

ROYAL REFLECTIONS: SPEAKING WITH LA KINGS ALUM PHILIPPE BOUCHER

👤 Ryan Cowley 📅 March 13, 2017



Image credit: Ryan Cowley

When reflecting on their team in the mid-1990's, fans of the **Los Angeles Kings** recall a transition period that saw the club make a few trades that left many scratching their heads. Trading **Darryl Sydor** and some guy named **Wayne Gretzky** are among two of the Kings who the team traded for very little. Another trade which some Kings fans weren't fond of was when their team dealt **Alexei Zhitnik** to the **Buffalo Sabres** in February 1995. After all, **Grant Fuhr**, who was the biggest name to join the Kings in said trade, went 1-7-3 for his new team before signing in St. Louis. However, there was another player in that deal who the Kings acquired, and he would soon turn into a solid fixture on the Los Angeles blueline for the better part of eight seasons.

Drafted 13th overall by the Sabres in 1991, **Philippe Boucher** would play 65 games over the course of three seasons in Buffalo before he was traded to the Kings.

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Upon joining his new team, Boucher would work to strengthen his defensive game, although the native of Ste-Apollinaire, Quebec, would be more known for his offensive prowess in addition to his hard, accurate shot. Still, Boucher's contributions would help improve a struggling Kings squad snap their playoff drought in 1998 while qualifying for the postseason each year between 2000 and 2002.



Bruce Bennett
J Leary

Due to injuries, however, Boucher suited up in more than 60 games just once during his tenure in Los Angeles, playing in 80 in 2001-02. The former first-rounder, though, made the most of his time with the Kings where he developed a solid relationship with then-Kings assistant coach **Dave Tippett**. It was thanks to Tippett, as a matter of fact, that led to Boucher signing with the Dallas Stars, who had signed the former Kings assistant as

their head coach shortly before. Tippet's influence has also resulted in Boucher entering the coaching ranks, where he serves as head coach and general manager of the **QMJHL's Quebec Remparts**, leading them to the league's President's Cup Final in 2015.

In this edition of **MakeWay's 'Royal Reflections'**, we speak with former Kings defenseman Philippe Boucher who, in addition to reflecting on his career in Los Angeles, speaks with us about the aforementioned Dave Tippet, retiring as a Stanley Cup champion (with Pittsburgh in 2009) and his own Philippe Boucher Foundation, which he created to help underprivileged children.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is Philippe Boucher.

Philippe Boucher Goal - Kings 2 Nucks 0 - 12.13.01



Make Way for the Kings: In February 1995, the Buffalo Sabres traded you to Los Angeles in a blockbuster trade that signaled the beginning of a rebuilding phase for the Kings. In addition to it being the first time you were traded in your pro career, how did it feel joining a team that, while they still had Wayne Gretzky, were, in many respects, starting from the ground up?

Philippe Boucher: Well, first of all, being traded is always something special when your original team that drafted you when you're 17 or 18. So, that was a little bit of a shock when I heard the news at *laughs* five in the morning, but I was excited to go L.A. for a new start on a team that sure looked like they were going to be rebuilding but still had a lot of great players like [Jari] Kurri and [Wayne] Gretzky and [Marty] McSorley, [Kelly] Hruddy and all those guys, so I was excited to go up [to Los Angeles] with Grant Fuhr.

MW: Despite their struggles early on, your defensive prowess was an instrumental force in helping the Kings return to the playoffs in 1998. While the Kings were swept by the Blues in the opening round, what positives can you take away from that year's team as they ended their five-year playoff drought?

PB: Well, we did struggle. We did. After [the Kings] went to the Finals. We struggled after the departure of Wayne [Gretzky] and a lot of the older guys. So, it was a struggle for us with coaching changes and everything, but to be back in the playoffs for an organization that was headed in the right direction, it was a fun time for everybody.

MW: During the 1997-98 season and the 1999-2000 season, you had played briefly for the IHL's Long Beach Ice Dogs. While the tenure was very brief, what are some of your memories playing with the Ice Dogs? There are countless fans in southern California who, to this day, still miss the team, so they had to have been special.

PB: It was a tough time for me because I basically missed an entire year. I had a surgery that went wrong and a misdiagnosis, so it was tough for me to be away from the game for almost a full year. So, by the time March came around, I was happy to go to Long Beach and able to be on the ice and play some actual games. I believe I played one game that [in 1999-00] in the NHL, but injuries were a problem for me and what should have been a simple surgery went wrong, it was tough for me. But to go and play for [then-Ice Dogs head coach] **John Van Boxmeer** when I was in Long Beach was a positive in a long injury-plagued season with multiple surgeries.

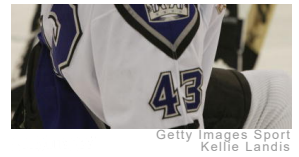
MW: One of the most iconic times in Kings history was their 2001 playoff upset of the Detroit Red Wings. In addition, the Kings made things more interesting by pushing the Colorado Avalanche to the brink of elimination in the next round. Describe your team's collective attitude against both Detroit and Colorado that spring.

PB: It was just— I believe we were down 2-0 to Detroit [in the series] and came all the way down from 3-0 to Detroit at home [in Game 4] and it really turned around. I believe, if I'm not mistaken, the last— the second part of the third period, we had taken [Kings goaltender **Felix Potvin**] out and getting some quick goals. That game felt like— my son was in the building where he was very, very young at the time and came into the locker

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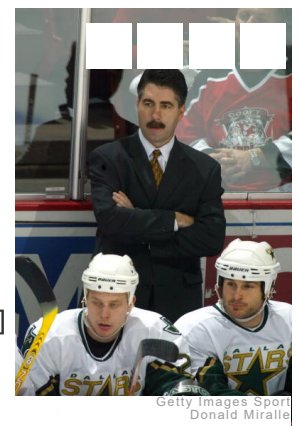
room and I could still hear probably a half-hour after the game because the fans were going wild in [STAPLES Center] and outside the building and all that. It was a historic comeback in that game and also in that round. We were playing well but it started off—we played pretty well in Detroit but obviously really well in L.A. and over the next four games. So, to be *laughs* kicking out Detroit in the playoffs was something special and we played well against Colorado, a very good team, in the next round and we met them a few times over the next couple of years.


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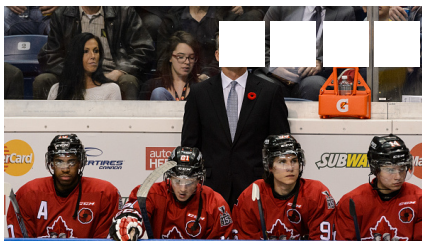
MW: In 2002, you left Los Angeles to sign with the Dallas Stars where you were reunited with former Kings assistant coach Dave Tippett. How much of a factor did Tippett play on you joining the Stars and what kind of influence was he on you in Los Angeles?

PB: It was a big factor for me. You know, that season I missed [1999-00] was very tough on me and the following season, I went down to Winnipeg [with the Manitoba Moose] in the International Hockey League and even though I was playing well and leading defensemen in scoring, it was hard for me to get a call-up and once I did later in the year, Tipp was very good to me. We had a long conversation about what it took for me—what was needed to change my game to be an effective player, to be a trusted player on the ice so I could get a bigger role and Tipp helped me out a lot. So, [the 2000-01 season] went well and the second season under him went really well and then—you know, I really loved being in L.A. but we started negotiating pretty late with the Kings when Tipp called me that summer — I had an eye injury in the playoffs; I had taken a puck to the face — and I knew he was calling to check on me and also he was going to get some [head coaching] job offers in the NHL and I had an idea when July 1 came around when Tipp went to Dallas and, even though he never said it directly, I had an idea I'd be getting a call.

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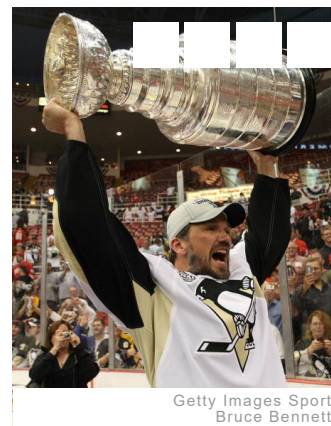

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Minas Panagiotakis

[Going to Dallas] was a natural fit for me. I loved L.A., wish I could have stayed, but it was a natural fit for me to go and play for somebody that helped me along the way. [Tippett] was great to me in Dallas and to this day, I still have a great relationship with him, a tremendous amount of respect for the person he is and the coach he is. I'm coaching now [for the Quebec Remparts] in the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League and a lot of the things I do is try to emulate what Tipp did as a coach for me and for the Kings.

MW: In 2009, you finished your career the way any player dreams of: as a champion, helping the Pittsburgh Penguins win the Stanley Cup. It was also your first Stanley Cup. Describe the overall joy and jubilation with winning hockey's Holiest prize.

PB: Well, it was good. The process was good, too. I really enjoyed playing for Dallas but things weren't going so well for us in Dallas and the same thing could be said for the Penguins who were struggling at the time, so they just swapped me for [another former Kings defenseman] Darryl Sydor and people kind of know him well too from his days in Los Angeles. So, we got traded for one another to add some change on both rosters and just to see us go from a team outside the playoffs and battling through and— **Bill Guerin** came and joined [the Penguins], [Chris] Kunitz came and joined us. So, just to see everything change from a struggling team to a positive team, a team that was winning hockey games and to see those young guys *laughs* that are still winning today, winning the Cup last year, and to come together and to be a part of that, it was a great experience for me.

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Bruce Bennett

MW: In addition to your head coaching and GM duties with the Quebec Remparts, you run the Philippe Boucher Foundation, which you and your then-wife Lucie started in 1997. Could you describe the foundation? How did the idea first come to fruition?

PB: It was actually something we— we had a golf tournament for minor hockey that I started in 1991 when I got drafted by Buffalo. We raised a little bit of money for about five or six years, but it started to go well. My father was handicapped and I was around paralyzed kids and underprivileged kids growing up and we felt like we could do more, so we turned the golf tournament into a foundation. I'm no longer with my wife but we started it together and with some coaches from my hometown that I had when I was young and some dear friends of mine, we're still doing it today. I think we've done 25 golf tournaments, coming up on 26, and the foundation's been around for 20 years, gave over \$1 million to underprivileged kids in the Quebec area. It's something that is very, very dear to me and to do that with people I've known since I was a young kid — some of them coaching me in minor hockey — to do this with me is a lot of fun. It grew into— we have a golf tournament and a dinner event, now a pro-am hockey game and all that, so it's been growing quite a bit. [Current NHLers] **David Desharnais** and **Antoine Vermette** have joined the golf tournament, so it's been fun.

*Photo credit:
Philippe
Boucher
Foundation*

Cup Champion Interviews - Philippe Boucher



For eight seasons, despite his injuries, Philippe Boucher was a consistent blueliner for the Los Angeles Kings, scoring 32 goals and 77 assists in 312 games **during his tenure**. In the summer of 2002, though, Boucher moved on to Dallas, joining new head coach Dave Tippett.

It was in Dallas where Boucher had a breakout. Despite breaking his left orbital bone from an errant puck to the face in late 2003, the blueliner was still able to play in 70 games for the Stars that season. He also played in his first All-Star Game in 2007 as a member of the Stars, playing in 346 games for the franchise, scoring 52 goals and adding 110 assists.

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It wouldn't be, however, until his final season (2008-09) where Boucher would win the Stanley Cup, helping **Sidney Crosby** and the Pittsburgh Penguins avenge their loss to the Detroit Red Wings from the previous year. In his 25 games with the Penguins, Boucher scored three goals and three assists while adding another goal and three helpers in nine playoff games, ultimately riding off into the sunset, so to speak, as a Stanley Cup champion.

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From the breaking of said orbital bone to his charity work with his own foundation, Philippe Boucher has proven that he is a man with both resilience and with a purpose.

Today, the Philippe Boucher Foundation, founded in 1997, continues to go strong as the charity's annual golf tournaments raise funds to help underprivileged children in the Lobitniere region of Quebec, just 10 minutes outside of his hometown of Ste-Apollinaire.

This season, Boucher is keeping busy as his Quebec Remparts are right in the thick of a playoff hunt as the QMJHL regular season winds down. Overall, though, the former Kings blueliner is loving his current roles both as a coach and GM and especially as someone who is making a solid difference in the community with his charitable foundation.

From his hard point shots on the ice to his affable demeanour off the ice, Philippe Boucher is remembered fondly by many who have been fans of the Los Angeles Kings. For his contributions, we celebrate Mr. Boucher's time with this proud organization. It was a great time, to say the least.
