

## Breaking Down Cliff Lee's Deal to the Phillies

Written by Maury Brown

Tuesday, 14 December 2010 01:10

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**UPDATE (10am ET - Tues) Vesting option details added.**

**UPDATE (1am ET - Tues) : According to Jerry Crasnick of ESPN.com, the Phillies upped the deal for Lee to \$120 million for 5-years plus the vesting option year**

**EDITOR'S NOTE: Maury Brown will be on Sirius/XM Radio's MLB Network Radio at 10:30am ET to talk the Lee deal and the free agent market this off-season.**

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*THIS IS BREAKING NEWS...*

**[Cliff Lee](#)** , the most coveted free agent this off-season, has gone, not the Yankees or Rangers, but a late charging “mystery team” in his former team, the Philadelphia Phillies.

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[According to Jerry Crasnick of ESPN.com](#) , Lee has accepted a 5-year, \$120 million deal with the Phillies. The contract has a vesting option for an additional year. The option vests at \$27.5 million if he pitches 200 innings in 2015 or 400 innings in 2014/2015 seasons, according to Crasnick. Deal includes \$12.5MM buyout. To place the contract in perspective, the Yankees had offered deal of 5-years, \$125 million, 6-years, \$144 million, and 7-years, \$161 million. In terms of the Yankees offers, at the very least Lee is leaving \$5 million on the table, or as much as \$41 million if Lee had accepted the 7-year deal. As of publication, the full details of the Rangers offers were not public.

The 5-year base has an average annual value (AAV) of \$24 million, moving Lee ahead of [CC Sabathia](#) and [Joe Mauer](#) as the 4th highest paid player in history by AAV, and 2nd highest for a pitcher.

According to Lee's agent Darek Braunecker, "The deal came together in a hurry." ( [Jon Heyman via Twitter](#) ) .

In making the deal, the Phillies have broken a club taboo in offering more than 3-years of contract life as the base for any deal with a pitcher. [Roy Halladay](#)'s 2011-13 deal is for \$60 million, [Cole Hamels](#) 2009-11 contract totals \$20.5 million. [Ryan Madson](#)'s 2009-11 deal is for \$12 million.

According to the MLBPA's annual report just released, the Phillies had the second highest average salary in baseball last year at \$5,662,551, a 28 percent increase from the 2009 average salary of \$4,055,455. The increased salary moved the Phillies from ranking 8th in average salary in 2009 to 2nd behind only the Yankees (\$7,604,937) for 2010. According to the MLBPA's 2009 report the Phillies ranked 11th in average salary for the 2008 season at \$3,393,916. Since 2006, the average salary for the club has increased 54 percent.

The move to land Lee will put the club on an even higher salary scale, meaning that the

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shedding of salary is almost assuredly in order. [Joe Blanton](#)'s salary arbitration avoiding 3-year deal for \$24 million was inked in January of this year, with him earning just \$1 million for the 2010 season. The numbers explode to \$8.5 million for 2011 and 2012 making the RHP a prime target to move. Rumors are that the Phillies are willing to eat part of his salary in order to make room on the Phillies ledger for Lee.

The one break this year is that the Phillies have no salary arbitration eligible players to deal with. To add to the belt tightening, the Phillies have the option of possibly not pursuing 5 free agents in the 2011 off-season ( [Raul Ibanez](#) , [Jimmy Rollins](#) , [Ryan Madson](#) , Dayns Baez, [Brian Schneider](#) , and [Ross Gload](#) ).

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**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, as well as a [contributo](#)

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• He is available for hire or freelance

• [Brown's full bio is here.](#)

He looks forward to your comments via email and can be [contacted through the Business of Sports Network](#)

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