

LOW DRAFT PICK TO TOP PROSPECT, ONTARIO REIGN'S NIC DOWD CLOSER TO THE NHL THAN EVER BEFORE

👤 Ryan Cowley 🕒 December 21, 2015



Photo credit: Jeff Gross/Getty Images

Having strengthened his two-way game since turning pro, he has quickly become regarded as one of the brightest pieces of the **Los Angeles Kings'** promising future. After a strong rookie campaign in **Manchester** last season, he followed it up with 13 points in 19 playoff games, helping the **Monarchs** win the **Calder Cup**. But moving forward, there is much more about **Nic Dowd** for the Kings and their loyal fans to be excited about.

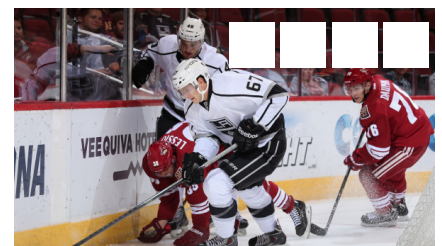
At six-feet and 175 pounds, he's not the most intimidating-looking guy on the ice but like the **classic Mark Twain adage** goes, "It's not the size of the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight in the dog," and Nic Dowd fits that to a T.

So far with the **Ontario Reign** this season, he has two goals and 14 assists, but what the 25-year-old possesses isn't limited to how many times his name appears on the scoresheet.

I recently spoke with Reign assistant coach **Chris Hajt** about Dowd and his progression since turning pro.

"Since the start of last year, Nic has improved his game," Hajt said. "Each day he works to get better. As the season went on last year, he received more and more ice time and was depended on in a lot of different situations. He was a big-time player in the playoffs and brought it into this year. On and off the ice he has been an important part of the team."

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Many of the so-called experts could have easily predicted that Nic Dowd's chances of making the **NHL** were slim-to-none. After all, he was a 7th-round draft selection in 2009. But if



anyone can take a **low draft pick** and turn him into a bona fide big-leaguer, it is the Los Angeles Kings. **Alec Martinez** and **Dwight King** (4th-round, 2007), **Jake Muzzin** (5th-round, 2007 by **Pittsburgh**) and **Jordan Nolan** (7th-round, 2009) have all developed within the organization not only into Kings mainstays but into integral pieces in their team's Stanley Cup success. In just his second full year in the organization, Dowd has developed quite nicely and to boot, has even developed a great collective rapport with his teammates.

"Nic is a good person and has a great relationship with all his teammates," Hajt continued. "This is a great group of men that work together and believe in each other."

In terms of performance, Dowd's long-term **offensive potential** is limited when compared to other forward prospects in the Kings' system. With that said, the centerman provides a variety of upside, including hardness on the fore-check. According to Hajt, Dowd not only works hard on the ice but is a leader as well.

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"Nic makes plays all over the ice," Hajt said. "He has the vision and ability to create time and space for himself in each zone. As a leader, other players on the team see this and can follow his lead."

One of those teammates is **Jonny Brodzinski** who was already familiar with Dowd as the two took the ice together at **St. Cloud State** for two seasons.

There, they helped the school find success which included an appearance in the **2013 Frozen Four** semifinals.

After seeing his goal and point totals increase in each of his four seasons at St. Cloud State, Nic Dowd went on to score nine goals and add 32 assists in 75 games last season, his rookie year, with the Manchester Monarchs. For a player who may be limited offensively, the numbers he puts up would beg to differ. He may not come close to hitting triple-digits in points but considering what Nic Dowd does bring — and has brought — to the table, his offensive production is, if you will, gravy.

Having the unusual distinction of being a hockey player born in Alabama, Dowd will certainly be the answer to a trivia question. However, Dowd's potential is not limited to being merely the subject of a fun fact. Instead, Dowd is paving his own road to the National Hockey League while leaving a few skeptics lost for words along the way. After all, being a 7th-round draft choice over six years ago may not warrant a spot in the top echelon of the sport's hottest commodities, but that certainly hasn't stopped the 25-year-old.

With **Michael Mersch** being recently promoted to the big club, Nic Dowd's role with the Reign has increased, and it is a role which the centerman will surely embrace. There are already enough positive aspects of his game to boast about but by next year, said aspects should be enough to see Nic Dowd contend until the bitter end for a spot on the Kings roster. That is, of course, assuming the big club would even want to wait that long. ^

