

JORDAN WEAL LEADING LA KINGS TO STRONG PRESEASON START

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It may only be the preseason but while the established players are simply tuning up for the regular season, these exhibition games are for the younger bodies to prove their worth as they aim to crack the big club's roster. **Jordan Weal**, who narrowly missed the **Los Angeles Kings'** opening-night roster last season, has shown that he belongs with the big club this year once and for all.

There were quite a few positives to take from the Kings' opening two games of the preseason. The silver-and-black defeated the rival **Arizona Coyotes** twice — first in Bakersfield and then at home at **STAPLES Center**.

On Monday in Bakersfield, the Kings opened the preseason without a hitch, beating the **Desert Dogs** by a 5-1 score. Jordan Weal opened the scoring that evening with a power-play goal before winning the game the following night in overtime. Just watching Weal out there has Kings fans salivating at the notion of watching him on a regular basis once the real season starts, and rightfully so. But the early success of the silver-and-black has not been limited to what the 23-year-old can do.

Just 21 seconds after Weal opened the scoring on Monday night, **Nick Shore** scored a power-play tally of his own to put Los Angeles in the driver's seat early. Shore scored another goal while **Tyler Toffoli** added a pair of his own en route to a convincing win for Los Angeles.

NHL 3 on 3 Kings Coyotes in Bakersfield 9/21/2015



Nick Shore, who got his first taste at playing at the NHL level last season, did not have much of an offensive impact last season, but his prowess in the faceoff circle certainly made up for it, going 53.8 per cent.

In 34 games in his maiden season with the Kings, the 22-year-old had one goal and added six assists while logging an average of 11:05 of ice time. Shore, a native of Denver, will look to increase those numbers, especially with Los Angeles's previous faceoff specialist, **Jarret Stoll**, having left for Broadway this past summer.

On Tuesday, despite falling behind early, the Kings were able to stick to their game plan and ultimately come out victorious.

Nick Shore assisted on Los Angeles' first goal of the evening along with defenseman **Derek Forbort** as **Michael Mersch** picked up his first of the preseason.

Despite a solid rookie campaign in **Manchester** last season, it is unlikely that Michael Mersch will be joining the big club to start the regular season. With that said, the native of Park Ridge, Ill., will not be content to simply get some ice time before heading up the road to **Ontario**.

LA Kings vs. Coyotes Overtime @ Staples Center 9-22-2015



Just 61 seconds after Mersch's equalizer, **Brian O'Neill** — last year's **AHL** regular-season MVP — gave Los Angeles the lead as Weal and **Andy Andreoff** both set up the tally.

After a scoreless second, the Coyotes tied the game on a shorthanded goal nearly halfway through the third. Then, in overtime, new Kings defenseman **Christian Ehrhoff** took a point shot that was tipped in by Jordan Weal for the winner. Brian O'Neill also added an assist to go with his earlier goal.

In goal through the first two outings, **Jean-Francois Berube**, **Jhonas Enroth**, **Patrik Bartosak** and **Peter Budaj** have all got to see some action.

Berube and Bartosak split the duties on Monday with the latter stopping all nine shots he faced and on Tuesday, it was Enroth and Budaj alternating with Budaj facing 11 shots to Enroth's eight. Each netminder allowed a goal en route to their team's win.

It may only be a pair of games and still just the preseason but the Los Angeles Kings are back which has raised the excitement level of their fanbase who are not accustomed to seeing their team miss the playoffs.

With that extra layoff, you can be sure that the players, coaching staff and management are all eager to be back to business as they look to adjust to life with some key changes, notably the subtractions of **Justin Williams** and **Robyn Regehr**.

The Kings hit the ice again on Friday as they travel to the nearby **Honda Center** to take on the **Anaheim Ducks**. The silver-and-black will meet the Ducks again on Tuesday at STAPLES Center with a trip to Denver sandwiched in between as the Kings visit the **Colorado Avalanche** on Saturday.

Following that, the Kings head to **Las Vegas** for their annual **Frozen Fury** exhibition to take on the Avs once again.

It's so far, so good for the Los Angeles Kings and their fans as they hope for an exciting preseason before the real starts on Oct. 7.