

LA KINGS' NELSON EMERSON ON NICK EBERT: "HE HAS SKILLS THAT OTHERS DON'T HAVE"

👤 Ryan Cowley 📅 November 4, 2015



LONDON, ON - MAY 19: Nick Ebert #10 of the Guelph Storm skates against the Val'Dor Foreurs in Game Four of the 2014 MasterCard Memorial Cup at Budweiser Gardens on May 19, 2014 in London, Ontario, Canada. The Storm defeated the Foreurs 6-3. (Photo by Kenneth Andersen/Getty Images)

For some players, being the final pick of the **NHL Draft** would all but deter their hopes for making it to the **NHL**. Kings prospect **Nick Ebert**, however, is not one of those cases. After a not-so-smooth transition from the junior ranks to the pros last season, the 21-year-old blueliner seems more determined than ever to make his opportunity count as he hopes to be donning the silver-and-black of the **Los Angeles Kings** sooner rather than later.

Being taken 211th overall by the Kings in 2012, Ebert started his road to the NHL on an inauspicious note. Entering said draft, there was a lot of promise for the native of Livingston, N.J., but considering how late he was chosen, Ebert's stock dropped. However, the youngster was motivated to make the most of his technical ability. From his puck-moving prowess to his exceptional skating to his possession of a powering slap shot, Ebert has shown that he brings much more to the table than skeptics believe.

After wrapping up his junior career in 2014, Ebert graduated to the **American Hockey League** where, in his first full year, helped the **Manchester Monarchs** to the **Calder Cup** crown. However, Ebert was frequently a healthy scratch in his first pro year, suiting up for 45 games during the regular season and just two during the playoffs.

This season, despite the now-relocated **Ontario Reign's** booming 5-0-2 start, Ebert is off to a less-than-stellar beginning, recording no points through four games. With



[View image | gettyimages.com](#)



that said, though, the former **Guelph Storm** continues to show promise, as Kings' Director of Player Development **Nelson Emerson** recently told me.

"Nick has shown good progress this year," Emerson said. "This year he has shown more maturity. Not trying to do too much, but doing the right things when it is needed."

Over the course of his 45 games with the Monarchs last season, Ebert scored eight goals and added six assists while amassing a +13 rating. While those are decent numbers, Ebert's rookie status most likely kept him on the sidelines for much of the year.

"We had an older group last year. Obviously pretty established," Emerson explained. "There were times he was the odd man out. I think there were times last season when he was frustrated."

Despite the circumstances, though, Ebert was able to make the best of a tough situation, and Emerson saw that.

"He put a lot of time in with [assistant coach] **Chris Hajt** and [development coach] **Mike O'Connell**," Emerson said of Ebert's work ethic. "He stayed ready and was a big contributor to the playoff run."

Despite being drafted by **Mississauga** in the **2010 OHL Priority Draft**, Ebert started, and spent the majority of his junior career, with the **Windsor Spitfires**, scoring 32 goals and 106 assists during his three-and-a-half-year stint with the club.

At the conclusion of the 2012-13 season, Ebert had a disappointing career plus-minus rating of -43, but the following year, turned the tables, amassing a +27 rating before being dealt to the **Guelph Storm**.

With the Storm, Ebert would play in 38 games, scoring nine goals and adding 24 assists while adding to his already-impressive plus-minus rating with +26. More importantly, Ebert was instrumental in the playoffs, notching 16 points in 20 games while helping the Storm win their first **OHL** championship title — the **J. Ross Robertson Cup** — since 2004. With that, they advanced to the **Memorial Cup**, Canada's prestigious tournament to determine junior-hockey supremacy.



Getty Images Sport
Claus Andersen

[View image | gettyimages.com](#)

There, Ebert's five assists in four games help lead the Storm to the tournament final where they lost to the **Edmonton Oil Kings**. Still, Ebert's junior career closed on a high note, but his transition to the next level wasn't quite as smooth.

"I think dealing with that as a young successful junior player can be difficult at times," Emerson said of Ebert being a frequent healthy scratch in Manchester last season.

After a four-game stint with the **ECHL** version in 2013, Nick Ebert is back with the Reign this season. But despite his lack of offensive production thus far, patience, according to Emerson, is key for Ebert's chances to succeed.

"Being a young D-man, the timetable is not always swift and smooth," Emerson noted. "If Nick continues to stay with it, work on his fundamentals and keep the game in front of him, he will have a real opportunity ahead of him. He has skills that others don't have. Can shoot, play the PP, skates well, and is solid on his skates. Again, this is only his second year pro but good things are ahead of him."

After joking that the Kings would be set if they drafted a defenseman named either Siskel or Roeper to complement the former OHLer, this writer had a chance to sit down and watch Nick Ebert as a player. The 6-foot-1 , 207-pounder looked much more at ease during his brief time in Guelph than he did in Manchester last season. With that said, despite his limited ice time with the Monarchs, there were promising signs from the young defenseman.

His aforementioned puck-moving skills and his booming slap shot in particular piqued this writer's interest in Ebert's game. Yet, while his defensive game could stand to see some improvement, simply getting more ice time at the AHL level will help Ebert's progression with the Reign this season and, who knows, by next September, the defenseman may be good enough to crack the Kings' opening-night lineup. But let's take this one step at a time.

For a team which possesses a defense-first philosophy, it is inevitable that the Los Angeles Kings will be tweaking their blueline over the next few years to maintain their strong presence at said position. In just a few short years, Nick Ebert may be ready for that responsibility. Until then, though, it should be just as enjoyable watching Nick Ebert develop and mature into an NHL mainstay — which isn't be too bad for the last pick of a draft.