

The Mock Salary Arbitration Case in Favor of Max Scherzer Seeking \$7.4 million

Written by Maury Brown
Saturday, 09 February 2013 12:58



On Thursday, I took part in a series of mock salary arbitration cases that are appearing on Baseball Prospectus. In the case, [I covered the Tigers' side if Max Scherzer](#) had gone to hearing. It was a tough case to make. Scherzer certainly anchored the rotation behind [Justin Verlander](#)

The process of doing mock hearings is so enjoyable that I decided to play both sides of the street. On Thursday it was a case for the Tigers. Today, it's my case for Scherzer. -- *Maury Brown*

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In the case of Max Scherzer seeking a one-year salary arbitration salary for 2013 with the Detroit Tigers, a strong case is made that the \$7.4 million salary he is seeking is fair, not only in comparison to his peers within his service time class this year, but in the year prior.

Scherzer compiled the finest season of his career, posting a 16-7 record, 3.74 ERA and 231 strikeouts in 32 starts. He was the #2 starter on the roster behind only Justin Verlander. His achievements on the season show clearly why the salary he is seeking is warranted. Scherzer's 2012 platform season display that he is not only one of the best pitchers on the Tigers' staff, but in all baseball for his ability to gain strikeouts and his winning percentage places him at the top of his salary arbitration class for starting pitchers. His season accomplishments provide ample evidence.

- He ranked second in all of Major League Baseball in strikeouts behind only Verlander (231)
- Led the American League in strikeouts per 9 innings (1.08)
- His winning percentage of .696 ranked ahead of teammate Verlander and fourth behind only [CC Sabathia](#) , [Jered Weaver](#) , and [David Price](#) in the American League,
- Scherzer struck out nine-or-more batters in 13 of his starts during the season and topped all major league pitchers with 13 such outings. His 13 such games marked the most by a Tigers pitcher since [Mickey Lolich](#) posted 15 games with nine-or more strikeouts in 971.

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- Finished 4-0 with a 4.04 ERA (35.2IP/16ER) and 51 strikeouts in six starts during May -- according to the Elias Sports Bureau, it marked only the fourth time a Tigers pitcher posted an unbeaten record with at least four wins and 50 strikeouts during a calendar month, In doing so, he joined [Jack Morris](#) (August of 1983) and Justin Verlander (May of 2009 and June of 2011) in accomplishing the feat.
- Scherzer led the American League with 51 strikeouts during May, while he tied for the lead with four wins.
- He struck out at least eight batters in 10 consecutive starts July 19-September 7 which marked the longest such streak of outings by a Tigers pitcher since at least 1918.
- Scherzer won five straight starts August 10-September 1, compiling a 1.03 ERA (35.0IP/4ER) and 44 strikeouts -- according to the Elias Sports Bureau, he became the first pitcher in Tigers history to win five straight starts while averaging more than one strikeout per inning and not allowing more than two runs during any of the starts.
- He was the Tigers Pitcher of the Month for August after compiling a 4-0 record, 2.25 ERA (32.0IP/8ER) and 44 strikeouts in five starts during the month -- tied for the lead in the American League with four wins during August, while he tied for second with 44 strikeouts and was seventh with a 2.25 ERA.
- Finished 2-1 with a 2.17 ERA (29.0IP/7ER) and 33 strikeouts in five starts during September
- Limited righthanded hitters to a .201 batting average (66x329) while lefties batted .292 (113x387) with him on the mound
- He received votes for AL Pitcher of the Month in August (4-0, 2.25 ERA, 9 BB, 44 SO) and in September (2-1, 2.17 ERA, 29.0 IP, 4 BB, 33 SO).

Compared to his peers in his service group, he is at the top of several statistical categories:

PPlatform

IP

G

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GS

ERA

W

L

W PCT

H

Ks

[Homer Bailey](#)

2012

208

33

33

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3.68

13

10

.565

206

168

Jason Hammel

2012

118

20

20

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3.43

8

6

.571

104

113

Max Scherzer

2012

187.2

32

32

3.74

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16

7

.696

179

231

In comparison to Jason Hammel of the Orioles: Scherzer is seeking a salary of \$7.4 million compared to Hammel's \$8.25 million. And yet, Scherzer posts twice as many wins (16), and struck out a staggering 122 more batters faced.

Compared to Homer Bailey: he has a higher winning percentage, gave up 27 less hits, and struck out 68 more batters in 20.8 less innings pitched.

Scherzer's salary of \$7.4 million he is seeking is also warranted based on comparable players in the year prior with the same amount of service time.

□

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Platform

IP

G

GS

ERA

W

L

W PCT

H

R

ER

HR

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BB

Ks

Max Scherzer

2012

187.2

32

32

3.74

16

7

.696

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179

82

78

23

60

231

[Matt Garza](#)

2011

198

31

31

3.32

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10

10

500

186

90

73

14

63

197

In 2011, Matt Garza of the Chicago Cubs was within the same Major League service time range as Scherzer is now (4 years). Garza had sought a salary of \$12.5 million—a staggering \$5.1 million more than what Scherzer is seeking. Ultimately, Garza and the Cubs reached a

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settlement of \$9.5 million, still more than \$2 million than what Scherzer is seeking. And yet, they are very closely matched statistically. While Scherzer gave up more home runs, he had less walks. When adjusting for the amount of innings pitched, the amount of hits, runs, and earned runs are within a very small margin. Scherzer's winning percentage is 196 points higher than Garza, and yet he is seeking far less in pay.

Based upon the performance and pay of his peers, Max Scherzer clearly deserves the \$7.4 million he is seeking. The \$6.5 million that the Tigers are offering would be a disservice to a stellar 2012 season for the Tigers' starter.



Maury Brown is the Founder and President of the [Business of Sports Network](#), which includes The Biz of Baseball, The Biz of Football, The Biz of Basketball and The Biz of Hockey. He [writes for Baseball Prospectus](#)

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