

ROYAL REFLECTIONS: SPEAKING WITH LA KINGS LEGEND ROGIE VACHON

👤 Ryan Cowley 📅 July 5, 2016



Image credit: Ryan Cowley Original photo credit: Bruce Bennett

Since he became eligible 31 years ago, **Rogie Vachon** has been passed over for induction into the **Hockey Hall of Fame**. Last week, the wait ended as the **Los Angeles Kings** legend **was selected** for the Hall's Class of 2016 along with **Eric Lindros**, **Sergei Makarov** and the late **Pat Quinn**.

MakeWayfortheKings' own correspondent **Christina Miller** was able to catch up with Mr. Vachon where he discussed his induction, his playing career and even his wife, Nicole, who sadly passed away earlier this year.

One can only imagine that when enough years have gone by without a call, a Hall-of-Fame-eligible player thinks less about being enshrined. That was just the case for Rogie Vachon who, upon being told the good news last Monday, admitted that getting said call was the furthest thing from his mind.

"I was home with my son when [Hockey Hall of Fame Chairman of the Board] Lanny McDonald calls me to say, 'Congratulations. You made it,'" Vachon said. "I was shocked and confused. 'Made what?' It had been so long, I had no idea I was on the list for consideration. I guess some committees didn't think I was worth it. Lots of people I meet thinking I'm already *in* the Hall of Fame and are always surprised when I tell them, 'No... I'm not,'"

Miller then passed along her condolences on behalf of the MakeWay family to Vachon on the recent passing of his wife, Nicole, which struck a chord with the Kings legend. Vachon would go on to speak lovingly of the woman who meant so much to him, admitting that, under the circumstances, being inducted earlier would have been especially gratifying.

Embed from Getty Images



"I wish it happened a couple of years sooner," an emotional Vachon continued. "[Nicole] would have been so proud. She was so proud of our kids and grandkids. She would have been proud of this."



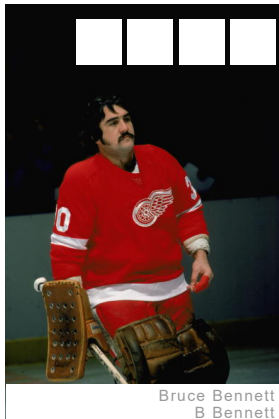
Speaking about his wife, it was evident that Vachon found himself in a comfort zone, expanding on Nicole's role during his playing career.

"She was fantastic," the soon-to-be Hall-of-Famer added. "She was a good business woman. She took care of business, she raised our kids alone practically because I was always gone. Even with all of that, she always kept so busy at home."

When asked if his children and grandchildren will be on hand at his induction this coming November, Vachon emphatically answered.

"Oh, yes! I'm flying everyone out to celebrate with me!"

Embed from Getty Images



Vachon then touched on his playing career where, at first, he described being traded to the Kings which meant leaving his boyhood team, the **Montreal Canadiens**.

"Ken Dryden came along in 1971, was MVP and goalie of the future," Vachon explained. "I was still young and wanted to be the number-one goalie so I *asked* to be traded. When I was traded to the Los Angeles Kings, I was excited."

While he did win two **Stanley Cups** and a **Vezina Trophy** with Montreal, it was with the Kings where Vachon enjoyed his greatest success.

In his seven years in Los Angeles, Vachon would go on to play 389 games, compiling a record of 171-148-66 with 32 shutouts and a 2.86 goals-against average. His wins and shutouts records would stand for more than three decades before **Jonathan Quick** surpassed them. But even when Quick did break the soon-to-be Hall-of-Famer's marks in said categories, the celebrations were just as much as a testament to Vachon's legacy as much as they were the current Kings netminder's achievements.

However, the reality of being a professional athlete means that, sooner or later, players will have to part ways with the city and the team that loves them so much. For Vachon, that was the case in 1978 when he left the Kings to sign with the **Detroit Red Wings**. Ms. Miller asked the Kings legend what it was like to leave Los Angeles for Detroit.

"It was very much a business decision at the time," Vachon stated. "The Kings offered me a three-year contract to stay. Detroit was coming in with five years. I asked the Kings to match that offer and they decided not to do

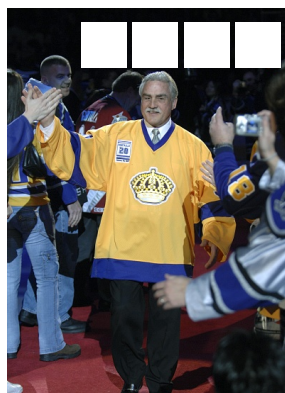
it and that's how I ended up in Detroit."

While being inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame is special under any circumstance, it is, to some, more prophetic that Vachon's induction will occur during the Kings' 50th anniversary season. After all, while any King being inducted during this time would be especially significant, that can be further emphasized for Mr. Vachon who is not only one of the franchise's greatest players but one of its most honorable ambassadors as well. Ms. Miller asked the former netminder whether he felt being inducted under said circumstances makes this milestone extra special.

"It is just an honor to be inducted," said a humble Vachon. "But after I think about it, I realized that it's really great timing because it is the 50th anniversary of the Kings, [having been] the first jersey that was retired and I think the Kings will have lots of events during the year to celebrate. I think it was great timing."

Ms. Miller even mentioned that she would be in line to buy a 50th-anniversary Rogie Vachon jersey to which the easygoing legend had a good laugh about.

Embed from Getty Images



Getty Images Sport
Noah Graham

There is so much to say about Rogie Vachon the goaltender, the ambassador and the man. His induction was indeed a long time coming but, as the old adage goes, it is better late than never. Yet, while Vachon's contributions as a player, a general manager and even as a coach speak volumes about what he means to the Los Angeles Kings, many fans do not hesitate in recognizing Mr. Vachon as a consummate gentleman, a humble man who, despite all of his accomplishments, has that refreshing absence of an ego.

For three decades, Rogie Vachon was passed over to enter the Hall, yet never complained. The old adage of having good things come to those who wait could not be more fitting than it is for Rogie Vachon in 2016.

Regardless of the how the current Kings fare on the ice, there will be so much to celebrate this coming season for an organization which has been decorated by the likes of so many players, coaches and managers of all different styles and personalities. You can bet that Rogie Vachon and the lineage of which he boasts will be front-and-center for those celebrations. After all, on the evening of November 14 in Toronto, he will not only be recognized as one of the Kings' greatest but as one of the game's greatest as well.

This is a honour much deserved for Mr. Vachon; an honour that will never be taken away from him. So, let us raise our glasses and salute a man who has brought the Los Angeles Kings so much, playing an integral role in making them what they are today.

Embed from Getty Images



Bruce Bennett
B Bennett

Mr. Vachon, we salute you.

**Special thanks to Dave Joseph of the LA Kings Alumni Association and colleague Christina Miller for their contributions to this article.*
