

# DESPITE RICHARDS, WILLIAMS SITUATIONS, KINGS SHOULD NOT BE DETERRED

👤 Ryan Cowley 🕒 December 21, 2015

While neither story should come as much of a surprise to anyone, the Los Angeles Kings and their fans are only reminded of what unpleasantness lies ahead over the course of the next few weeks.

On Saturday, theScore reported that there are “no viable suitors” for Mike Richards while on Sunday, theScore reported that the Kings and pending free agent Justin Williams are not close to a new deal. The former was learned from LAKingsInsider’s Jon Rosen while the latter was told by Sportsnet’s Elliotte Friedman.

In regards to the Mike Richards issue, no teams, as of now, are willing to take on the 30-year-old’s hefty salary which will see him make \$6 million next season.

After eclipsing the 20-goal and 60-point plateau in his last four seasons with the Philadelphia Flyers, Mike Richards has failed to duplicate the same offensive prowess in Los Angeles. Of course, while it is fair to suggest that the Kings overall are not one of the higher-scoring teams in hockey, it does cause concern that a once-bona fide point-producer has failed to reach the 20-goal or even 50-point barrier just once in his four seasons with the silver-and-black.

Of course, while it seemed unfathomable – and even frustrating – that Dean Lombardi did not buy out the former Kitchener Ranger last summer, the decision was a testament to the Los Angeles GM’s loyalty, especially in an industry where that is rare, even more so in the salary cap era. Still, the Kings, for the time being, remain left with an onerous contract for a player who scored just five times in 53 games last season while accumulating a less-than-modest -10 rating. Not even a stint in the AHL in Manchester could give Richards the kick in the pants so many fans desperately wanted.

What does this mean? Well, this is what Jon Rosen wrote:

*“I’m getting the strong feeling, through multiple channels, that there hasn’t been any clear movement, and no viable suitors have stepped forward at this time. Similar to the attempt to move the center near the trading deadline, there are simply no proposals that make any sense for the Kings as of this writing. Could that change? Sure, it could change. But don’t expect Richards back next year..”*

He’s been a good leader, played a great role not only in his team’s Stanley Cup wins – particularly the former – in addition to being a fan favourite, but it is hard to fathom how the Kings can continue keeping

Richards on the payroll, barring a monumental resurgence next season. Unfortunately, fans have been wanting the forward to revamp his game for quite some time and it has only resulted in wishful thinking.

For now, here is the cap hit for Richards's contract according to the aforementioned Jon Rosen:

*2015-16: 1.22M*

2016-17: 1.72M

2017-18: 2.72M

2018-19: 4.22M

2019-20: 4.22M

2020-21: 1.47M

2021-22: 1.47M

2022-23: 1.47M

2023-24: 1.47M

2024-25: 1.47M

This certainly isn't the end of the Mike Richards story, but we will be hoping for a sensible conclusion.

As for Justin Williams, it seems inevitable that his days in Los Angeles are over. While yours truly does wish that he and club can salvage a deal, the reality seems more prevalent with each passing day that the Kings just cannot meet the winger's demands, especially considering their own financial limits right now. After all, re-signing pending RFAs Tyler Toffoli and Martin Jones must also be seen as a priority.

While parting with Williams will not be an easy decision for the Kings, it will give the team and their fans a chance to move forward and embrace their promising future.

While he will not immediately – nor will anyone else – replace Williams, prospect Jordan Weal looks more than ready to make the jump to the NHL. After narrowly missing the cut in training camp to stick with the big club last fall, Jordan Weal responded with a memorable year in Manchester, which saw him help the Monarchs to their first Calder Cup title and, for himself, playoff MVP honours.

Weal may only be one example but there are a myriad of them working in the favour of the silver-and-black.

To outsiders, a team who missed the playoffs and now, barring a last-minute change-of-heart, about to part ways with one of their most important players in addition to bearing the burdensome contract of an underachieving player, the Los Angeles Kings could be seen as the brunt of jokes. But the Kings have played under the radar before with little to no expectations and all that did was help garner championship glory.

Whether the third time will be once again the charm remains to be seen for quite some time, but while the respective situations involving Richards and Williams look gloomy, that shouldn't deter the franchise's long-term strategy that has twice proven to be a winner.

After all, there are still those guys who go by the names Kopitar, Doughty and Quick that have been, and remain, integral forces for the Los Angeles Kings – and that's just the team getting warmed up.

Whatever the future holds for Mike Richards and Justin Williams, yours truly will wish them nothing but the best without the slightest ounce of hesitation. But the Los Angeles Kings under Dean Lombardi will find a way to persevere and restore their championship aspirations.

That's not wishful thinking. That's the truth.

Source: [makewayfortheKings.com](http://makewayfortheKings.com)