

MICHAEL MERSCH'S TENURE WITH LA KINGS INCREASINGLY INEVITABLE

👤 Ryan Cowley 🕒 October 8, 2015



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He may have missed the final cut but if his performance during the preseason was any indication, it will not be long before fans get to see **Michael Mersch** in a **Los Angeles Kings** uniform on a full-time basis.

Under the **Dean Lombardi** regime, the Kings have been notorious for patiently — but efficiently — develop their players before cracking the big club's roster. Having just finished his first full **AHL** season, it was expected that Mersch would simply return to the American League for another couple of years before making a permanent address in the **City of Angels**. That, however, may not be the case.

In his six preseason games, Mersch tallied 17 total shots and, while yours truly doesn't tend to place much emphasis on said stat, it is notable to mention that his total tied him for second among all players for the exhibition schedule. Plus, Mersch was the only rookie on the list in said category. To make matters better for the native of Park Ridge, Ill., he only averaged 10 to 12 minutes per night, underlining the forward's emphasis on quality over quantity. As far as hitting the twine went, Mersch had a very decent showing, scoring twice.

Aside from a numbers standpoint, Mersch's preseason performance has displayed just how integral he is when the puck is on the stick, and when it leaves it as the 23-year-old did an outstanding job creating scoring chances.

While yours truly was certainly excited about the prospect of seeing Mersch beginning the season in Los Angeles, he can take some comfort knowing that the former **Wisconsin Badger** won't be too far thanks to the **Manchester Monarchs'** off-season relocation to nearby **Ontario**.

Last season in Manchester, Mersch had a phenomenal rookie campaign scoring 22 goals and 45 points, in addition to a +20 rating, in 76 games. Mersch's contributions not only helped the Monarchs clinch their first regular-season crown but their first **Caldner Cup** championship as the 225-pounder helped lead the Monarchs with 13 goals and 22 points in the postseason.

Drafted 110th overall in 2011, there was plenty of promise for Michael Mersch. Few, however, realized just how much before the calendar turned to 2015. One



of those who did see the enormous potential in Mersch was Kings Director of Player Development, **Nelson Emerson**.

In August, I had a chance to speak with Emerson, who has played an integral role in the development of crucial pieces in the Kings overall success in recent years. From **Alec Martinez** and **Jake Muzzin** to **Dwight King** and **Jordan Weal**, Emerson has played a vital role in turning green prospects into NHL-ready players. Michael Mersch is the most recent example.

"It took him a little to get going but he's a real studier of the game as he wanted to watch videos and watch how he could get better," Emerson told me. "The thing about Michael Mersch is that place in front of the net, that area below the top of the circle, he's become just a super pro in that area. Can't knock him off his skates, he jumps on loose pucks, he screens in front of the net with tips and rebounds. That's become an area where he's become an expert in."

Emerson continued by revealing details about Michael Mersch that not everyone would be quick to pick up on, but important to know nonetheless.

"One thing about [Mersch], most don't know about his skating but he has worked so hard on his skating over the last couple of years," Emerson continued. "Now, people will go watch him in a game and they will only talk about his skating being an efficiency. So, give him credit because he's worked so hard."

It is imperative to point out that Mr. Emerson and I had this conversation before NHL training camps opened, so the youngster's performance during the preseason was only on the horizon.

"It was awesome the year he had and how he progressed," Emerson continued. "Really looking forward to watching him as he continues his pro career."



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Emerson also summed up his thoughts on Mersch in relation to his pro career by stating that Mersch "has all the attributes of being a great NHLer."

It may have been just one AHL season, and then just a handful of preseason games — heck, skeptics can always the empty half of the glass — but there is no denying just how exciting Michael Mersch is to watch.

From his creativity to his size even to his professionalism, the 23-year-old does, as Emerson said, have all the attributes to be a great NHLer someday, and that someday should come much sooner rather than later. After all, despite missing the cut to start the season with the Kings,



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do not be surprised to see Michael Mersch getting called up to the big club at some point this season — maybe now after Los Angeles's poor offensive showing on Wednesday. Then again, maybe not that soon.

Whatever the case may be, the excitement for Michael Mersch is palpable as fans of the Los Angeles Kings eagerly await the day when the big man joins — and stays with — the Kings.