

SPEAKING WITH SOON-TO-BE HALL-OF-FAMER, LA KINGS' NICK NICKSON

👤 Ryan Cowley 🕒 October 19, 2015



ONTARIO, CA - FEBRUARY 11: Nick Nickson of the Los Angeles Kings speaks during an Ontario Reign Press Conference at Citizens Business Bank Arena on February 11, 2015 in Ontario, California. (Photo by Aaron Poole/NHLI via Getty Images)

There are but a handful of figures who have held the honour of being synonymous with **Los Angeles Kings** hockey. Having now entered his 35th season with the club, **Nick Nickson** has celebrated a storied career in the broadcast booth and three weeks from tonight, the longtime radio voice of the Kings will receive the ultimate accolade: induction into the **Hockey Hall of Fame**.

Nick Nickson will be on hand at hockey's greatest shrine on November 9 to receive the prestigious **Foster Hewitt Memorial Award**, given to those who make outstanding contributions to their profession and to hockey during their broadcasting career. The award, created in 1984, has been presented to some of the greatest, and most memorable, voices in hockey. Some of the winners include, aside from the legendary namesake himself, **Danny Gallivan, Bob Cole, Mike "Doc" Emrick, Rick Jeanneret** and Nickson's former broadcasting partner and television voice of the Kings, the legendary **Bob Miller**.

Last month, I had the opportunity to speak with Mr. Nickson, discussing, among other topics, his feelings on being named this year's recipient of the Foster Hewitt Award.

"Surprised," Nickson said matter-of-factly. "I don't think this is an award you consciously think about throughout your career and of course, in my case, my broadcasting career. I am very anxious for the ceremony in Toronto in November. I think that will probably be when it hits me, when they present me with the Hall of Fame jacket, and it's going to be nice because I'll have a lot of family and friends there and a lot of my former partners that I've worked with in broadcasting. Bob Miller, of course, my current partner, Daryl Evans, Brian Engblom will be there, Mike Allison will be there. I've done some games, of course, with Jim Fox; he'll be there."

So, I think what will make the ceremony a lot of fun and very rewarding is that the people that are close to me both professionally and personally are going to be able to be there at the luncheon.”

Nickson, however, will not be the only Kings broadcaster to be receiving an award this season. **Jim Fox**, the club’s TV analyst since 1990, will be officially inducted into the **Southern California Sports Broadcasters Hall of Fame** this coming January. When I spoke to him about his induction, Fox told me that he would use the honour as “motivation” moving forward. I asked Nickson if he felt the same way about his induction into the Hockey Hall.

“When you start a career — in my case, broadcasting — the motivation for me has always been to, number one, do the best broadcast possible, to entertain the fans and be accurate with everything,” Nickson told me. “And that motivation doesn’t change for me. It hasn’t changed for me since I started doing hockey games almost 40 years ago and, whether or not I receive accolades in the way of the Hall of Fame honor such as this coming in November, it really is not going to change the way that I approach doing a broadcast. And I know it’s different for everybody but everybody’s got their own system, their own set of beliefs as to how they can get the job the best way possible.



Getty Images Entertainment
Imeh Akpanudosen

[View image | gettyimages.com](#)

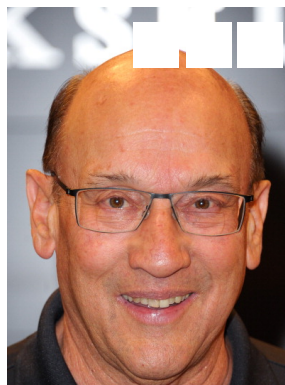
“Like I said, I like to think that I’ve been fairly consistent in my preparation for broadcasts over the years, so what motivates me is to try and do the perfect broadcast — which is never going to happen — but if I could come close, then that should be pretty good.”

When he joined the Los Angeles Kings in 1981, Nick Nickson’s broadcast partner was the aforementioned Bob Miller. The two worked together until 1990 — when the team’s simulcast was divided — but have remained close professionally. Miller, the 2000 recipient of the Foster Hewitt Award, gave a glowing testimonial about his colleague when we spoke this summer.

“I think it’s a wonderful honour,” Miller said. “[Nickson] spent 34, 35 years with the Kings — eight of those he was my partner on the radio and television simulcast. He’s an excellently-trained broadcaster — that’s what he wanted to do all his life. He did minor-league games in Rochester (New York) and also in New Haven and then came to the Kings in 1981. Then in 1990, we split the radio and the TV; I went to TV and Nick, since 1990, has been the play-by-play voice for radio.

“He also does a pregame show, a post-game talk show and does an excellent job and it’s a great honour for him. I’m looking forward to being in Toronto on the 9th of November when he gets inducted and receives the Foster Hewitt Award.”

As for being named the Foster Hewitt Award winner in 2000, Miller shared his feelings on what it was like to be given such a prestigious honour.



WireImage
Noel Vasquez

[View image | gettyimages.com](#)

"I said that day, I don't think anybody, including players, ever starts a career with the goal being 'I've got to get to the Hall of Fame,'" Miller told me. "I think the goal is simply to get a job in the profession that you are interested in and passionate about. Then, do the best you can and keep that job and whatever accolades come along as you're doing it, then that happens. But it wasn't a goal of mine to say, 'Gee, I want to someday be in the Hockey Hall of Fame.' So, I think it's that way for everybody: for announcers, for players.

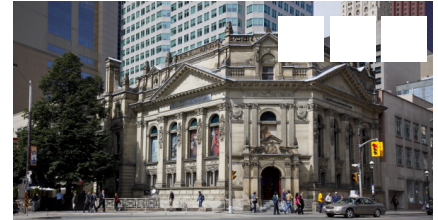
"Players when they start out, first of all, I think they just want to stick with the team, they want to get to the highest level of their profession and they want to win a Stanley Cup. I think the Hall of Fame, most of them would agree, is icing on the cake when you retire and you get inducted into that Hall of Fame. That's the way I felt, that's the way Nick Nickson feels and I'm very happy for Nick. It's a great honour for him."

Speaking to Nickson last month, he felt it was notable to mention the role Bob Miller played in helping him achieve success in Los Angeles. While he was already a seasoned veteran in the industry at the time of his arrival in 1981, Nickson's own expertise coupled with Miller's helped the duo reach new heights in the Kings' broadcast booth, developing a dignified chemistry along the way.

"What made [working with Bob Miller] so enjoyable — and I want to say successful in the nine years that I worked with Bob when I first came to Los Angeles — was that we both had a broadcasting background and at that time, there were very few ex-athletes that became broadcasters, especially in hockey," Nickson stated. "Of course, that's all changed now in all the sports where almost all the color analysts — in hockey, baseball, football, you name it — are former athletes who played that particular sport, and I think when I worked with Bob, both of us having that training of broadcasting in the background, number one, made for a very smooth and seamless broadcast. You had two people who were educated in broadcasting and knew what it was all about. I was not a rookie in terms of broadcasting when I started working with Bob in 1981 and he was not a rookie as a broadcaster when he started with the Kings in 1973, and I'd like to think subconsciously that we both pushed each other. He did such a good job — working with him, that makes you want to do a good job to help and I think vice-versa. I think with any broadcasting team that's been together for a number of years, you'd probably find that to be true. You develop a rhythm, a cadence, a knowledge of where your partner is going, what he's saying, you know when to get in, when to get out to make the smooth broadcast. So, I'd think having joined the Kings in '81, I had been in broadcasting for almost a decade, so the broadcasting end of it

wasn't new to me and it certainly wasn't new to Bob. So again, I think we were able to play off each other quite well because of our broadcasting experience."

It all started in his hometown of Rochester, New York, when in 1975, he became the voice of the **AHL's Americans**. But it was 1977 when he became associated with the Los Angeles Kings, joining their minor-league affiliate, the **New Haven Nighthawks**, before moving up to the big club four years later. Since then, Nickson has never looked back.



[View image | gettyimages.com](#)

In fact, to show just how appreciative the Los Angeles Kings are for Nickson and his contributions, they will be honouring the new Hall-of-Famer at **STAPLES Center** on November 10 as part of the team's **Legends Night** series just prior to their game against the **Arizona Coyotes**.

During a career that has spanned five decades, Nick Nickson has personified broadcasting excellence, painting a picture with his detailed descriptions of what's happening on the ice with his distinctive, booming voice coupled with his in-depth knowledge of the Kings and the game. A consummate professional in every sense of the term, Nickson has done what so many long to do: live his dream — and he has done that to the fullest. He has not only left his legacy on the Los Angeles Kings but on the **National Hockey League** and the game of hockey overall — and that is no easy feat.

He was there when the Kings won their first **Stanley Cup** in 2012, announcing, "After 45 years, the Kings can wear their crown", to their second in 2014 to every milestone prior to and since. He was there when the **Wayne Gretzky** era began, and when it ended, to **No. 99's** iconic milestones in between. He was there when the Kings made their unlikely march to the **Stanley Cup Final** in 1993 and when they upset the heavily-favoured **Detroit Red Wings** in the 2001 playoffs. Nick Nickson was not only there for the LA Kings but for their ever-loyal fanbase whom he was nothing short of a consummate gentleman towards. Even yours truly, who struggles with a stutter that impedes his communication over the phone, Mr. Nickson, despite his busy schedule, could not have been more patient and understanding when agreeing to a phone interview last year. That is just one of many ways that this writer will hold the veteran broadcaster to such a high level of deep-rooted respect.

This writer, in addition to, among others, the Los Angeles Kings and their beloved fanbase, could not be any more proud of the man who has brought us the most memorable moments in team history — moments fans will forever relive.

On November 9, 2015, Nick Nickson will receive the sport's highest honour as he will be forever — and deservedly — enshrined in the illustrious Hockey Hall of Fame, taking his place in the annals of hockey history.

Mr. Nick Nickson, we salute you.



Getty Images Sport | Noah Graham

[View image | gettyimages.com](#)