

ROYAL REFLECTIONS: SPEAKING WITH LA KINGS ALUM HUBIE MCDONOUGH

👤 Ryan Cowley 📅 April 7, 2017



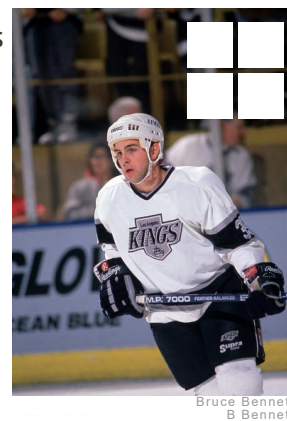
Image credit: Ryan Cowley Original photo credit: Bruce Bennett/Getty Images

While he did spend some time with the organization as a player, the vast majority of **Hubie McDonough's** contributions to the **Los Angeles Kings** came in a different capacity, helping to shape the future of the club first in his hometown of Manchester, New Hampshire, and, most recently, in nearby Ontario, California.

An undrafted center out of Manchester's **St. Anselm College**, Hubie McDonough would begin his pro career in 1986-87, scoring 27 goals and 79 points in 82 games for the **IHL's Flint Spirits**. The following year, McDonough would move over to the **AHL** to join the Kings' then-farm club, the **New Haven Nighthawks** where he spent the two seasons.

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In the latter season (1988-89), **his 37 goals** and 92 points earned McDonough a call-up to Los Angeles where he registered an assist in four games with the Kings. His efforts even helped him begin the next season with the Kings where the 5-foot-9 center scored three goals and four assists in 22 games before being traded to the **New York Islanders**.



McDonough would make numerous stops during his playing career but would finish it in his hometown, suiting up for five games with the expansion **Manchester Monarchs** of the **American Hockey League**. A long-term relationship with his hometown team was now born.

Since his retirement as a player, McDonough remained with the Monarchs as their **Director of Hockey Operations** — and even served briefly as an assistant coach — before **the club relocated** 3,000 miles west to the Golden State in 2015 where they became the **Ontario Reign**. The move, however, was not before

McDonough and his hometown team celebrated some championship success, helping to solidify a potent farm system for the Los Angeles Kings.

In this edition of **MakeWay's 'Royal Reflections'**, we speak with former Kings player and current Reign executive Hubie McDonough who discusses, in addition to his playing career with the Kings, his role with the Monarchs/Reign and how it felt leaving his hometown after winning a **Calder Cup** championship.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is Hubie McDonough.

Hubie McDonough Highlights



Make Way for the Kings: While you only played 26 games for them, you began your NHL career with the Los Angeles Kings in 1989. Describe your overall playing experience with the Kings. What did you learn from your time in Los Angeles?

Hubie McDonough: Well, I was with the organization for two years. I played in New Haven [for the Kings' then-AHL affiliate Nighthawks] and we ended up going to the [Calder Cup] Final in New Haven and losing to Adirondack. Then, the next year, 1989-90, that's when I made the Kings out of camp and actually it was just after Thanksgiving that they traded me to the Islanders. But, it was certainly fun playing with **Wayne Gretzky** and **Bernie Nicholls**, **Dave Taylor** and **Larry Robinson**, a host of other guys, veteran players that I had watched as a youngster and as a college kid growing up, and it was great being there in the dressing room with them.

MW: You effectively ended your playing career in 2001-02 when you played five games for your hometown team, the Manchester Monarchs. From there, you moved to the team's front office where you became their Director of Hockey Operations. Having already led the IHL's Orlando Solar Bears to a championship in the same capacity in 2001, how confident were you that you could turn the Monarchs into a championship winner?

HM: Well, I don't think I had— you know, there are so many people involved as it's not a one-man operation by any means. But every year, the AHL and, at that time, the IHL levels, things change. Teams move around, somebody's trying to go to a different organization, getting a chance to play with the big club. So, in Orlando, we were **Atlanta's** farm club and we had a bunch of good, young kids, played well the year before and then came together in that last year of the IHL [2000-01] and went on to be a veteran **Chicago Wolves** team.

But, you can win as many AHL championships as you want, if the NHL team doesn't do well, there's going to be changes. So, yes, we wanted to win hockey games [in Manchester], but we wanted to develop the talent and develop the players to be Kings. So, that was the mantra then and it didn't change when Dave Taylor was the general manager [in Los Angeles] and when **Dean Lombardi** came in and really put his fingerprints on everything and changed everything to the point where only three of us remained: myself, **Chris Kingsley** and **Mike Holden**, who is no longer with the team, but Chris and myself are still here.

So, my job was to help make these kids better pros and make that jump to the Kings. That's the key now: to make Kings out of the [Ontario] Reign now and the Monarchs at the time.

MW: Over the course of your time in the Monarchs front office, you have had a bevy of prospects suit up for your club. But, when the Kings hired Dean Lombardi as their new GM, in 2006, fans in Manchester started seeing some of their favourite players, whether they were aware of it at the time or not, ultimately become solid NHLers. From Alec Martinez and Trevor Lewis to Tyler Toffoli and Tanner Pearson, Manchester quickly became one of the best sites for developing talent. What can you take away from watching these kids grow into the players they are today? Was there any bittersweetness knowing that they wouldn't be in Manchester for long?

HM: Like I said, it's not a one-man operation. The development guys come in, we work with them in the summertime, then they come down during the year and work with [the players], then the coaches have them every day. I help them on the ice and a lot off the ice. So, it certainly is a— we're proud. We're proud that they've come through and they know who they are, how their talents have taken them to where they are and knowing that you helped them along the way. I feel good about that. But, I think 14 was the number in that first championship by the

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Kings — 14 guys that came from Manchester. So, really, it's a testament to everybody involved from the trainers to the coaches to the management staff, scouts who went out finding guys when they were 18 or younger and stepping into the organization and having them buy into the system. It's a long process to win Stanley Cups. Dean [Lombardi] had a five-year plan and it took seven, and then we won two.

MW: Could you describe how you felt witnessing the Kings win the Stanley Cup in 2012, and even again in 2014? As mentioned earlier, many of those Kings were Monarchs products so there must have been a palpable sense of pride for you and your staff knowing how much you contributed to the Kings' ultimate success. How accurate is that?

HM: It was an incredible feeling to be a part of it. I mean, we were a small part but [the Kings] had us go to New Jersey [for the 2012 Final] and then we flew out [to Los Angeles]. We followed the team for the Finals and everybody was on board. It had never been done before, obviously, by a Kings team, so everybody was really excited. So, for everyone to get out there and be on the ice, to be celebrating on the ice and in the dressing room, the guys being sprayed with champagne and you're part of that celebration, it was really an incredible feeling. Then, you think once is great but then you get to do it again, it's something else. It's really indescribable. I mean, I wasn't a player carrying around [the Stanley Cup] but as part of it, we helped everyone a little bit and it was just a great a feeling, a great accomplishment to be able to hoist [the Stanley Cup] in the dressing room and have your picture taken with it and be a part of that whole— like I said, there were a lot of people involved. It all comes down to the players getting the job done but there were a lot of people that helped them along the way, to get to that goal of winning the Stanley Cup. I think when you achieve it, it's really something else.

Photo courtesy of Manchester Regional Youth Hockey Association (mryha.blogspot.ca)

MW: 2014-15 was a bittersweet season for the Manchester Monarchs. On the one hand, the club would relocate to Ontario, California, after the season but until then, the Monarchs enjoyed unbelievable success, not only winning their first regular-season title but first Calder Cup championship. Describe your overall feelings of not only that season overall but of the championship win.

HM: Well, when we first started there, in Manchester, you couldn't get in the building. It was incredible. It was the place to be. So, the first three or four years, it was crazy because you didn't have to do anything; people just wanted to be there. But, then when the novelty wore off, it was a bit more difficult but we keep working, working and working and obviously you want to win a championship at that level with the guys there who are

Photo credit: Mark DiOrio/Observer-Dispatch via AP

trying to get to the NHL but you get everyone doing well at that level. Then, there were kind of mixed emotions. You win the championship but we didn't really get to raise the banner the next year because we were leaving, so we had a celebration at the end of that year and we got a really good turnout. We weren't on the ice but they put a stage down there on the [SNHU Arena] surface. We had a really nice celebration and it was more of a send-off, really, got to raise the banner and we were gone knowing that we weren't going to be there the next year.

So, winning a championship at any level is always a great accomplishment. Like I said before, there's a lot that goes into it. You've got to be a little bit lucky, you've got to think of the health of the players, you've got to have good guys in the lineup who can help you win games and it's a long grind to the playoffs at the AHL or NHL levels — anybody can tell you that. But, to end up winning that championship in Manchester and kind of saying goodbye at the same time, it was kind of bittersweet.


MW: You are currently in your second season in Ontario with the Reign. In terms of your team's on-ice product and popularity, how strong are the Reign and how do you feel about the leadership not only from your own staff but from the Kings as well?

HM: Well, we're under the same marching orders since we've started, so from Dean [Lombardi] and Rob [Blake] all the way down, everything's been great. Same with [Reign coaches] Mike [Stothers] and Chris [Hajt]. They've done a tremendous job of not only winning games but they teach. They do a lot of video, help the players by teaching them individually how to get better by watching video and making these players understand what they do well and what parts of their game they need to work on. So, what the players are getting and the quality of the teaching that they're getting not only from our coaches but from the development staff that comes in probably once or twice a month to work with these guys— [the staff are] up here a lot watching practice if they're not on the ice.

[The Kings] are a very cohesive unit from Dean and Rob all the way through the scouting staff and all the way through the development staff to the coaching staff. Everybody's working together with the ultimate goal of not only winning the Stanley Cup but also winning another Calder Cup. It's what you want to do: win. So, every night, they come out and think they're going to win. Obviously, that doesn't happen every night but the players are getting better and making those strides and getting themselves ready to be L.A. Kings to a point in the near future.

Hubie McDonough Interview (06/30/14)





From **Dustin Brown** and **Jonathan Quick** to **Trevor Lewis** and **Alec Martinez** to **Tyler Toffoli** and **Tanner Pearson**, the championship success of the Los Angeles Kings would not have been possible if it weren't for the contributions of the Manchester Monarchs. In fact, some of the current Kings, according to some, may not have even been considered to be NHLers at the beginning of their pro careers. Nevertheless, the Monarchs' staff helped mold these players into what they are today, being the best players they can be playing at the game's highest level. Hubie McDonough was not immune to these contributions.

Today, while their farm system isn't quite as strong on paper as it was in recent years, the Los Angeles Kings now benefit from having their AHL club just a short drive away. Plus, with the likes of **Adrian Kempe** and **Jonny Brodzinski** now with the big club, it remains evident that the Kings still have a good farm system — one that will improve in the coming years.

*Photo courtesy of
www.manchestermonarchs.com*

When Dean Lombardi became the general manager of the Los Angeles in 2006, he made plenty of changes to the club's farm system. Hubie McDonough was one of the few pieces that was kept on board. For that, McDonough rewarded Lombardi, helping to develop the talent in Manchester where many would ultimately help the Kings win not one, but two Stanley Cups. To boot, the Monarchs even won their first — and only — Calder Cup in 2015, giving Kings fans some solace after their team missed the playoffs.

As we look back on 50 years of the Los Angeles Kings, we recognize, and appreciate, the farm system that helped the Los Angeles Kings achieve success that fans could have only dreamed of. The Manchester Monarchs/Ontario Reign has proven to be an integral piece of the Kings' overall success and who better to thank for that than its Director of Hockey Operations?

Thank you, Hubie McDonough.

