
<td>$4,825,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacoby Ellsbury (2011 Stats, 2012 Salary)</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0.321</td>
<td>0.376</td>
<td>0.552</td>
<td>$8,050,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nate McLouth (2009 Stats, 2010 Salary)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.256</td>
<td>0.349</td>
<td>0.470</td>
<td>$5,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam Jones (2011 Stats, 2012 Salary)</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.280</td>
<td>0.319</td>
<td>0.466</td>
<td>$6,150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Bourn (2010 Stats, 2011 Salary)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.265</td>
<td>0.341</td>
<td>0.346</td>
<td>$4,400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denard Span (2012 Stats, 2013 Salary)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.283</td>
<td>0.342</td>
<td>0.395</td>
<td>$4,750,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dexter Fowler (2012 Stats)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.300</td>
<td>0.389</td>
<td>0.474</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{24} Id.

VII. Recent Performance of the Club

The Club undeniably had a rebuilding year last season, finishing 2012 with a record of 64-98. With the third worst record in the MLB, the club finished 30 games back in their division. Although the 2012 season was disappointing, much of the Club’s woes seemed to be due to a lack of pitching, as the team allowed a league worst 890 runs. Conversely, with the help of Mr. Fowler, the team managed to be 6th, 2nd, and 6th overall in runs, batting average and on-base percentage respectively. With the addition of new pitching, the Club has the potential to make significant strides in the coming season, and Mr. Fowler is eager to be an integral part of this revitalization.

VII. Summary and Conclusion

Mr. Fowler’s performance over the course of his early career has been quite remarkable and shown an upward trend throughout, culminating with his exceptional performance in 2012. During his time in major league baseball, Mr. Fowler’s injuries have been relatively minor and do not pose a threat to the continuation of his outstanding play. Given Mr. Fowler’s lack of career-threatening mental or physical problems, when one compares Mr. Fowler’s salary request to the 5th-year salaries of other similarly performing Center Fielders, his request proves quite reasonable. Accordingly, based on the evidence presented in this brief and at oral argument, Mr. Fowler respectfully requests that this panel find his offer of $4.6 million to be an appropriate salary for the 2013 season.

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27 Id.
29 Id.