Moneyball Weekly:

The last go-around of the Los Angeles Kings

by Jack Yadlon
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
HE/HIM/HIS
ptf24003@uconn.edu

Between 2010 and 2015, only three teams won the Stanley Cup: the Boston Bruins, Chicago Blackhawks and Los Angeles Kings.

Boston had a great run with an old core and have since transitioned well into their new one led by David Pastrnak.

The great Blackhawks dynasty has been torn down for years now, with third-year Connor Bedard leading the tail end of the team's full-on rebuild.

The Kings have also changed most of the roster, but their core sit partially sits around two members of their 2014 team in Anze Kopitar and Drew Doughty.

The Kings' last series win was the 2014 Stanley Cup final. Since then, they've fallen in the first round six times, with the past four years all coming to the Edmonton Oilers.

The Kings' direction has been vague for years now. Doughty's contract is a burden, while Kopitar isn't the player he once was.

The lack of a true star player creates an undefined core. The only definitive member of it is forward Adrian Kempe.

With Kopitar announcing before this year that this will be his final season, the Kings' only option seems to be to bring possibly the greatest King of all time one more shot at glory.

The Olympic roster freeze began last Wednesday, meaning no moves can be made until Feb. 23. With this, a mini trade deadline ensued.

On the other side of the country, one of the league's most disappointing teams, New York Rangers accepted the reality that a retool had become necessary, meaning the movement of older players to bring in younger players. This meant that superstar Artemi Panarin was up for grabs.

With a full no-move clause on Panarin's contract and all the control in his hands, the leverage went to any team that he was willing to be traded to, which would turn out to be Los Angeles.

Due to this leverage, the Kings only gave up their top prospect Liam Greentree and a third-round pick which can be upgraded based on the Kings' playoff performance.

The Kings promptly signed Panarin to a two-year, $22 million extension, meaning that for the first time in forever the Kings will have a real superstar.

The Kings sit only three points out of the playoffs due to a shallow west. Despite this, the Kings still have major problems. Los Angeles has the third-worst goals leaguewide, with the rest of the bottom eight consistent of only teams who are bottom seven in the overall standings.

Panarin can help with this, but one player will not fix everything.

Teams can still discuss potential moves over the freeze, though nothing can be finalized during this time. It is likely the Kings will begin making calls and start to figure out what to do when the window reopens.

With their franchise icon on the way out and their top prospect gone, the only real direction for the Kings is one last all-in shot at a championship. And with around $14 million in cap room come deadline day (per Puckpedia), the Kings have room for moves.

The Kings' big offensive issue is down the middle. They've been forced to play Alex Laferriere, a natural winger, at center due to lack of depth with Alex Turcotte out. This is very likely to be their position of interest.

Unfortunately for the Kings, that just so happens to be the weakest position of the deadline outside of goalies.

The top player remaining on the market is another Ranger in Vincent Trocheck, a veteran center with multiple years of control remaining. Due to the thin market at the position and the years left on his contract, Trocheck will come at a premium, and without Greentree there may not be anything left that the Rangers would want from Los Angeles.

Calgary Flames' Nazem Kadri and Nashville Predators' Steven Stamkos both have cup winning experience but sit on teams out of contention, though both carry undesirable contracts that the Kings would need to take on.

Columbus Blue Jackets' Charlie Coyle and Boone Jenner could also be available, but these would be lower-end options than the Kings need.

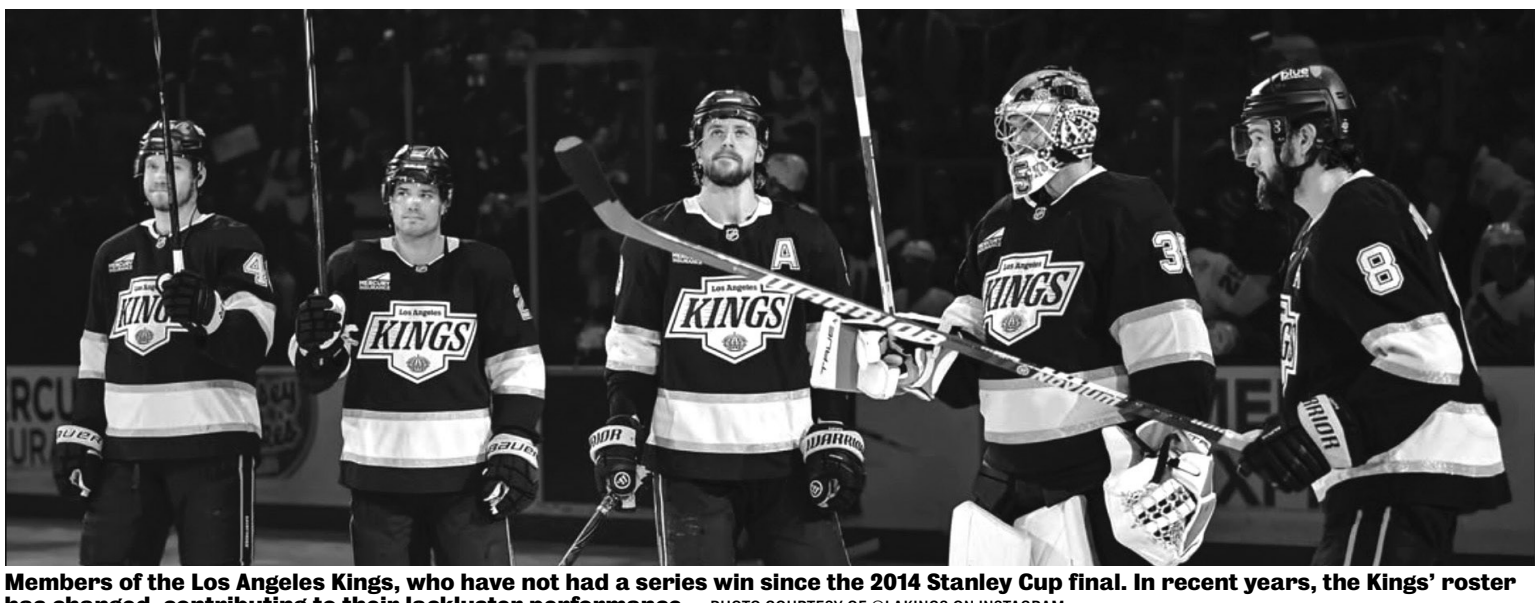
Elias Pettersson of Vancouver and Robert Thomas of St Louis could provide a long-term center solution for the Kings should either waive their full clauses.

Pettersson sits on a sinking Vancouver team that is primed for a full reset and will be likely to try and shed Pettersson's hefty deal. The problem for the Kings is that Pettersson's failure to live up to his contract is a large part of why the Canucks have failed, a potential red flag for L.A; one that could also slash the price of acquisition.

Robert Thomas is a much more desirable pickup as the lone bright spot in a horrible Blues season. For that reason, St Louis may not even entertain offers for him. The cost of acquisition would be sky-high and potentially too much for the Kings after moving Greentree.

How much the Kings give up comes down to whether they expect a full rebuild or not after Kopitar's departure. With a shaky roster and shakier future, something had to give.

And the Panarin move signifies that general manager Ken Holland has likely determined that sacrifice to be the future.



Members of the Los Angeles Kings, who have not had a series win since the 2014 Stanley Cup final. In recent years, the Kings' roster has changed, contributing to their lackluster performance. PHOTO COURTESY OF @LAKINGS ON INSTAGRAM

Men's Hockey East Roundup Week 17

by Jack Yadlon
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
HE/HIM/HIS
ptf24003@uconn.edu

With Olympic hockey set to begin this week, the NHL has entered a three-week roster freeze.

But college hockey continues as the push for the NCAA tournament progresses.

The end of last week featured the UMass Amherst Minutemen against the UMass Lowell River Hawks, a game which the Minutemen took 6-4. Jack Musa's point production has slowed down in recent weeks, but a hat trick and four-point performance could signal a return to his earlier form.

The Beanpot kicked off Monday, with No. 11 Boston College (BC) facing Harvard followed by Boston University (BU) and Northeastern.

Boston College stepped on the gas early and never let up, scoring three first period goals in what would ultimately end in a 5-1 victory. Bruins' prospect James Hagens scored three points in the victory to send BC back to the Beanpot finals.

The following game was a much more balanced affair, with two teams who had been ranked earlier in the year but have since fallen out of them.

The teams each traded two goals in the first two periods before entering overtime tied at 2-2. With no decision made after the overtime frame, the teams went to the shootout to determine who would see BC the following Monday. Terrier Cole Hutson finished off Northeastern and punched his team's ticket for a chance at the Beanpot title in another battle of Comm Ave.

Merrimack traveled to Stonehill on Tuesday. Justin Gill and Trevor Hoskin both scored four points in the Warriors' 9-5 barnburner victory.

Friday action began with No. 18 Maine traveling to Boston University for a lone game. Maine led late in the third period by a score of 2-1, but a late Cole Eiserman goal on the powerplay tied things up for the Terriers. In overtime, it was Minnesota draft pick Ryder Ritchie who finished things off for Boston. Despite not holding a lead at any point in the week, the Terriers managed an overtime and shootout win.

No. 7 Providence visited New Hampshire and hosted Vermont during the weekend. Tanner Adams scored four points in game one and Aleksi Kivioja the same in game two to contribute to two 6-1 Friar victories. Providence, who struggled early in the year, continues to dominate and come closer to a guaranteed at-large bid to the NCAA tournament.

Vermont had another 6-1 finish on the weekend in their Friday matchup against Boston College.

Contrary to expectation, that 6-1 finish came in favor of the Catamounts. Ten different Catamounts recorded a point in an unprecedented victory for a team with a sub-.500 record against what would have likely been a top 10 win the following week.

No. 12 UConn travelled to Bentley to face Northeastern in their temporary home following the closure of the legendary Matthews Arena. A stellar performance from goaltender Tyler Muszelik led to a shutout for the Connecticut Huskies in a 2-0 victory.

Of all goalies with 20+ games played, Muszelik's .931 save percentage only trails Michigan State's Trey Augustine and Augustana's Josh Kotai, both of which by very small margins. There is a very good chance that the Richter award comes down to these three, with Augustine and Muszelik having real chances for the Hobey Baker award.

UMass and Lowell played a two-game series for their third matchup since last Sunday. Game one went to the River Hawks by a score of 3-1 in an upset, closing off a five-game winless streak against the Minutemen. The celebration was short-lived, with Amherst taking game two 5-2 to claim the season series.

The final month of the regular season begins today with Northeastern playing Harvard in the Beanpot consolation game, followed by BC and BU for the championship. The Terriers will be defending their title to become two-time reigning champs.

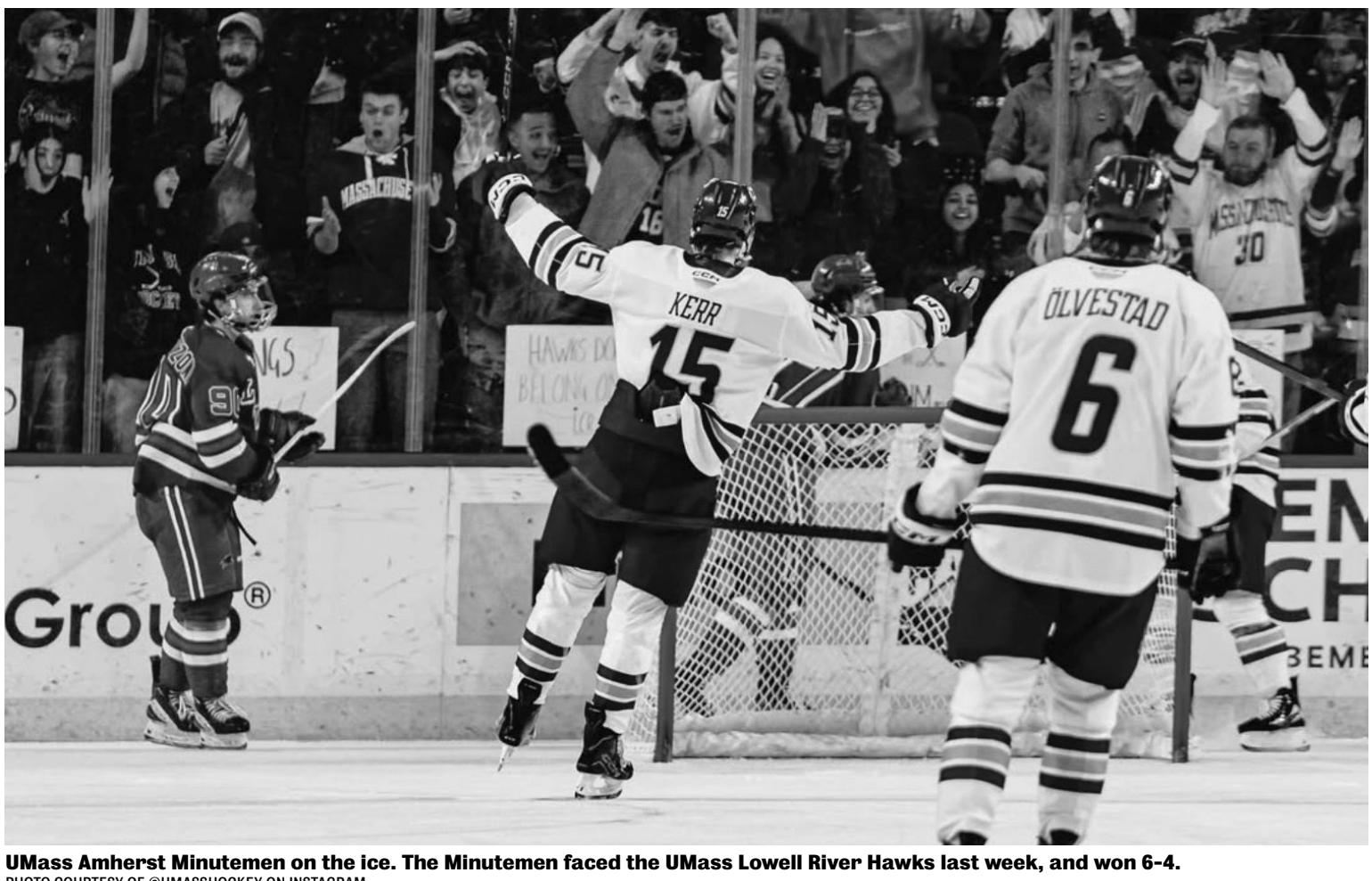
UConn travels to Maine for a two-game series for their first meeting since last year's Hockey East finals. As of Sunday, this is a ranked matchup, though that could change depending on the rankings today due to Maine's Friday loss to BU.

The Beanpot finalists both play home-and-home's this weekend, with BC taking on Merrimack and BU facing New Hampshire in two games each.

Northeastern travels to Rhode Island to see the red-hot Friars in a two-game set to try and right the sinking ship against a very tough opponent.

UMass Lowell also embarks on a road trip out northwest to see the Vermont Catamounts.

The UMass Minutemen will have an off week following three games against their Lowell counterparts.



UMass Amherst Minutemen on the ice. The Minutemen faced the UMass Lowell River Hawks last week, and won 6-4.
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