



One of the allures of arguing about baseball is that fans can no longer, for lack of a better term, pull arguments out of their respective asses. With the wealth of readily available statistical data, anyone who offers an argument based purely on conjecture can be disproven with just a few clicks of a mouse.

At the same time, the same wealth of information that makes baseball one of the most fun sports to discuss also makes it much tougher to have a dissenting opinion. If a person has an opinion that goes against what the statistics say, whether it is a well-founded opinion or not, the [intelligentsia](#) is oh-so-quick to point out the folly in the logic.

All of which brings me to Scott Kazmir. The deadline for teams to make [qualifying offers](#) to their impending free agents passed on Monday, and the Indians made the obvious decision to present Ubaldo Jimenez with a QO, which he is sure to decline and which will likely result in the Indians gaining a [sandwich pick](#) in next year's draft (plus that sweet, sweet [draft slot money](#)). The Indians also made the nearly-as-obvious decision to forego extending a QO to Scott Kazmir, which makes him a free agent unencumbered by draft pick compensation. Just another instance of a savvy front office taking care of some routine offseason business.

Except that I don't agree with the second decision. I would have extended Scott Kazmir a qualifying offer. I know statistically that makes very little sense. Kazmir was a 1.1 WAR pitcher last season, (that's according to Baseball Reference, FanGraphs had him at 2.5 WAR, which would make him well worth the \$14 million QO) and with his past history of injury and ineffectiveness, it would be ludicrous to guarantee \$14 million to Kazmir for one year. Hell, I

think Keith Law gets a sharp pain in his temporal lobe at just the thought of extending Scott Kazmir a qualifying offer.

Yet despite all of that, I still would've done it, and here's why:

1. There's no such thing as a bad one-year contract.

I like one-year deals for players because if something goes wrong, as it has for Scott Kazmir in the past, the team can cut bait without worrying about having dead money on the books for the following season.

Most people seem to agree that Kazmir is in line to receive a [multi-year deal](#) . [MLBTradeRumors.com](#) pegs a likely Kazmir contract at [two years, \\$16 million](#) , but I would guess it creeps closer to \$20 million as the bidding season progresses. If people are okay with the Indians going to \$20 million over two years for Kazmir, which I think a lot of people are, then I don't think a \$14 million qualifying offer would have been that farfetched. In fact, I could make the argument that a one-year deal is more beneficial to the club, as it would have locked in a solid starter for next season while keeping the books clean for 2015 and beyond. It seems like the worst case scenario in extending Kazmir a QO would have been that he actually accepted it, and there are a lot worse things than locking in a rotation piece on a one year deal, even if it's an overpay.

2. Signing free agent starting pitchers is risky business.

Free agency is expensive, and the words 'Cleveland Indians' and 'expensive' typically don't go together (I was going to put in a joke about how X was expensive for fans going to Indians games, but I can't think of anything. Parking maybe? Beer that's not Miller Lite?). It may seem like there are a plethora of free agent starters out there, but the influx of national TV money means each team will have more money to spend, and teams are always searching for more pitching.

It's also important to keep in mind past free agent contracts. As [Buster Olney points out](#) (\$), the Cubs gave Edwin Jackson 4 years, \$52 million, and Jackson could at best be described as league average leading up to that offseason. Much scarier is that the Angels gave the [JUGS Machine](#) that is Joe Blanton a [two year, \\$15 million contract](#) to throw batting practice every fifth day.

In short, it's impossible to know how the free agent market will play out. By locking in Kazmir early, even at \$14 million for one year, the Indians could have avoided the starting pitcher free agent quagmire and focused whatever remaining dollars they had on the rest of the roster.

3. I think Scott Kazmir can be better in 2014 than he was in 2013.

This is where I leave the land of sabermetrics and enter the underworld that is conjecture. I watched a disproportionate number of Scott Kazmir starts, and here's what I saw: I saw a lefty who was [consistently sitting around 93-94 MPH](#). I saw a pitcher that had a sharp slider and deceptive changeup that kept hitters off the fastball. I saw a pitcher with good control and good command within the zone. Basically, I saw a guy who I thought was better than his numbers would suggest.

I'm not a scout, and there's a reason that I'm writing this article and not making the actual decisions for the Indians. But I still trust what my eyes and my gut tell me, and they're telling me that Scott Kazmir will be a good rotation piece in 2014, whether it costs \$14 million for one year or \$18 million for two. Hopefully the Indians can bring him back at the latter number, because they won't be able to get him at the former.

Jeremy Klein is an unabashed Cleveland Sports fan who is encouraged by what he's seen so far from Andrew Bynum, but wants to see him play extended minutes for a few weeks before handing the Cavaliers the sixth seed in the East. You can follow him on Twitter [@PapaBearJere](#)

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