

Gretzky leaves for St. Louis; Kings sing the Blues

■ **HOCKEY:** After weeks of rumors and speculation, the Great One heads East

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Wayne Gretzky, the greatest hockey player of his generation, has a new address: St. Louis. Gretzky, who failed to win a Stanley Cup in Los Angeles, was traded to the St. Louis Blues on Tuesday night, ending weeks of rumor and speculation about his future.

"I'm emotionally drained," Gretzky said at a new conference in Los Angeles. "I'm disappointed to be leaving Los Angeles but I'm excited to play in St. Louis. ... It's always tough when you move. Nobody likes to make changes. Sometimes it's just timing."

To get the most prolific scorer in NHL history and a hockey icon whose name is synonymous with the sport, the Blues gave the Kings three young players — Craig Johnson, Patrice Tardif and Roman Vopat — plus their

No. 1 draft pick in 1997 draft and a fifth-round pick this year.

"This is a terrific day for the St. Louis Blues franchise," Blues president Jack Quinn said. "There were some moments that weren't pleasant, but we're all good friends, and things turned out the right way."

The 35-year-old superstar said he expects to sign with the Blues in two to three weeks.

"It wasn't a financial issue," he said. "Finances never really were a factor."

Gretzky can become a free agent after this season, and the Kings risked losing him without compensation if they failed to sign him. He said it "could conceivably happen" that he plays out the season with the Blues, then signs elsewhere.

"I think it's been tough on everyone," Gretzky said. "It's been very unfair for all of us. I think everyone is

relieved."

Kings governor Bob Sanderman said he made a contract offer to Gretzky.

"He went away and discussed it with his family and let us know late this afternoon he preferred not to remain with the Kings," Sanderman said.

The contract would have covered the rest of Gretzky's playing days and then he would have moved into a senior front-office job.

Gretzky, wearing a dark suit, was relaxed and upbeat as he announced his trade at an airport hotel. His demeanor was far different from the time he was last traded. Gretzky was reduced to sobs when dealt from Edmonton to Los Angeles in 1988.

Word of the trade initially came while Kings general manager Sam McMaster and Sanderman were meeting into the evening at the Forum in Inglewood, Calif.

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Horoscope by Frances Drake

FOR Wednesday, Feb. 28, 1996
ARIES
(March 21 to April 19)

You could be asked to use your business talents in a new way. Chances for success are good. Capitalize on an opportunity, but watch expenditures during evening hours.

TAURUS

(April 20 to May 20)
Vacation plans fall into place. Bonds of affection grow stronger. Meetings with publishers, agents and lawyers are beneficial, but watch out for some restlessness in the evening.

GEMINI

(May 21 to June 20)
You have more than one iron in the fire with the marketing of creative work. Travel counts as well. Attend to bookkeeping and investments in the near future.

CANCER

(June 21 to July 22)
It's a day of productivity and important career progress. A project gets nicely off the ground. Partnership matters are of increasing importance in the near future.

LEO

(July 23 to Aug. 22)
You're more economical at home than in public. You're also more likely to have a better time at home. The coming weeks improve romantic fortunes for you.

VIRGO

(Aug. 23 to Sept. 22)
If you're going to bring up business, the right timing is essential. It's better to see what others have to offer rather than to instigate discussions. It's a time of listening rather than talking.

LIBRA

(Sept. 23 to Oct. 22)
It's a shame to quibble about money when the two of you have so much more going for you. Familiar haunts suit you best for pleasure and allow

renewed romance.
SCORPIO
(Oct. 23 to Nov. 21)

If each one of you does your share, there will be no need for nagging. Try not to be moody. Invite some business colleagues over for festive times.

SAGITTARIUS

(Nov. 22 to Dec. 21)
You're more candid with a loved one than you are with a friend. Perhaps you think this person is prying. Romantic developments please you.

CAPRICORN

(Dec. 22 to Jan. 19)
Check the legalities of a situation. You're ready to make a new beginning at work. Your mind is working best toward nightfall.

AQUARIUS

(Jan. 20 to Feb. 18)
Buying for the home proves fortunate. Romantic partnerships are favored over business ones. In your career, it's hard to get others' full cooperation.

PISCES

(Feb. 19 to March 20)
Friends, romance and money don't mix. Extra care is needed in spending and the use of credit. Work remains the best avenue for immediate cash returns.

YOU BORN TODAY are sensitive and imaginative. You work well in partnerships and are good at bringing out the best in others. You have an interest in world affairs and could be drawn to politics and humanitarian endeavors. You would make a fine teacher, religious leader or social worker. You are creative and attracted to theater, poetry, dance and art. Your need for security could limit your universal outlook if you're not careful.

Birthdate of: Vincente Minnelli, film director; Zero Mostel, actor; Gavin MacLeod, actor.

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Doonesbury

by GARRY TRUDEAU

