

# EX-KING, CURRENT SHARK MARTIN JONES DESERVES LOVE FROM FORMER TEAM'S FANS

👤 Ryan Cowley 🕒 December 20, 2015

"We are sooo dead."

That was a text message I received from a friend in the early afternoon of Tuesday, December 3, 2013. She was referring to the Los Angeles Kings who, one night after defeating the St. Louis Blues on home ice, were preparing for another chapter in the Freeway Faceoff, visiting the Honda Center to take on the hated – but red-hot – Anaheim Ducks.

As exciting as every battle between the Kings and Ducks has been, there weren't a plethora of interesting storylines with each matchup – except for this one.

Nearly a month after Jonathan Quick injured himself, Ben Scrivens, who the Kings had acquired from Toronto in the off-season, was thrown into the fire, so to speak, as he took over the reins in goal.

Despite reticence from a number of fans, Scrivens guided the silver-and-black to points in 11 of their next 12 games, winning seven of those contests. But after making 25 saves in a 3-2 win the previous night, Scrivens needed a rest. Enter rookie Martin Jones.

On the surface, it appeared as if the Kings were crazy to give the then-23-year-old netminder his NHL debut in hostile territory against a Ducks team who were, no pun intended, flying high.

I could understand my friend's reluctance – nay, cynicism – but I knew that, with all due respect to Scrivens, he had plenty of help from his team's solid defensive corps as they had elevated their collective game when Quick went down. This night, I assured her, would be no exception. Alas, I was correct.

Jones's first NHL game was a memorable one, stopping 26 shots to force overtime and then stopping all nine shots in a marathon shootout to defeat the Ducks. Jones would then go to win his next seven starts, tying a league record for the best start to a goaltender's career at 8-0-0.

When Jonathan Quick went down in early November, it appeared to some as if the Kings had met their match. However, in just a few weeks, the goaltending situation in the City of Angels became the envy of the league with Scrivens filling in for Quick without breaking a stride and then Jones doing the same.

While neither Scrivens nor Jones played the minimum 25 games in 2013-14 to get their names on the trophy, the Kings did nevertheless win their first William Jennings Trophy in franchise history, awarded to

the club with the fewest goals against.

Once Quick returned to the lineup, Ben Scrivens was traded and Martin Jones cooled off a bit, playing just 19 games overall, but amassing an impressive 16-3-3 mark with a 2.13 goals-against average and .928 save percentage.

Still, Jones, while not quite as integral as No. 32, was nonetheless an important part in the Kings winning their second Stanley Cup in three years.

This past season, Jones played just 15 games, going 4-5-2 with a 2.25 GAA. Yet, while those numbers were underwhelming, it was evident that the North Vancouver native was ready to become a number-one netminder.

On June 26, Jones was traded to the Boston Bruins and immediately considered to battle Tuukka Rask for the club's number-one spot. But just four days later, the fading Kings-Sharks rivalry received an upgrade as Jones was shipped to San Jose, speculated to take over the team's number-one spot in goal left by the recently-departed Antti Niemi.

So, instead of seeing him once or twice a year, the Kings will now have to deal with their former netminder four or five times – the first of which will most likely take place on Oct. 7 as the Kings play their home-opener against Jones and the Sharks.

I asked an abundance of Kings fans how they would react at STAPLES Center on Oct. 7 when seeing Martin Jones donning the jersey of, of all teams, the despised Sharks.

The vast majority of those I asked said that they would definitely applaud the netminder while some, including yours truly, would not object to giving Jones a standing ovation.

As for the possibility of jeering the former King, the gesture was collectively seen as unfathomable.

"I don't think anyone should boo him," David Cleveland, a Kings fan from San Jacinto, Calif., said. "It's not like he had much of a say as to where he went. If anything, he deserves an ovation and tribute to start things off."

Chris Thomas, a resident of Hesperia, Calif., and Make Way for the King's own artist said, "I would and will give him a standing ovation."

Of course, while Jones will, most likely, be receiving an overwhelming warm reception from the STAPLES faithful on Oct. 7, said respect will be given solely during the pre-game as, once the puck drops to open

the regular season, it will be business as usual. Martin Jones, after all, will then be just be another opponent.

While he will be donning enemy colors, Jones never did ask to be traded anywhere, much less to San Jose. Besides, in all fairness, if given the chance to be a backup in Boston or a starter in San Jose, it is hard to imagine why a netminder of Jones's potential would forego the latter.

Just hours before he made his NHL debut, it appeared to some as if the Los Angeles Kings were "sooo dead," to be starting an inexperienced Martin Jones against a team as formidable as the Anaheim Ducks. Yet, Jones quieted the skeptics and held down the fort when Jonathan Quick was unable to play, making the most of his limited ice time, ultimately earning his shot at being a number-one guy.

2015-16 marks the campaign where the San Jose Sharks will discover whether Martin Jones can, no pun intended, sink or swim.

It is near-impossible to figure just how he – or any backup – will fare as a starter but if his development with the Kings organization is any indication, then Martin Jones should flourish as a starter, which, four or times a year, may very well come to the chagrin of his former team.

But don't tell that to the Los Angeles Kings or their fans. They may just have something else to say about that.

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