

# THE CURIOUS CASE OF KINGS CAPTAIN DUSTIN BROWN

👤 Ryan Cowley 🕒 December 13, 2015

Few have been more integral to the Los Angeles Kings and their vast success than their captain, Dustin Brown. However, while the Kings were able to give themselves an abundance of cap relief from terminating Mike Richards's contract and, albeit begrudgingly, watching Andrej Sekera leave for greener – or, in Edmonton's case, whiter – pastures, there are still some exorbitant numbers on their books from underachieving players. One player who headlines that list is Mr. Brown himself.

In the summer of 2013, Brown and the Kings agreed to an eight-year contract extension worth \$47 million. This past season, the Ithaca, NY, native played the first year of said contract, and it resulted in career-lows in goals (11) and points (27) which was matched from 2013-14. Brown's -17 rating last season was also his lowest since the 2006-07 campaign when he finished with a -21.

While everyone is entitled to have an off year, Dustin Brown has arguably been one of the more inconsistent Kings in recent years. The captain, however, has more often than not come through in the face of adversity.

One such example is the night of February 25, 2012.

With the NHL's Trade Deadline having been just under 48 hours away, few would have been more relieved to reach the deadline more than Dustin Brown himself. In the prior few weeks, Brown's name had been associated with what felt like a plethora of possible trade scenarios and in this last game before said deadline, the Los Angeles captain had a chance to prove to his team that he was worth holding onto.

It was a Saturday night and the formidable Chicago Blackhawks paid a visit to STAPLES Center. As for Brown, he answered the call in his 11th hour, so to speak, by doing what no other King had done that season: score a hat-trick. To make the milestone even more special, all three goals came on special teams: two on the power play, one shorthanded. The captain's dominance led the Kings to a 4-0 victory before proceeding to finish the season on a personal hot streak as the silver-and-black squeaked into the playoffs.

Brown didn't stop when the regular season ended, though. His efforts were instrumental in helping the Kings make playoff history, becoming the first-ever eighth-seed to oust the top three seeds in the conference. Overall, Brown scored eight goals and 12 assists in 20 playoff games and while his production slowed when Los Angeles reached the Stanley Cup Final, he came through when it mattered once again,

scoring the first two goals in his team's Cup-clinching win against the New Jersey Devils, setting the tone for the most momentous evening in team history.

After helping the Kings to a Western Final appearance the next year, Brown, while struggling offensively, was still able to lead his team to another Stanley Cup win in 2014.

In the last 30 years, only a handful of captains have led their teams to multiple Stanley Cups: Wayne Gretzky, Mario Lemieux, Mark Messier, Steve Yzerman, Scott Stevens, Joe Sakic and Jonathan Toews.

While it may not be fair to compare the Los Angeles captain to some of the aforementioned or vice-versa, the list does bear the importance of how much of an accomplishment it is for a captain to lead his team to the top of the hockey mountain on more than one occasion.

As of now, many fans seem fed up with Dustin Brown's lack of production. Many more, however, remain loyal to their captain, and rightfully so.

As a winner of the Mark Messier Leadership Award, few take more pride in wearing the "C" than Dustin Brown. Aside from being a physical presence on the ice, the former Guelph Storm is a humanitarian off the ice, donating \$50 per hit to a different charity each season. In 2012-13 and 2013-14, it was the Children's Hospital Los Angeles' Newborn and Infant Critical Care Unit. Before that, it was the nonprofit KaBOOM! which he and his wife raised \$70,000 to help build a new playground in Carson, California.

Speaking of his physicality, Brown dished out 234 hits this past season and while those numbers are impressive, it was his lowest full-season total during his 11-year NHL career.

2014-15 wasn't the first time that Dustin Brown experienced production deficiency but unfortunately, because the Kings missed the playoffs, those numbers (or lack thereof) seemed more problematic than they actually were.

With the playoff miss, the Kings enter the new season in unfamiliar territory. The next season will be an especially challenging one for Dustin Brown who will be turning 31 in November.

Entering just the second year of his eight-year deal, Brown's \$7.2 million salary leaves the Kings with a cap hit of \$5.875 – a number that doesn't look quite as bad anymore but remains hefty nonetheless.

If Dustin Brown has proven nothing else in recent years, it is that he responds admirably to adversity. Whether he can continue to do that next season remains to be seen, but given everything that he has accomplished both individually and from a team standpoint, the Los Angeles captain should respond with

a vengeance. That is especially accurate in the wake of the Kings' acquisition of Milan Lucic who, because he plays a very similar game to Brown's, might give the captain a run for his money.

If loyalty was the reason for keeping Mike Richards in tow last season, that reasoning would only be intensified for Dustin Brown, even if he was drafted prior to the Dean Lombardi era.

To say that 2015-16 will be a make-or-break year for Dustin Brown is a tad premature, but you can be sure that if No. 23 doesn't pick his game up next season, then adjustments will need to be made sooner rather than later.

Source: [makewayfortheKings.com](http://makewayfortheKings.com)