

DISCUSSING HOCKEY, BROADCASTING AND DYNASTY WITH KINGS LEGEND JIM FOX

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The 2014-15 season is a milestone year Los Angeles Kings legend Jim Fox. This season, the 54-year-old is celebrating his 25th anniversary as the color analyst for the Los Angeles Kings, having worked alongside Bob Miller for all these years. As per tradition, silver anniversaries are celebrated by receiving silver gifts – and what better gift than hockey's greatest prize, the Stanley Cup? But not jump ahead of ourselves just yet. After all, it is only October.

Since being drafted 10th-overall by the club in 1980, Jim Fox has been a part of the Los Angeles Kings family – first as a player and now as the team's television color analyst. Few names are as synonymous with the Los Angeles Kings than Jim Fox.

Earlier this week, I had the pleasure of speaking with Mr. Fox about a few important topics. Here is what he had to say:

This is your 25th year in the Kings' broadcast booth. Could you touch on your broadcasting career overall? What were some of your best moments? Worst? Most embarrassing? What have you learned from Bob Miller?

When I went into broadcasting it was a very difficult transition for me. I was learning on the job and for the first two or three years I felt that I was embarrassing myself every game. There were some games that I didn't even know the final score because I was so overwhelmed with the technical aspects. It is very difficult for me to think about "best" and "worst" moments since I try to just move on to the next game. I still have my players mentality when it comes to that.

As far as Bob helping me, it is probably in a different way than most people would think. Keep in mind that the job of a play-by-play man and an analyst are completely different. But, I have learned a lot just by observing Bob and the way he goes about things. Things like, don't take things too hard when things go wrong, the next play is a chance to get back on track. Preparation is something that applies to every job, but I have learned from Bob that there is no substitute for preparation and the only way to be comfortable on air is to be confident and the only way to be confident is to prepare. The biggest thing I have learned from Bob is to take pride in your work. Unlike many play-by-play men, I did not grow up

aspiring to be an announcer, but Bob has showed me how to take pride in what you do and that has helped me apply myself in a more efficient way.

What made you pursue a career in broadcasting? Did you have a preference of where you wanted to broadcast or were you set on Los Angeles as you spent your entire pro career there?

I never pursued the broadcasting job. It just found me. Timing is everything. When I retired for the Kings as a player, I went to work in the Community Relations department. A year or two after Wayne Gretzky joined the Kings, the management decided that it would be beneficial to split up the simulcast (radio and TV worked by the same announcers) and separate radio and TV. That meant there would be an opening for an analyst since Nick Nickson moved to radio play-by-play. I was recently retired and was the guy that was just available. The analyst position is exclusively an ex-player position and since I was with the Kings my whole playing career, there really would not be a spot open for me anywhere but the Kings. Once again, I didn't pursue it, it found me.

No significant changes were made to the Kings roster over the summer. How do you like this year's team despite the quiet off-season? How do you like their chances of repeating as champions this year?

I think to talk about repeating is not the way to approach things. You make the playoffs first. Especially in the Western Conference. The Kings have proven they can win it all, so if they did it again, I would not be surprised, but I also respect the quality of the other teams. The Kings being quiet is almost exclusively because of the salary cap. They don't have any room under the cap, so their options are limited. Actually, it is because of the long-term planning by (general manager) Dean Lombardi that the Kings have been able to keep the players they do have. It wasn't a choice to be quiet. The only way to make changes would have been to make trades, but, why would you change a group that has had as much success as this group? The Kings will be hoping that the cap goes up in the future to give them a little breathing room and maybe open up a few more options.

While I enjoyed both Doc Emrick's call for NBC and Jim Hughson's for CBC, I thoroughly enjoyed listening to yours and Bob Miller's call of Alec Martinez's Stanley Cup-winning goal. You sounded so excited on the call. Were you that jubilant or was it more a result of being so overcome with joy that you did not know what to say?

Bob and I were recording the game for a DVD that would be released later. This is different than a regular broadcast and that is why I reacted the way I did. We were doing it 100% for Kings fans and to me it was not a regular broadcast. We were working off of the NBC feed. We did not have control over replays, etc.

This is completely different than a normal broadcast, especially for the analyst. Most of my job is based on replays. Bob's job is to call the game live and that does not change regardless of who is producing the game. Once again, the play-by-play job is completely different from the analysts. I knew exactly what I was doing. I was trying to call it more for the Kings fans emotions as opposed to analyzing things. Also, in the situation where a team wins the Stanley Cup, there is not much analyzing to do. You let the moment speak for itself. Analyzing can come after the fact. If we were doing a regular broadcast, where we controlled the production, things probably would have been different for me. Not necessarily Bob because he is calling things as they happen. When the analyst talks, things have already happened. I have said it numerous times, I think Bob is the best at capturing the moment with the appropriate amount of energy. Not too much, not too little. Once again he hit it right on!

Growing up in Ottawa, I became a fan of the OHL's 67's. I followed Tyler Toffoli's career there in recent years, but before that, I followed yours there. In each of your three seasons in Ottawa, you reached the 100-point plateau including 166 points (65 goals) in your final year of junior. What motivated you to have such an outstanding junior career? How was it having now-Hall-of-Famer Brian Kilrea as a coach?

Motivation just comes from trying to win games. Seems simple, but that's it. If you win, that takes care of many other things. I feel fortunate to have played for Brian Kilrea because he always worked as hard as he could to put his players in the best possible position to have success. He also loved the creative part of the game and he encouraged his players to be as creative as possible. He always put a premium on being disciplined as a teammate, but he also found enough "room" to allow us to have fun. I loved playing for Brian!

Being 5' 8, were you ever told that you were too small to play in the NHL? If so, did you use that as extra motivation to make it to the big leagues? Did you take consolation knowing that Marcel Dionne was the same height or did size even matter?

I was told many, many times that my size would not allow me to make it, but I never thought about it in a fashion that motivated me. I was just trying to be the best player I could. I never had a doubt about playing in the NHL. I thought I could do it and it worked out, but other peoples thoughts about whether I could make it or not did not enter into motivating me. I understand that in certain circumstance a bigger player has an advantage, but I just tried to be as effective as I could. I certainly respected Marcel and the way he played, but size was not a big concern for me. I don't like when people say "he was good for his size". You are either good or not and you make do with what your body gives you.

Speaking of Ottawa, when the Kings were there in December, 2005, you were critical of Ottawa's Zdeno Chara fighting with LA's Tim Gleason very late in the game. After the contest, Ottawa coach Bryan Murray confronted you in the hallway about your comments. Were you caught off-guard by that? Have you and Bryan spoken since then? Were you able to laugh about it, especially when Bryan's brother, Terry, coached in LA?

Most of my criticism was directed at Bryan, not Chara and that is why Bryan was not happy with me. I wish it could have unfolded in a different manner, but it happened the way it did. I have talked to Bryan since and I just chalk it up to the emotions of professional sports. I never discussed it with Terry when he joined the Kings. I am not even sure if he was aware it happened.

Eight years ago when the Kings had one of the worst defenses in hockey and a carousel of goaltenders, did you ever imagine that they would win the Stanley Cup even just once, much less twice? And did you think it would have happened as quickly as it did?

I always believed the Kings would win the Cup. It took longer than I had hoped, but that made it so special when it happened. To win it twice is a blessing. I have learned a lot by watching this group. The management, the coaches and the players. They have taught me a ton about how to have team success. The bottom line is, the individuals that make up the Kings hockey department do not care about who gets the credit. They just work for each other. That is more important than any tactic or game plan!

From every Los Angeles Kings fan I run into who was met Mr. Fox, they have nothing but the greatest things to say – about how charming, how affable and how kind their team's TV analyst is. In addition, just to prove that there is no bias, I have heard similar testimonials from fans of the rival Anaheim Ducks and San Jose Sharks.

I wish a heartfelt congratulations to Jim Fox on his silver anniversary in the broadcast booth – and I, like every fan of the Los Angeles Kings, sincerely hope that the campaign ends with another championship.

Here's to 25 years – and many, many more.