

# REIGN ASST CHRIS HAJT ON JUSTIN AUGER: "HE'S BEEN A 200-FOOT PLAYER FOR US"

👤 Ryan Cowley 📅 November 30, 2015



*Photo credit: Christian Petersen/Getty Images North America*

Turning themselves into a championship winner did not happen overnight. Far from it, actually.

Under general manager **Dean Lombardi**, the **Los Angeles Kings** have implemented a patient but effective farm system for their prospects to develop. With that, the Kings have been transformed into a club that models one of the league's top defensive units to go in hand with exceptional goaltending. But that isn't all that the silver-and-black have to be proud of.

An integral part of the Kings' success in recent years has been their size. Boasting a handful of players who exceed six feet and 200 pounds, the Kings have gained plenty of notoriety as one of the most intimidating teams in all of hockey.

At 6-foot-7 and 230 pounds, **Justin Auger** of the **Ontario Reign** fits that bill. Yet, while he may not be quite ready for the **NHL** at this point, his progression so far indicates that he may be listing **STAPLES Center** as his business address sooner than we might think.

Recently, I spoke with Reign Assistant Coach **Chris Hajt** about Auger, who couldn't help but glow about the big man.

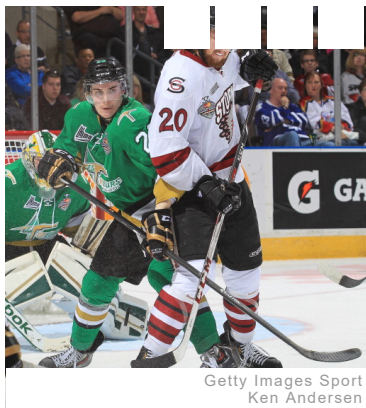
"Justin is a force on the ice," Hajt said. "He is a great person who works on his game on and off the ice. He quickly adjusted to the pro game last season and earned important ice time for the team."

By saying that Auger has quickly adjusted to the pro game, Hajt was not exaggerating.



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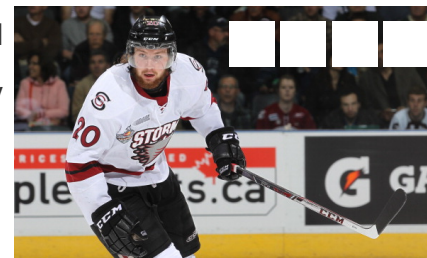
In 70 games for the **Manchester Monarchs** last season, the 21-year-old made the most of his first year as a pro, scoring 13 goals and adding 16 assists while accumulating a plus-15 rating, quickly establishing himself as an asset on the ice in more ways than one. But if critics were anticipating a sophomore slump from the native of Waterloo, Ont., they would be disappointed.

"This year, [Auger] has taken another step. He's been a 200-foot player for us," Hajt continued. "Playing in all key situations, he uses his body well and is taking more pucks to the net. He has also worked hard on his net front play and

shooting which will allow him to create more offense."

In this his sophomore campaign as a pro, Auger has done his part in helping the newly-relocated Reign jump out to an 11-4-2 start. Through 17 games, the big man has scored three goals and added five assists to go in hand with a plus-eight rating. But, as Hajt mentioned, Auger has worked hard on his net front play, which is crucial.

From an observational standpoint, the Los Angeles Kings, who have struggled offensively in recent years, have done so mainly due to the lack of traffic they create in front of the net. While that statement is up for debate, it is nonetheless one area in which the silver-and-black can improve upon should they hope to score more goals. So far, **Milan Lucic** has provided some help in that department and while he hasn't suited up for the big club just yet, **Michael Mersch** is notorious for doing the same in Ontario. Justin Auger is following suit and with his towering frame, could transform himself into the organization's most effective player in said department.



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In addition to his size, Justin Auger also has strong puck possession skills, which just happens to be another area the Kings have had tremendous strength in in recent years, and possesses a great two-way game. Since turning pro last year, Auger has made an immediate impact, making it hard to believe that he still only 21.

While fans in Los Angeles were certainly thrilled to have their team's AHL affiliate relocate to nearby Ontario, they can now look forward to watching individual players master their craft before joining the Kings. While attending Reign games and celebrating the atmosphere is certainly worth the drive to Ontario, watching the likes of Michael Mersch, **Adrian Kempe** and especially Justin Auger will certainly give fans a bit more bang for their buck.

