2013 National Baseball Arbitration Competition

Tommy Hanson v. Atlanta Braves

Submission on behalf of Atlanta Braves

Submitted by Team 28
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I. Introduction and Request for Hearing Decision

This brief will analyze the past and present contributions of starting pitcher Tommy Hanson (“Mr. Hanson”). The Major League Baseball Collective Bargaining Agreement (“CBA”) provides the proper procedure to govern the present arbitration hearing. Under CBA Article VI, Section E, Part 10(a) & (b) the criteria considered in determining the player’s award, include: (1) the quality of the players 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 contribution; (3) the record of the Player’s past compensation; (3) comparative baseball salaries; (4) the existence of any physical or mental defects on the part of the Player; (5) and the recent performance record of the Club including but not limited to its League standing and attendance as an indication of public acceptance.¹

Mr. Hanson is a 26-year-old right-handed starting pitcher with 3.120 years of major league service, making him arbitration eligible for the first time.² Based on Mr. Hanson’s performance, his injury history, and the statistics and salaries of comparable first time arbitration eligible right-handed starting pitchers, the Braves respectfully request that the panel conclude that Mr. Hanson’s value falls short of the $ 3.9 million midpoint.

II. Quality of Mr. Hanson’s Contribution During the Past Season

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>GS</th>
<th>W/L</th>
<th>IP</th>
<th>ERA</th>
<th>WHIP</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>BB</th>
<th>K/BB</th>
<th>Opposing BA</th>
<th>Opposing OBP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13-10</td>
<td>174.1</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>.271</td>
<td>.344</td>
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During the 2012 season Mr. Hanson started 31 games, throwing over 170 innings for the second time in his career.³ In addition, Mr. Hanson’s 161 strikeouts marked the second highest

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³ [Id.](http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/h/hansoto01-pitch.shtml)
total of his career.\textsuperscript{5} However, overall, Mr. Hanson had an underwhelming statistical season, posting a 4.48 ERA—the worst mark of his career by almost .9 runs.\textsuperscript{6} Furthermore, Mr. Hanson’s ERA ranked 72\textsuperscript{nd} out of 91 pitchers in Major League Baseball\textsuperscript{7} and 42\textsuperscript{nd} out 46 pitchers in the NL\textsuperscript{8} with over 160 IP. Mr. Hanson’s woes did not end there, as he also showed difficulty keeping runners off of the base paths. Mr. Hanson’s 1.45 WHIP (walks and hits per innings pitched)—representing the average amount of base runners a pitcher allows per inning—was the highest of his career by over .2.\textsuperscript{9} Moreover, this mark ranked 45\textsuperscript{th} out of 46 NL starting pitchers,\textsuperscript{10} and 86\textsuperscript{th} out of 91 pitchers in Major League baseball\textsuperscript{11} with over 160 innings pitched.

Mr. Hanson’s inflated WHIP is partially attributed to his giving up 183 hits—more than he had in any previous season.\textsuperscript{12} Consequently, opposing hitters posted a batting average of .271 off of Mr. Hanson—another career worst.\textsuperscript{13} Furthermore, opposing hitters’ batting average on balls in play (BABIP: representing the percentage of balls put in play that result in hits) against Mr. Hanson was .319\textsuperscript{14}—only slightly higher than the league average of .300\textsuperscript{15}—suggesting that the poor performance is attributed to Mr. Hanson, rather than bad luck or poor team defense.

Finally, Mr. Hanson’s posted the worst walk rate of his career, walking over twenty more batters total, and averaging .5 more walks per nine innings than he had in any previous season.\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[14] Id.
\end{footnotes}
Mr. Hanson also struggled to neutralize power hitters, giving up a total of 27 home runs—another career worst. This mark eclipsed his total in the 2010 season by 13, despite the fact that Mr. Hanson started three more game in 2010 than in 2012. Also noteworthy is the fact that in 2012 Turner Field (the Braves’ home stadium) ranked as the eighth most difficult park to hit home runs. Finally, opponents posted both the highest OPS and slugging percentage against Mr. Hanson that he has allowed to date.

III. Career Contributions and Physical or Mental Defects on the Part of the Player

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>GS</th>
<th>W/L</th>
<th>IP</th>
<th>ERA</th>
<th>WHIP</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>BB</th>
<th>K/BB</th>
<th>Opposing BA</th>
<th>Opposing OBP</th>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
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<td>11-4</td>
<td>127.2</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>1.183</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>105</td>
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<td>.225</td>
<td>.301</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>202.2</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>.239</td>
<td>.301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11-7</td>
<td>130.0</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>1.169</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>.219</td>
<td>.289</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13-10</td>
<td>174.1</td>
<td>4.48</td>
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<td>.271</td>
<td>.344</td>
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</table>

Mr. Hanson was drafted in the 22nd round of the 2005 MLB draft by the Atlanta Braves. He made his major league debut on June 7, 2009 at the age of 22. Mr. Hanson went on to start 22 games in 2009. His 2.89 ERA ranked as number 1 out of 22 Major League rookies and 10th out of all Major League pitchers with over 100 innings pitched. In addition, Mr. Hanson gave up the least amount of hits (105) and had the lowest WHIP (1.183) of all qualifying rookie starters. Furthermore, Mr. Hanson had the second highest strikeout to walk ratio and the

18 Id.
19 http://espn.go.com/mlb/stats/parkfactor/_/sort/HRFactor
21 Id.
22 Id.
23 Id.
24 Id.
25 Id.
26 Id.
27 Id.
highest amount of strikeouts per nine innings of all qualifying rookie starters.\(^{27}\) As a result of his phenomenal rookie campaign, Mr. Hanson finished in 3\(^{rd}\) place in NL rookie of the year voting.\(^{28}\)

Mr. Hanson went on to post another strong season in 2010. His 34 games started mark the most in any season of his career, and 2\(^{nd}\) most of any pitcher in the NL in 2010.\(^{29}\) In addition, 2010 marked the only season where Mr. Hanson eclipsed 200 innings pitched, with a final total of 202.2.\(^{30}\) During his 2010 campaign, Mr. Hanson also saw career highs in both strikeouts (173), and strikeout to walk ratio (3.9). Furthermore, his 3.33 ERA ranked 26\(^{th}\) in majors.\(^{31}\) Finally Mr. Hanson had the lowest amount of walks per nine innings (2.5) of his entire career.\(^{32}\)

2010 also marked Mr. Hanson’s only career postseason start.\(^{33}\) However, his postseason play did not match his regular season success. Mr. Hanson started game 2 of the 2010 NLDS against the San Francisco Giants.\(^{34}\) Over 4 innings pitched Mr. Hanson gave up 5 hits, 1 walk and 4 earned runs while striking out 5.\(^{35}\) The Braves would win the game in extra innings; however, the Giants went on to win the series 3-1.\(^{36}\)

Mr. Hanson’s 2011 season was marked with regressions in important statistical categories and injuries. 2011 was the second straight season in which Mr. Hanson posted a worse ERA than the previous year.\(^{37}\) In addition, Mr. Hanson’s walk rate was up, as he walked .7 more batters per nine innings than he had in 2010.\(^{38}\) Furthermore, after starting only 22 games, Mr. Hanson was forced to miss the final 2 months of the 2011 season with a partially torn rotator cuff.

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29 Id.
30 Id.
34 http://espn.go.com/mlb/boxscore?id=301008126
35 Id.
38 Id.
in his pitching shoulder. While surgery was not required, the fact that Mr. Hanson injured his pitching shoulder at such a young age is worrisome to the Braves regarding his future.

Finally, 2012 marked the worst season of Mr. Hanson’s career across most relevant statistical categories and included another stint on the DL. After pitching 5 innings during a July 30 start against Miami, Mr. Hanson was put on the 15 day DL with a strained lower back. While Mr. Hanson was able to return for his August 17th start, the fact that he had to miss time for injuries for the second straight year is a cause for concern for the Braves.

IV. Comparative Salaries and Past Compensation

In 2009, 2010, and 2011 Mr. Hanson earned $435,000, $456,000, and $535,000, respectively. The Braves feel that a salary of $3,500,000 gives Mr. Hanson an appropriate raise and represents his place in the game among right-handed starting pitchers today. Justin Masterson, Jordan Zimmerman, and Max Scherzer are comparable right-handed pitchers to Mr. Hanson, earning similar salaries after three years of MLB service time.

A. RHP Justin Masterson: 3.108 Services Years During 2011 Arbitration ($3,825,000)

| Tommy Hanson and Justin Masterson Platform Year Pitching Comparisons |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | G | W | L | ERA | IP | K | K/9 | WHIP | HR/9 |
| Hanson (2012) | 31 | 13 | 10 | 4.48 | 174.2 | 161 | 8.3 | 1.454 | 1.4 |
| Masterson (2011) | 34 | 12 | 10 | 3.21 | 216 | 158 | 6.6 | 1.278 | .458 (1st in AL) |

41 http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/gamelog/_/id/30191/tommy-hanson
44 Id.
Justin Masterson’s statistics and service serve as a strong comparison to Mr. Hanson. After the 2011 season, Mr. Masterson underwent arbitration for the first time, and the Cleveland Indians provided him with a raise, agreeing to pay him $3,825,000.45

Mr. Hanson and Mr. Masterson possess comparable platform year win-loss records and strikeout totals. However, that is where their statistical similarities come to a screeching halt. In his platform year Mr. Masterson had a lower ERA, which ranked 12th in the AL,46 whereas Mr. Hanson’s ERA was among the worst in the NL; Masterson also pitched over 40 more innings. Further, Mr. Hanson’s WHIP was next to last among qualifying NL pitchers, whereas Mr. Masterson’s WHIP ranked in the 50th percentile in the AL.47 Finally, Mr. Masterson had a much better HR/9 ratio;48 in fact, Mr. Masterson gave up the fewest home runs per nine innings in the AL.49 While Mr. Hanson’s career ERA is much lower than his platform season ERA, Mr. Hanson’s ERA has steadily increased during each of his four seasons in the Major Leagues,50 which is a significant cause for concern.

B. RHP Jordan Zimmerman: 3.108 Services Years During 2011 Arbitration ($2,300,000)51

| Tommy Hanson and Jordan Zimmerman Platform Year Pitching Comparisons52 |
|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                 | G      | W      | L      | ERA    | IP     | K      | K/9    | WHIP   | HR/9   |
| Hanson (2012)   | 31     | 13     | 10     | 4.48   | 174.2  | 161    | 8.3    | 1.454  | 1.4    |
| Zimmerman (2011)| 26     | 8      | 11     | 3.18   | 161.1  | 124    | 6.9    | 1.147  | 0.9    |

47 Id.
48 Id.
49 Id.
50 Id.
52 Id.
Jordan Zimmerman, a 26-year-old right-handed pitcher for the Washington Nationals, is also a viable comparison player to Mr. Hanson. Mr. Zimmerman first became arbitration eligible in 2012 as a Super 2 after 2.154 years of Major League Service. After making close to the league minimum during his first two seasons, the Washington Nationals avoided arbitration, and agreed to increase his salary to $2,300,000 prior to the 2012 season.

The Nationals restricted Mr. Zimmerman to just 160 innings in 2011, since he was returning from Tommy John surgery, which had limited him to just seven games in 2010. Notwithstanding, Mr. Zimmerman proved that he had fully recovered from the surgery by producing impactful numbers. His impressive 3.18 ERA ranked 10th best in the National League among qualified starters, and his 4.00 strikeout per walk ration (“K/BB”) ranked 7th best in the NL. Mr. Zimmermann also greatly limited opponents’ ability to hit for power, giving up just 12 home runs (5th best among NL starting pitchers), and ranking 14th in opponents’ on-base plus slugging percentage (“OPS”) and 16th in opponents’ slugging percentage. Mr. Zimmermann was a consistent “work horse” who “ate up innings” for the Nationals. He pitched into the sixth inning in 24 of his 26 starts, and pitched six or more innings in 18 of his 26 starts.

Conversely, Mr. Hanson’s 4.48 ERA ranked 72nd out of 91 qualifying pitchers in Major League Baseball and 42nd out 46 qualifying pitchers in the NL. Mr. Hanson also gave up 27 home runs, which was the fifth most among qualified NL pitchers. Mr. Hanson’s .808 opponents’ OPS ranked dead last in the National League among the 46 qualified starters; his
opponents’ slugging percentage was also second highest in the NL among qualified starters.\textsuperscript{63} Further, Hanson’s pedestrian 2.27 K/BB ratio ranked him 35\textsuperscript{th} out of 46 qualified NL starters.\textsuperscript{64} Mr. Hanson will likely argue that Mr. Zimmerman’s sub-.500 record significantly depreciates his value. However, Mr. Zimmerman’s less-than-stellar record was due in part to the meager run support he received from the Nationals’ offense. In seven of Mr. Zimmermann’s eleven losses, the Nationals scored two runs or fewer, and he gave up zero earned runs in six-plus innings in three of his no-decisions.\textsuperscript{65} It is noteworthy that Felix Hernandez won the 2010 AL Cy Young Award with a 13-12 record; this indicates that a pitcher’s win-loss record is not definitive, and may not even be illustrative, as an evaluation tool for starting pitchers.

Although Mr. Hanson has demonstrated strong career numbers, his steady decline in ERA during each of his four seasons, coupled with the worst overall statistical performance of his career at age 25 is of noteworthy concern.\textsuperscript{66} In light of Mr. Zimmerman’s statistics and 2012 $2.3 million contact, Mr. Hanson’s value is significantly less than the $3.9 million midpoint.

\textbf{C. Max Scherzer ($3.75 million in 2012)}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/Player</th>
<th>GS</th>
<th>W/L</th>
<th>IP</th>
<th>ERA</th>
<th>WHIP</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>BB</th>
<th>K/BB</th>
<th>Opposing BA</th>
<th>Opposing OBP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hanson 2012\textsuperscript{67}</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13-10</td>
<td>174.1</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>.271</td>
<td>.344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scherzer 2011\textsuperscript{68}</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15-9</td>
<td>195.0</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>.272</td>
<td>.325</td>
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</table>

A comparison between Mr. Hanson’s 2012 statistics and Max Scherzer’s statistics during his platform year in 2011 presents strong evidence supporting the conclusion that Mr. Hanson’s value is decisively less than the $3.9 million midpoint. Mr. Scherzer and Mr. Hanson are comparable players as they are both right-handed starting pitchers. Further, during their

\textsuperscript{63} Id.
\textsuperscript{64} MLB.com, “Tommy Hanson Stats,” http://mlb.mlb.com/stats/sortable.jsp?c_id=mlb&tcid=mm_mlb_stats#elem.
\textsuperscript{65} Id.
\textsuperscript{67} http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/h/hansoto01-pitch.shtml
\textsuperscript{68} http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/s/scherma01.shtml#contracts
respective platform years, Mr. Scherzer was 26\textsuperscript{69} and Mr. Hanson was 25.\textsuperscript{70} Most importantly, despite the fact that Mr. Scherzer’s platform year statistics were comparable or better than those of Mr. Hanson across the board, he wound up signing a contract for less than the current midpoint. Consequently, to find in favor of Mr. Hanson would require a conclusion that his value is higher than a player that performed better during his platform year.

During Mr. Scherzer’s platform year he pitched 195 innings over 33 starts.\textsuperscript{71} While Mr. Hanson started just 2 less games than Mr. Scherzer, he had over 20 less innings pitched.\textsuperscript{72} Furthermore, during the course of their respective platform seasons Mr. Scherzer and Mr. Hanson had nearly identical ERA. Mr. Scherzer, however, was significantly better at keeping runners off the base paths. He posted a 1.34 WHIP\textsuperscript{73} compared to Mr. Hanson’s 1.45\textsuperscript{74}—representing .11 less base runners per inning pitched. Mr. Scherzer also had a substantially lower walk rate than Mr. Hanson, issuing 15 less walks in 2 more starts. Finally, Mr. Scherzer had a 3.11 strikeout to walk ratio\textsuperscript{75}—significantly better than Mr. Hanson’s total of 2.27.\textsuperscript{76}

In addition, while Mr. Scherzer and Mr. Hanson pitch in comparable home ballparks, Mr. Scherzer was considerably better at neutralizing power hitters.\textsuperscript{77} During their respective platform years, opposing hitters’ OPS and slugging percentage were both decisively lower against Mr. Scherzer than against Mr. Hanson. Despite the fact that Mr. Scherzer produced better statistics across the board in his platform year, he was paid a salary less than the $3.9

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{x} Id.
\bibitem{y} http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/h/hansoto01-pitch.shtml
\bibitem{z} http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/s/scherma01.shtml#contracts
\bibitem{aa} http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/h/hansoto01-pitch.shtml
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\bibitem{af} http://espn.go.com/mlb/stats/parkfactor/_/sort/HRFactor
\end{thebibliography}
million midpoint in the present case. Consequently, a comparison between the platform year statistics of Mr. Scherzer and Mr. Hanson supports the Braves’ position in the present arbitration.

V. **Recent Performance of the Atlanta Braves**

Despite having missed the playoffs just 6 times in the last 21 years, the previous two seasons have been difficult for the Braves. In 2011 the Braves suffered a historic collapse, becoming the only team in Major League history to miss the playoffs after leading by 8 games in September. While the Braves made the playoffs in 2012, they lost to the St. Louis Cardinals in the newly instituted 1 game wildcard round as a result of a controversial call.

However, the Braves figure to be very competitive in 2013. The Braves began the offseason by signing BJ Upton—one of the top center fielders on the market—to a long-term deal. In addition, the Braves have a strong core of young offensive talent in Andrelton Simmons, Jason Heyward, and Freddy Freeman. Coupled with a core of reliable veterans and one of the best bullpens in Major League Baseball, the Braves’ future is bright.

VI. **Conclusion**

Mr. Hanson is a talented young pitcher with a lot of potential. At times Mr. Hanson has shown his ability to be a reliable and effective starter. However, based on his regression in important statistical categories, his injuries during the past two seasons, and the salaries paid to comparable first time arbitration eligible right-handed starting pitchers, the Braves respectfully request that the panel conclude that Mr. Hanson’s value falls short of the $ 3.9 million midpoint.

78 [http://espn.go.com/mlb/history/teams/_/team/atl](http://espn.go.com/mlb/history/teams/_/team/atl)