

2025 Mock Baseball Arbitration Brief

Kyle Isbel v. Kansas City Royals

Submission on behalf of Kyle Isbel

Filing Number: \$3.6 M

Prepared by Addison Turnauer on December 14, 2025

This brief is a supplemental writing sample for my portfolio to showcase my ability to apply the Major League Baseball Basic Agreement to a player's performance record and advocate within the salary arbitration framework. All filing numbers referenced are for illustrative purposes only, and this brief does not constitute an official filing.

I. Introduction

This submission analyzes the contributions and value of Kyle Isbel (“the Player” or “Mr. Isbel”) for purposes of determining his appropriate salary for the 2026 season with the Kansas City Royals (“the Club” or “the Royals”). Under Article VI(E) of the Major League Baseball (“MLB”) Collective Bargaining Agreement (“CBA”), the Arbitration Panel must consider: (1) the quality of the Player’s contribution to his Club during the past season (“platform season”); (2) the length and consistency of his career contributions; (3) 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 of the Club, including its League standing and attendance as an indication of public acceptance.¹

Mr. Isbel has accrued 4.043 years of Major League service, making him eligible for salary arbitration for the second time with the Royals.² The Player has filed for a salary of \$3.6 million, while the Club has filed for \$2.8 million, establishing a midpoint of \$3.2 million.

During his 2025 platform season, Mr. Isbel delivered exceptional defensive performance, improved offensive consistency, and reliable availability as the Royals’ primary center fielder. The Club’s filing does not adequately reflect the Player’s overall value. When assessed under the factors mandated by the CBA, particularly (1) his elite defensive metrics and overall run-prevention value; (2) his documented growth in offensive production across multiple seasons; and (3) his favorable comparisons to similarly situated outfielders, the Player’s filing of \$3.6 million most accurately represents his contributions and the market precedent established by comparable players. For these reasons, and as further established herein, the Arbitration Panel should award Mr. Isbel a salary of \$3.6 million for the 2026 season.

¹ Major League Baseball Players Association. *2022–2026 Basic Agreement*, Article VI(E), at 17.

² <https://www.mlb.com/player/kyle-isbel-664728>

II. Quality of the Player's Contribution During the Platform Season

Kyle Isbel - 2025 Platform Year Offensive Statistics and MLB Rank Among Center Fielders ³										
G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	SB	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
135	368	42	94	4	33	4	.255	.301	.353	.654
16th	23rd	27th	20th	33rd	26th	42nd	17th	24th	36th	32nd

During his 2025 platform season, Mr. Isbel primarily hit ninth in the batting lineup, producing competitive numbers among Major League center fielders, despite hitting in a traditionally low-leverage role. Mr. Isbel ranked 16th in games played, 20th in hits, and 17th in batting average. His 368 at-bats also ranked among the highest for center fielders, showcasing the Player's durability and the Club's reliance on him as a regular starter. His ability to generate consistent contact and contribute valuable run production from the lower third of the order goes beyond what the Club could have reasonably anticipated from his lineup placement. Mr. Isbel's offensive performance remained competitive and within the top half of the league's center-field cohort. These results demonstrate that Mr. Isbel's offensive contributions substantially exceeded expectations of a center fielder hitting lower in the lineup and support awarding a salary that accurately reflects his performance relative to similarly situated center fielders.

Kyle Isbel - 2025 Platform Year Offensive Statistics and Team Rank ⁴										
G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	SB	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
135	368	42	94	4	33	4	.255	.301	.353	.654
6th	6th	6th	6th	8th	6th	6th	7th	10th	11th	11th

Within the Club, Mr. Isbel's offensive performance stood out relative to his peers. He finished sixth on the team in games played, at-bats, runs scored, hits, and RBI, proving himself to be a reliable everyday contributor whose presence supported the Royals throughout the full

³ <https://baseballsavant.mlb.com/>

⁴ <https://www.mlb.com/royals/stats/ops?playerPool=ALL>

season. His consistency highlights his importance to the Club's offensive composition, and he provided steady, competitive value despite hitting lower in the order. Mr. Isbel's contributions helped lead the Royals to a competitive 82-80 season, and the Club drew its highest attendance in recent years. These team-level rankings confirm that Mr. Isbel delivered significantly more offensive production than would typically be expected from his lineup position, reinforcing that his requested salary most accurately captures his true value to the Royals.

Kyle Isbel - 2025 Platform Year Defensive Statistics and MLB Rank Among Center Fielders						
OAA	FRV	DRS	Feet Covered	Putouts	ARM	Fielding %
+12	+10	+9	37	329	0	.997
6th	6th	8th	7th	6th	Above average	3rd

In addition to his reliable offensive output, Mr. Isbel's greatest value to the Royals during his platform season came from his exceptional performance in center field. Mr. Isbel has established himself as one of the premier defensive center fielders in Major League Baseball. His +12 Outs Above Average, +10 Fielding Run Value, and 329 putouts placed him within the top six center fielders in the league. His 37 feet covered per play ranked seventh among Major League center fielders, illustrating elite range and closing speed that enabled him to track down batted balls most outfielders cannot reach. The Player's steady arm value limited opposing baserunners and contributed to the Club's overall run-prevention efforts. Mr. Isbel's .997 fielding percentage ranked third among MLB center fielders, further demonstrating his reliability and near-flawless execution this season. These metrics confirm that Mr. Isbel's defensive skillset delivered substantial run-prevention value that materially enhanced the Club's overall performance and greatly exceeded that of an average center fielder, strongly supporting the Player's requested salary.

III. Length and Consistency of Career Contributions

Kyle Isbel - Career Offensive Statistics											
Year	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	SB	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
2021	28	76	16	21	1	7	2	.276	.337	.434	.771
2022	106	256	32	54	5	28	9	.211	.264	.340	.604
2023	91	292	45	70	5	34	7	.240	.282	.380	.662
2024	136	384	62	88	8	42	11	.229	.287	.367	.654
2025	135	368	42	94	4	33	4	.255	.301	.353	.654
Career	496	1376	197	327	23	144	33	.238	.288	.365	.653

Across five Major League seasons, Mr. Isbel has demonstrated steady and dependable offensive production, gradually expanding his role within the Royals' lineup while maintaining a stable offensive profile. His career totals: 1,376 at-bats, 327 hits, 197 runs scored, and 144 RBI, demonstrate sustained contribution and multi-season reliability as his responsibilities increased from a developmental outfielder in 2021 to an everyday player by 2024. As Mr. Isbel's opportunities increased, so did his offensive impact. Mr. Isbel's offensive production, measured by improvements in total hits, run production, and overall efficiency at the plate, shows growth over time, with his career .653 OPS establishing a competitive baseline for a center fielder who hits in the lower third of the order.

When compared to Major League center fielders, Mr. Isbel's three-year offensive profile from 2023 to 2025 is even more favorable: his .241 batting average and .367 slugging percentage both exceed the 2025 center field positional averages of .216 and .332, respectively. These positional advantages, combined with his year-to-year growth and reliable level of production, reinforce that Mr. Isbel's offensive performance exceeds expectations for his role and supports awarding the Player's requested salary.

Kyle Isbel - Career Defensive Statistics							
Year	OAA	FRV	DRS	Feet Covered	Putouts	ARM	Fielding %
2021	1	+1	0	33.7	46	0	1.000
2022	12	+9	+1	38.6	184	-2	.979
2023	10	+9	+13	36.9	200	-1	.995
2024	9	+7	+5	37	293	-1	.987
2025	+12	+10	+9	37	329	0	.997
Career	+8.8	+7.2	+5.6	36.9	1,052	-0.8	.993

Mr. Isbel's defensive career reflects elite defensive work in individual seasons and a sustained, repeatable pattern of excellence spanning his entire Major League tenure. Over five seasons, he has consistently ranked among the most effective defensive center fielders in Major League Baseball, as evidenced by his career averages of +8.8 OAA, +7.2 FRV, +5.6 DRS, and 36.9 feet covered per play. These metrics demonstrate his exceptional range, play-conversion ability, and consistent run prevention that exceed the 2025 center-field positional averages of +4.81 OAA, -0.94 FRV, -0.005 DRS, and 33.9 feet covered per play.

The difference between Mr. Isbel and the average Major League center fielder showcases his advanced defensive skill set and the extent to which his performance notably enhanced the Royals' overall defensive profile. Mr. Isbel's .993 career fielding percentage through 1,052 putouts demonstrates both durability and the Club's continued reliance on him as the primary defender in a critical defensive role. Mr. Isbel's career defensive record demonstrates a level of long-term defensive quality that exceeds that of an average Major League center fielder, placing him in the upper tier of defenders at his position. His consistent ability to save runs, cover significant ground, and execute plays with near-flawless precision provides compelling support for the Player's requested salary.

IV. Past Salary Compensation

Kyle Isbel - Past Player Salary Compensation ⁵				
Year	Age	Team	Salary	Service Time
2021	24	Kansas City Royals	\$570,500	0.000
2022	25	Kansas City Royals	\$701,900	1.000
2023	26	Kansas City Royals	\$727,500	2.000
2024	Arbitration Year 1		\$758,250	3.000
2025	Arbitration Year 2		\$1,750,000	4.043

Having already completed one arbitration cycle in which he received a modest salary increase to \$1.75 million, Mr. Isbel now enters his second year of eligibility with a substantially stronger platform season and a more significant record of contribution.

V. Comparative Baseball Salaries

Under Article VI(E) of the Basic Agreement, appropriate comparables include players in the same service class as Mr. Isbel or those not more than one service class above. The following five center fielders, each of whom provided substantial value in his respective platform seasons and received compensation exceeding the midpoint, offer meaningful benchmarks for evaluating Mr. Isbel's requested salary. These comparables progress from Mr. Isbel's closest statistical twin, Harrison Bader, to similarly situated second-year eligible players, Byron Buxton, George Springer, and Kevin Kiermaier, and upper-tier third-year eligible center fielder Jackie Bradley Jr. Together, these players set the standard within the established marketplace for high-value defensive center fielders. Mr. Isbel's 2025 platform season performance was competitive with, and in several key respects, exceeded that of each comparable player, making a strong case for the reasonableness of his requested salary.

⁵ https://www.sportrac.com/mlb/player/_/id/26123/kyle-isbel

A. Harrison Bader - Platform Year 2022 - \$4.7 million⁶

Harrison Bader spent his 2022 platform season with the St. Louis Cardinals and New York Yankees and was awarded \$4.7 million in his second year of arbitration. Mr. Bader is Mr. Isbel's closest statistical twin and provides the most direct benchmark for evaluating his performance. Because Mr. Isbel's career spans five Major League seasons, Mr. Bader's five-year performance record from 2018 to 2022 was reviewed alongside his platform year.

Kyle Isbel - 2025 Platform Year and Career Offensive Statistics										
G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	SB	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
135	368	42	94	4	33	4	.255	.301	.353	.654
496	1376	197	327	23	144	33	.238	.288	.365	.653
Harrison Bader - 2022 Platform Year and 2018-2022 Offensive Statistics ⁷										
G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	SB	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
86	292	38	73	5	30	17	.250	.294	.356	.650
505	1,491	219	366	49	167	55	.242	.320	.409	.730

The offensive comparison between Mr. Isbel and Mr. Bader shows similar rate statistics with several important advantages for Mr. Isbel in overall contribution. While both players posted comparable slash lines in their platform seasons, Mr. Isbel sustained his performance over 49 more games and 76 more at-bats, demonstrating greater availability and dependability. His larger offensive workload resulted in higher totals in hits, RBI, and runs scored, despite operating from the lower portion of the lineup, whereas Mr. Bader typically hit in the middle of the order. When compared to Mr. Bader's five-year offensive profile, Mr. Isbel's results establish him as a comparably consistent and more reliable player whose offensive stability meaningfully strengthens his arbitration case.

⁶ https://www.espn.ph/mlb/story/_/id/33671558/harrison-bader-agrees-104m-2-year-contract-st-louis-cardinals?utm

⁷ <https://www.mlb.com/player/harrison-bader-664056?stats=career-r-fielding-mlb&year=2025>

Kyle Isbel - 2025 Platform Year and Career Defensive Statistics						
OAA	FRV	DRS	Feet Covered	Putouts	ARM	Fielding %
+12	+10	+9	37	329	0	.997
+8.8	+7.2	+5.6	36.9	1,052	-0.8	.993
Harrison Bader - 2022 Platform Year and 2018-2022 Defensive Statistics						
OAA	FRV	DRS	Feet Covered	Putouts	ARM	Fielding %
+6	+5	+1	35.6	205	0	1.000
+10.6	+9.6	+8.4	36.12	1,065	0.4	.989

Defensively, Mr. Isbel delivered a stronger platform season than Mr. Bader. While both players are recognized as elite defenders, Mr. Isbel outperformed Mr. Bader across every metric, generating 100% more OAA, 100% more FRV, and over 800% more DRS during their platform seasons. Mr. Isbel's 37 feet covered per play exceeded Mr. Bader's 35.6 feet covered by 1.4 feet, exemplifying his superior range and closing speed. Mr. Isbel paired this performance with an exceptional .993 career fielding percentage, exceeding Mr. Bader's .989 fielding percentage and reaffirming his reliability and defensive consistency.

These offensive and defensive comparisons demonstrate that Mr. Isbel outperformed Mr. Bader across a broader offensive and defensive workload and provided greater overall value during their respective platform seasons. Mr. Bader received \$4.7 million in his second year of arbitration eligibility, a figure set in the 2023 salary environment. Adjusting for salary inflation, escalating league revenues, and the increased premium placed on elite, defense-first center fielders, Mr. Bader's award would equate to an even higher number today. Accordingly, because Mr. Isbel exceeded Mr. Bader in defensive performance and matched his offensive output with greater availability from a lower lineup spot, the Player's filing of \$3.6 million is both reasonable and conservative.

B. Byron Buxton - Platform Year 2021 - \$7.3 million⁸

Byron Buxton played his 2021 platform season with the Minnesota Twins and was projected to earn \$7.3 million in his second year of arbitration eligibility before avoiding arbitration through a long-term contract extension, providing an upper-end comparison within Mr. Isbel's service class. Mr. Buxton's five-year performance record, from 2017 to 2021, was evaluated along with his platform year.

Kyle Isbel - 2025 Platform Year and Career Offensive Statistics										
G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	SB	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
135	368	42	94	4	33	4	.255	.301	.353	.654
496	1,376	197	327	23	144	33	.238	.288	.365	.653
Byron Buxton - 2021 Platform Year and 2017-2021 Offensive Statistics ⁹										
G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	SB	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
61	235	50	72	19	32	9	.306	.358	.647	1.005
355	1,188	194	307	58	160	59	.246	.287	.470	.757

Mr. Buxton's platform season featured exceptional power production, reflecting a different offensive role than Mr. Isbel's. However, Mr. Buxton appeared in only 61 games during his platform season, while Mr. Isbel delivered a steady, contact-oriented offense over 135 games, providing greater availability and reliability. Despite hitting primarily from the lower third of the lineup, Mr. Isbel offered stable offensive contributions consistent with the expectations for a high-impact defensive center fielder. These differences highlight Mr. Isbel's greater total offensive contribution and dependability relative to an upper-tier comparator within the same service class.

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<https://www.pinstripealley.com/2021/11/27/22804206/new-york-yankees-trade-target-byron-buxton-minnesota-twins-star-healthy-center-fielder-hicks?utm>

⁹ <https://www.mlb.com/player/byron-buxton-621439>

Kyle Isbel - 2025 Platform Year and Career Defensive Statistics						
OAA	FRV	DRS	Feet Covered	Putouts	ARM	Fielding %
+12	+10	+9	37	329	0	.997
+8.8	+7.2	+5.6	36.9	1,052	-0.8	.993
Byron Buxton - 2021 Platform Year and 2017-2021 Defensive Statistics						
OAA	FRV	DRS	Feet Covered	Putouts	ARM	Fielding %
+7	+8	+13	33.9	138	+1	.994
+10.2	+7.25	+11.6	34.5	958	+1.5	.994

Mr. Isbel compares exceptionally well to Mr. Buxton defensively, who is widely regarded as one of the premier center fielders in Major League Baseball and a benchmark for elite defensive performance. Mr. Isbel exceeded Mr. Buxton in OAA, FRV, and feet covered per play in their platform seasons, demonstrating a higher range and run-prevention capability across a significantly larger number of plays. Mr. Isbel's 329 putouts far surpassed Mr. Buxton's 138, indicating a greater defensive workload in their platform seasons and the Royals' reliance on him to anchor the outfield. Mr. Isbel's .997 fielding percentage also exceeded Mr. Buxton's .994 fielding percentage, emphasizing a higher level of precision and play-making ability in center field.

Although Mr. Buxton avoided arbitration by signing a long-term contract extension; his elite defensive profile in his second year of arbitration eligibility remains valuable for comparative purposes. Mr. Buxton's 2021 platform season resulted in compensation exceeding \$9 million through his extension, reflecting the high market valuation assigned to elite, run-preventing center fielders. Therefore, Mr. Isbel's request of \$3.6 million, despite offering greater availability and a higher defensive value, is notably conservative and well within the supported range for his service class.

C. George Springer - Platform Year 2018 - \$12.0 million¹⁰

George Springer completed his 2018 platform season with the Houston Astros and settled for \$12 million in his second year of arbitration, serving as a market-ceiling within Mr. Isbel's service class. Mr. Springer's five-year offensive profile from 2014 to 2018 was reviewed for comparison against Mr. Isbel's career statistics, while his defensive evaluation relies on three years of available data, from 2016 to 2018.

Kyle Isbel - 2025 Platform Year and Career Offensive Statistics										
G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	SB	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
135	368	42	94	4	33	4	.255	.301	.353	.654
496	1,376	197	327	23	144	33	.238	.288	.365	.653
George Springer - 2018 Platform Year and 2014-2018 Offensive Statistics ¹¹										
G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	SB	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
140	544	102	144	22	71	6	.265	.346	.434	.780
622	2,419	434	642	121	330	41	.263	.355	.468	.823

Mr. Springer's 2018 platform season reflects an elite offensive campaign, characterized by significant power production, a strong on-base profile, and middle-of-the-order impact, establishing him as one of the most productive offensive center fielders in Major League Baseball. His power-driven performance informs the upper bounds of compensation for second-year eligible center fielders. By contrast, Mr. Isbel's offensive role is centered around reliable contact and competitive at-bats from the lower third of the lineup. While their profiles differ, the comparison highlights the broad range of production levels within the same service class and demonstrates that arbitration awards for center fielders, even those with different offensive roles, are heavily influenced by the overall value a player provides to their club.

¹⁰ https://www.sportrac.com/mlb/player/_/id/14174/george-springer

¹¹ <https://www.mlb.com/player/george-springer-543807>

Kyle Isbel - 2025 Platform Year and Career Defensive Statistics						
OAA	FRV	DRS	Feet Covered	Putouts	ARM	Fielding %
+12	+10	+9	37	329	0	.997
+8.8	+7.2	+5.6	36.9	1,052	-0.8	.993
George Springer - 2018 Platform Year and 2016-2018 Defensive Statistics						
OAA	FRV	DRS	Feet Covered	Putouts	ARM	Fielding %
+0	+1	-2	33.6	252	0	.993
-0.3	N/A	+2.3	32.8	803	N/A	.996

When evaluating both their platform seasons and three-year defensive profiles, Mr. Isbel compares exceptionally well to Mr. Springer, outperforming him in every metric, including OAA, FRV, and DRS. Mr. Isbel's 37 feet covered per play exceeded Mr. Springer's 33.6 feet covered by 3.4 feet, demonstrating greater range and run-prevention value. Mr. Isbel's fielding percentage of .997 through 329 putouts surpassed Mr. Springer's .993 through 252 putouts, demonstrating greater reliability and play-conversion efficiency as the Royals' primary center fielder. When extended across their multi-year defensive windows, Mr. Isbel continued to exceed nearly all of Mr. Springer's measures, consistently generating a stronger OAA and DRS, and maintaining a more stable defensive profile. These distinctions confirm that Mr. Isbel delivered a higher level of defensive impact than Mr. Springer in both platform-year and multi-year contexts.

Mr. Springer received \$12 million in his second year of arbitration eligibility, reflecting the arbitration market's willingness to compensate high-value center field talent accordingly. What Mr. Isbel lacked in comparison to Mr. Springer in offensive production, he made up for defensively. Mr. Isbel's requested salary of \$3.6 million, therefore, falls well within the supported range and sits on the lower end for players providing comparable defensive and everyday value to their Clubs.

D. Kevin Kiermaier - Platform Year 2017 - \$5.5 million¹²

Kevin Kiermaier played his 2017 platform season with the Tampa Bay Rays and would have entered his second year of arbitration eligibility with a projected salary of \$5.5 million before signing a long-term contract extension. Mr. Kiermaier's four-year offensive profile from 2014 to 2017 was reviewed for comparison to Mr. Isbel's career statistics, while his defensive evaluation relies solely on his 2017 platform season due to limited data from earlier seasons.

Kyle Isbel - 2025 Platform Year and Career Offensive Statistics										
G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	SB	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
135	368	42	94	4	33	4	.255	.301	.353	.654
496	1,376	197	327	23	144	33	.238	.288	.365	.653
Kevin Kiermaier - 2017 Platform Year and 2014-2017 Offensive Statistics ¹³										
G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	SB	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
98	380	56	105	15	39	16	.276	.388	.450	.788
462	1,582	208	415	47	151	60	.262	.321	.433	.753

Mr. Kiermaier's 2017 platform season reflects an offensive profile typical of a defense-first center fielder such as Mr. Isbel, marked by modest power, steady contact, and situational reliability from the top of the order. This profile mirrors that of Mr. Isbel's for the Royals in 2025, as he similarly offered contact-oriented production, competitive plate appearances, and lineup stability from the lower third of the lineup. These similarities illustrate the common framework for premium defensive center fielders and reinforce the appropriateness of comparing the two players. Despite opposite lineup roles, Mr. Isbel and Mr. Kiermaier's alignment in contribution and overall impact confirms that Mr. Isbel fits well within the established salary range for defense-first center fielders.

¹² <https://salarysport.com/baseball/player/kevin-kiermaier/>

¹³ <https://www.mlb.com/player/kevin-kiermaier-595281>

Kyle Isbel - 2025 Platform Year and Career Defensive Statistics						
OAA	FRV	DRS	Feet Covered	Putouts	ARM	Fielding %
+12	+10	+9	37	329	0	.997
+8.8	+7.2	+5.6	36.9	1,052	-0.8	.993
Kevin Kiermaier - 2017 Platform Year						
OAA	FRV	DRS	Feet Covered	Putouts	ARM	Fielding %
+12	N/A	+10	37.2	242	N/A	.976

Mr. Kiermaier was one of the premier run-preventing center fielders during his 2017 platform season, and Mr. Isbel's 2025 performance compares favorably across every available metric. While FRV and ARM metrics are not available for Mr. Kiermaier's platform season, the available defensive measures provide a sufficient basis for comparison. Mr. Isbel matched Mr. Kiermaier's OAA and remained competitive in DRS and feet covered per play, demonstrating consistently strong range and run-prevention value. Mr. Isbel maintained a higher fielding percentage of .997 through 87 more putouts than Mr. Kiermaier, illustrating his expanded defensive workload and dependability. Mr. Isbel's defensive reliability, range, and play-conversion ability firmly place him within the defensive profile of established second year arbitration salary levels.

Even though Mr. Kiermaier avoided arbitration and instead signed a long-term contract extension, his projected second year arbitration salary was \$5.5 million, and the figure remains useful for understanding the compensation market for defense-first center fielders. That benchmark appropriately reflects the premium placed on elite defensive center fielders. Given that Mr. Isbel provided similarly strong comparable value during his platform season, while offering greater availability and more stability, his requested salary of \$3.6 million sits comfortably below this benchmark and is fully supported by arbitration precedent.

E. Jackie Bradley Jr. - Platform Year 2018 - \$8.55 million¹⁴

Jackie Bradley Jr. completed his 2018 platform season with the Boston Red Sox and was awarded \$8.55 million in his third year of arbitration, providing a CBA-permitted upper-tier defensive ceiling comparable within one service class above Mr. Isbel. Mr. Bradley's five-year offensive profile from 2014 to 2018 was reviewed for comparison with Mr. Isbel's career statistics, and his defensive evaluation relies on three years of available data, from 2016 to 2018.

Kyle Isbel - 2025 Platform Year and Career Offensive Statistics										
G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	SB	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
135	368	42	94	4	33	4	.255	.301	.353	.654
496	1,376	197	327	23	144	33	.238	.288	.365	.653
Jackie Bradley Jr. - 2018 Platform Year and 2014-2018 Offensive Statistics ¹⁵										
G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	SB	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
144	474	76	111	13	59	17	.234	.314	.403	.717
634	2,119	316	509	67	282	45	.238	.317	.411	.728

Although Mr. Bradley and Mr. Isbel served in different offensive roles, their platform year profiles reflect similar contact-oriented production typical of defense-first center fielders. Mr. Bradley's rate statistics reveal modest offensive output spread across 144 games, a workload comparable to Mr. Isbel's 2025 platform season. By comparison, Mr. Isbel produced a higher batting average while operating from a lower-leverage position in the lineup. Mr. Isbel's disciplined approach, situational hitting, and reliable contact quality provided the Royals with dependable offensive value consistent with the responsibilities of a center fielder. These similarities, together with Mr. Isbel's higher batting average, confirms that his offensive performance fits within the established range of comparable center fielders.

¹⁴ https://www.sportrac.com/mlb/player/_/id/12166/jackie-bradley-jr?utm

¹⁵ <https://www.mlb.com/player/jackie-bradley-jr-598265>

Kyle Isbel - 2025 Platform Year and Career Defensive Statistics						
OAA	FRV	DRS	Feet Covered	Putouts	ARM	Fielding %
+12	+10	+9	37	329	0	.997
+8.8	+7.2	+5.6	36.9	1,052	-0.8	.993
Jackie Bradley Jr. - 2018 Platform Year and 2016-2018 Defensive Statistics						
OAA	FRV	DRS	Feet Covered	Putouts	ARM	Fielding %
+13	+14	+1	35.5	299	+3	.984
+12.6	N/A	+9.3	35.3	964	N/A	.988

Defensively, Mr. Bradley has been regarded as one of the most effective center fielders in Major League Baseball, and Mr. Isbel's 2025 platform season metrics compare favorably. Mr. Isbel exceeded Mr. Bradley's platform year marks in DRS and feet covered per play, demonstrating a higher range and play-conversion efficiency. Mr. Isbel's .997 fielding percentage through 329 putouts significantly outperformed Mr. Bradley's .984 through 299 putouts, showcasing Mr. Isbel's exceptional reliability and run-prevention value over a larger defensive workload.

Mr. Bradley received \$8.55 million in his third year of arbitration eligibility following his 2018 platform season, a figure that reflects the strong market for elite defensive center fielders, which would equate to a higher figure in today's arbitration environment. The comparative evidence demonstrates that Mr. Isbel outperformed Mr. Bradley in several key areas, such as batting average, defensive runs saved, feet covered per play, and fielding percentage, showcasing his offensive dependability, elite defensive range, and near-flawless execution. Given these demonstrated advantages, Mr. Isbel's requested salary of \$3.6 million sits well within the range supported by Mr. Bradley's precedent and remains below the level typically awarded to players providing comparable overall value.

VI. Existence of Physical or Mental Defects

Both parties acknowledge that Mr. Isbel reported no physical or mental defects during the 2025 season or at any point relevant to this proceeding. He remained healthy and available throughout the platform year, demonstrating consistent durability as the Royals' primary center fielder. Accordingly, there is no evidence of any condition that would diminish his value or warrant a reduction in the Player's requested salary.

VII. Performance of the Club

In 2023, the Royals had the fourth-worst season in franchise history, going 56-106 during their first year under new management, while Mr. Isbel appeared in only 91 games. In 2024, Mr. Isbel played in 45 more games, and the Club rebounded significantly, finishing 87-76, one of the best records in recent franchise history. The Royals advanced to the 2024 American League Division Series, where they lost in four games to the New York Yankees. In those four games, Mr. Isbel recorded nine at-bats, posting a .222 batting average and a .300 on-base percentage, and drove in one of the Royals' only 12 runs of the whole series.

In 2025, the Royals continued their competitive trajectory, finishing 82-80 and remaining in postseason contention for much of the year. The Royals drew 1,748,801 fans to Kauffman Stadium, an increase from the prior season. This rise in attendance indicates growing public acceptance and heightened engagement as the Club sustained its improved performance. Throughout this period, Mr. Isbel's consistent presence in center field contributed to the perception of increased defensive stability and overall reliability, reinforcing his role in the Club's broader resurgence. Under Article VI(E), these indicators of public acceptance further demonstrate that Mr. Isbel's performance materially supported the Club during a period of positive organizational momentum.

VIII. Conclusion

For all the reasons set forth above, the evidence demonstrates that Kyle Isbel provided the Royals with exceptional value during his 2025 platform season and throughout his five-year Major League career. Mr. Isbel (1) delivered elite defensive performance that consistently exceeded positional averages and placed him among the top center fielders in Major League Baseball in OAA, FRV, DRS, feet covered per play, and fielding percentage; (2) produced competitive offensive value, including reliable contact quality and improved year-to-year efficiency, despite operating from a low-leverage lineup position; and (3) demonstrated availability and durability as the Club's primary center fielder, providing a stabilizing presence that materially supported the team's performance during a period of organizational improvement.

When judged against comparable second-year arbitration-eligible center fielders Harrison Bader, Byron Buxton, George Springer, and Kevin Kiermaier, Mr. Isbel consistently matched or exceeded the benchmarks established by this group. The comparative record shows that Mr. Isbel (1) delivered a stronger defensive platform season than Mr. Bader and Mr. Springer, generating twice the OAA and FRV, and more than eight times the DRS; and (2) he provided significantly greater availability and defensive workload than Mr. Buxton and Mr. Kiermaier, recording more games and putouts while maintaining a higher fielding percentage. The established salary range for these defense-first center fielders spans from \$4.7 million to \$12 million, placing Mr. Isbel's requested salary squarely within, and notably on the lower end of this well-supported market.

Based on the evidence presented in this brief and as would be further established in oral argument, the Player respectfully requests that the Panel find his filing of \$3.6 million to be a more accurate reflection of his present value than the Club's filing of \$2.8 million and conclude that his appropriate salary for the 2026 season lies above the \$3.2 million midpoint.