

TOFFOLI, MARTINEZ, ENROTH ALL IMPRESS IN FIRST QUARTER FOR LA KINGS

👤 Ryan Cowley 🕒 November 25, 2015



Oct 12, 2014; Los Angeles, CA, USA; Los Angeles Kings left wing Tanner Pearson (70) celebrates after scoring a goal against the Winnipeg Jets with Los Angeles Kings center Tyler Toffoli (73) and defenseman Alec Martinez (27) during the second period at Staples Center. Mandatory Credit: Kelvin Kuo-USA TODAY Sports

After the opening week, some fans felt as if the sky was falling.

The **Los Angeles Kings** started the 2015-16 campaign with a discouraging 0-3-0 start. While most took the early struggles in stride, some fans had called for netminder **Jonathan Quick** to be traded and-or for head coach **Darryl Sutter** and even general manager **Dean Lombardi** to be fired. Just like that, the “But what have you done for me lately?” syndrome had kicked in with a vengeance. But the Kings found their way as a seven-game winning streak put them near the top of the NHL standings and while they have lost a few since their slow start, remain among the league’s most impressive teams as they finish the season’s opening quarter tied atop the **Pacific Division**.



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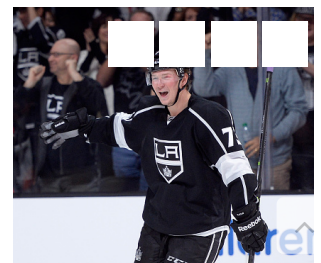
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The silver-and-black have had some positive contributions thus far, but they have also had to deal with some not-so-impressive situations.

Here is how the Kings have fared thus far as we break down who has had great starts to the year and who could see some improvement for the coming quarter and even for the remainder of the season.

Most Impressive Offensively: Tyler Toffoli

Since he and **Jeff Carter** were paired with new King **Milan Lucic** (both of whom deserved honorable mentions in this category), the trio — also known as “**The TLC Line**” — have electrified the Kings’ offense. Yet, while Carter and Lucic have been



great, it is Tyler Toffoli who has led the way for the silver-and-black with 11 goals which not only leads the Kings but is good enough for a fifth-place tie in the league.

While strong starts seem to be his specialty, expect Tyler Toffoli to keep rolling right on into the new year.



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Most Impressive Defensively: Alec Martinez

He will be forever remembered in the annals of Kings history for scoring the Stanley Cup-winning goal in overtime, but there is much more to Alec Martinez's game than one iconic moment.

When he was drafted by the Kings in 2007, Martinez, while he did have plenty of promise as a defenseman, was not close to being NHL-ready. Yet, through a few years of sound development within the organization, Alec Martinez has graduated to the big club where he went from a defensive liability in his early years to arguably the club's most solid blueliner.

So far this season, the 27-year-old leads his team with 45 blocked shots, which also ties him for seventh in the league. From breaking up key offensive-zone plays to rushing back to break up an otherwise golden scoring opportunity, Alec Martinez is a defensive coach's dream. His 38 hits don't hurt either. Even offensively, Martinez can contribute as he has three goals and four assists through 21 games while boasting a plus-five rating.

Gradually, Kings fans are missing the defensive prowess of **Willie Mitchell** and **Rob Scuderi** less and less — and they primarily have Alec Martinez to thank.

Most Pleasant Surprise: Jhonas Enroth

He has only played in five games thus far but Jhonas Enroth has looked admirable as Jonathan Quick's backup. His first start of the season came on Oct. 22 in San Jose. While some didn't like the decision to go with Enroth in hostile territory, the 27-year-old quieted his critics by making 39 saves en route to a 4-1 Los Angeles victory. Overall, Enroth has gone 3-1-0 thus far while posting stellar numbers in goals-against average and save percentage, notching 1.17 and .962 respectively.

Enroth's outstanding play so far has given his coach the confidence to give Jonathan Quick a rest more often than in past years.

Least Impressive Offensively: Andy Andreoff

As a fourth-liner who only averages 8:24 of ice time per game, it may not be entirely fair to be critical of Andy Andreoff for his lack of production. Nonetheless, Andreoff is now in his second year with the Kings but, unlike last year, has been given a bigger role this year.

Andreoff played in 18 games all of last season whereas this season, the 24-year-old already has 19 under his belt. However, unlike last year's totals of two goals and an assist, Andreoff only has one goal to date.

While he did average 12 goals and 30 points in his two seasons with Manchester, Andreoff did play in 69 and

76 games respectively, so he definitely has time to improve his offensive numbers.

The native of Pickering, Ont., however, has been more active on the ice this season than he was last, so we should look forward to something good from the youngster before the calendar year is through.

Least Impressive Defensively: Derek Forbort

He has had to wait a long while to crack the big club's lineup. Since being drafted in the opening round in 2010, Derek Forbort has since spent his career in the **AHL** where he continuously developed into a solid blueliner for the **Manchester Monarchs**.

This season, he has been given the chance to show off his skills in Los Angeles, but his tenure has not gotten off to an auspicious start.

In seven games so far, Forbort is a minus-two with three giveaways and six penalty minutes. Those certainly aren't numbers to worry over but so far, Forbort has looked more like a defensive liability for the silver-and-black than anything else.

Averaging 12:35 of ice time per outing, the native of Duluth, Minn., is the club's seventh D-man, alternating with **Christian Ehrhoff** between the ice and the press box.

The upside is that after honing his skills in the minors for so long, Derek Forbort has earned his spot with the Kings. After all, it wasn't too long ago that the likes of Alec Martinez and **Jake Muzzin** were both considered defensive liabilities for the Kings — and look at them now.

Only more time and experience will make Forbort a better defenseman and maybe even a better scoring threat. So far, the 23-year-old has yet to register a point. Still, Forbort is someone to be curious about moving forward.

Dark Horse: Jamie McBain

It almost seems as if Jamie McBain shouldn't have been a King in the first place, but everything happens for a reason.

After being left with no cap relief following Slava Voynov's suspension last fall, the Los Angeles Kings signed one of the few defenseman they could afford in Jamie McBain. All McBain did was help his team defensively while chipping in with a goal and few assists here and there.

This past summer, yours truly was especially excited when the Kings re-signed McBain and now, he is justifiably spending less time as a healthy scratch — why he was one last season is beyond this writer — and more time keeping a strong defensive corps together.

Through 15 games this season, McBain has a goal and three assists — three of his four points coming on the power play — while recording 16 blocked shots and nine hits.

At 6-foot-1, 181 pounds, he's not the biggest guy on the ice but Jamie McBain has been the hardest-working King on the ice thus far, making the most of his 13:48 of average ice time. Plus, his aforementioned stats thus

far have made him a power-play specialist.

He may not be the flashiest player and you certainly won't see many fans wearing his jersey but the underrated Jamie McBain is nonetheless a valuable commodity for the Los Angeles Kings.

Strongest Team Category: Defense

Despite last year's issues on the blueline with the voids left by Willie Mitchell and Slava Voynov, the Kings finished with a fifth-best 2.40 goals-against-per-game. This season, the silver-and-black look even better defensively with a mark of **2.19 goals-against-per-game**, good enough for third overall.

While they have been victim to a few defensive blunders and some unlucky bounces — who hasn't? — the Los Angeles Kings have once again proven that on most nights, they don't need to score many goals to win games. With the Voynov matter now closed coupled with the addition of veteran Christian Ehrhoff, the Kings have given Drew Doughty some much-needed support as last season, the Norris nominee would log an exorbitant 30 minutes a night. But Doughty, like the rest of the defensive corps, has rebounded from a tough 2014-15 campaign and restored their defensive dominance, making the jobs of Jonathan Quick and Jhonas Enroth that much easier.

Weakest Team Category: Faceoffs

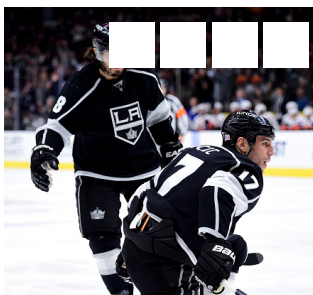
If the last four games were any indication, some might argue that the Kings have struggled most of the penalty-kill. However, despite their opponents going 5-for-21 against them over the last four outings, Los Angeles's 84.3 PK percentage **ranks them** seventh-overall — so, it is pretty far from being their weakest facet. The Kings have, however, been **struggling in the faceoff dot**. This is where they miss Jarret Stoll the most as their 48.4 FOW percentage ranks them 25th in the league.

So far, the Kings have lost faceoffs in key offensive and defensive situations but, in fairness, it hasn't been anything to panic about. Not yet, at least.

Given their overall place in the standings thus far, the Kings' performance in the faceoff department hasn't cost them many games, if any. Still, it is an area that could see a great deal of improvement.

In addition to the aforementioned, there are quite a few Kings who deserved honourable mentions.

Jeff Carter has been impressive offensively while **Drew Doughty** has been a force on the defensive side of things.



As a pleasant surprise, Milan Lucic deserves some acknowledgement, yet while his overall contributions were expected, many Kings fans were not sold on the big man, factoring his sometimes over-aggressive attitude as a liability for the Kings. It's been so far, so good for Lucic in Los Angeles, though.



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In the dark horse category, **Nick Shore** and **Trevor Lewis** each deserve honorary mentions. While neither have produced much offensively, both players have been very active in games whether it's crashing the net, antagonizing opposing players or simply working hard to give their team every chance to win.

Overall, it has been a positive opening quarter for the Los Angeles Kings where every player, in one way or another, contributes. This writer is certainly looking forward to what the silver-and-black have in store as we now look forward to the halfway point of the season.