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FLYERS/NHL Articles

1. Philadelphia Inquirer - Former Flyers help Los Angeles Kings win Stanley Cup over New Jersey Devils

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Los Angeles Kings' 45-year Stanley Cup quest ended in a triumphant flurry of blood, sweat and power-play goals. After missing two chances to claim the title last week, the long-suffering Kings are NHL champions for the first time.

Hooray for Hockeywood.

Jeff Carter and Trevor Lewis scored two goals apiece, playoff MVP Jonathan Quick made 17 saves in his latest stellar performance, and the Kings beat the New Jersey Devils 6-1 Monday night in Game 6 of the finals, becoming the first eighth-seeded playoff team to win the league title.

Captain Dustin Brown had a goal and two assists for Los Angeles, which ended its dominant postseason run before a frenzied bunch of its heartiest fans incessantly waving towels and glowsticks. The crowd included several dozen Kings faithful who have been at rinkside since the team's birth as an expansion franchise in 1967, waiting for one glimpse of the Stanley Cup.

After taking a 3-0 series lead and then losing two potential clinching games last week, the Kings finished ferociously at Staples Center just when the sixth-seeded Devils appeared to have a chance for one of the biggest comebacks in finals history.

One penalty abruptly changed the tone of the series. Brown, Carter and Lewis scored during a five-minute power play in the first period after Steve Bernier was ejected for boarding Rob Scuderi, leaving the veteran defenseman in a pool of blood. Quick took it from there, finishing a star-making two months by allowing just seven goals in six finals games.

"You never know. You get to the dance, you never know what's going to happen," Brown said. "We calmed down after losing two. It was the first time we had done that all playoffs, and we finally got off to a good start."

Martin Brodeur stopped 19 shots for the Eastern Conference champion Devils, just the third team to force a Game 6 in the finals after falling into an 0-3 hole. Rookie Adam Henrique ended Quick's shutout bid late in the second period after the Kings had built a 4-0 lead, but Lewis and Matt Greene added late goals for the Kings.

"We never lost our confidence," Quick said. "We had to take it on the chin to keep moving, losing two, and we looked at it as, 'Hey, we still have to win one game to win a championship. And we have two chances.' Finally, we were able to do it at home."

The Kings went 16-4 after barely making the playoffs, eliminating the top three seeds in the Western Conference in overwhelming fashion as they matched the second-fastest run to a title in modern NHL history. Although the Devils gave them a little trouble, the Kings took down every opponent in their path after an inconsistent regular season.

"Every single guy worked so hard for us this season," said defenseman Drew Doughty, who began the year as a contract holdout and finished with six points in the finals, including two assists in the clincher. "Everyone deserves this. We got used to each other, we developed a chemistry, and we just went sailing from there."

Los Angeles boasted a talented, balanced roster that peaked at the absolute perfect time under midseason coaching hire Darryl Sutter. Brown, just the second American-born captain to raise the Cup, accomplished what even Wayne Gretzky couldn't do in eight years in Los Angeles.

Quick added one more dominant game to his run, setting NHL records for save percentage (.946) and goals-against average (1.41) among goalies who played at least 15 postseason games. Brown capped his own impressive playoff work by finishing with 20 points, tied for the postseason scoring lead with linemate Anze Kopitar.

Brown accepted the Cup from NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman and skated straight to center ice with it, triumphantly thrusting it skyward and kissing the silver. Brown handed it off first to Willie Mitchell, the 35-year-old defenseman who had never won the Cup, and he gave it to long-injured and recently returned forward Simon Gagne, who nearly tripped before raising the Cup for the first time.

The stone-faced Sutter smiled broadly at his first chance to raise the Cup, and general manager Dean Lombardi even took a turn after declining it twice. Later, Justin Williams sat his crying daughter in the Cup, and Kopitar raised it while wearing a gold crown on his head.

After a dominant 12-2 tear to the Western Conference title, the Kings won the first two games of the finals in overtime by identical 2-1 scores in New Jersey, leading many to assume another one-sided series victory was upcoming. Los Angeles then flattened the Devils 4-0 in Game 3, but missed its first chance to clinch on home ice when Henrique scored the tiebreaking goal with 4½ minutes left in New Jersey's 3-1 win in Game 4.

The Devils then beat Los Angeles 2-1 in Game 5, earning another cross-country trip after becoming the third team in NHL history, and the first since 1945, to win twice after falling behind 0-3 in the finals.

"You don't give yourself a lot of room for error, finding yourselves in a pretty deep hole," Devils captain Zach Parise said. "It's hard, but we really felt like could get back in this and force a Game 7. We did give our best, but we just came up a bit short, unfortunately."

The Kings were the West's bottom seed after failing to clinch a playoff berth until right before their 81st game, but only because they underachieved for much of the season. Their talent finally came together under Sutter, who replaced the fired Terry Murray shortly before Christmas and turned Los Angeles into a contender by late February.

Five years after the Anaheim Ducks won California's first Stanley Cup, the Golden State's oldest team raised the second. The Kings also are the first team to win the Cup at home since those Ducks, and their fans appreciated the Hollywood touch.

Despite coming off their first back-to-back losses of the playoffs, the Kings started with impressive energy in Game 6, getting most of the good early scoring chances — and then they got the break they needed when Bernier pushed Scuderi headfirst into the boards behind Quick's net. Scuderi stayed motionless for quite a while, eventually heading to the dressing room after leaving plenty of blood from his lacerated nose.

Bernier, a 27-year-old journeyman and depth forward with two goals in 24 playoff games this season, went to the locker room. The Devils complained Jarret Stoll received no penalty for checking Stephen Gionta into the boards between the benches a moment earlier.

"I wish I could take that play back," said Bernier. "I didn't want to hurt my team. I wanted to help them. This is extremely hard. It's been a long playoff run for us. To finish on that note, it's not fun for sure. But there's nothing I can do now."

The Kings then went to work on a power play that nearly measured up to the Miracle on Manchester — the famed 1982 playoff game in which Los Angeles rallied from a 5-0 deficit in the third period against Edmonton with a dynamic power play.

Brown scored 53 seconds in, slickly redirecting Drew Doughty's low pass in front for his first goal since the Western Conference finals opener. Brown's physical play and goal-scoring in the first-round series against Vancouver set a tone for the entire playoffs, but New Jersey had effectively shut him down until Game 6.

Carter then scored his seventh goal of the postseason after Brown walked the puck out of the corner and fired a shot at Brodeur's glove side while skating away from the net. The midseason acquisition has been a dependable scorer ever since he was reunited with longtime Philadelphia teammate Mike Richards on the Kings' second line.

Richards and Carter aren't the only Kings with Flyers ties. Simon Gagne is also on the team's roster, while legendary former Flyers goaltender Ron Hextall now serves as Los Angeles' vice president and assistant general manager. And Kings president Dean Lombardi was a scout for the Flyers from 2003 to 2006.

With the Los Angeles crowd on its feet, the Kings added another as rookie Dwight King ferociously drove the net and left a rebound for Lewis, who tucked it home for his first goal in 18 games. Staples Center was deafening for the rest of the first period, and Los Angeles went up 4-0 just 90 seconds into the second when Brown found Carter unchecked in the slot for a one-timer.

NOTES: The Kings are the first team to clinch the Stanley Cup on their home ice since the Anaheim Ducks did it five years ago. They're also just the second No. 8 seed ever to make the finals. Edmonton lost in seven games in 2006. ... Only four Kings had previously won the Stanley Cup — Dustin Penner, Scuderi, Justin Williams and Colin Fraser, who didn't contribute much to Chicago's 2010 run. ... David Beckham, Matthew Perry, James Gandolfini, Alyssa Milano and My Chemical Romance attended the game. My Chemical Romance's "Welcome to the Black Parade" has become the black-jerseyed Kings' unofficial anthem after its incorporation into a clever pregame video featuring photos of several Kings as kids.

2. Philadelphia Inquirer – Courting Season for Parise

Sam Cardichi

The Flyers will be among numerous teams interested in talking with New Jersey star left winger Zach Parise when he becomes an unrestricted free agent on July 1.

Understandably, Parise was in no mood to address his status after the Kings won the Stanley Cup by blasting his Devils, 6-1, on Monday.

“I’m not talking about that,” he told reporters in Los Angeles.

Parise had just one goal in the Finals; the Devils want to re-sign him.

“I think Zach is a big thing the organization has to take care of first, no doubt about that,” goaltender Marty Brodeur said. “They need to try to lock him in and lure him into staying. He’s a franchise player and a guy the fans love. As a captain, he’s a great leader and he did a great job first year as a captain to bring a team counted out early in the season to what we accomplished.”

* * *

Former Flyer Simon Gagne was one of the first Kings to skate around the ice with the Stanley Cup. It was a greatest snapshot of his underrated career.

A few minutes later, in the sweetest moment of their careers, Mike Richards handed the Cup to his best friend, Jeff Carter.

Richards on the Flyers organization: "They taught me how to be a winner."

He then said this about the Kings: “This is the closest team I've ever been a part of.”

3. CSNPhilly.com - Yet another L.A. Kings connection to Philly

Tim Panaccio

Not that this is going to make Flyers fans feel any better about the L.A. Kings’ winning the Stanley Cup, but there is yet another historical tie to Philadelphia outside of the obvious "Flyers West" references to ex-players, coaches and management within the Kings organization.

It took the Kings 44 years to win a Cup. They joined the league as part of the first expansion in 1967-68 along with the Flyers and others.

The previous longest wait for an NHL club to win a Cup was 32 seasons, according to the Elias Sports Bureau, which belonged to the Dallas Stars, formerly the Minnesota North Stars. They won in 1999.

Now here is the Philly tie-in from Elias: Three Major League Baseball teams waited 44 or more seasons for their first World Series championship: The Phillies top the list at 98 seasons (1980), followed by the Brooklyn Dodgers in their 66th (1955) season as well as the Baltimore Orioles (66th, in 1966).

The NBA record is held by Detroit at 41 seasons (1989) and the NFL mark is held by New Orleans, who won the Super Bowl following the 2009 season in their 43rd year as a franchise.

"It's pretty awesome," Kings coach Darryl Sutter said in his postgame press conference. "Obviously, when you have a three- or four-goal lead with five minutes left, you know what these guys are capable of doing. Then you start seeing it on the bench. It's the feeling of seeing them so happy, the work that you go through.

"The first thing you think about as a coach, these guys are all young enough, they've got to try it again."

4. CSNPhilly.com - Despite report, JVR's infection delaying surgery

Sarah Baicker

Flyers general manager Paul Holmgren on Monday denied a report that forward James van Riemsdyk has been purposefully delaying a necessary surgery, which is in turn preventing a possible trade with the Columbus Blue Jackets.

In a tweet, NBC's Howard Eskin reported that van Riemsdyk is delaying surgery on a torn labrum, which is holding up a possible trade for Blue Jackets captain Rick Nash. However, according to Holmgren, that's not the case.

"James surgery has been delayed due to an infection in his foot," Holmgren said in an e-mail to CSNPhilly.com. "Any of this other speculation is way off base."

Van Riemsdyk, of course, had a very rough 2011-12. Expectations were high for the 23-year-old winger after a breakout performance in the previous season's playoffs, during which he scored seven goals and was the Flyers' best player on the ice in practically each of the team's 11 games. He was inked to a six-year, \$25.5 million deal last August.

But van Riemsdyk wasn't able to get into a rhythm this past season; he was simply too hampered by injuries (most notably a concussion and broken left foot), and missed 39 games in the regular season and four in the playoffs. Van Riemsdyk finished the year with just 24 points (11 goals). In seven playoff games, he had only two points (one goal).

Perhaps in part because of his disappointing season, van Riemsdyk has been the subject of trade rumors since winter. Various reports and rumors suggested he was headed everywhere from San Jose to Toronto. But, of course, the trade deadline came and went, and he remained in Philadelphia.

Similarly, the Flyers' reported interest in Nash is nothing new. They were rumored to be interested in him right up until the trade deadline in late February. That said, his \$7.8

million cap hit makes him a tough acquisition for any team tight on funds, the Flyers included.

As for just when van Riemsdyk will have the surgery, a course of action should be decided on within a week, according to his agent, Alec Schall.

"It's frustrating because he's doing everything possible to get himself healthy to play," Schall said. "Everyone wants what's best. It's not an adversarial thing with the Flyers and James."

Schall also said that because of the Flyers' "no one is off limits" history, he wouldn't be surprised if the team elected to trade van Riemsdyk at some point. That said, a trade with Columbus is "nothing the Flyers have told [he and van Riemsdyk] to expect."

Van Riemsdyk was the second-overall pick in the 2007 draft, selected immediately after the Chicago Blackhawks took Patrick Kane. In 196 NHL games, he has 99 points (47 goals, 52 assists).

5. CSNPhilly.com - Six side effects of a potential JVR trade

John Boruk

Why hasn't James van Riemsdyk had surgery yet? According to NBC-10's Howard Eskin, JVR is delaying it in order to thwart a trade to Columbus for Rick Nash. According to Flyers GM Paul Holmgren, the delay is due to a foot infection (see story).

I talked with Eskin after his story broke, and he told me his source is "rock solid," which I believe. However, Eskin was unaware of the foot infection.

Nevertheless, don't rule out the possibility of a deal. Let's break down the factors involved and potential side effects for the Flyers:

1) It's possible a deal could be consummated as long as all available information is disclosed. When the Flyers acquired Chris Pronger from Anaheim, then-Flyers defenseman Luca Sbisa was dealing with a groin injury that could have required surgery at the time. Ducks general manager Bob Murray felt comfortable with the situation and proceeded with the trade. However, if you're Columbus GM Scott Howson and you're preparing to complete an earth-shaking trade that could determine your future with the organization, you need guarantees.

2) If there's a deal in the works with Columbus, you would think Howson might touch base with the prospective parties to determine the interest level of the players he would be getting back in return. The last thing Howson needs is another Jeff Carter fiasco and having another Philadelphia "bad apple" on his roster. At this point, why would anyone

want to play in Columbus? Howson should expect that any player he receives in a trade for Nash won't exactly be jumping for joy.

3) If indeed the Flyers need a healthy JVR to facilitate a trade for Nash, then you can rule out a Flyers deal for Nashville defenseman Shea Weber this off-season. That leads me to think that Nashville either has no intention of trading Weber or Predators GM David Poile wants too much or a player that is "off limits" like Sean Couturier or Brayden Schenn. I find it hard to believe the Flyers' off-season agenda centers solely around Nash, unless...

4) If Weber isn't traded by July 1, then it's possible the Flyers could be putting together an offer sheet. If they explored that option for Steve Stamkos last summer, then why would they even hesitate on Weber, a restricted free agent?

However, the Flyers have to be careful with their draft picks. In order to produce a valid offer sheet, you must show you have those picks as compensation and for Weber that would likely require four first-round selections from 2013-2016 – which they currently own.

Another internal dilemma: if both Weber and Ryan Suter hit free agency, what's the Flyers' plan of attack? Attempt to sign Suter and then pursue a Weber offer sheet if you can't acquire his teammate? Or put all your eggs into one of the Predators defenseman's basket? I'd bet on the former. Weber likely will still be unsigned by the time Suter does.

5) If Nash is Plan A leading up to the draft, then Jaromir Jagr is the obvious Plan B in the works. Don't expect the Flyers to sign two right wingers for a collective cap hit of \$11 million when it fails to address the team's major area of need. That simply doesn't make much sense. Now that Nash's name has resurfaced and the possibility that JVR's health issues could negate a possible blockbuster deal, then you can see why the Flyers might reach out to Jagr's agent about a Philly return. However, I don't see any resolve with Jagr until this whole JVR-Nash, surgery-or-not deal is all figured out.

6) If JVR remains in Philadelphia, then 2012-13 will be by far his most important/scrutinized season as a Flyer. He better produce a breakout year to justify the six-year extension or the entire fan base will turn on the No. 2 overall pick from the 2007 draft like we haven't seen in a long, long time.

The collective patience regarding van Riemsdyk is already wearing thin, and now with this most recent news that the Flyers could potentially significantly upgrade with Nash, JVR will be given no margin of error from the moment he takes his opening shift of the season.

Failure to completely recover from this hip injury and another lackluster season (regardless of injuries) would also depreciate his trade value moving forward.

6. ESPN.com - Kings rout Devils 6-1 to win first Cup

Corey Masisak

LOS ANGELES -- This is a city of glitz and glamor, so the pregame video just before the Los Angeles Kings have taken the ice at Staples Center during the 2012 Stanley Cup Playoffs appropriately is accompanied by multicolored spotlights, a laser show and images projected onto the playing surface.

The heart of the video, though, goes to the soul of this sport. There are pictures of the Kings in their youth, boys wearing over-sized hockey equipment who dreamed of reaching the pinnacle of the sport they loved.

The boys in those faded photos arrived there Monday night.

Los Angeles, on the strength of three power-play goals in the first period, finished off the New Jersey Devils with a 6-1 victory in Game 6 of the Stanley Cup Final, earning the franchise's first championship in its 45-year history.

"They've been waiting longer than I have, this city," captain Dustin Brown said. "You dream of winning the Cup, and you know what, I'm glad I was the first King to ever lift it."

The victory caps one of the most remarkable postseason runs in League history. Los Angeles was in 11th place in the Western Conference with 14 games remaining in the regular season, and the Kings didn't earn a spot in the postseason until during Game No. 81.

From that point, the Kings were nearly unstoppable. Los Angeles became the first No. 8 seed to win the Cup, the first team to defeat the top three teams in its conference and the first team with any seed to win the first three games of all four series, including the first two on the road in each round.

"I don't know, I can't even describe it," veteran defenseman Willie Mitchell, who at 35 years old the eldest of the Kings, said after winning the Cup for the first time. "Everyone played road hockey as a kid. We had a green garbage can that everyone would go around and pose with it.

"We just did it for real, baby. This is awesome. ... It has been a good journey. We faced a lot of adversity this year, but we found a way to dig ourselves out the hole and get to this point. It is pretty unique."

The Devils proved to be the Kings' toughest foe, staving off elimination twice before finally succumbing Monday night at Staples Center. New Jersey also had a pretty

incredible postseason run, knocking off coach Peter DeBoer's old team, the Florida Panthers, before vanquishing division rivals Philadelphia and the New York Rangers en route to the franchise's fifth Eastern Conference title since 1995.

New Jersey missed the Stanley Cup Playoffs in 2010-11 for the first time in 14 seasons, as the Devils finished in fourth place in the Atlantic Division. But Martin Brodeur played better in this postseason than he has in several springs, and the Devils advanced past the second round for the first time since last winning the Cup in 2003.

"I'm proud of our group," DeBoer said. "You know, you put some men together and you play 110 games I think we played, on the ice every day, I couldn't be prouder of them as a group."

A year ago Tim Thomas capped one of the best postseasons in League history by a goaltender by winning the Conn Smythe Trophy. All Quick did was author a better run one year later. He finished the 2012 playoffs with a 16-4 record, a .946 save percentage and a 1.41 goals against average to earn the playoff MVP award.

Four of the first five games in the 2012 Stanley Cup Final were incredibly close. Game 6 changed dramatically on one play. Steve Bernier hit defenseman Rob Scuderi behind the Kings' net and was assessed a major penalty for boarding and a game misconduct at 10:10.

Bernier was given a major penalty because of the severity of the violence on the boarding infraction. Once a major is assessed, Rule 41.5 states that if the penalty results in an injury to the face or head (Scuderi was bleeding), then it is an automatic game misconduct.

Brown opened the scoring at 11:03 of the first on a tip-in when Drew Doughty sent the puck toward the slot. Jeff Carter deflected Brown's shot from the slot past Brodeur at 12:45 to make it 2-0. Trevor Lewis made it 3-0 in the final seconds of the power play when he put in the rebound of a Dwight King shot at 15:01.

The Kings had just six power-play goals in the first three rounds of the playoffs; they matched that total in six games against the NHL's top penalty-killing team during the regular season.

"It was huge," center Anze Kopitar said of the three goals on Bernier's penalty. "The way the game started for us was unbelievable. [Brown] is our leader and our captain. You can't ask for more than he brought tonight."

Carter scored his second of the night and eighth of the postseason 90 seconds into the second period to push the lead to four goals. Brown carried the puck into the zone, and Devils defenseman Anton Volchenkov collided with linesman Pierre Racicot while trying to stay with him. The Kings' captain eventually got the puck to Carter for a high shot from just beyond the hash marks that beat Brodeur.

Adam Henrique got the Devils on the board with 73 seconds left in the second period. He put in the rebound of a Petr Sykora shot for his fifth of the postseason. Lewis, into an empty net, and defenseman Matt Greene added late tallies for the Kings.

Brown became the first player in a Kings sweater to lift the Cup, and the first American since Derian Hatcher in 1999 to receive it from Commissioner Gary Bettman. He scored the big goals early in this postseason, and his crunching body checks of Henrik Sedin and Michal Rozsival proved to be defining moments in two series en route to the Final.

There was once a lineage of great Los Angeles centers, from Marcel Dionne to Bernie Nicholls to Wayne Gretzky -- who was at center ice before Game 3. Kopitar has rekindled that tradition, and his spectacular postseason affirmed his place among the League's elite, complete players. He was responsible for several of the signature goals during this run, from a remarkable shorthanded tally against St. Louis, to an overtime breakaway in Game 1 of the Final and a perfect finish from Brown in Game 3.

"This is unreal. Every single emotion in me is coming out," Kopitar said. "The biggest thing has been the belief inside the locker room. We had 25 guys believing in one thing. I can't be more proud of the guys."

Brown and Kopitar finished tied for the League lead in this postseason in goals (eight, along with five other players) and points (20).

The Devils had matched an NHL record by avoiding elimination four times in this postseason, including twice in this series, but their inability to solve Quick, more than anything, was their undoing. He allowed only seven goals [the Devils also scored an empty-netter] in the six games.

"Obviously, Darryl [Sutter] came in [December] and I felt like everybody felt a little more accountable for their own actions, their day-to-day play, practice, everything," Quick said with the Conn Smythe Trophy sitting next to him. "Obviously at the end of the day, you know, no matter what, it's got to come from the room and guys have to make a decision to work. I think we did that. You can't say enough about this group and how hard they worked."

7. NHL.com - Order of first round of 2012 NHL Draft set

Adam Kimelman

With the Stanley Cup Final settled, it's time to take a look at how the first round of the 2012 NHL Draft will look.

The first 14 picks were set by the results of the NHL Draft Lottery held in April. The 12 teams eliminated in the first two rounds of the playoffs come next. Non-division winners are placed in inverse order of points, followed by division winners through the same process. That's why the Pittsburgh Penguins, who had the fourth-most points in the League, have a better draft spot than the Florida Panthers, finished with nine fewer points but won the Southeast Division.

The next two spots go to the losing teams in the conference finals, again in inverse order of regular-season points, meaning Phoenix will pick 27th and the Rangers 28th. New Jersey, which lost in Game 6 of the Cup Final, will pick No. 29, while the Cup champion Kings will take No. 30.

Three teams have multiple first-round picks: Tampa Bay will pick 10th and 19th; Washington has the Nos. 11 and 16 picks; and Buffalo will pick 12th and 21st.

Columbus also could have two first-round picks. They currently have the No. 2 pick and hold an option to take Los Angeles' pick. The Blue Jackets acquired the rights to the pick in the Jeff Carter trade, and can take the Kings' first pick this year or next, or trade the option.

Three teams currently will sit out the first round: Colorado, which sent its pick to Washington in the Semyon Varlamov deal; Detroit, which traded its pick to Tampa Bay as part of the Kyle Quincey trade; and Nashville, which dealt its pick to Buffalo in exchange for Paul Gaustad.

Also, New Jersey has the option of forfeiting its pick as penalty for circumventing the salary cap in signing Ilya Kovalchuk in 2010. The Devils have to surrender their top pick in either the 2012, 2013 or 2014 draft.

1. Edmonton
2. Columbus
3. Montreal
4. N.Y. Islanders
5. Toronto
6. Anaheim
7. Minnesota
8. Carolina
9. Winnipeg

10. Tampa Bay
11. Washington (from Colorado)
12. Buffalo
13. Dallas
14. Calgary
15. Ottawa
16. Washington
17. San Jose
18. Chicago
19. Tampa Bay (from Detroit)
20. Philadelphia
21. Buffalo (from Nashville)
22. Pittsburgh
23. Florida
24. Boston
25. St. Louis
26. Vancouver
27. Phoenix
28. N.Y. Rangers
29. New Jersey
30. Los Angeles

8. TSN.ca - DEVILS SUFFER THROUGH PAINFUL START AND FINISH TO CUP FINAL

The Canadian Press

Ultimately the New Jersey Devils were done in by a slow, somewhat unlucky start. And a key penalty call at the end.

Losing two 2-1 overtime games at home to open the Stanley Cup final proved to be too big an obstacle to recover from. A 4-0 defeat in Los Angeles in Game 3 then pushed the Devils to the edge of the playoff precipice.

Coach Peter DeBoer's team gave it a yeoman effort, winning Games 4 and 5 -- 3-1 in Los Angeles and 2-1 in Newark -- before crashing 6-1 Monday night in Game 6 at the Staples Center.

The Devils became the first team since 1945 -- and only the third ever -- to come back from an 0-3 deficit in the final and force Game 6.

"I think the hockey world pretty much wrote us off," DeBoer said before Game 6, "and I think we feel we've played with no pressure because of that."

But they could not match the 1942 Maple Leafs, the only team to come back from an 0-3 start and win the final (over Detroit).

After Game 5, DeBoer was asked if he thought bad bounces even out over a series.

"I think that's pretty fair," he replied.

The Devils coach may be rethinking that. He was livid Monday when Steve Bernier was ejected and given a major for driving Rob Scuderi into the boards and bloodying the Kings defender.

Seconds earlier Jarret Stoll went unpunished for a hit from behind on Devils forward Stephen Gionta.

The Kings scored three times on the ensuing power play.

"You know what, tonight is about L.A. and letting them celebrate," DeBoer said of the call after the game. "If you want to ask me about that in about a week, I'll give you my honest opinion on it."

He said he felt for Bernier.

"You know, it's a bad spot for him to be in. Everybody knows Bernie's heart's in the right place. He's not at fault."

Things went from bad to worse in the second period when Devils defenceman Anton Volchenkov got tangled with linesman Pierre Racicot seconds before the Kings made it 4-0.

New Jersey will be due a few breaks when it next plays the Kings.

Still the Devils showed remarkable resilience in the face of imminent Cup defeat. They were 4-0 in playoff elimination games prior to Monday.

"It's a difficult thing to get yourself ready for games like that," 40-year-old goalie Martin Brodeur said after Game 5. "Now it's been two in a row (in the final). It drains you a lot. It takes a lot out of you. But it's worth it."

Throughout the playoffs, the resilient Devils got better as the series progressed. New Jersey was 10-2 in Games 4 through 7 through the playoffs.

But in a series where little things turned into big ones, they dug themselves too deep a hole after coming out at the wrong end of the opening overtime games.

Even then, DeBoer believed. And his players proved him right with their comeback in Games 4 and 5 with Brodeur leading the way.

"I've been singing the same tune since Game 1," DeBoer said after Game 5. "I said even when we were down 3-0 (in the series) that I didn't feel that the series was that lopsided.

"Our best players were our best players tonight. Brodeur and Parise and Kovalchuk. That's the key this time of year."

The fact that not all of the big guns were firing at the same time was part of the Devils' problems. Captain Zach Parise and Ilya Kovalchuk were up and down with speculation that injuries, particularly to Kovalchuk, were taking a toll.

An 0-for-15 power play finally came to life in Game 5, but it took a Jonathan Quick handling error to end the drought.

The Devils beat Quick just seven times in six games (there was also an empty-net goal). Two of those goals bounced in off Kings defenceman Slava Voynov, another was a deflection and then there was the handling gaffe that gifted Parise a goal.

New Jersey had more success as the series wore on, using its speed and passing to force the L.A. goalie to move side to side, opening up angles at net. They also looked to get physical around Quick.

Brodeur's influence, meanwhile, increased as the series wore on, helping partially negate the Quick factor at the other end.

Brodeur's composure on and off the ice helped keep the Devils together when other teams might have folded.

"He's played very well the last two nights," Kings coach Darryl Sutter said of Brodeur after Game 5. "We hit a couple (of posts).

"We're probably saying what they said Games 1 and 2 where we got breaks and now they did. That's how even it is."

DeBoer made changes throughout the series, shuffling his forward lines and tweaking his defensive pairings. He also inserted veterans Petr Sykora and Henrik Tallinder as of Game 4.

While New Jersey downplayed the cross-country commute, saying the Kings were doing it too, the final marked the first time the Devils had played out of their time zone since mid-January.

Los Angeles also had a week to prepare for the final, compared to four days for New Jersey.

New Jersey, seeded sixth in the East, finished ninth in the league at 48-28-6.

After surviving Game 7 in overtime against third-seeded Florida, the Devils took out the No. 5 Flyers in five games and then the top-ranked Rangers in six.

Playoff pluses include 22-year-old rookie forward Adam Henrique, whose overtime heroics and composure belied his inexperience.

Three of Henrique's five playoff goals were game winners and two of them were series-clinchers -- against the Panthers and Rangers.

Tallinder's seamless return to the blue-line after an absence of 58 games and nearly five months due to a blood clot in the leg was remarkable.

And another veteran defenceman, Bryce Salvador, showed an unlikely playoff scoring touch with four goals -- including the winner in Game 5 -- and 10 assists. The 36-year-old Salvador had no goals and nine assists in 82 regular-season games.

The Devils were chasing their fourth Cup after wins in 1995, 2000 and 2003. They lost in seven games to Colorado in 2001.

A first-rate organization from top to bottom, the Devils won points for their classy approach during the final despite the lopsided, chippy finale. DeBoer typified that, showing the same kind of character his team did during difficult times.

Still, New Jersey faces a challenging off-season on and off the ice. The search for investment to help pay for the team's debt continues while Parise is a free agent this summer.

9. TSN.ca - MCKENZIE: KINGS WERE LED BY THREE BIG PERFORMERS

Bob McKenzie

The three big pieces for the Los Angeles Kings in winning the Stanley Cup were Jonathan Quick, Dustin Brown and Anze Kopitar.

Quick was the Conn Smythe Trophy winner who was tremendous with just sublime numbers in the playoffs and especially this final, giving up just seven goals in six games. Brown got everything going on the power-play for the Kings in Game 6 and Kopitar was a huge force throughout the playoffs, being physically dominant.

Kings general manager Dean Lombardi and his staff did an incredible job putting this team together but those three players were holdovers from a previous regime. Dave Taylor was the GM and he drafted both Quick and Kopitar in the 2005 NHL Draft and less than a year later, he was fired and replaced by Lombardi. This was the going away present that he and his staff left behind for the current edition.

It's always the case when a team wins the Stanley Cup that it takes so many people to put it together but when you look at the big three on the Los Angeles Kings, they've been there for a while and they've been waiting for this moment.

Major Call

The referees had no choice but to give Steve Bernier a major penalty and a game misconduct for his hit on Rob Scuderi. When you look at the play, you see that he came a long way to make the hit. Did Scuderi reverse his field? Did he turn at the last minute and put Bernier in a difficult position? Yes, he did.

But at the end of the day, if you run somebody into the boards that violently from behind and there's an injury on the play, it's a major penalty. Whether anybody likes it or not, in the NHL if a play results in an injury and there's perceived to be a foul on the play, there's a major penalty.

You couldn't give him a minor in that situation, because once you saw the blood and a head injury on the play, the referee was obliged to give him a five-minute major. The Devils will debate that, lots of their fans will debate that, but the referee had to make that call.

Can't Blame Bernier

A lot of people will want to say that Steve Bernier lost the New Jersey Devils the Stanley Cup and that's not right for a couple of reasons.

First, they were already in a 3-0 hole in the series, which put them in the situation where one bad call or one bad play can go against you. Second, in that situation, the Devils have to get their penalty kill going.

New Jersey will tell you that they didn't like the fact that Stephen Gionta was hit from behind on the play and there was no call for that. They will also tell you they didn't like that Dustin Penner took a swing right after Scuderi was down on the ice and Penner didn't get called for that. A penalty to Penner there could have off-set at least part of the five-minute power play.

However, you can't give up three goals on one power play and allow the Kings to get engaged to that degree. This was a power play that wasn't great during the playoffs. Los Angeles had six power play goals in three full series against the Vancouver Canucks, St. Louis Blues and Phoenix Coyotes.

In the Stanley Cup Final, the Kings had six power play goals alone on 20 chances in six games against the Devils. You can let one goal in, maybe you let in two, but if you let three in, you're in trouble.

10. ESPN.com - Martin Brodeur sets July 1 deadline

Katie Strang

LOS ANGELES -- New Jersey Devils veteran goaltender Martin Brodeur said he is planning on returning to play next season, but he set a July 1 deadline to make a firm decision.

"This season and this playoff run answered a lot of questions -- where my game is at -- and I'm really happy to hopefully continue," he said Monday after he team's season-ending 6-1 loss to the Los Angeles Kings in Game 6 of the Stanley Cup finals.

Brodeur said he wants to take some time to decompress and think before fully committing to a comeback.

"Free agency," Brodeur answered when asked about his timeline. "I'm not saying I'm going to go after midnight, but for me that's the date. I'm going to take a little time off -- I'll be back in Jersey until late June -- and I'll figure it out then."

The 40-year-old future Hall of Famer was upbeat despite the team's blowout defeat in Los Angeles. Brodeur, a three-time Cup winner, seemed encouraged by the direction of the team and the level of play he was able to sustain during a deep playoff run.

"I feel real good. I was two games away (from) winning a Stanley Cup. A lot of clutch games I needed to play well and I did," he said. "I like the team in front of me and the system we play in -- that really helps my game as far as handling the puck and doing different things.

"This season kinds of put a little more jump in what I was trying to do and maybe try to continue a little bit more, but we'll see. I'm not sure yet."

Although he surrendered five goals to the Kings as they clinched their first Cup in franchise history, Brodeur had a renaissance in the Devils' resurgent season.

Despite the awards and recognition accrued throughout his illustrious 18-year career, Brodeur said he still felt like he needed that to prove to himself that he could play at an elite level.

"I want to be the best I can be. I think my expectations are higher -- probably not as high as (the media), but it's high," he said. "I want to be able to contribute and play at a certain level and play a lot of games and not take a seat."

Brodeur said his decision will not be linked to that of franchise winger and captain Zach Parise, who declined to discuss his future after the game.

However, he did say that re-signing the impending free agent should be the Devils' top priority moving forward.

"I think Zach is a big thing to the organization. They have to take care of that first. There's no doubt about that," Brodeur said. "They need to try to lock him in and lure him into staying."

Brodeur did not rule it out, but said it is unlikely he would consider signing anywhere else besides New Jersey, where he has played for his entire career. This season was the last of a six-year, \$31.2 million deal that he inked in 2006.

"I don't see myself at all doing that," Brodeur said. "But again, I think circumstances is out of my hands. You never know, I guess. I don't want to. It definitely would have to be something really weird that I'm going to do that.

"The Devils is what I am, what I believe in and this is where I want to be."

- FLYERS -