

LA KINGS' BOB MILLER ON MILAN LUCIC: "HE FITS THE KINGS"

👤 Ryan Cowley 🕒 December 29, 2015



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It took some time but fans of the **Los Angeles Kings** have warmed up to **Milan Lucic**, and with plenty of good reason.

When he was acquired from the **Boston Bruins** in June, many Kings fans displayed great skepticism. Despite his offensive abilities or his physical prowess, Lucic developed a reputation for being a troublemaker on the ice in recent years, hurting his team more than helping. By that logic, few could blame said Kings fans for feeling reluctant about their team's new star.

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Conversely, there were plenty of fans loved the trade. While the silver-and-black did part ways with **Martin Jones** and highly-touted prospect **Colin Miller**, they knew they were getting a player who, when on his game, was a difference-maker. One of those who loved the acquisition from the start was a man who arguably knows the Los Angeles Kings more than anyone else: the club's legendary broadcaster **Bob Miller**.

I caught up with Mr. Miller in Toronto before the Christmas break where I asked him about Lucic's time with the Kings thus far.

"He fits the Kings," Miller said. "Everywhere you go, other coaches say that [the Kings are] a big, strong team. Not too fancy but they play the right way. He fits that style of play by the Kings: a big body and gets in front of the net."

Miller went on to point out some interesting differences that Lucic had noticed between his tenures in Boston and Los Angeles, which explains his early-season offensive struggles.



"[The Kings] started out placing [Lucic] on a line with Kopitar and Gaborik, "Miller said. "Everybody thought that was going to be a fantastic line, and it didn't really start out that way at the beginning of the year. Now, they've gotten him back on that line [on Dec. 17 in Montreal]. But the way [Lucic] explained it was that in his eight years in Boston, he played with right-hand shots and the passes would come to him (a left-handed shooter) a little differently than it did from a left-hand shot and Gaborik and Kopi are both left-hand shots.

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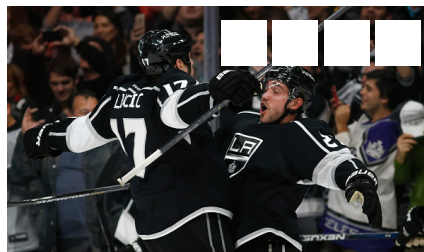
"The other thing that he said, in training camp and everything, he wasn't scoring a lot and he was just getting used to the way the Kings play, playing with new linemates and he said, 'You know, with eight years and the same coach, I knew automatically what to do. Now,' he said, 'I'm pausing to think about where should I go and it's putting me behind the play,' and that was the reason he didn't have a lot of points early on. But now, he's used to this. He seems to like it in L.A. and he'll see how he does with [Kopitar and Gaborik] on that line."

Being sold on Lucic right from the start, Miller echoed the same enthusiasm for the former **Vancouver Giant** when we spoke **this past** summer:

"The Kings getting Milan Lucic, I think, was an excellent deal. I would always trade a draft choice, unless it's No. 1 or 2 or even higher and be the 13th, I'd always trade a draft choice for an established player because you know what you're going to get."

It has taken a while for everyone to embrace Lucic as the dominant player he is but it is better late than never. Those who still aren't sold on the 27-year-old are fully aware that this is the final year of the ex-Bruins' contract and the consensus is that he will be asking for a big raise next summer. With that said, contract talks between the Kings and Lucic are slated to begin in the new year, and with the top-priority contract of **Anze Kopitar** all but finalized, expect talks to begin sooner rather than later.

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With the Bruins last season, Milan Lucic scored just 18 goals and 26 assists in 81 games. Through 35 games **this season**, he has 10 goals and 12 assists and well on pace to exceed last season's numbers. Of course, it could be argued that Lucic, like most others, is merely stepping up his game to increase his free-agent value. Nonetheless, he is helping the Kings win at a torrid pace while quieting his critics with a vengeance **as he leads** the silver-and-black with 126 hits.

As impressive as his offensive and physical contributions have been, though, Bob Miller did not need said areas to sum up Milan Lucic's positive force in Los Angeles. Instead, his attitude has spoken volumes above all

else.

"He's a great guy, a really good guy off the ice. He's great with the fans, good with the media, he's really just fit right in."

And for that, fans in Los Angeles couldn't be happier.