

ROYAL REFLECTIONS: SPEAKING WITH LA KINGS ALUM KEN BELANGER

👤 Ryan Cowley 📅 March 22, 2017



Image credit: Ryan Cowley Original photo credit: Donald Miralle/Allsport

Coming off an improbable season where they fell just short of reaching the **Western Conference Final**, the **Los Angeles Kings** entered the 2001-02 with, if you will, a new lease on life. However, after **Stu Grimson** moved on to sign in Nashville, the Kings needed someone new to fill their enforcer role. Enter **Ken Belanger**.

Born in Ste Sault Marie, Ontario, Ken Belanger would go on to establish himself in junior hockey as both a physical and a net-front presence. Splitting his **OHL** career between the **Ottawa 67's** and **Guelph Storm**, the 6-foot-4, 220-pound left winger would rack up 582 penalty minutes in his four seasons of junior, scoring 31 goals and adding 42 assists to those totals.

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After being drafted in the seventh round by the **Hartford Whalers**, Belanger would play for the **Maple Leafs**, **Islanders** and **Bruins** before signing with the Kings in 2001.

In this edition of **MakeWay's 'Royal Reflections'**, we speaker with LA Kings alum Ken Belanger who speaks with us about the factors that played in him signing with the Kings, how he enjoyed playing under then-head coach **Andy Murray** and where playing for the club ranks for him as he looks back on his **NHL** career.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is Ken Belanger.

Ken Belanger vs Jody Shelley Oct 27, 2002





Make Way for the Kings: You signed with the Los Angeles Kings in the summer of 2001. What factors played in your decision to sign in Los Angeles?

Ken Belanger: Well, there were two teams at the time. I was with Boston at the time when I became a free agent and I had **Anaheim** and L.A. both bidding to sign me and I knew not much about either team other than– because I didn’t watch them a whole lot being in the west. So, I think my decision to go to L.A. over any other team was that I knew they were a big-market city and they wanted to build a championship team to win a Cup. So, that was my main reason going [to Los Angeles] was I felt that they– I had the best opportunity to be on a good team was with L.A.

MW: Already a veteran of seven NHL seasons, you had established yourself as one of the premier enforcers in the game. Entering training camp in the fall of 2001, what were coach Andy Murray’s expectations of you aside from dropping the gloves?

KB: Well, there was never really a defined expectation documented in terms of other than– I think at that point in my career, I was fairly established in what I was doing and so I think it was pretty obvious what the expectations were of what [the Kings] wanted in terms of leadership and also being a force on the ice.

MW: After 47 games in your first two seasons with the Kings, you would play in just five following the lockout in 2005-06 which, by that point, you had a new coach in Marc Crawford. How was your career

under Crawford like?

KB: It was good. It was challenging for me obviously having injuries and being out of the lineup for months and obviously the injury being a concussion, and the role I had to play was challenging to get back into the groove of things. So, the relationship was there but when you're out for so long and you try to get back into the streamline of the team, it becomes challenging but nevertheless, that's what being a professional hockey player is.

MW: You played for four teams over the course of your NHL career. Where does playing with the Kings rank and why?

KB: Well, I was fortunate enough to play in great cities. The Kings were– it was a great place to finish. I loved California, I loved the beach. But, I was fortunate enough to start my career with the Toronto Maple Leafs and then New York, then Boston, then L.A. So, I had great cities to play in. Every city offered me up a different element of living and lifestyle, but I was fortunate enough to finish in a place like L.A. Me and my wife both enjoyed the beach, the environment and the warm weather, so it was nice to walk into the rink in sandals and flip-flops *laughs*. So, we really enjoyed our time in California.

Practice at KBX



Ken Belanger **went on to play** 52 games for the Kings, amassing 109 penalty minutes and scoring two goals. Unfortunately, injuries would limit Belanger's time with the Kings as he missed most of the 2002-03 campaign and the entire 2003-04 season. He would, however, return to the Kings in 2005-06 but after just five games back, Belanger would announce his retirement.

Today, Mr. Belanger is enjoying great success in his post-playing career.

In the decade-plus since his retirement, Belanger returned to his hometown of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, to help youth in the area sharpen their skills in an effort to guide them in climbing the local ranks of hockey in quest of pursuing their dreams.

While Sault Ste Marie has seen a plethora of players progress to the junior, collegiate and professional ranks before, the area has seen just a small number of their players advance to the NHL in recent years. With that said, Belanger been involved with the **KBX Hockey Club**, which was founded by former NHLers **Keith** and **Wayne Primeau**.

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Bruce Bennett
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The KBX Hockey Club, which Belanger owns and operates, includes a training facility and a hockey school, as the former King works diligently towards opening the door more of his hometown's youth to achieve their dreams of one day playing professional hockey.

For more information on this, please read **Mike Verdone** of the **Sault Star**'s piece from January 2016 [here](#).

In addition to his work with youth in his hometown, Belanger is also the Founder and CEO of **Extrior Skate Protection Inc.**

(www.Shotblockers.com), which promotes and markets exterior hockey

Photo credit: KBXHockey.com skate protection. Belanger co-founded his company with **Larry Jensen**, a manufacturer of prescription orthotics, and **Bruce Booth, DPM**, a licensed Podiatrist. This equipment has been endorsed by, among others, **Hockey Hall-of-Famers Paul Coffey** and **Patrick Roy** and was even worn by current Kings defenseman, and reigning **Norris Trophy**-winner, **Drew Doughty**, during his team's **Stanley Cup** victory in 2012.

In parts of 10 NHL seasons, he left his mark as one of the game's fiercest enforcers, maximizing his towering size to inflict intimidation into his opponents and today, Ken Belanger is giving plenty back to the sport he dedicated his life to from a very early age.

As we look back on 50 years of the Los Angeles Kings, we reflect on Ken Belanger and his contributions to this proud organization and beyond.

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