

## Abstract

This thesis analyses the validity of the contract year phenomenon in the National Hockey League (NHL). This notion, that players increase their performance in the final year of their contract, has been supported by previous findings in baseball and basketball, but ice hockey has been largely overlooked thus far. This thesis further extends the analysis to the second-to-last year on players' contract and distinguishes between unrestricted and restricted free agents. Rigorous analysis of the NHL contract structure is employed to eliminate contract states that would bias the results. By using a within-player fixed effects model in combination with advanced performance metrics, it arrives at an unexpected conclusion that upcoming unrestricted free agents improve their performance in the second-to-last year of their contract, but there is not enough evidence to suggest that they improve in the final one. No performance increase was found for upcoming restricted free agents during the final two years of their contract.

<b>JEL Classification</b>	C23, D01, J30, J41, Z20
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