

ROYAL REFLECTIONS: SPEAKING WITH LA KINGS ALUM JARED AULIN

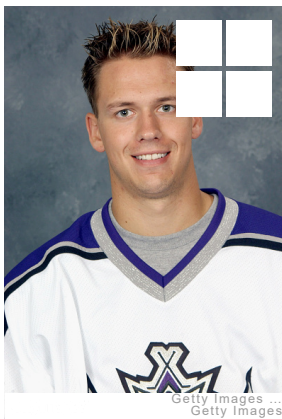
👤 Ryan Cowley 🕒 March 6, 2017



Image credit: Ryan Cowley

We have all been in walks of life where those who supported us the most had left us, although most commonly via resignation or dismissal. For **Jared Aulin**, that was no different, but for the former NHLer, it was under tragic circumstances.

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When Aulin was acquired by the **Los Angeles Kings** (with **Adam Deadmarsh** and **Aaron Miller**) from the **Colorado Avalanche** in early 2001, he was known as someone who would be integral to the team's future. If no one believed this, Jared Aulin knew he had the support of two Kings scouts whose collective interest was piqued by the 18-year-old prior to acquiring him: **Ace Bailey** and **Mark Bavis**.

Fresh off a 108-point campaign with the **WHL's Kamloops Blazers**, Jared Aulin had all the confidence in the world entering his first training camp with the Kings. Sadly, what should have been an exciting time for Aulin was overshadowed by the horrific attacks of September 11 which claimed the lives of, among others, Aulin's



mentors, the aforementioned Bailey and Bavis, who were both on board one of the planes that crashed into the **World Trade Center**.

The Kings, along with the rest of the United States and the world, were mourning the loss of not only their two beloved scouts but of every victim whose life was taken that tragic morning. For Aulin, the pain was just as unbearable knowing that two men who he had gotten to know very well, were suddenly gone.

While not having Bailey and Bavis at his side, Aulin would carry on, making his Kings debut in 2002-03 where **he scored** two goals and two assists in 17 games while spending the rest of the campaign in Manchester.

Photo courtesy of lakings.com Unfortunately, a devastating shoulder injury would prevent Aulin from continuing his NHL career. In fact, Aulin became so discouraged that he was ready to walk away from the game he loved. But, a friend at the **University of Calgary** called, giving Aulin a second chance, ultimately leading the Calgary native to a career resurgence in Sweden.

In this edition of **MakeWay's 'Royal Reflections'**, Anna Bittner and I have the pleasure of speaking with Jared Aulin, who shares with us his inspiring story of loss, resilience and strength. Through it all, Aulin has fought hard and is, a decade after wanting to leave the game, still going strong, playing the game he has always loved in picturesque Switzerland.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is Jared Aulin.

Jared Aulin berättar om sin mammas cancer



Make Way for the Kings: During your third season (99-00) with the WHL's Kamloops Blazers, you suffered a broken ankle but still managed to score 55 points in 57 games. When I think of that type of heroism, I immediately think of Bobby Baun, who was famous for helping the Leafs win the Stanley Cup on a broken leg. Did the team's medical staff do something to allow you to play on that ankle or was it sheer determination that got you through that period?

Jared Aulin: I was actually playing with a broken ankle through the rest of the season, so I went from 23 points in nine games to 55 points in 57 games. But, I found out at the end of the year that I was supposed to have ankle surgery but the [Blazers] wanted me to play, so I just played through it.

MW: While in Kamloops, you were scouted by Kings scouts Ace Bailey and Mark Bavis. What areas in particular were they most impressed by and what was the driving force that brought you to Los Angeles?

JA: I think they saw me as a player who played with passion and brought a skill level to the game where I could create offensive opportunities in situations other players couldn't, and so they were keen on having me part of the Los Angeles organization, so I was excited when they chose me.

MW: Describe the feeling of entering your first training camp with the Kings in 2001. While it would normally be a time of excitement for a young player eager to impress, any enthusiasm would be overshadowed by the tragic deaths of both Bailey and Bavis in the September 11 attacks. As best as you can, could you describe your feelings at camp that fall under said circumstances?

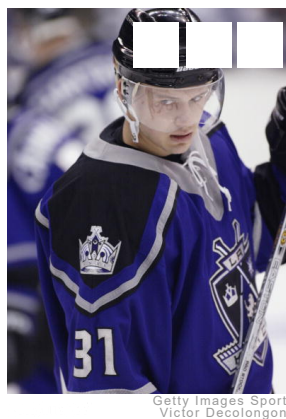
JA: I remember waking up at a hotel and turning on the TV before going down for breakfast, the first day of training camp, and just seeing the news and how shocked and, I guess, scared everyone was to see [the attacks on September 11]. Then, an emergency meeting was called for all the players. We met up as a group and found out about the tragic and saddening loss of Mark Bavis and Ace Bailey: two guys who I got to know over the year and who I was looking forward to seeing and making proud because I was their player. It was hard, it was tough, but we were reminded that their passion was hockey and [the Kings coaches and management] wanted us to come together as a group and prove ourselves. So, there's one side of you that feels an emptiness, there's a loss and an empty space you don't recognize there, and the other side of it is that you want to make them proud and prove to everybody that [Bailey and Bavis] made the right decision.

Photo courtesy of lakings.com

MW: You debuted for the Kings in the 2002-03 season where you scored a pair of goals and assists in 17 games. You also registered a point per game in your 44 games with Manchester that season. Being that

it was your first year of professional hockey, what emotions did you go through playing your first NHL game and even your first AHL game?

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JA: First NHL game was really exciting. I remember we were playing– my first shift, I set up **Mathieu Schneider** for a one-timer and he hit the crossbar and I got hit from behind, so it created a scoring chance and drew a penalty. But then, after that, I had limited ice time, so to go from being excited to just sitting there and wanting more opportunity– but that’s the way it was for young guys back then.

AHL was very similar. I didn’t have– the tragic loss of Mark Bavis and Ace Bailey, I didn’t have them in my corner to push for me to get the opportunity I felt I deserved at the start. Then, after a little while, I got to put myself in and get more of an opportunity and got a point per game. But, the first games are always exciting. You have a lot of emotion regardless, but you prove to your teammates that they can trust you and prove to the organization that you’re a guy they’re happy with.

MW: Despite an impressive first pro season, you were dealt a setback prior to your sophomore season as you suffered a serious shoulder injury. Physically and mentally, how was the recuperation process for you and how did you feel upon returning to action?

JA: It was mentally tough. I remember I was pretty heartbroken. I felt I was going to earn an opportunity to play on the Kings’ fourth line that year and ended up– **Mike Cammalleri** and I were going to play hockey in a rookie tournament. We felt that we were targets. Cammalleri blew his knee out in that tournament, too, and I had the shoulder injury and was told that I was going to miss the whole season. So, it’s hard and when you’re a young guy whose trying to step into the league and have an impact, trying to carve your way into the NHL and you get news like that and a setback like that, it’s difficult. So, mentally it was really tough and then the other side of it is learning how much work it takes to get back and to get to a point where you feel you could be the same player you were before the injury. Unfortunately, we had so many injuries in L.A. that the focus couldn’t

be as much on each individual. So, for a young guy where you don't have the attention, I guess you learn that the hard way.

MW: In 2007, you were ready to walk away from the game when you received a call from a friend at the University of Calgary where you would become the first player in 20 years to play in the CIS (Canadian Interuniversity Sport) after playing in the NHL. What motivated you most to return to school and how did it feel not only playing for the school but being back in the classroom?

JA: My biggest motivation was– I didn't really want to play hockey. I didn't have the passion for it anymore. I felt that once my shoulder injury happened, that I wasn't given the same opportunity to excel in my career, even though I felt I could bring the same game I always brought. But, as I got older, I learned that the shoulder injury was botched in one of the worst shoulder surgeries anybody had seen. That's why the opportunity was limited.

Going to school, it was an opportunity for me to get an education and find a love for the game again and to prove to myself that I still have the skills and the passion for the game. So, I loved it, I had a lot of fun, I played with friends but at the same time, being in the classroom was tough. Five years without school, then you step into university again, you realize that mentally, office work or school work or any type of job outside of athletics, is very mentally-draining. So, when you combine academics with sports, you have to really make sure that you're taking care of yourself and getting the proper rest while still getting your homework done.

MW: After a few stops in the AHL, you went to Sweden in 2010 where you revitalized your playing career. What factors played in your career resurgence?

JA: First year in Sweden, I was getting used to the league but it was fun. The crowds in Sweden are very passionate. Whoever's in the building, they're cheering for somebody; it's not a status thing. They're there to see somebody win and see two teams compete. But, after that season, my first year at Orebro, where I was for four years, it was probably the greatest days of my hockey career because I never felt more appreciated as a hockey player and a person. I think the biggest thing was when I got there, the coach told me that he knows what I'm capable of and wants me to focus on me and playing my game, being as creative as I can be and just know that if I make a mistake, I'd work hard to fix it. So, I think for me, my personality, when a coach gives you that much trust and believes in your abilities, it gives you that much more reason to be confident and to go out there and have fun with it. I really had a lot of fun out there. The fans [in Orebro] really embraced me and made me feel special.

*Photo credit:
Christoffer F.
Pettersson*

MW: You are now in your seventh season in Europe, now playing in Switzerland. With all of the trials and tribulations you experienced over the years, what kind of perspective do you have now looking back on it and what advice can you give for those who, in any walk of life, are ready to throw in the towel, so to speak?

JA: The biggest thing is that it's okay to walk away from something if you're not feeling the passion because you never want to be someone who quits your job and puts the people you work with at risk. For me, it's a sport, it's a team sport, so if I can't bring my best, then it's not fair to my teammates for me to go out there and pretend. So, my breakaway from hockey for three years allowed me to re-energize, to recharge my batteries and just to go out there and enjoy it. I think too often we get caught up in the fact that it's a business and we forget it's okay to have fun and we take things too personally.

At the end of the day, it's just a game and we're lucky to be playing it. So, I learned that if I have an off night or the team has an off night, to evaluate your mistakes but not let it get to you and to go on and to remind yourself that it's a new day tomorrow and every day above ground is a good day and I guess the biggest thing I've learned in life is that it's okay to be emotional but it's never okay to feel sorry for yourself because it could always be worse. So, being given a second chance, you just learn to appreciate everything more and not just in your sport but in everyday life.

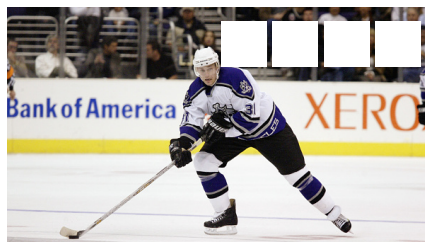
14-3:s stöd till Jared Aulin efter matchen



We all have a passion for something; a dream. Unfortunately, at one time or another, many of us contemplate leaving that passion or forgetting about that dream. Sometimes the thought of chasing our dreams can appear

too daunting, while other times, complacency can rear its ugly head. The latter can unfortunately remind us that it's more important to support ourselves with regular paychecks than it is to take a risk and do something we love so much that it will never feel like a job. Jared Aulin was on the precipice of giving up his passion and his love for hockey. However, thanks to a call from a friend, Aulin stuck with it while making history as the first player in two decades to play in the CIS after playing in the NHL.

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Victor Decolongon

In 2010, Aulin took his game to Sweden, scoring 65 goals and 189 points in five seasons there where he enjoyed a career resurgence. Of his five seasons in Sweden, Aulin played four for Orebro HK and was so loved there that the fans gave their star — as seen in the video above — a touching tribute in October 2014 following the passing of his mother, Patricia.

Now, in his second season with Switzerland's **Rapperswil-Jona Lakers**, Aulin, who turns 35 later this month, **continues to go strong** with 19 goals and 54 points in 47 games.

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City-Press
Marco Leipold

Like any Canadian hockey fan, the holidays are synonymous with the annual **IIHF World Junior Championship**. At the 2002 version of the event, I had the privilege of watching Jared Aulin for the first time, where **he scored** four goals and five assists in seven games for his home country en route to falling just a goal short of a gold medal. Still, while junior success doesn't necessarily lead to NHL success, this writer saw something special in Jared Aulin and was excited as anything when the Calgary native made his debut for the

Kings the following season. Unfortunately, Aulin's time in Los Angeles was brief, leaving this writer very disappointed when the former Kamloops Blazer was ultimately traded to the **Washington Capitals**.

If circumstances had been different, perhaps Jared Aulin could have gone to have a long NHL career. In fairness, though, no one will know that. Instead, the path Aulin has taken has led him not only to rediscover his love for hockey but has shaped him into a man who has become wealthy in experience and wisdom.

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To say that life is full of ups and downs is, simply put, stating the obvious. For Jared Aulin, though, he has learned that on a first-hand level and, through all of his trials and tribulations, is an inspiration not only for surviving, but for excelling.

In 2001, it was the overwhelming endorsement of Ace Bailey and Mark Bavis that made Jared Aulin a Los Angeles King. They would be proud of their protege had his career with the Kings lasted. Even more, though, Bailey and Bavis would be proud of Jared Aulin for continuing to live his dream despite all of the hardships while becoming the player and the human being he is today.

Not everyone who has been down a challenging road is courageous enough to tell their story. Jared Aulin, however, is and for that, this writer, along with Bailey and Bavis and everyone else whose had the pleasure of knowing him, is sincerely proud of the man.

Jared Aulin, this one's for you.

**Special thanks to my assistant and friend, Anna Bittner, for helping me conduct this interview.*