

LA KINGS' MIKE O'CONNELL SAYS ADRIAN KEMPE "HAS PROGRESSED BEAUTIFULLY"

👤 Ryan Cowley 🕒 November 12, 2015

Jun 27, 2014; Philadelphia, PA, USA; Adrian Kempe puts on a team cap after being selected as the number twenty-nine overall pick to the Los Angeles Kings in the first round of the 2014 NHL Draft at Wells Fargo Center. Mandatory Credit: Bill Streicher-USA TODAY Sports

Despite winning their second **Stanley Cup** in three years, the **Los Angeles Kings** were still on a mission to keep building for the future. After all, good teams can win championships but erode within a short period of time. Great teams, however, can win championships while continuing to build, determined to win more. The Kings are the latter, just like the **Chicago Blackhawks**, the **Detroit Red Wings** in recent memory and the **Montreal Canadiens** from an even earlier time. But while the Kings have found themselves in good company, they know that they must continue to stay the course should they plan for more long-term success.

At the **2014 Draft** in Philadelphia, just weeks after winning another Stanley Cup, the Kings were preparing for their first opening-round selection since 2012 when they took **Tanner Pearson** 30th overall. This time, the silver-and-black had the 29th pick and with it, they selected a promising forward by the name of **Adrian Kempe**.



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When the Kings drafted Kempe, he already had a season with Swedish powerhouse **MODO** under his belt.

In 45 games with the club, the then-17-year-old scored five goals and six assists to go in hand with a +5 rating. But while his offensive numbers were decent at best, it is notable to mention that the native of Kramfors, Sweden, brings much more to the table than an ability to get his name on the

scoresheet. Plus, his aforementioned age could have also played a factor. Regardless, Kempe was a player with a plethora of upside entering said draft and has since only gotten better.

Recently, I had a chance to speak with **Mike O'Connell** about Kempe's progression. O'Connell, who has been with the Kings since 2006, is the Senior Advisor of Player Development for the Kings.

"Adrian is an excellent prospect and has progressed beautifully," O'Connell said.

After being drafted by the Kings, Kempe returned for a second season with MODO where he improved his offensive production, scoring five goals and 12 assists in 50 games. He did, however, see his plus-minus drop to a -8. Still, Kempe's future remained bright and after a three-game stint in **Manchester** last season, the youngster moved west with the club and is now playing for the **Ontario Reign**.



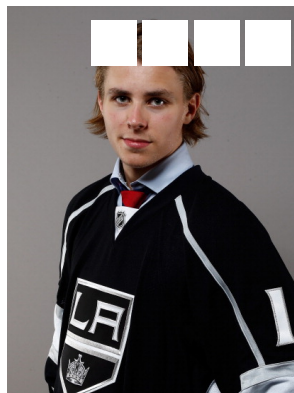
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With the Reign, Kempe is already making a significant impact. In 10 games this season, the winger has four goals and four assists. Of course, while his rapid offensive production thus far is certainly impressive, O'Connell insists the Kempe, as talented as he is, still needs time to develop.

"He has a way to go yet, but like all our players, we want them to be ready when they get their chance and then never have them return to the minor leagues," O'Connell stated frankly.

At 6-foot-1, 187 pounds, Adrian Kempe may not be the biggest guy that opponents will have to deal with but that certainly doesn't mean that the 19-year-old won't use his size to his full advantage.



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Kempe is known as a player who isn't shy about dishing out, or even taking a hit, if it benefits his team. He does possess a mean streak — which is evident in his knack for fighting for pucks in and around the net — coupled with a disdain for losing. Kempe, though, is also known as a very coachable player; someone who already has a good understanding of the game but who is always willing to listen and learn if it makes him better as a player.

"We are very happy to have him in our organization and he will be a productive player for the Kings in the near future," said O'Connell.

When the Kings do need to make a call-up, it is unlikely that they will reach out to Kempe first. That, however, is not a detriment to Kempe but rather a testament to more established players like **Michael Mersch**. With that said, the 19-year-old's call to the NHL will be a matter of when and not if. After all, in addition to his aforementioned strengths, Kempe also possesses great speed, a fluid skating motion and good hands. He may not possess the same on-ice charisma as an **Alex Ovechkin** and could stand to add some

muscle to his frame but from an overall standpoint, Kempe is proving that he is an instrumental piece to the silver-and-black's promising future.

After all, if he is this good right now, just imagine how formidable Adrian Kempe will be when is ready to make the next step.