

# ROYAL REFLECTIONS: SPEAKING WITH LA KINGS ALUM GEORGE PARROS

👤 Ryan Cowley 📅 March 31, 2017



*Image credit: Ryan Cowley Original photo credit: Andrew D. Bernstein*

Not only was he one of the toughest fighters in the game but also one of its most popular personalities. Over the course of his professional career, which has since transitioned into an integral role with the **National Hockey League**, **George Parros** has garnered respect as one of hockey's most cerebral figures.

After nine seasons as one of the game's premier enforcers, Parros retired in December 2014, 14 months after falling head-first onto the ice during a fight with **Colton Orr** of the **Toronto Maple Leafs**. Parros, then with the **Montreal Canadiens**, was limited to just 22 games in 2013-14 due to concussions and also a crowded roster.

During his playing career, Parros is best known for his six years of service with the Anaheim Ducks, who he won a Stanley Cup with in 2007. But, for Parros, it all started with the Los Angeles Kings, who drafted the 6-foot-5 right winger in the eighth round (222nd overall) in 1999.

In this edition of **MakeWay's 'Royal Reflections'**, we speak with Kings alum George Parros who speaks with us about his playing career not only in Los Angeles but in Anaheim as well, taking boxing lessons for not-so-obvious reasons and his current role, working for the **NHL's Department of Player Safety**.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is George Parros.

George Parros vs Kevin Westgarth Apr 9, 2011





**Make Way for the Kings: You were drafted by the Kings in the eighth round of the 1999 Draft but after doing very well on your SATs, you went to Princeton University for four years. What was the driving force that led you to a career in hockey over, for instance, your major in economics?**

George Parros: I didn't know right away that I would be able to have a career in hockey, so my focus before going to Princeton, and the first little while there, was always school. But, after I had gone out to Los Angeles for a few camps — development camps in the summertime — and my college career progressed, I kind of got the idea that maybe there was something there and that I would have a shot at trying to have a pro career. So, I figured don't have any regrets and give it the best shot I can and worry about the rest later. So, by the time I finished school at Princeton, I knew I was going to try to make a career out of hockey and see where it took me.

**MW: During your minor-league career, you took boxing lessons. Tell us about that.**

GP: I really only took boxing at the end of every summer, usually about two weeks before training camp started. I wasn't really interested in— I didn't think that boxing translated to hockey obviously or fighting in hockey but rather balance issues which occur on the ice. I really [took boxing lessons] to condition myself to having punches coming to the head and working on my reaction times kind of like a big movement. If somebody comes at my head and I make big movements, you kind of lose your balance and fall a lot easier. So, boxing for me was a way to continue my cardio training but also to condition my reaction time and make those movements minimal, so it's really helped. I didn't really see boxing as a way to improve my fighting on the ice but just more of a way to condition my reaction times.

**MW: You suited up for the Kings in 2005-06 where you registered 138 penalty minutes in 55 games. How was that first season for you and how do you feel you fit in with the Kings?**

**GP:** The first season was amazing. It was my dream to make it to the NHL and it came true, so I was excited to be there, ecstatic to help out. Our team struggled a bit throughout the year, so competitively, it was a bit more disappointing than we would have liked but I was on cloud nine because it was my first year up in the major league and I fit in just fine, especially with a few teammates, and everyone in the locker room.

**MW:** After your one season with the Kings, you would ultimately join their cross-town rivals, the Anaheim Ducks, where you really began to establish yourself as one of the game's fiercest enforcers in addition to one of its most favourite personalities. You even, much to the dismay of Kings fans, helped the Ducks win the Stanley Cup in 2007. What were some factors that helped make you such a good fit in Anaheim?

**GP:** I think that the culture in Anaheim helped my game but, you know, we had a lot of talent on our team, a lot of great players and Hall-of-Famers, and I believe only one of us in that locker room had won a Cup before — **Scott Niedermayer** — so we had a lot of hungry guys as well. It was a good combination of having all that great experience, all those amazing players and a lot of young talent, too — **Corey Perry** and **Ryan Getzlaf** were just getting started. So, it was pretty much like a winning combination as far as the locker room was concerned; the chemistry was great as well. All those factors combined really were the reason why we won.

**MW:** In October 2013, you had made your debut with the Montreal Canadiens. However, after a fight with Toronto's Colton Orr, a scary incident occurred where you lost your balance and hit your head on the ice. What were your feelings entering that season in Montreal and even that game, the season-opener?

**GP:** Well, I had a shoulder injury at the end of the previous season, so I was rehabbing it all summer long. I got traded to the Canadiens halfway through the summer and so, my focus shifted to getting on the ice as soon as possible with the Canadiens. Their opening-night game was against rival Toronto at home — a game I had circled on my calendar and was looking forward to playing very much. I didn't really partake in training camp so much but was finally ready to go, so my whole summer really focused on playing in that game. So, that was my mindset leading up to it and got myself ready and went through a really grueling rehab but achieved my goal, made it to the ice and played in that game. Unfortunately, [the incident] occurred but it was a successful summer leading up to it.

**MW:** This past September, you joined the NHL's Department of Player Safety where you are helping with disciplinary decisions. Having been the subject of player safety yourself, how much of an asset did you feel you could be to the league upon being hired and could you describe in more detail your role with the league?

GP: This was a job I was hoping to get as soon as I retired: to be working in the league office, teaching the game of hockey and really keeps you close to the game. I felt that my greatest asset was the fact that I had played the game with a very physical style, as difficult as anybody, I think, during my career but, at the same time, I never once got fined or suspended. So, that's what we're really trying to accomplish as a department: to educate [the players] on how to hit and to stay away from the more dangerous things and really walk that line because you want to keep physicality in the game. So, we want guys to hit but we want them to [hit cleanly] so I think [said philosophy fits] really well with the way I played, so I feel like I'm a great asset for the department.

More specifically, I help weigh in on decisions. When incidents occur on the ice, I'm one of the guys that weighs in on what I saw and how I think we should move forward. I'm just another voice in the room along with [former Ducks teammate] **Chris Pronger**, [You Can Play co-founder] **Patrick Burke** and **Damian Echevarrieta**, so we all weigh in on our thoughts and make a decision. We each put our own perspective on things, we each have our own views. We don't always get along but often times we see things the right way.

George Parros & the Stanley Cup at Princeton University



As mentioned, during his early days at Princeton, George Parros's emphasis was on school. However, despite not being a priority early on, Parros's dream of playing professional hockey gradually became more realistic. ^

Even when he was drafted in the late rounds by the Kings, the native of Washington, Penn., wasn't deterred. Following two-plus seasons in the AHL with the **Manchester Monarchs** and three games in the **ECHL** with the **Reading Royals**, George Parros fulfilled his dream of playing in the National Hockey League.

Yet, while he did begin his career with the Kings, it would be with the club's cross-town rivals where Parros would truly establish himself as one of the league's most fearsome fighters on the ice and one of its most lovable personalities off the ice. In fact, it was with the Anaheim Ducks where Parros became known for his trademark mustache. In fact, the Ducks team store sold the former enforcer's own "**Stache Gear**" with all of the proceeds going to two charities which are very close to Parros: the **Childhood Leukemia Foundation** and **Garth Brooks Teammates for Kids**.

To learn more about these charities, I strongly encourage you to visit their websites today.

When he landed head-first onto the ice during a fight to open the 2013-14 season, fans and players alike could not help but worry for George Parros, not in terms of his future as a player but his future in general.

Thankfully, while he did retire, George Parros, always known for his determined toughness, fought back from the injury and is now towards the end of his first season as part of the NHL's Department of Player Safety.

In addition to his role with the league, Parros is also a co-founder of the largely-successful clothing line, '**Violent Gentlemen**'. You can also see Mr. Parros in a cameo role on the silver screen in '**Goon: Last of the Enforcers**' along with the aforementioned Colton Orr and current NHLers **Tyler Seguin** and **Michael Del Zotto**.

The movie, directed by **Jay Baruchel** and starring **Seann William Scott**, was released in theatres on Mar. 17.

He suited up for the Ducks, Canadiens, **Colorado Avalanche** and **Florida Panthers**, but it was with the Kings where George Parros began his NHL career, making a positive mark on the franchise in his lone season in Los Angeles.

Along with **Kevin Westgarth**, who we interviewed earlier this season, **Jeff Halpern** and **Syl Apps**, George Parros is one of just four Princeton grads to ever play for the Kings. More than that, though, Parros is a man whose personality contrasts his on-ice demeanor in the sense that he is a consummate gentleman whose stories leave readers and listeners in awe of a man who had a successful NHL career but who also fought hard to earn himself said career, especially being a late draft choice.

Even the most loyal of Kings fans don't mind that George Parros helped their crosstown rivals win a Stanley Cup — and why would they? Parros was a warrior on the ice but was, and is, one of the nicest and smartest guys off the ice.



He may not have been a King for very long but every great story has a beginning, and George Parros's took place in the City of Angels. So, as we look back on a half-century of the Los Angeles Kings, we celebrate the contributions that George Parros has laid upon this proud franchise.

*\*Special thanks to John Dellapina of the National Hockey League in helping make this interview possible.*

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