

THE GREATNESS OF KINGS LEGEND DARYL EVANS

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A collage of Daryl Evans (Image credit: Chris Thomas)

Some would suggest that he is best known for scoring the overtime goal that capped off his team's miraculous playoff comeback against the juggernaut Edmonton Oilers in 1982. But while that moment is still held close to the hearts of Los Angeles Kings fans everywhere, Daryl Evans has since been known for what he has done off the ice. In addition to being the team's radio analyst since 1998-99, Evans is an ambassador to the Los Angeles Kings. From the countless Kings fans I have spoken to over the years, I hear nothing but the greatest things about Mr. Evans. On Saturday afternoon in Toronto, I was fortunate enough to witness first-hand what makes Daryl Evans not only a great ambassador but also a great man.

On Saturday afternoon, the Kings were preparing for their Sunday afternoon tilt with the Toronto Maple Leafs at the team's practice facility, the MasterCard Centre. Daryl Evans was on hand, periodically watching the team's practice while making time for the fans outside by signing autographs and having pictures taken. But what really astonished me was what happened after practice had ended.

When I first arrived at the MasterCard Centre approximately a half-hour before the Kings were set to take to the ice, there were already a number of fans waiting outside for autographs. But there was one young boy who stood out.

Decked out in his Jonathan Quick jersey, a Kings hat and a goaltender's helmet with the same armor design as his hero's to boot, you certainly didn't have to read between the lines to figure out what the child's objective was. Even from afar, you could tell not only how excited he was but how elated his family was for him.

"His name was Ethan and he is a goalie," Evans told me.



I met many die-hard Kings' fans and of all the weird, wild and uncanny memorabilia I've seen, never before had I seen a mask that looked just like Jonathan Quick's. Fans of the Kings, whether 20, 30 or 60 years old, could certainly learn something from young Ethan.

Well after practice was all said and done, Ethan and his family, like many of the kids, had formed a line outside of the player's dressing room in hopes of having their favourites sign a few autographs before heading out to the bus.

Standing away from the crowd, I saw the players come out to sign jerseys, hats and cards before making their way outside. As many happy children as there were, there was one in particular who didn't share the same joy.

I looked over and saw young Ethan in tears. As you can imagine, it was a heartbreaking sight because right then, I could only assume that the young netminder missed his chance to see his hero.

"When Quick came out, he got mobbed by a group and Ethan was forced out," Evans recounted. "Then Quick left and Ethan returned in tears to his parents that he had missed an opportunity to get his favorite player's autograph."

As heart-wrenching as it was to see Ethan so upset, it was even more so when he was consoled first by his mother and then his little sister who used her tiny arms to give her big brother a bear hug. However, I wasn't the only one to witness Ethan's anguish.

While I felt awful wishing there was something I could do, into the scene walked Daryl Evans in an effort to cheer poor Ethan up.

"I approached him and showed him my Stanley Cup rings and asked if he wanted to put them on and take a really cool picture, so he did," Evans told me. "Could tell he was still feeling the emptiness of missing Quick and they asked if there was any way to get Quick to sign his hat so I took it from him and went out to find Jonathan Quick and get it signed. He signed it and I returned to Ethan and his family."

Initially, I thought I saw Daryl Evans take Ethan's mask along with the hat out to Quick, but I could be wrong. Then again, any fan who has had the privilege of meeting Mr. Evans can attest to the astonishing modesty of the Kings legend, so I'll leave this up to the judgement of the reader.

Nevertheless, I had decided to stay at the rink for an extra few minutes, and I am certainly glad that I did.

Hearing the greatest things about the man assured me that Daryl Evans was the epitome of a class act, but to witness his kindness and generosity first-hand, however, was something very special. In all honesty, seeing Evans being the true professional that he is and help Ethan feel better reminded me of whenever I was upset

as a young child and my mother or father, or even one of my two older brothers, would do something or say something to make me feel better. But that was family. In this case, Daryl Evans approached a family he had never met before and did what he could to help in spite of that.

Mr. Evans described the feeling when he returned Ethan's freshly-signed memorabilia to him.

"The look on his face was priceless," Evans recalled. "Quick had made his day. I'm glad I was there to help Ethan through this very special moment. He and his family were all very grateful."

Had Jonathan Quick been able to sign Ethan's memorabilia in the first place, it would have been great. Things, however, don't always work out the way they're intended to. But this is exactly what makes blessings in disguises so significant – and so lasting.

Given the NHL's geographic-friendly schedule, the Los Angeles Kings only visit Toronto once a year, so you can imagine how much extra emphasis was placed by young Ethan and his family on meeting his favourite player.

There was no obligation and certainly no fanfare, but Daryl Evans went out of his way to make a child's day. He may give credit to Jonathan Quick but Daryl Evans, whether he will admit it or not, deserves much of the credit for turning Ethan's disappointing day into one he will remember for many years, and possibly even for the rest of his life.

As previously stated, every Kings fan I have ever been in contact with has had nothing but the greatest things to say about Daryl Evans. From his polite, affable demeanour to his generous, selfless ways (on top of his debonair fashion sense), Daryl Evans is a reminder that even on the worst days when it seems as if the world is full of cold, heartless cynics, there are those out there who possess hearts of gold. Many say that this is the most wonderful time of the year, where it's always better to give than to receive and Ethan and his family certainly discovered that first-hand on Saturday afternoon.

While I admit that I only met and spoke with Mr. Evans briefly, I can readily admit that I was proud. I was proud to be an avid supporter of the Los Angeles Kings, proud of the organization for employing a man of such quality for so many years and even proud of Daryl Evans himself.

When young Ethan sees his friends next, he will exuberantly tell the tale of how his brief heartbreak was suddenly lifted by a man who selflessly took it upon himself to make his day, his week and quite possibly his year.

Today, tomorrow and even 10 years from now, you can bet that while he recounts the tale of how Jonathan Quick signed his memorabilia and helped make his day, he will think of Daryl Evans and do exactly what myself and Kings' fans everywhere do:

Smile.