

A DISCUSSION WITH KINGS' LEGENDARY BROADCASTER BOB MILLER

👤 Ryan Cowley 🕒 December 15, 2015

Before the new year, I had the honour of meeting Los Angeles Kings' legendary broadcaster Bob Miller. We met at Toronto's MasterCard Centre where the Kings were practicing for their matchup the following afternoon against the Maple Leafs.

What started out as an exchange of greetings turned into a nice chat about the Kings' championship success last spring, which included the stunning come-from-behind series win over the San Jose Sharks when the Kings were down 0-3. We even laughed as I had told him that I went through the same anguish as a fan 10 years earlier when my beloved Boston Red Sox overcame a 0-3 series deficit to defeat the despised New York Yankees.

I had then requested to Mr. Miller whether I could interview him. The legend agreed and later on, I had the privilege of asking his thoughts on the Kings on someone who has meant so much not only to the organization but to the dedicated fanbase as well as Greater Los Angeles as a whole.

From his feelings on both Stanley Cup wins to his favourite moments as a broadcaster to an unfortunate altering of an image of his, Mr. Miller could not have been more helpful and gracious.

Here is how the interview went:

How do you feel about the Kings' play as of late? Too many shots, not enough goals is a major theme at play, but this is nothing new for the Kings as they have found themselves in the same predicament at numerous points going back the last few seasons. Does the team's recent struggles worry you or do you feel that the Kings will, like they have in recent years, get progressively better as the season goes along?

The Kings are good one night, looking like the team that won two Cups, and not so good the next game. Very inconsistent. Defense not as good as it has been in the past but they are missing three of their top defenseman from the Stanley Cup seasons. Willie Mitchell went to Florida, Slava Voynov, suspended for a lengthy time and now Robyn Regehr injured. I still think feel they can get it all together once the playoffs start.

Aside from the 2012 and 2014 Stanley Cup wins, what are your favourite moments as a Kings' broadcaster?

The "Miracle on Manchester" in 1982 when the Kings came from a 5-0 deficit at the end of two periods to tie the game with five third period goals, the last one coming with :05 on the clock to tie and then winning it in OT. Then they went on to eliminate the heavily favored Oilers in five games. Also, the two all-time records Wayne Gretzky set in passing Gordie Howe in points and then in goals. Going to the Stanley Cup Final in 1993 and the seven-game series against Toronto to get to the Final, winning Game 7 in Toronto.

Before you joined the Kings as a broadcaster, you had earned the recommendation of Los Angeles Lakers' legendary broadcaster Chick Hearn. However, owner Jack Kent Cooke decided to hire Roy Storey, who stayed just one year, which led to your hiring. Were you at all deterred by Storey's hiring or did that further motivate you to succeed even more as a broadcaster anywhere, much less in Los Angeles?

I was disappointed by Mr. Cooke's decision but it turned out to be fortunate that I stayed in Wisconsin broadcasting Badger hockey because that team went on to win the NCAA hockey championship.

Prior to Jim Fox joining you in the booth, your broadcasting partner was current Kings' radio broadcaster Nick Nickson. Describe some of the differences and similarities between the two? Was it any more beneficial with Fox being an ex-player?

Nick and I had a great partnership doing Kings hockey on a radio-TV simulcast. I think, however, an ex-player, such as Jim Fox, gives us information and a look at the game that only a former player can. The important factor here is that the ex-player truly works hard at perfecting his broadcasting talents and diligently prepares for each broadcast.

One of the many changes you've experienced in Los Angeles was the arrival of Wayne Gretzky in 1988. I have asked many fans how it was being a Kings fan during that time. Some loved it while others weren't as crazy about Gretzky's arrival. How did you feel about it not only for yourself but for the Kings as a franchise and even the hockey scene in Southern California?

I was thrilled with Gretzky coming to L.A. I never thought it would happen but I knew when it did it would raise the profile of the Kings from a team that a lot of people didn't care about to one that was known and publicized throughout North America. Games were sold out, celebrities were at the games and the Kings were winning and were very popular.

In 2012, Frozen Royalty writer Gann Matsuda took a photo of you showing off your Stanley Cup ring. Since then, however, the photo has been altered to show you making a vulgar gesture. Within the past year, you approached some fans – one of which was Andros Gonzalez, who runs the Kings-related Facebook group, 'Knights of the Forum' – expressing your displeasure in regards to the doctored image. While it was an attempt by some to get a cheap laugh, there were many Kings supporters (myself included) who thought the altered image was tasteless and unfortunate. Could you describe what it was like to see such a nice picture altered in such a way?

I was surprised when I saw the photo because I knew I had never done that in a photo. There are certain factors in our digital and photoshop world that I don't like. Too many idiots can doctor photos and then send them out on the Internet and also make certain comments on the Internet, Twitter and Facebook with no consequences. Therefore, I don't tweet, Facebook or any of those other social media sites.

Lastly, describe your feelings on both of the Kings' championship wins. Could you describe what made each win special? Was it more rewarding in 2012 having such a smooth road to the Final or did the challenge and resilience two years later make 2014 more significant? Is it even fair to compare the two?

Both championships were won in such diverse ways that both are memorable. In 2012, the Kings surprised everyone by racing through the playoffs and setting many records for Stanley Cup domination. In 2014, they did it the hard way, coming from behind in games, and series to set even more records. It was thrilling to win the Cup both ways.

Since I started writing about the Kings, I got in touch with many fans – and all of them who have ever met Bob Miller cannot emphasize enough what a consummate professional and gentleman he is. I know having watched broadcasts of different teams over the years that Bob Miller is one of the most unbiased broadcasters in hockey.

In spite of everything he's accomplished, what is most refreshing about Bob Miller is his conspicuous absence of an ego.

From his induction into the Hockey Hall of Fame to sharing legendary status in Los Angeles with the likes of broadcasters Vin Scully and the late Chick Hearn, Bob Miller is a man who acts as if he's just someone simply doing his job. Even just speaking with him for a few minutes made me feel like a better man. Whether it was his knowledge for the game, casual yet professional demeanor or making me feel like we had spoken many times before, there is something about Mr. Miller that has left myself, and many others, richer for the experience, however informal, of just speaking to him. I even told him how his call on Alec Martinez's Cup-winner last June still gives me goosebumps. Miller responded with a humble "Aw, shucks," kind of answer.

And in case you're wondering, no, he didn't actually say, "Aw, shucks."

In terms of longevity if nothing else, Bob Miller is the epitome of Los Angeles Kings hockey. He has seen the best, the worst and the most bizarre when it comes to this franchise. From Marcel Dionne and Dave Taylor to Luc Robitaille and Wayne Gretzky, Mr. Miller has been there to call games played by the greatest figures to ever suit up for this great franchise and has even been there to call the team's biggest and proudest accomplishments.

Whether he is willing to admit it or not, Bob Miller was, is and will forever be a legend in Los Angeles. Mr. Miller, the broadcaster, the fan and the human being, has touched the lives of so many over the years, whether in Los Angeles or halfway across the world. That is just the type of professional that Bob Miller is and nothing makes me prouder of being a Kings' supporter than knowing who has represented this team with his legendary voice for 40-plus years.