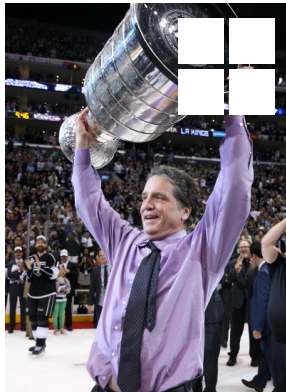


# LA KINGS TO RISE FROM ADVERSITY UNDER GM DEAN LOMBARDI

👤 Ryan Cowley 🕒 September 25, 2015



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The greatest accomplishment is not in never falling, but in rising again after you fall.

This, one of the many iconic quotes said by the late **Vince Lombardi**, rings true for anyone, and the **Los Angeles Kings** are no exception as they are looking to move forward after a tumultuous year.

It was a year that saw three of their players — all now former Kings — get into legal trouble which those outside the team's fanbase seemed to enjoy, watching the two-time **Stanley Cup** champions fall by the wayside. But while he most likely was not referring to hockey, Vince Lombardi's sentiment towards perseverance is

nonetheless both powerful and absolute. In this sense, winning the Stanley Cup in 2012 or 2014 was not the greatest accomplishment the Kings could have achieved. It is how they perform, and ultimately succeed, after going through such a disappointing year.

On the first day of training camp last Friday, according to a source through **TSN's Pierre LeBrun**, Kings GM **Dean Lombardi** — no relation to Vince — gave his players a passionate half-hour speech. According to LeBrun's source, "you could hear a pin drop" as Lombardi addressed his players with a passionate speech addressing the proverbial dark clouds that hovered over his team from **Slava Voynov** to **Mike Richards**, just to name two issues.

Lombardi also went one step further not only challenging his players to be champions once again — which, like in previous years, would prove many wrong — but to be champions away from the ice as well. So, while the latter statement may be perceived as marginally corny at best, Dean Lombardi did make the right move. Whether or not that translates to championship success will not be determined for quite some time, but the Kings GM felt he needed to return from an agonizingly-long summer with a vengeance, and he did just that.

Also according to LeBrun, "To a player, when I spoke to them, they said, 'The words were heard,' and they will do their best to show a lot of people wrong this year."



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This past Monday, the Kings made a promising push forward, as they announced a series of personal conduct training initiatives in addition to partnerships with various social groups to help better educate their employees and help instill the club's values and principles. Also, just a couple of weeks ago, the Kings hired former NHLer **Brantt Myhres** to direct the team's new player-assistance program.

Some of said training initiatives will include sexual harassment training and creating **Kings Over Violence**, a promotional campaign in partnership with **Peace Over Violence** to increase awareness against violence. The latter would certainly suggest that this was implemented in the wake of the legal issues involving now-former defenseman Slava Voynov but on a larger scale, it is simply a program put in place that should be essential within any organization. So, while these initiatives were not instilled to garner admiration from others, even the team's harshest skeptics could — and should — admit on some level that the Kings are taking accountability for their players' mistakes and learning from them. The same can be suggested for **The Herren Project**, another of said initiatives, which will be dedicated to educating players on drug and alcohol abuse.



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This writer believes that while they are doing what it takes to be a championship contender again, the Los Angeles Kings are also, and just as importantly, working to restore the faith of those fans who have been disillusioned by earlier rumours that Slava Voynov would be back with the club following his jail sentence for domestic abuse, giving the impression that the team would value loyalty over integrity. Of course, while the latter is both inaccurate and unfair, there are many fans who are adamant that professional athletes — or anyone for that matter — who abuse women should receive nothing less than a stringent punishment, regardless which team they suit up for. Still, no one can deny that Dean Lombardi and company are working towards long-term success for their club in every facet.

When he was hired in 2006, Dean Lombardi took over a Los Angeles Kings team that had established a notoriety for, among other issues, poor draft results and questionable trades. Lombardi quickly implemented a five-year rebuilding plan and if this writer's feelings were any indication, patience was not a trait that came easily. But through better drafting, smarter trades and even going through a painfully-long goaltending carousel before finding an unprecedented form of success between the pipes, Dean Lombardi had to push through many dark days before finding light at the end of the tunnel — light that saw ultimate success for his team while quieting critics who barely gave his club a sporting chance at being a playoff contender much less a championship one.

Some general managers could enter their 10th season with an organization and feel content. Dean Lombardi, though, saw his first decade with the silver-and-black ending in disappointment, but seems dearly motivated into restoring success entering his second.

Following their unfortunate playoff miss last season, the Kings could have fired both Lombardi and head coach **Darryl Sutter**, but they didn't, nor did anyone expect them to. Yes, it would have been an option, but it would have been, quite frankly, an easy way out.

The Los Angeles Kings, in many ways, have never been a stronger organization before Dean Lombardi was at the helm. Having a chance to rebound after a dismal 2014-15 campaign is just what the Kings need and there is no better man to guide them in the right direction than Mr. Lombardi himself. After all, as one successful sports figure named Lombardi once said, "The greatest accomplishment is not in never falling, but in rising again after you fall."

It is now time for another sports figure named Lombardi to not only practice that, but to consummate it, and if his track record through the first nine years is any indication, then Dean can... and Dean will.



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