

WHAT THE KINGS' 2012 STANLEY CUP DID FOR ME THAT THE RED SOX'S 2004 WORLD SERIES DIDN'T... BUT HOW I LOVED BOTH ANYWAY

👤 Ryan Cowley 📅 June 11, 2017



Image credit: Ryan Cowley

The **Boston Red Sox** and the **Los Angeles Kings**.

Those were this writer's two teams growing up. Yet, while the lineage of each organization was vastly different in many respects, they both had one thing in common: a painstakingly-long championship drought.

Of course, if an 'Understatement of the Year' award existed, it would go to the old adage, "Good things come to those who wait," and it would win twice: once in 2004 and again in 2012. These years were highlighted by both teams ending their respective championship droughts and, in the process, bringing this writer unprecedented joy.

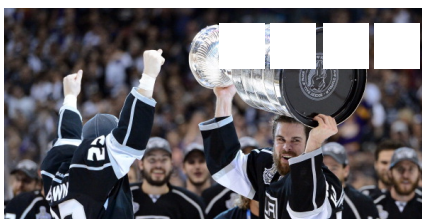
Embed from Getty Images



Getty Images Sport
Ron Vesely

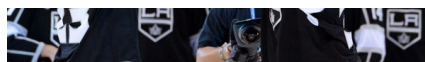
On the evening of June 11, 2012, I was on my way home from work just in time for the puck to drop for Game 6 of the **Stanley Cup Final** between the Kings and the **New Jersey Devils**. The Kings had already celebrated a magical postseason. En route to the Final, they had become the first No. 8 seed to eliminate the top three seeds in a conference. However, after taking a 3-0 series lead against the Devils, the silver-and-black had dropped the previous two as they were slowly losing momentum. But, there was something about playing on home ice that just couldn't be taken lightly.

Embed from Getty Images



Like a little boy waiting for Christmas morning, the anticipation of Game 6 was agonizing. Early in the game, though, Kings defenseman **Rob Scuderi** drew a crucial five-minute power play. The man I wanted the Kings to sign





Getty Images Sport
Harry How

three years earlier for his fearless defensive ability exercised a new talent: milking an illegal hit for all its worth. It paid off.

With the Devils down a man, the Kings made sure to capitalize on their opponent's mistakes. Captain **Dustin Brown**, who had a quiet Final, opened the scoring. Then, on the same power play, scored again (although **Jeff Carter** was later given credit). Before long, the Kings were up 6-1 and the party was on.

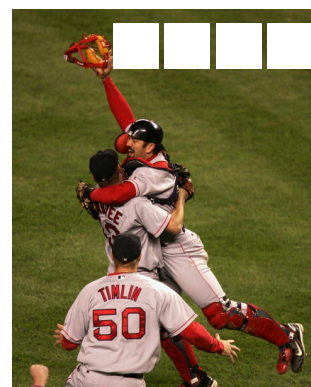
From **Rogie Vachon** and **Marcel Dionne** to **Bob Miller** and **Nick Nickson** to **Jerry Buss** and **Bruce McNall** to **Steven Raboin** and the **Egebjerg brothers**, this win was for everyone. Their drought may not have been as long – or as publicized – as that of the Red Sox, but the Los Angeles Kings nonetheless deserved their crown.

After they broke their dreaded curse in 2004, the Red Sox won another World Series in 2007. By this juncture, there was no better time to be a fan of this team when for the previous eight decades, a fan's experiences were laden with disappointment, and even shame.

Yet, while the Red Sox were the proverbial cream of the crop by this point, the Kings were on the opposite end of the spectrum. Aside from a few playoff upsets here and there and a Finals appearance in 1993, the Kings were never considered Stanley Cup contenders.

However, a new general manager in **Dean Lombardi** meant a new philosophy. Upon his hiring in 2006, Lombardi unveiled a five-year plan. It had promise but it was nonetheless a frustrating wait. Still, success was inevitable. The club's previous failed rebuilds became something of the past. Going to the beach or enjoying the night life were no longer factors in players wanting to come to Los Angeles and the team was no longer bent on acquiring the best players but rather the right ones.

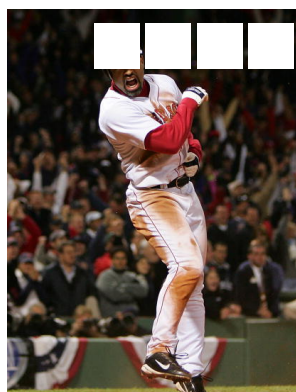
Embed from Getty Images



Getty Images Sport
Al Bello

With all that factored in, the spring of 2012 was paramount. The fall of 2004, though, was a bittersweet one.

Embed from Getty Images



Getty Images Sport
Ezra Shaw

In the **American League Championship Series**, the Red Sox had fallen behind 0-3 in their series against the hated **New York Yankees**, coming off a 19-8 thrashing in Game 3. Yet, while the Yankees beating the Red Sox never failed to get this writer's dander up, this particular series didn't. It wasn't because I didn't care but rather realizing that there were issues in life that were far more important. My mother's cancer treatment wasn't going as well as doctors had hoped and, as a result, there was nothing more they could do for her. But, in the back of my mind, I thought how nice it would have been for the Red Sox just to pull off the impossible just before my mother passes; to not only defeat the hated Yankees but to become the first team in **MLB** history to come

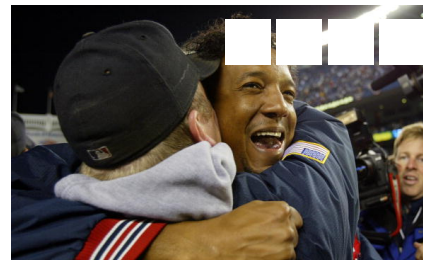
back from 0-3 in a series. Most of all, though, to erase that dreaded 86-year championship curse and, in the process, to forgive, among others, **Bill Buckner**.

Little did I know!

That evening, I watched Game 4 with a “playing with house money” sort of mindset. Before I knew it, apathy turned to intensity as the Red Sox won the next three games — all in dramatic fashion — setting the stage for Game 7 at **Yankee Stadium**.

I was in the hospital with my mother that night and leading up to the game, I was trembling. Akin to a first date with your dream girl or an interview for your dream job, my nerves were shot for this one. I didn't even care that the Red Sox blew a big lead to lose Game 7 the previous fall to the same team at the same venue. This was different. Like in Game 4, the Red Sox had nothing to lose. The Yankees, meanwhile, had everything to lose. They may have had 21 more World Series victories than their longtime adversaries but when you acquire the game's then-highest-paid player in **Alex Rodriguez** (especially on the heels of him joining the Red Sox), there is no other choice to win. That goes especially for blowing a 3-0 series lead.

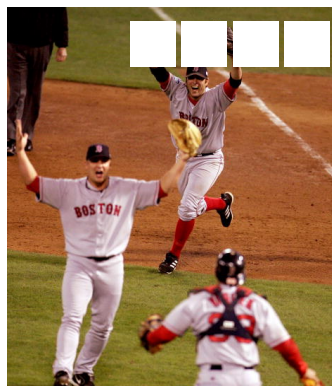
Embed from Getty Images



Getty Images Sport
Jed Jacobsohn

The Red Sox were up against ace pitcher **Kevin Brown** – who was A-Rod's predecessor as the game's highest-paid player. But to those dreading a repeat of 2003, they needn't have worried.

Embed from Getty Images



Getty Images Sport
Al Bello

The Red Sox stunned the baseball world, shellacking the Yankees 10-3 before sweeping the league-leading **St. Louis Cardinals** in the World Series seven days later.

Entering the bottom of the ninth of the series-clincher in St. Louis, I got out of my clunky **Homer Simpson** slippers because, frankly, I wouldn't have been able to jump around the entire main floor of my house with them on.

After **Albert Pujols** got on base, **Scott Rolen** popped up to right followed by **Jim Edmonds** striking out. And then...

St. Louis's next batter, **Edgar Renteria**, bounced a grounder back to the mound where closer **Keith Foulke** grabbed it.

Jumping up from my seat and leaning over, I was waiting for the ball to hit the inside of [first baseman] **Doug Mientkiewicz's** glove and I was off.



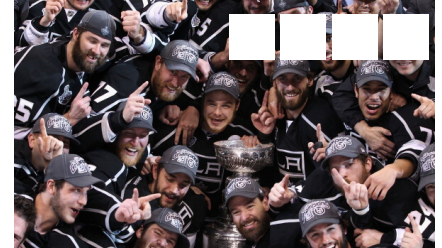
"Back to Foulke! Red Sox fans have longed to hear it..."

My favourite words spoken by any sports broadcaster, ever! Thank you, **Joe Buck**!

And then... I was off! Jumping around the entire floor yelling, "Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes!"

It was a winter of sheer jubilation (living in Ottawa, that was unprecedented) but my reaction when the Red Sox won the World Series contrasted my reaction to the Kings' Stanley Cup win in 2012.

Embed from Getty Images



Getty Images Sport
Christian Petersen

While they hadn't won a World Series in nearly a century, there had been a palpable feeling in recent years that the Red Sox were due. The same – from my vantage point, at least – could not be said for the Kings.

Even during their recent rebuilding years, attention began to shift to the lesser-publicized teams like the **St. Louis Blues** or the **Dallas Stars**. The Kings, despite playing in one of the largest North American markets, were largely ignored. Even award voters snubbed rookie sensation **Drew Doughty** for a **Calder Trophy** nomination for **Kris Versteeg** in 2009.

Yet, while the latter had better numbers, Doughty, still just 18, had quickly established himself as the cornerstone of an already-promising defensive corps for the Kings; an area the franchise had struggled with for years.

The same thing can be said for the 2012 playoffs. Entering said postseason, virtually no one gave the Kings a chance.

Embed from Getty Images



Getty Images Sport
Derek Leung

Their first-round opponents were the league-leading **Vancouver Canucks** who, after falling just one game short of winning it all in 2011, were poised to go one step further this time around. After five games, though, the Kings had shocked the hockey world by not only eliminating the Canucks but dominating them through their entire series.

After needing only a combined nine games to get past the Blues and the Arizona, err, **Phoenix Coyotes**, the Kings met the Devils in the Final. Yet, the winners of three Stanley Cups suffered the same fate as the Kings' previous three opponents

and, in the end, the countdown was on.

Counting down the waning seconds of Game 6 like the fans in attendance, I fell to my knees with tears falling from my eyes with a temporary inability to even speak. Thinking about all the waiting, all the heartache and

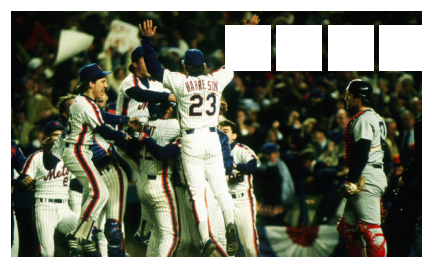
everything before, after and in between, I was lost for words. Yet, when I eventually did get my words back, I had called my brother – who had been the reason I became a Kings fan – to congratulate him.

Normally, congratulating fans was a bit tacky in my opinion but I just didn't care. Plus, when I was congratulated for those five championships between my two teams from 2004 to 2014, I embraced it. Who cares if I didn't play for any of those teams? It just felt so good to be associated with both of these teams, especially with the Kings whom I had written about religiously since 2009.

The Red Sox' 2004 win was something I will always hold very dear to my heart but the impact of the Kings' 2012 win had just as much vigor, if not more.

Prior to 2012, 'Game 6' was associated with infamy as it translated to that of the 1986 World Series. It was then when the Red Sox, a single out away from winning it all, suffered an insurmountable collapse to the **New York Mets**, capped off by an unfathomable fielding error by the aforementioned Bill Buckner. The 2012 Kings, though, transformed 'Game 6' into a term associated with utter jubilation.

Embed from Getty Images



Getty Images Sport | Rich Pilling

When asked how I compare the two victories, I simply answer that I cannot. Both were similar but so very different.

Personally speaking, it is downright impossible to say which victory was better. Between the lineage and the storylines entering their respective runs and what it took to get to the top both short- and long-term, there are far too many factors at play to make it a fair comparison.

One thing I can safely say, though, is that no matter what happens down the road, I will always look back on 2004 and 2012 and remember what incredible times they were, especially on a personal level.

Embed from Getty Images



Getty Images Sport
Ezra Shaw

I was thankful to celebrate the 2004 victory with my ailing mother just months before she passed away. I was also thankful to celebrate the 2012 victory with my brother and the hundreds of friends I had made along the way. With that said, while 2004 was special in itself, I felt like I was, in a way, part of the Kings team that won it in 2012 (and again in 2014). Yes, as a fan, I was part of 'Red Sox Nation' but there was something deeper eight years later. After all, having written about the Kings and having not only met but having garnered so many friendships with a litany of the club's fans — whether they were from Los Angeles, the United Kingdom, Australia or just up the road — made this writer feel like he was a part of it just as much as anyone else, albeit unofficially.

Indeed, we are all Kings.

Overall, though, I was truly blessed to celebrate all of it, as a dedicated fan of both teams. Some, however, would suggest that sports is, for lack of a better term, pedestrian; that in the grand scheme of things, it's not that important.

I beg to differ.

A long-awaited championship may not necessarily win eternal bragging rights against fans of your rival teams but it nonetheless instills an overwhelming feeling of accomplishment. This is a feeling that if your team can overcome adversities to reach the top of the mountain, if you will, then why can't you?

The 2012 Los Angeles Kings did that for me, in addition to many, many others, including a quarter-million fans who showed up for the club's Stanley Cup parade. So, remind me again: Who says Californians don't care about hockey?

Like the 2004 Boston Red Sox, the 2012 Kings reignited the imaginations of countless long-suffering fans, assuring them that those better days ahead had indeed arrived, that next year was finally here. This unbelievable sense of rewarded patience reminds us all that one, there is no greater amount of pride than donning their team's colours and two, quintessentially, that anything is possible.

If only someone made a ***Fever Pitch***-like movie about the Kings...

For this writer, there is nothing more special than being a fan of the Los Angeles Kings. I am, like my beloved Boston Red Sox, a fan then, a fan now and a fan forever — and I wouldn't have it any other way.

Embed from Getty Images



Getty Images Sport
Noel Vasquez