

# ROYAL REFLECTIONS: SPEAKING WITH LA KINGS ALUM CRAIG REDMOND

👤 Ryan Cowley 📅 February 28, 2017



*Image credit: Ryan Cowley Original photo credit: Greg Abel*

Upon being drafted by the **Los Angeles Kings** in 1984, **Craig Redmond** was ranked by the NHL's Central Scouting Bureau as the top offensive defenseman entering that year's draft.

Having been awarded **WCHA's Freshman of the Year** in 1983, his lone season at the **University of Denver**, Redmond would move on to play for the **Canadian National Team** where he had the honour of representing his home country in Sarajevo at the **1984 Winter Olympics** on a team that included future NHLers **Kirk Muller**, **Dave Gagner** and future Kings teammate, goaltender **Darren Eliot**. Redmond also played alongside a handful of future **NHL** defensemen including **Bruce Driver**, **J.J. Daigneault** and **Doug Lidster** — all of whom won **Stanley Cups** during their respective careers.



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The Kings drafted Redmond sixth overall and that fall, the 19-year-old had become the youngest full-timer to suit up for the club. However, between injuries and team management **wanting him to** steer away from his offensive game and focus on a more physical game, Redmond's time in Los Angeles wasn't what was expected. Still, Redmond, a native of Dawson Creek, B.C., made the most of his time with the Kings, benefiting from the plethora of leadership on the Kings from on the ice to behind the bench with the late, great **Pat Quinn**.

In this edition of **MakeWay's 'Royal Reflections'**, Anna Bittner and I speak with Craig Redmond, who shares with us his experiences with the Kings, which included said leadership, how his career with the Kings came to an end and even the influence his Canadian National coach **Dave King** had on him in preparation for the National Hockey League.



This is Craig Redmond.

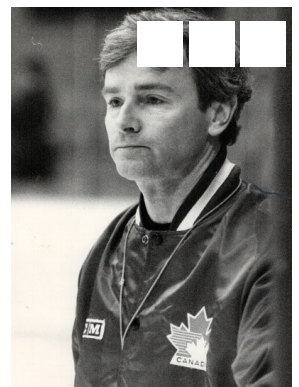
**Make Way for the Kings: You were drafted by the Los Angeles Kings sixth overall in 1984. In addition to how you felt being drafted, what were your expectations upon being drafted and what expectations did the Kings have for you?**

Craig Redmond: My expectations at that time were that I would, and could, play that following season. I had spent some time the previous year– my draft-eligibility year, I was with the Canadian National Team and we had played NHL teams in exhibition and also during the Winter Olympics in Sarajevo in '84 and I played against the world's best, so I felt like I had definitely proven myself, that I could play at the next level. So, I definitely had an expectation that I could play and that I could contribute right away with the Kings. I think [the Kings], by signing me to a contract the way that they did, that they had that expectation as well.

**MW: As you just mentioned, you spent a season playing with the Canadian National team upon being drafted. What did you learn and what adjustments did you make to your game to prepare for the NHL? What type of influence did your then-head coach Dave King have on you?**

CR: Well, [Dave] had an enormous amount of influence on prepping me for the NHL game. I was a defenseman but I thought of the game, oddly enough, in an offensive way. So, Dave King definitely prepared me for playing me on the other side of the puck, being more responsible defensively and a more well-rounded player. So, I think the commitment to fitness that we made with the national team was also something that helped me prepare for the NHL as well. I mean he had an enormous amount of influence in preparing me as he did a number of my teammates where some of my fellow defensemen went on to have fantastic NHL careers.

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**MW: As a 19-year-old, you were the youngest full-time King entering your rookie season of 1984-85. However, you were joining a club with quite a few veterans like Marcel Dionne, Dave Taylor and mid-season acquisitions Steve Shutt and Tiger Williams. How much of an influence did the older guys have on you and how instrumental were they in your success that first season?**

CR: I can't even begin to explain how enormous of an impact they had. Steve Shutt, he was my road roommate and I think he taught me– I think even today I don't even realize the lessons that he taught me back then. It was like to have my own private coach every day. Tiger Williams is still a friend of mine to this day, who I talk to on a regular basis. **Brian Engblom** was a defense partner that I had that [with Steve Shutt in Montreal] won numerous Stanley Cups. I was definitely surrounded by some really, really good people. Marcel Dionne and

Dave Taylor, they'd be the examples that they projected on the ice and the leadership they provided was just fantastic.

**MW: Entering the 1984-85 season, the Kings, a team fresh off missing the playoffs, had a new coach in Pat Quinn. Under Quinn, you scored six goals and 33 assists in 79 games in your rookie year. Could you describe the impact Quinn had not only on you but the team overall?**

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CR: I think he had an enormous impact. I think, you know, as many players who've played for Pat, they'd describe him as one of the few coaches— I shouldn't say "few coaches"; that's not a fair statement — but one of the coaches that truly cared about your well-being. Obviously, he had a job to do and that was to make sure that we won hockey games, but he would also take the time to— he'd ask questions about how you were doing in your personal life because he was genuinely interested in it. I think, for the most part, he was a man who really, really cared and again, I think he had an enormous impact on me as a hockey player.

**MW: The following season, you scored six goals and 18 assists but unfortunately, the Kings had missed the playoffs. Were there any significant differences in 1985-86 as opposed to the previous year? Did the changing of captains — Terry Ruskowski to Dave Taylor — play a significant factor for instance?**

CR: I think in any year when there are changes, there's potential for success or failure, so I think for whatever reason, there seemed to be— there were some key players that moved in and out of the lineup and changed the dynamic for sure. I think we struggled as a group to find a way. I know as a player in my sophomore year that I definitely had my challenges and then some.

**MW: In your third season, you suffered a serious knee injury which limited you to just 16 games for the Kings — and five more for their then-AHL affiliate, the New Haven Nighthawks. Yet, while you made a comeback the following year (1987-88), the Kings wanted to send you back to New Haven after just two games. It must have been hard enough to recuperate from your knee injury but it must have been, in a way, more difficult to learn that the Kings wanted to demote you. As best as you can, could you describe your feelings during those two seasons?**

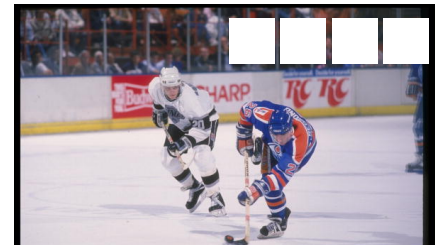
CR: Well, obviously I was very disappointed. I struggled with— I probably came back too early off of the injury and it seemed to compound as I tried to get back into the lineup. I had issues with the knee as I wasn't able to get it back to where it needed to be until I had a full summer of training, and when I got back to camp the following year, I felt like I was at a peak physically and the team was moving in a different direction. Pat Quinn was no longer the head coach and they had drafted— I think **Wayne McBean** was [drafted fourth overall in

1987] and [the Kings] had a different coaching and a different vision and there were too many bodies to fill the roles that they wanted and I happened to be one of the guys who didn't fit into that, and it was enormously disappointing for me for sure.

**MW: You were traded to Edmonton in August 1988, officially ending your tenure with the Kings. When you looked back on your career with the Kings at the time, how did you feel about leaving and what went through your mind upon leaving? Have your feelings changed looking back on your Kings career now?**

**CR:** Well, I think in some ways, it was exciting because it happened at the same time that [Wayne] Gretzky came to Los Angeles, so obviously that was a very exciting time. To have an opportunity to play with [the Oilers] that had just won the Stanley Cup was very exciting but at the same token, it was disappointing to see something not come to fruition the way I had expected to with Los Angeles. But looking back on it now, I definitely have some— it was disappointing to say the least. Obviously what had happened didn't meet the expectations I had set out for myself.

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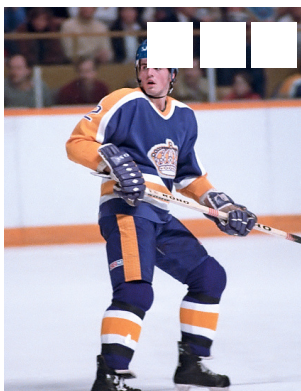


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Mike Powell

He may not have had the volume of success many thought he would have but Craig Redmond was nonetheless a talented defenseman who helped the Kings through some of their roughest years, scoring 13 goals and 58 assists in **his 170 games** with the club.

In addition, the camaraderie Redmond had garnered with Steve Shutt to Tiger Williams was critical to Redmond's stay in Los Angeles and, as the 51-year-old had mentioned, continue to resonate with him to this day.

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After Los Angeles, Redmond would play 21 games for Edmonton before suiting up for 44 more in the **AHL** with the Oilers' farm team in **Cape Breton**. Redmond would even return to Cape Breton in 1996 to attempt a professional comeback. However, after his second stint in the Nova Scotia town, in addition to a stint with the **IHL's Atlanta Knights**, the former Kings blueliner would retire for good.

With that said, though, Craig Redmond has found plenty of success in his post-hockey career as you can find him these days in the Metro Vancouver area where, for 29 years, he has been a Project Manager for multiple land development companies.

Before NHLers took part at the Olympics, you would be hard-pressed to find many players who had the privilege of representing their country on the grandest stage and playing in the NHL. There have only been a handful of players to accomplish such a feat and Craig Redmond will forever be known as one of those players.

As many great years as the Los Angeles Kings have had, they have also had their share of disappointing campaigns. During his tenure in Los Angeles, the Kings made the playoffs just once, but for Craig Redmond, there was more to his time in southern California as he learned the ins and outs of the game at the highest level, formed long-term friendships and even learned more about himself along the way. Besides, no matter how the Kings fared on the ice, the ever-loyal fanbase of the Los Angeles Kings will always hold Craig Redmond in high regard, remembering him fondly as one of their own.

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