



I know that I have wrote quite extensively about Mike Ribeiro this season (especially lately), but I could not resist another follow up piece now that Ribeiro has been recognized (at least by his own team) as a legitimate NHL star. How did they do it? By handing over \$25 million big ones over the next five seasons.

Firstly, I want to give a bit of a rant on the word “overpayment.” In the new NHL (hell, it has already been two and a half seasons, so I guess it is just the “NHL” now), the salary cap has had a dramatic impact on the economics of the league. Young, unproven players are being given contracts that people still complain about. Mike Richards, Ryan Getzlaf, Niklas Kronwall, Kevin Bieksa, Dustin Brown are just a few examples. With a limit on what teams are able to spend, they are giving out big money to keep assets that they feel are the most valuable to their organization, with less emphasis on past performance. Get used to it.

Continuing with my rant, who decides who is overpaid anyway? With the cap, one teams' priority player may be redundant and unwanted on another team. There only needs to be one team or one offer sent in to “set the market” for that player now. Who thinks Tomas Vanek is worth what he makes? I do not think anyone this side of Vanek's family believes that. He has the “potential” to be a big money player, but Buffalo – and Edmonton – recognized his upside

and were willing to commit a significant cap amount to have him. There are a few teams that would not have even thought of matching that offer for Vanek, but Buffalo was in a tough situation. There are obviously trends and examples you can use if you really want to conduct the research of past contracts, but comparing pre-cap and post-cap NHL contracts is a huge waste of time. Better off trying to find similarities between apples and oranges.

On to my new favorite player to write about, Mr. Mike Ribeiro and his new deal. Ribeiro has been flat out spectacular for the most part since coming over from Montreal. 59 points last season playing second line minutes (on a brutal offensive team) and he is on pace for a 90-plus point season in 07-08. He is exactly what that team needed: creativity, puck skills, and vision. They have endless north-south players like captain Brenden Morrow, but needed a dazzler like Ribeiro to open things up offensively and on the powerplay. Dallas recognized his performance, and rewarded him big time. There are obviously more than a few teams who would not think of giving Ribeiro that kind of money, so in their eyes he is "overpaid." In Dallas' eyes, they locked up their best offensive threat for five years at fair market value.

So say Dallas feels that Ribeiro's demands of \$5 million per season (assumption) were too high. They let him play out the season, and he puts up 88 points (currently on pace for). He gets a few offers in free agency, and eventually signs with Team X for \$4.5 million per season. Dallas saves nearly \$500,000 per season! Trouble is, they are now without their best offensive player and top center. They struggle to find someone on the market, since most of the good young centers have already been re-signed (and largely "overpaid") by their own clubs, so they eventually are forced to coerce Alexei Yashin out of Russia. They do not end up winning a single game in 08-09 while Ribeiro sets all the records staring for Team X!

Exaggeration aside, I hope this pseudo-rant helped clarify my view on why the logic behind "overpayment" is extremely flawed. Ribeiro is a star in this league, and Dallas paid him like one. Sure, they might have given up a bit of extra cash, but if he can continue to play well that is pretty much a moot point. Sure, he could regress back into the floater he was in Montreal, but he is playing – and talking – like a new, more mature player now that he has found a home in Big D.

If you want to talk more about my view on overpayment or the current free agent (RFA or UFA) situation in the NHL, [hit me up on my blog](#) .