

MIKE RICHARDS SAGA TURNS TO (POTENTIALLY) UGLY CHAPTER

👤 Ryan Cowley 🕒 December 28, 2015

On Sunday, the Los Angeles Kings placed Mike Richards on waivers with the intention of buying him out. While this news did come as relief to many Kings fans, it did leave them wondering why this didn't happen sooner. But then, Monday came along.

Kings fans were welcomed with a shocking start to their weeks as it was reported that Mike Richards' contract would be terminated, and not bought out, for "material breach", which was confirmed to Sportsnet by NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly. Of course, while many believe that the financial straits of the Kings would be less dire in this situation, this is a story that will not likely reach a conclusion anytime soon. After all, it is possible that the NHLPA could file a grievance.

"We are in the process of reviewing the facts and circumstances of this matter, and will discuss the situation with the player in order to determine the appropriate course of action," NHLPA spokesman Jonathan Weatherdon said in a statement.

As for the announcement of the contract termination, the Los Angeles Kings issued the following statement:

"The Los Angeles Kings today have exercised the team's right to terminate the contract of Mike Richards for a material breach of the requirements of his Standard Player's Contract. We are not prepared to provide any more detail or to discuss the underlying grounds for the contract termination at this time."

Then, later Monday, NHL on NBC's Pierre McGuire indicated that said contract breach occurred while Richards was crossing the Canada-United States border. The longtime hockey analyst revealed this on TSN 690's Melnick in the Afternoon show in Montreal.

It is notable to mention that just one day before deciding to terminate the centreman's contract, GM Dean Lombardi told ESPN's Katie Strang that not buying Richards out last season may have been "the worst decision (he had) ever made."

That is a very bold statement made by a man who brought unprecedented success to the Kings organization and while he is only human, it was somewhat numbing to read that Lombardi had admitted such feelings. Nevertheless, Monday came along and whether it can be suggested that Lombardi did his homework or that his team simply caught lightning in a bottle, this news has proven that winning a Stanley Cup isn't necessarily required to have a whirlwind summer.

Last summer, Kings' GM Dean Lombardi had the chance to use a compliance buyout on the 30-year-old only to pass. Despite Richards' underachieving ways in Los Angeles, Dean Lombardi was loyal to the former captain, and even more hopeful that 2014-15 would be a turnaround year for the Kitchener Ranger alum. It didn't happen. Not even a stint in the AHL could invigorate Richards.

"I met with him. He promised that he'd do it. And when a guy looks you in the eye and promises, to me, that goes beyond loyalty," Lombardi told the Los Angeles Times before last season. "A guy's giving you his word. That's more important than a contract or anything else."

in each of his first three seasons with the Kings, Richards had career-lows in goals (18 in 2011-12, 12 in 2013, 11 in 2013-14). This past season, Richards scored just five times while adding 11 assists in 53 games.

It is anticipated that these are just the early stages of this suddenly-ugly divorce between Mike Richards and the Los Angeles Kings. What this ultimately means for the team, their cap situation and Richards himself remains to be seen. Nevertheless, this has the makings of a drama-filled summer in Southern California.

As if the Slava Voynov situation wasn't enough.

Source: makewayfortheKings.com