

Worth Every Penny by Austin Kim
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It's easy to forget that it hasn't even been a year since Mookie Betts became a Dodger. It's probably because he's already provided so many signature moments both in the regular season and playoffs during the year in which the Dodgers snapped a 32-year World Series drought. Each time the Dodgers fell short of winning the last game of the season since 2017, it felt like there was something missing. When the Dodgers traded for Mookie Betts, they were basically saying, "You're the missing piece. With you, we're going to win." And not only that, they doubled down on their bullishness on Mookie by inking him to a 12 year / \$365,000,000 extension in July, a day shy of opening day. And I'm here to share why he's proven himself to be worth every penny.

He's arguably the best player in baseball right now

I know people will kill me for this borderline heresy since Mike Trout is on the trajectory to become the GOAT. But... hear me out. Okay, this was more of a clickbait header, but I still think even if Mookie isn't the statistical machine Mike Trout is, he's just as consistent in being a top 3 player in the league over the last 4-5 years. He hits for average, has great speed on the bases, and is a premier defender. This year, he became the first outfielder to win 5 straight Gold Gloves since Ichiro won 10 straight in the AL from 2001-2010. And the biggest question mark about Betts coming to the Dodgers was his power, which was a fair question. Fenway Park is a much more hitter-friendly ballpark than Dodger Stadium. But this year, Betts put any doubts of his power to rest by hitting 16 homers (t-7th in the MLB) in the shortened season. He is a true 5-tool threat that can help his team win in a variety of ways, if not with his bat, then with his sublime defending and intelligent baserunning.

Proven winner and leader

Furthermore, we can definitively say that Mookie Betts brings more to a ballclub than just his skills. He's a winner and a leader. When the Dodgers backed up the Brinks trucks for Mookie, they were paying him just as much for his play as they were his clubhouse presence. From day one, Dodger incumbents like Justin Turner and Clayton Kershaw exuded with praise for Mookie's approach to the game. They talked up his insane level of focus and leadership. As much as he got paid, he made clear to his teammates throughout the season that what he cares most about as a Dodger is not the money, but to win championships. For instance, after facing a pitcher, Mookie immediately goes to the dugout and gives his scouting report to the next batter, doing whatever he can to positively sway the game in the Dodgers' favor. This says a lot for a player who already has the accolades and trophies that Mookie does. To be this locked in even after winning a World Series and getting the contract of a lifetime is rare, even amongst the best of the best.

And fortunately for us Dodger fans, Mookie backs up his talk with results. He won once with Boston and has already won once with the Dodgers while putting his fingerprints all over their 2018 and 2020 championship seasons, respectively.

The Dodgers are the 2020 World Series champions

Before this year, the Dodgers hadn't won the World Series since 1988. The Dodgers secured Mookie Betts not to bring another superstar to LA, but to give themselves the best chance to finally win the ever-so-elusive Commissioner's Trophy. After signing his landmark extension in July, Mookie said himself, "I'm here to win some rings and bring rings back to LA - that's all I'm focused on." The man wants to bring not just one but *multiple* rings and he's followed through so far in his first year with us. Not only did we win in his first year with us, but he was perhaps the biggest reason we did. Oh, and did we mention that he was listed on the all-MLB first team?

Conclusion

For the haters who said we gave up too much money to Mookie, you're wrong. If you haven't copped his jersey yet, please get one and wear it to the next Dodger game you get to go to (once covid-19 is over, of course). To all the Dodger fans out there, we are lucky to have this man on our team... let's enjoy every part of his contract, especially this current World Series win :)