

TO HAVE SLAVA VOYNOV BACK IN A KINGS UNIFORM WOULD BE DISGRACEFUL

👤 Ryan Cowley 🕒 December 4, 2015

He is a talented player who has established himself as a stalwart on his team's blueline thanks to his tireless defensive play. He was also integral in helping the Los Angeles Kings win two Stanley Cups in three years. Unfortunately, what Slava Voynov has done off the ice has turned what he has done on it into a moot point.

It all began in October when the Kings' defenseman was suspended indefinitely by the NHL following charges of domestic abuse. As the weeks turned into months, the subject became more polarizing, more emotional. Then, just this week, the hoopla reached a climax as Voynov was sentenced to 90 days in jail and three months of probation after pleading no contest to physically abusing his wife, Marta Varlamova.

But enough about the details.

On Thursday, Helene Elliott of the Los Angeles Times wrote a scathing piece on Voynov that called for the Kings to follow the same route as the hindrance that was the Mike Richards situation and terminate his contract. In fact, when it was announced last Monday that Richards' contract would be terminated, many King fans I spoke with could not fathom why their team had not done the same with Voynov. After all, until Monday, there wasn't much ground to cancel Richards's contract because as far as I know, "underachieving" is not a sufficient reason to do so. Voynov, meanwhile, was charged and suspended by the league what feels like an eternity ago. But now that a verdict has been reached and sentencing has been set, the parties can move forward. What the NHL – and the Kings – will do in the aftermath remains to be seen, but I will not hesitate in echoing Ms. Elliott's belief that the silver-and-black should cut ties with their controversial blueliner.

Here is what Elliott had to say:

Does Voynov deserve a second chance? This might have been that second chance. According to court documents, Varlamova told a nurse who treated her that night at Providence Little Company of Mary Hospital in Torrance that Voynov had previously assaulted her. Does that not count in evaluating his ability to learn from his past mistakes?

Those who say it's punishment enough that Voynov was suspended most of last season and must serve jail time and probation, perform community service and go through a domestic violence prevention program

should focus on the nature of the incident. If the Kings give him another chance, they would be making it a "gimme" and diminish its magnitude.

Varlamova told Redondo Beach police Voynov punched her in the jaw, choked her three times, pushed her to the ground, kicked her and shoved her into the corner of a flat-screen TV, resulting in a 1.2-inch gash above her left eye. He accepted responsibility for his actions, remember? That should not be forgotten.

The Kings can terminate his contract, trade him, or keep him with the team. Here's a vote for one of the first two options.

Being one of the most respected hockey writers in North America, Helene Elliott's thoughts resonate with both the most avid and casual of fans, and this is certainly no exception.

As far as I'm concerned, Slava Voynov's on-ice contributions to the Los Angeles Kings can forever take a back seat to what he's done away from the rink. This situation is an ideal opportunity for the Kings organization to make a stand and let everyone know that this type of behavior will not be tolerated under any circumstances, even if it does involve a high-caliber defenseman.

The Colorado Avalanche dropped the ball in 2013 when they continued to allow their netminder Semyon Varlamov to play despite being arrested on domestic violence charges after abusing his girlfriend, albeit the charges were eventually dropped. Still, if I were a fan of the Avalanche, I would be sick to my stomach learning that my team has given the message – intentionally or not – that it's okay to beat a woman, even when said woman – in this case, Evgenia Vavinyuk – did not defend the netminder or justify his actions.

"I want the American government to defend me," Vavinyuk told KUSA in 2013. "I want everyone to know, all the fans to know, that he's not the great Semyon Varlamov. Great people don't beat up their women. They don't give them concussions. They don't belittle them, throw out like dogs. I want people to know this, that this man can be an animal."

If Slava Voynov should ever wear the uniform of the Los Angeles Kings again, I cannot, and will not, respect that. Scoring a clutch goal, blocking a vital shot or helping the team win another Stanley Cup, I can no longer salute the defenseman who I once had an abundance of respect for based mostly on his prowess as a player.

To have Slava Voynov back in a Kings uniform would be disgraceful. Even if U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials decide not to deport the defenseman for his actions, there will be other NHL clubs asking for the 25-year-old's services, and if those teams feel that on-ice talent supersedes morality, then shame on them.

At the end of the day, I have faith in the Los Angeles Kings that they will make the right decision, and I don't just say that because I have been one of their most ardent fans for so many years. Dean Lombardi and company, while they do value loyalty, should not be expected to let this matter slide. Plus, the club's re-signing defenseman Jamie McBain on Friday could very well indicate that the Kings are one step closer to ridding themselves of Voynov. Never mind that taking his \$4.167 million salary for next season off the books would help the team financially, Voynov's return to the lineup will send the message that the Kings condone such behaviour, ultimately risking the alienation of droves of fans, female and male.

He may have garnered respect and admiration as a top-four defenseman, as an instrumental piece in both of the Kings' championship wins, but to commit something as heinous as beating a woman should prove that playing in the NHL should be a privilege and not a right. So, if all goes well, I will not have to explain to my mother, my grandmother and every other woman I know why I am a fan of a team who justifies such garbage.

Source: makewayfortheKings.com