



**VSiN**

# 2023 NHL BETTING GUIDE



**AUSTON MATTHEWS**  
TOR +900 TO WIN STANLEY CUP



**CONNOR MCDAVID**  
-105 TO WIN HART TROPHY

## BEST BETS

FOR PLAYER AWARDS  
AND THE STANLEY CUP

PLUS...

- ANALYSIS OF ALL 32 NHL TEAMS
- STEVE MAKINEN'S POWER RATINGS
- 1ST PERIOD BETTING STRATEGIES

**VSiN** **PRO**

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*photos by USA Today Sports Images*

**ODDS WITHIN GUIDE ARE TAKEN  
FROM DRAFTKINGS. ALL ODDS ARE  
SUBJECT TO CHANGE.**

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**ALL TEAM PREVIEWS ARE  
COURTESY OF JONNY LAZARUS.  
FOLLOW HIM AT @JLAZZY23 ON X**

## TERMS TO KNOW

**All situations:** All play during regulation and overtime.

**Even strength:** Play when both teams have the same number of players on the ice.

**5-on-5:** Play when both teams have five skaters and a goalie on the ice.

**5-on-5 score adjusted:** The metric but adjusted for score effects.

**GP:** Games played.

**TOI:** Total amount of time played.

**Corsi:** Any shot attempt (goals, shots on net, misses and blocks) outside of the shootout. Referred to as SAT by the NHL.

**CF:** Count of Corsi for that team.

**CA:** Count of Corsi against that team.

**CF/60:** Rate of Corsi for that team per 60 minutes of play.

**CA/60:** Rate of Corsi against that team per 60 minutes of play.

**CF%:** Percentage of total Corsi in games that team played that are for that team.

**Fenwick:** Any unblocked shot attempt (goals, shots on net and misses) outside of the shootout. Referred to as USAT by the NHL.

**FF:** Count of Fenwick for that team.

**FA:** Count of Fenwick against that team.

**FF/60:** Rate of Fenwick for that team per 60 minutes of play.

**FA/60:** Rate of Fenwick against that team per 60 minutes of play.

**FF%:** Percentage of total Fenwick in games that team played that are for that team.

**Shots:** Any shot attempt on net (goals and shots on net) outside of the shootout.

**SF:** Count of shots for that team.

**SA:** Count of shots against that team.

**SF/60:** Rate of shots for that team per 60 minutes of play.

**SA/60:** Rate of shots against that team per 60 minutes of play.

**SF%:** Percentage of total shots in games that team played that are for that team.

**Goals:** Any goal outside of the shootout.

**GF:** Count of goals for that team.

**GA:** Count of goals against that team.

**GF/60:** Rate of goals for that team per 60 minutes of play.

**GA/60:** Rate of goals against that team per 60 minutes of play.

**GF%:** Percentage of total goals in that game that are for that team.

**xGF:** Count of expected goals for that team.

**xGA:** Count of expected goals against that team.

**xGF60:** Rate of expected goals for that team.

**xGA60:** Rate of expected goals against that team.

**xGF%:** Percentage of expected goals in that game that are for that team.

Loyal VSiN subscribers,

The puck is about to drop on another NHL season and we're excited to bring you a new voice on hockey. Please welcome our new lead NHL analyst, Jonny Lazarus, who provides a unique and interesting perspective on the game as a former Division I college hockey player at UMass-Amherst and also Mercyhurst. His insight and the way in which he evaluates the game will be a great asset to bettors.

Along with his betting analysis for us, Jonny also does color commentary for UMass hockey and has also been a featured analyst on NHL Network, along with his coverage of the Rangers for The Hockey News. "JLazzy" knows his stuff and he will be a strong presence for us with NHL best bets articles five days per week, videos on social media (@JLazzy23 on X), and guest appearances on VSiN programming.

In this year's Guide, you will find:

- Team previews for all 32 teams
- 1st Period Betting Strategies
- Futures bets, award picks, and season-long props
- A glossary of basic and advanced stats
- Steve Makinen's Power Ratings

Through this year's preview magazine, you can get a feel for how Jonny views the game and approaches the betting side of it via the team previews and his futures bets. I wrote the glossary, but this is ultimately Jonny's labor of love and we hope you stay with us all season long, as we're just getting started with our hockey coverage.

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# JONNY LAZARUS' GUIDE TO 1P TOTAL BETTING

By Jonny Lazarus

Well folks, hockey season is back and that means it's time to talk about my favorite bet in all sports — the NHL 1st Period Under. Baseball has the NRFI (No Runs In The First Inning), but hockey fans have twenty minutes to sweat out every shot on goal that happens in the opening frame. It is electric.

To start, know that the 1st Period Over/Under is more often than not set at 1.5.

The first period is typically an introduction to how the final 40 minutes of a game will play out. As a former player, let me tell you that the first period was always my least favorite, especially if it's the second game of a back-to-back. There is always a feeling-out process and an adjustment window for getting yourself into the game. Everyone is different, but I always felt better as the game went on.

With all of that said, there are a ton of factors that go into betting a 1st Period Under. For example, you need to take into account how many games a team has played in that week, their travel schedule, whether the starter or backup will be in the blue paint, if the specific team is better at home or on the road, and most importantly, if it's a back-to-back.

I always like to look at the results from the team's three previous games, that's usually telling of how a team is trending, more so with goal-scoring than goaltending. Even the best goalies have an off night, but if their teammates are struggling to score goals, that's a good time to hop on board.


One key thing to take into account is that not every team is safe to bet on. I have one rule, never take the 1P Under in an Edmonton Oilers game, I don't care how good the odds are. It is terrifying watching Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl skating with the puck while trying to root for an Under.

My two favorite teams to take in the NHL happened to have met in the first round of the playoffs last season, which was a glorious two weeks for people who follow my picks. Those teams are the Carolina Hurricanes and the New York Islanders, the two most profitable teams in the 2022-23 season for the 1P Under. This bet was cashed 55/82 times for the Islanders (27.02% ROI) and 53/82 times for the Hurricanes (10.33% ROI), according to EV Analytics. Like clockwork, the 1P Under hit in all six games of their first-round series; it was beautiful.

I know there are a lot of people out there who hate taking Unders because they aren't always fun to root for, but let me tell you this, hockey is different because it can be very dramatic. There have been so many times where I would lose if another goal were scored, a team would score, and then a coach's challenge would save my bet. Nothing makes the heart pump like an offside review to save an Under.

Another advantage of this particular bet is that it is very niche, which allows for more opportunities to find an edge and the empty net goal is never taken into consideration.

Whether you're a hockey fan or not, there is a different kind of rush about the opening puck drop and the first period. It's going to be a very fun season of taking the 1P Unders, so strap in and enjoy the ride.



*Aided by netminder Ilya Sorokin, the NY Islanders played under their 1st period total 55 of 82 times last season.*

# NHL GUIDE

# 23-24 STATS

# GLOSSARY

By Adam Burke

Advanced stats are here to stay. They are the fabric of high-level analysis across all sports and that includes the NHL, where the analytics movement has been gaining steam for a long time now.

Our 2023-24 NHL Betting Guide will include a lot of stats and abbreviations that you may not be all that familiar with, but they are stats that you will want to keep in mind as you read and as you bet on games throughout the season.

To illustrate why these stats are important, let's use shots on goal as an example. A shot on goal is any puck shot towards the net that would go in if there was not a goalie standing there. Not all shots are created equal, though. A dump-in on net from the red line is not nearly the same as a rebound chance right in front of the goal. A cross-crease one-timer is not the same as a puck flipped on net by a forward during a 1-on-2 rush so that his team can get a whistle and a stoppage of play do not have the same chance of becoming a goal.

Some of the stats incorporated by Jonny Lazarus in the team previews are examples of why higher-level analysis is needed to quantify the quality of shots on goal.

To take it a step further, let's talk about scoring chances. Is a shot a bad shot because it hit the post or because it missed the net by a couple of inches? It's not a shot on goal because it wouldn't have gone into an empty net, but it is a way more dangerous scoring chance than a run-of-the-mill shot on net. That's why stats like "high-danger chances" or "scoring chances" exist.

To borrow an example from baseball, a line drive hit 100 mph has a better chance of becoming a hit than a ground ball hit at 80 mph. Sometimes that line drive goes right at a fielder. Sometimes that ground ball squeaks through and finds a hole. The line drive was a better form of contact, but the outcome was unlucky. The ground ball was a weaker form of contact, but the outcome was lucky.

Similarly, hockey has stats like "Expected Goals" to showcase the quality of scoring chances based on a variety of factors, including where the shot came from and the likelihood of scoring in that situation.

Game state is also important in the NHL. Of the six major North American sports, hockey is the only one where a team can be forced to play with fewer people than the other team. As a result, it is important to differentiate statistics based on how many people are on the ice for each team.

With that primer in mind, let's look at some of the stats used throughout the NHL Betting Guide and explain what they mean.

## BASIC STATS

### G, A, P

G is short for goals, A is short for assists, and P is short for points. All goals and assists are "points".

### Goals Against Average

Think of Goals Against Average (GAA) like ERA (think I'm a baseball guy?!). In baseball, ERA is (earned runs \* 9) / innings pitched. In hockey, GAA is (goals against \* 60) / minutes played. It is meant to show the average number of goals allowed per game played, assuming the goalie plays all 60 minutes. That stat is displayed to two decimal places, so 3.00, 2.50, etc.

### Save Percentage

Save Percentage (SV%) is straightforward. Saves / Shots Against. If a goalie stops 27 out of 30 shots in a game, his SV% is 90%, but the stat is displayed as a decimal, so .900. The league average SV% last season was .899.

### Power Play Percentage

A power play is a period of time in which one team has more players on the ice than the other. Teams scored an average of 21.31% of the time on the power play last season.

### Penalty Kill Percentage

A penalty kill is when a team has fewer players on the ice than the other. Teams killed off an average of 78.69% of penalties last season.

### Scoring Chances

A scoring chance is different from a shot on goal. Shot attempts are assigned values based on a variety of factors and scoring chances have a higher than normal likelihood of becoming goals than regular shots.

## ADVANCED STATS

### Even Strength

Even strength means both teams have the same number of skaters on the ice, so 5-on-5, 4-on-4, or 3-on-3, with the exception of pulling the goaltender to add an extra player. That is still considered even strength since a skater replaces a goalie, but the same number of players are still on the ice for each team.

### 5-v-5/5-on-5

This is the most common state of an NHL game. This is different from even strength because that can happen at 4-v-4 or 3-v-3. Most advanced stats websites will have filters for 5-v-5, 5-v-4, 5-v-3, 4-v-4, etc. Another term for this is "game state". 5-v-4 would be a power play, for example.

### All Situations

Jonny cites some of his stats with "in all situations". That encompasses all game states throughout regulation and overtime, so 5-v-5, 5-v-4, 5-v-3, 4-v-5, 3-v-5, 4-v-4, and 3-v-3.

### "Per 60"

Other stats that Jonny cites are "per 60", meaning the "rate per 60 minutes". To calculate that, the formula is (Stat \* 60) / TOI (time on ice).

### Expected Goals (or xG)

Without diving too deep into the weeds, this is a stat composed of a lot of pieces of information including where the shot was taken (including distance and angle), what kind of shot it was, how quickly the shot was taken after another (rebound; less time for the goalie to get into position), and several other variables to calculate a "goal probability".

Shots in the middle of the ice are going to have a higher goal probability than a shot taken from the side of the net or from far away. Only unblocked shot attempts are calculated, so if a shot is blocked by a forward or a defenseman on the way to the net, it is not tracked.

Modifications of this stat like xGF (Expected Goals For) or xGA (Expected Goals Against) add a team-specific element.

Individual players or goalies with higher or lower xG marks may be either getting lucky or unlucky and that could be a sign of some positive or negative regression.

### Goals Saved Above Average (GSAA)

GSAA is a really popular metric for goalies that sounds complicated, but it isn't. Take the league average save percentage and adjust for the number of shots that a goaltender has faced. If a goalie has a .925 save percentage, which is well above the league average of .899, then you can calculate how many goals saved above an average goaltender he is based on the number of shots that he has faced.

### High-Danger Scoring Chances (HDSC)

As mentioned above with scoring chances, each "chance" is assigned a value. High-danger scoring chances have the highest expected value, so think about a rebound chance right in front of the net or a shot in the middle of the ice between the faceoff circles. These are the worst for a team to give up on defense and the best for a team to generate on offense.

Offshoots of this stat include HDSH% (High-Danger Shooting Percentage) and HDSV% (High-Danger Save Percentage). You can look for positive or negative regression based on those two stats with how lucky or unlucky a team has gotten in either category.

Last season, the Blue Jackets had a 14.38% HDSH%, while the Kraken led the league at 19.88%.

The Bruins were the best at HDSV% at 93.87%, while the Kraken were the worst at 79.75%.

There are also Medium-Danger Scoring Chances and Low-Danger Scoring Chances. The better a team plays defensively, the more low-danger chances they will allow compared to other types of chances.

Sites like Natural Stat Trick, Evolving Hockey, MoneyPuck, and others are good places to get these stats and work them into your handicapping.

*Linus Ullmark led the NHL last season with 46.69 GSAA.*



# JONNY LAZARUS' BEST FUTURE BETS

By Jonny Lazarus

## TEAM TO WIN THE PRESIDENTS TROPHY

(MOST REGULAR SEASON POINTS)

### Edmonton Oilers +800 (DraftKings)

The Oilers finished as the sixth-best team in the 2022-23 regular season, boasting a record of 50-23-9 for a total of 109 points. Obviously, they came up short on the ultimate goal after losing to the eventual Stanley Cup Champion, the Vegas Golden Knights, in six games during the second round. That being said, out of the four opponents that the Golden Knights played, the Oilers gave them their biggest challenge.

For two straight years, the Oilers have lost in the playoffs to the eventual Stanley Cup champion. I am expecting them to be an even more motivated group this year.

The Oilers are absolutely loaded up front, but they are led by the two best forwards in the National Hockey League, Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl, who are tired of the disappointing endings to a season. McDavid and Draisaitl led the league in scoring by an absolute landslide. McDavid finished with 64 goals and 89 assists for a total of 153 points, while his running mate, Draisaitl, tallied 52 goals with 76 assists for 128 points.

The biggest question mark for Edmonton will always be their goaltending. Stuart Skinner and Jack Campbell shared a majority of the time in the blue paint, but Skinner appeared to emerge as the team's No. 1 guy. He finished the regular season with a .914 save percentage and a 2.75 goals against average, but struggled in the playoffs as he skated to a .883 save percentage with a 3.68 goals against average.

The Oilers power play is by far the most elite in the entire league and I don't see that changing anytime soon with the roster that they have in place. They had an unbelievable 46.2% success rate in the playoffs, which was easily the most successful while also leading this category in the regular season, scoring at a 32.4% rate.

I have a strong feeling that this is the Oilers' year.

## CALDER TROPHY WINNER

(ROOKIE OF THE YEAR)

### Devon Levi +1200 (DraftKings)

The last goalie to win the Calder Trophy as the NHL's Rookie of the Year was Steve Mason in 2008-09 with the Columbus Blue Jackets. All of the talk about the potential winner of this year's award is surrounding Connor Bedard and Adam Fantilli. While it's warranted to hype those players up, Levi is on a better team than both of them. The Buffalo Sabres can make some noise this season, while Chicago and Columbus will most likely finish towards the bottom of the league. If the Sabres are successful, Levi will be one of the main reasons.



Connor McDavid



Another edge that Levi has over anyone is that he has already experienced some NHL games. He had seven starts last season and earned five wins while skating to a .905 save percentage and a 2.94 goals against average. He also had a +3.1 goals saved above expected. When Mason won the award, he had a .916 save percentage and a 2.29 goals against average, which isn't that much better than what we've seen from Levi already.

The talent in this rookie class is unbelievable, but it's been 15 years since we've seen a goalie win the Calder. The hype around Levi is real and we're due to see a netminder win the Rookie of the Year.

### PLAYER TO WIN THE NORRIS TROPHY

*(BEST DEFENSESMAN)*

#### **Miro Heiskanen +1400 (DraftKings)**

Somehow, somehow, Heiskanen has become an underrated defenseman in the NHL. He finished tied for fifth in points last year (with Brandon Montour and Rasmus Dahlin), tallying 73 in 79 games played. The 24-year-old third overall pick in the 2017 NHL Draft has yet to even enter his prime and he is coming off of a breakout season. He doubled his point total from 2021-22 and set new career highs in goals (11), assists (62) and points (73).

Why I love Heiskanen so much this season is because the Dallas Stars are elite. They finished one point shy of winning the Central Division (108 points) and they made a trip to the Western Conference Finals. Dallas is a very deep team that is built to sustain success throughout the regular season and with Heiskanen being their No. 1 guy on the blue line, as well as the quarterback on the power play, he could light it up this season.

The Stars had the fifth-best man-advantage unit in the league last season (25%) and the success was largely due to the play of Heiskanen, who finished tied for the most power-play points amongst defensemen with 34. The expectations are high in Dallas this season and Heiskanen could get them over the hump.

### PLAYER TO WIN THE ROCKET RICHARD TROPHY

*(MOST REGULAR SEASON GOALS)*

#### **Mikko Rantanen +1400 (DraftKings)**

Is it possible that Rantanen had the quietest 55-goal season ever? Colorado was an interesting team last year because they were defending their throne as the Stanley Cup champions, but their team felt nowhere near the same as we saw in the spring of 2022. Rantanen, however, stepped up when the team needed him most and was able to score at will, while other star players like Cale Makar, Gabriel Landeskog, and Nathan MacKinnon missed time due to injury.

Rantanen's goal-scoring has continued to increase year by year. In 2020-21, he tallied 30 goals for the second time in his career, which led him to score 36 in 2021-22, followed by the incredible 55 in 2022-23. So, this begs the question, how will Rantanen follow up his breakout season from last year? It appears that he'll be on a line with MacKinnon and Jonathan

Drouin, which could be a very dangerous pairing, while also playing on one of the most elite power plays in the NHL.

As good as the Oilers are and I know the Golden Knights are the defending Stanley Cup champions, but in my opinion, the West still runs through Colorado.

Rantanen certainly has the ceiling to lead this league in goals if the Avalanche can stay healthy.

### ODDS TO MAKE/MISS THE PLAYOFFS

#### **Florida Panthers To Miss The Playoffs: +180 (DraftKings)**

The Florida Panthers' magical run last spring was nothing short of incredible, but it's going to cost them in the 2023-24 season. This is a group that overcame a ton of adversity last season, but they are starting the new year with some challenges and lingering injuries from their run to the Stanley Cup Final.

The Eastern Conference is incredibly strong and missing two of their top defenseman to start the year might put them in a bit of a hole. They will be without Brandon Montour and Aaron Ekblad. Of course I'm aware of what this team has been able to accomplish when shorthanded, but I don't think they had enough time off to fully recover.

I know these aren't the craziest odds, but I think it's a great bet.

#### **Ottawa Senators To Make The Playoffs: +130 (DraftKings)**

I am all over the Ottawa Senators this season. Something about this group just screams to me and I think it all starts with their captain, Brady Tkachuk, who might be one of the most underrated leaders in all of sports. Tkachuk is the heartbeat of this team and brings a ton of swagger to this group, but when you surround him with other talented players like Tim Stutzle, Claude Giroux, and Vladimir Tarasenko up front, they're scary.

Not to mention the elite talent that they have on their back-end with Thomas Chabot, Jake Sanderson, and Jakob Chychrun. They took a ton of positive steps in the right direction last season and I feel strongly that this is the year that they break through.

They will be a fun team to follow.

### LONG-SHOT PROP BET

#### **Juuse Saros To Record 60+ Saves In Any Game: +2500 (DraftKings)**

This bet is such a hidden gem. The Nashville Predators allowed the sixth-most shots on goal against per game last season (33.6), but there were so many nights where Juuse Saros got peppered. The Predators were a total disaster in their defensive zone last season, especially on the night of January 5th, 2023 when Saros recorded 64 saves in a win against the Carolina Hurricanes.

It's certainly possible for this rebuilding Predators team to have another night like this one and Saros is strong enough to stand on his head any given night that he's in the blue paint.



# STEVE MAKINEN'S POWER RATINGS

TEAM	POWER RATING
CAROLINA	3.94
NEW JERSEY	3.81
COLORADO	3.79
EDMONTON	3.58
TORONTO	3.56
DALLAS	3.53
NY RANGERS	3.40
VEGAS	3.38
BOSTON	3.35
LOS ANGELES	3.31
FLORIDA	3.30
PITTSBURGH	3.13
TAMPA BAY	3.12
CALGARY	3.08
MINNESOTA	3.06
SEATTLE	3.01
BUFFALO	2.74
NY ISLANDERS	2.69
WINNIPEG	2.66
OTTAWA	2.59
VANCOUVER	2.49
NASHVILLE	2.48
DETROIT	2.38
ST LOUIS	2.37
WASHINGTON	2.22
ARIZONA	2.19
PHILADELPHIA	2.10
COLUMBUS	1.96
CHICAGO	1.92
ANAHEIM	1.82
MONTREAL	1.77
SAN JOSE	1.61

# ANAHEIM Ducks

PACIFIC DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

1.82 (#30 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

250-1



Let's face it, the Anaheim Ducks had a pretty miserable year last season. That said, this is an organization that is committed to building toward the future. They've hired a new head coach in Greg Cronin and brought in some veteran players, but expectations shouldn't be very high for this team that finished last in the division in the 2022-23 campaign.

### OFFENSE

To say the Ducks struggled mightily when it came to scoring goals last season would be a massive understatement. As a group, they tallied the second-fewest goals, finishing with a total of 209, while skating to an average of 2.51 goals per game. Even with young stars like Trevor Zegras and Troy Terry, the Ducks also had the worst expected goals percentage (39.98%) in the entire NHL.

This team didn't get any stronger in the offensive categories during the offseason. They added Alex Killorn up front, and he may have won a couple of Stanley Cups, but he doesn't make this forward group that much scarier. The offensive struggles will continue for the Ducks, but you can always count on Zegras and Terry to throw in some dazzle.

### DEFENSE

If you thought Anaheim's offense was the team's biggest flaw, you might be mistaken. The Ducks were far and away the worst team in the league in their own end. They allowed the most goals against per game (4.09), as well as the most shots against per game (39.1). As a team, they also skated to the worst expected goals against per 60 minutes and allowed the most scoring chances against per 60.

They added Radko Gudas and Robert Hagg this summer to help out Jamie Drysdale, who is a bright spot on this blue line. The 21-year-old had his season shortened due to injury last year, but if Drysdale can stay healthy he'll be able to boost this team on both ends of the ice.

### GOALTENDING

John Gibson has been minding the goal for the Ducks for what will now be a decade. The American-born goaltender didn't have his best year last season, but that was largely due to the team in front of him. Gibson skated to a .899 save percentage and a 3.99 goals against average. He only secured 14 wins in 52 starts. Lukas Dostal will back Gibson up, but I don't expect him to make this team much better. Gibson was elite in the blue paint at one point of his career and hopefully for this team he can find that in him once again.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - F LEO CARLSSON

The second overall pick in the most recent NHL draft comes in with a ton of hype around him. It may have been a surprise to most that Leo Carlsson was picked at No. 2, but he could be the second-line center on this team if all goes well. It isn't guaranteed that he'll make the roster for opening night, but there is no doubt in my mind that the 6'3 forward from Sweden will get his chance with the Ducks.

### OUTLOOK

I am very confident that this team won't come close to making the playoffs. The odds back that up, considering the fact that they are +1700 on the DraftKings Sportsbook to reach the postseason. Zegras will give the league some highlight-reel plays, but the Ducks will find themselves towards last place in the division yet again.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

23-47-12

Over/Under

41-37-4

Against the Spread

46-36

2.51  
(#31 of 32)

Goals Scored  
Per Game

4.09  
(#32 of 32)

Goals Allowed  
Per Game

15.7  
(#31 of 32)

Power Play  
Percentage

72.1  
(#31 of 32)

Penalty Kill  
Percentage

0.76  
(#26 of 32)

Goals Scored in  
1st Period

1.22  
(#32 of 32)

Goals Allowed in  
1st Period



# ARIZONA Coyotes

CENTRAL DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

2.19 (#26 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

130-1

Expectations are not very high for the Arizona Coyotes again this season, but some positives from this past season might give the fan base more to cheer about moving forward. That could very well include the 2023-24 season, which will once again feature home games in a 5,000-seat rink due to ongoing issues with local government. The small arena may have given the team an edge with a 21-15-5 record at home, but the road was unkind and unforgiving to a young team. With some new pieces on the roster, there's room for improvement.

### OFFENSE

A lack of depth was a big factor for the Coyotes last season. With just seven wins on the road, the front office made it a point to add to the forward group with signings of Nick Bjugstad, Jason Zucker, and Alexander Kerfoot. Third-overall pick Logan Cooley should infuse talent into the roster right away and could even find himself on a line with Clayton Keller, who was a breakout star last season with 86 points in 82 games.

Despite solid performances from Nick Schmaltz (58 PTS in 63 G) and up-and-comer Mattias Maccelli (49 PTS in 64 G), the Coyotes lacked explosiveness and finished with 2.48 expected goals per 60 minutes to rank among the league's worst. They overperformed by scoring 2.74 goals per game, but failed to sustain some early-season power play success, which is why the focus was on improving the offense during the summer. Cooley and a continuation of the breakout season from Keller should help.

### DEFENSE

To no surprise, the 'Yotes struggled mightily in their defensive zone for most of last season, finishing towards the bottom of the league in shots against, goals against and high-danger chances against per 60 minutes. They made some nice acquisitions this offseason, bringing in veteran defenseman Matt Dumba from Minnesota and also adding Sean Durzi from Los Angeles. Bringing in these two players makes them a much better team defensively going into this season. Dumba might not be the same player that he was a couple of years ago, but a fresh start could be all he needs to get himself going. And he should be Arizona's best defender.

### GOALTENDING

Karel Vejmelka owned the blue paint for a majority of the season and just like the team in front of him, he had much more success on home ice as opposed to playing on the road. At Mullett Arena, Vejmelka skated to a record of 12-8-3, but this team never found its confidence in away barns, as he was 6-16-3 on the road. His record wasn't strong, but he managed to do his job at keeping his team competitive in almost every game, boasting a +11.1 goals saved above expected on the year.

Backup Connor Ingram had some strong showings last season, but no matter who was in goal, they were most likely getting peppered with shots. Ingram appeared in 27 games, finishing with a record of 6-13-8 and a .907 save percentage to go with a 3.37 goals against average. Goaltending isn't the Coyotes' biggest strength, but these two are more than capable of stealing some games here and there, especially on home ice.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - F CLAYTON KELLER

Keller enters the 2023-24 season following a career year in which he tallied 37 goals and 49 assists while remaining healthy the entire season, playing in all 82 games. Keller is an elite playmaker, especially at 5-on-5. In fact, during the 2023 calendar year, Keller finished with the fifth-most points at even strength, scoring 21 goals and adding 20 assists for 41 even strength points in 47 games. His production last year was no fluke, and I expect Keller to drive the Coyotes offense yet again.

### OUTLOOK

Arizona has a wide range of outcomes and could finish anywhere outside the top six in the conference. I firmly believe that the Coyotes took some steps in the right direction last season and improved the roster this summer. They could be sneaky good based on the young talent, but they'll need to stay healthy and learn to win on the road to make a playoff push.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

**28-40-14**

Over/Under

**42-35-5**

Against the Spread

**40-42**

2.74

(#27 of 32)

**Goals Scored  
Per Game**

3.60

(#24 of 32)

**Goals Allowed  
Per Game**

18.9

(#24 of 32)

**Power Play  
Percentage**

74.6

(#27 of 32)

**Penalty Kill  
Percentage**

0.76

(#27 of 32)

**Goals Scored in  
1st Period**

1.06

(#29 of 32)

**Goals Allowed in  
1st Period**



# BOSTON Bruins

ATLANTIC DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

3.35 (#9 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

16-1

Many changes have been made to the structure of the Boston Bruins lineup after their historic 2022-23 season, which ended in a massive playoff disappointment. It's going to be very difficult to replicate an NHL record-setting regular season of 135 points (65-12-5), but the Bruins will battle their way back to the Stanley Cup Playoffs in the spring of '24. It won't be easy in the Atlantic Division, but this team will compete, like they always do.

### OFFENSE

The B's made a ton of moves this offseason, especially to their group of forwards, as they said goodbye to legendary Patrice Bergeron. They also lost Taylor Hall, Tyler Bertuzzi, Nick Foligno, and Garnet Hathaway. So, it's safe to say that the second-best offensive team in the NHL last season is going to look a little different up front in 2023-24.

This will certainly not be the same team we saw last season, but the Bruins still have their two leading scorers from last season in David Pastrnak and Brad Marchand. They can always be counted on to provide offense, but now that the Bruins have lost their top two centers, the middle of the ice is a concern for this team. The Bruins should be a middle of the pack offensive team this season.

### DEFENSE

The 2022-23 season was an incredible defensive showing for the Boston Bruins. They were far and away the best team in their own end, only allowing 2.12 goals against per game, as well as finishing in the top 10 for high-danger chances against per 60 (11.54) and expected goals against per 60 (2.77).

The team lost Connor Clifton and Dmitry Orlov this summer but they brought in tenured veteran Kevin Shattenkirk. I wouldn't say they strengthened their blue line, but I also wouldn't say that it got worse. I don't think Boston will finish in the top three defensively again, but I do believe they will be strong in their own zone.

### GOALTENDING

There is no denying the fact that the Bruins had the best goaltending tandem in the NHL last season and they will be back together again for the 2023-24 campaign. Linus Ullmark won the Vezina Trophy as the league's best goaltender, skating to an astounding record of 40-6-1 with a .938 save percentage and a 1.89 goals against average. He also finished with the second-best mark with +42.4 goals saved above expected. His backup (who is more like a 1B), Jeremy Swayman, earned 24 wins and boasted an eighth best +24.0 goals saved above expected.

Their numbers from last season will be difficult to replicate, but the Bruins goaltending is the furthest thing from a concern.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - D CHARLIE MCAVOY

McAvoy has been impressing hockey fans since he first set foot into the NHL back in the 2017 Stanley Cup Playoffs, but this season is going to be different for him. With Bergeron retiring, McAvoy could potentially be named the captain of this Bruins team. He took on leadership responsibility early on in his career and now he is the number one guy on the Boston blue line. He has put up back-to-back 50+ point seasons and I truly feel that he has potential to hit that 60+ point plateau. This will be a big year for McAvoy.

### OUTLOOK

To me, the Bruins are without a doubt a playoff team. Are they a lock to finish in the top three of the division? I wouldn't say so, but they will definitely get in. The Atlantic Division will be an absolute battle, but thanks to their goaltending the Bruins should be competing for a playoff spot.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

65-12-5

Over/Under

36-40-6

Against the Spread

32-50

3.67

(#2 of 32)

Goals Scored  
Per Game

2.12

(#1 of 32)

Goals Allowed  
Per Game

22.2

(#12 of 32)

Power Play  
Percentage

87.3

(#1 of 32)

Penalty Kill  
Percentage

0.94

(#14 of 32)

Goals Scored in  
1st Period

0.59

(#1 of 32)

Goals Allowed in  
1st Period



# BUFFALO Sabres

ATLANTIC DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

2.74 (#17 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

35-1

The Buffalo Sabres are seeking to make the playoffs for the first time since the 2010-11 season. They are one of the sexiest teams to watch going into this season, as they were knocking on the door of the postseason last year, only missing out by one point. There were a ton of positives to take away from the 2022-23 campaign for this young group and they will be a ton of fun to watch this year.

### OFFENSE

Buffalo's offense was driven by Tage Thompson, who became a household name among NHL fans last season after tallying 47 goals and 47 assists for 94 points in 78 games played. As a group, they finished as the third best offensive team (3.57 GF/GP) and had the ninth-best power play (23.4%). Thompson's line, which included Jeff Skinner and Alex Tuch, is going to be scary for all opponents. Skinner tallied 35 goals and 47 assists, while Tuch added 36 goals and 43 assists last season.

Dylan Cozens, Victor Olofsson, Casey Middlestadt and Rasmus Dahlin from the back-end are other guys that can step up and provide offense for this Buffalo team. They have a ton of young talent up front.

### DEFENSE

If the Sabres were just a little bit better in their own end last season, they would have without a doubt been in the playoffs. They finished in the bottom 10 of the league in multiple defensive categories such as expected goals against per 60 (3.30) and high-danger chances against per 60 (13.67). They've strengthened their blue line a bit this offseason by adding Connor Clifton and Stanley Cup Champion Erik Johnson.

The Sabres have to be a much better team in their own end this season and an area that needs to be a whole lot better is their penalty kill, which finished fifth-worst in the league last season (73%). Dahlin and Owen Power will help this blue line have a stronger season in 2023-24.

### GOALTENDING

There is a three-way battle for the Sabres starting goaltender position between Devon Levi, Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen and Eric Comrie. But to me, Levi is the guy. Goaltending is certainly the biggest question for this team after Craig Anderson announced his retirement. Luukkonen skated to a 17-11-4 record last season which was solid, but with the future of the organization in Levi's hands, it should be him that owns the blue paint this season. Levi's ceiling is incredibly high and there could be some growing pains, but I think he can get this team into the playoffs in his rookie season.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - G DEVON LEVI

Levi isn't guaranteed to be the starting goaltender just yet, but I have no doubt that he is going to be their guy. He has only appeared in seven career games, but he skated to five wins with a .905 save percentage. This kid is a legit goaltender. He won back-to-back Mike Richter Awards as college hockey's best goalie and I feel strongly that his name will be in the mix for the Calder Trophy as the NHL's Rookie of the Year which is +1200 on the DraftKings Sportsbook. Levi is going to be a stud.

### OUTLOOK

Like I said before, the Sabres are the sexy team in the NHL with the amount of young talent that they have on their roster going into this season. The hype is warranted and if they can tighten up defensively, this team will be very scary this year. I think Thompson could put up 100 points this season which will help Buffalo be a playoff team.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

42-33-7

Over/Under

43-34-5

Against the Spread

48-34

3.57

(#3 of 32)

Goals Scored Per Game

3.62

(#26 of 32)

Goals Allowed Per Game

23.4

(#9 of 32)

Power Play Percentage

73.0

(#28 of 32)

Penalty Kill Percentage

0.99

(#11 of 32)

Goals Scored in 1st Period

1.00

(#21 of 32)

Goals Allowed in 1st Period



# CALGARY Flames

PACIFIC DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

3.08 (#14 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

30-1

Frustration and confusion are the first two things that come to mind when thinking about the Calgary Flames in the 2022-23 season. This organization has made a ton of changes over the past few seasons and after having a down year, there is still hope that this group can bounce back and get back into the playoffs. A new general manager (Craig Conroy) and head coach (Ryan Huska) could be exactly what the doctor ordered for this version of the Flames.

### OFFENSE

After a completely disappointing season, the Flames didn't do much in the offseason to make themselves stronger offensively. If anything, they arguably got worse. Tyler Toffoli led the Flames last season in points and was traded this summer in a deal that included Yegor Sharangovich, but what this team needs is a much better performance from the guys they brought in over the previous summer like Jonathan Huberdeau and Nazem Kadri.

Huberdeau and Kadri are both very strong players in the league, but for whatever reason, they had a hard time adjusting in their first year in Calgary. As a group, this team is capable of scoring goals, they skated to the seventh-best expected goals per 60 minutes (3.42). Their power play wasn't as strong as they would have hoped. In 2021-22 they were in the top 10 in the league (22.9%), but last season they finished 19th (19.8%). There's plenty of room to improve offensively for the Flames.

### DEFENSE

The Flames' blue line seems to be their biggest strength heading into the 2023-24 season. What they lacked in other areas of the game, they made up for in their own end. Calgary finished as the third-best team in shots against per game (27.3) and they were tied for the league's fourth-best penalty kill percentage (82.6%).

They have a very strong defensive core, made up of tough guys like Mackenzie Weegar, Chris Tanev, and Noah Hanifin. This group did its job last season, but they didn't get a ton of help offensively or in goal.

### GOALTENDING

Jakob Markstrom was, without a doubt, the Flames most disappointing player last season. After being a Vezina Trophy finalist in the 2021-22 season with 37 wins, Markstrom struggled mightily this past season, as he only won 23 games. Similar to Huberdeau, Markstrom is certainly a player that can have a big bounce back season, but he has only reached 30 wins once in his career, so I'm not too confident that he will. Last season, he finished with an .892 save percentage and a very poor -3.1 goals saved above expected. Calgary's success will lie in his performance.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - F JONATHAN HUBERDEAU

During the 2021-22 season, Huberdeau finished tied for second in the league in points (115) when he was a member of the Florida Panthers. When you compare that to his first season with the Flames, in which he only recorded 55 points, there was clearly a lot of untapped potential. He has established himself as an elite player in this league, and if there is one guy in the NHL that can have a strong bounce back season, it is Huberdeau. I don't think he'll get to that 100-point mark this season, but I have no reason to doubt that he can put up at least 80.

### OUTLOOK

The Calgary Flames are a team that can flirt with making the playoffs, but as of right now, DraftKings has them at +145 to miss the postseason, which seems too good to pass up. They didn't miss the playoffs by much last season, but the Pacific Division has at least three stronger teams than them, so, if anything, they will be a wild card team. I personally don't see this team making the playoffs and I love the value on that bet.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

38-27-17

Over/Under

41-34-7

Against the Spread

45-37

3.15

(#19 of 32)

Goals Scored  
Per Game

3.01

(#13 of 32)

Goals Allowed  
Per Game

19.8

(#20 of 32)

Power Play  
Percentage

82.6

(#5 of 32)

Penalty Kill  
Percentage

0.94

(#16 of 32)

Goals Scored in  
1st Period

1.02

(#25 of 32)

Goals Allowed in  
1st Period

# CAROLINA Hurricanes

METROPOLITAN DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

3.94 (#1 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

+800



It was a very disappointing ending to the 2022-23 season for the Carolina Hurricanes as they were swept in the Eastern Conference Finals. Each year, the Hurricanes are a team that is talked about as a Stanley Cup contender which is warranted considering that they have won the Metropolitan Division three years in a row. They are favored to win the division yet again at +180 at DraftKings Sportsbook.

### OFFENSE

Carolina is very strong at creating offense, as they finished as the fourth-best team at generating high-danger scoring chances per 60 (14.87) and also skated to the fifth best-expected goals per 60 (3.56). The issue with the Hurricanes is that as well-rounded as they are, they don't seem to have any true game-breakers. Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov are very good players, along with Martin Necas, who broke out in the 2022-23 season. But this team doesn't have a true superstar.

The Hurricanes would be much scarier offensively if they could figure out their power play. Last season, they finished 20th on the man-advantage, scoring at 19.8% rate.

### DEFENSE

Team defense is what makes the Hurricanes such a successful team. Rod Brind'Amour has done a fantastic job at getting his players to buy in and really focus on playing a complete, 200-foot game. Their blue line is the team's biggest strength, starting with one of the most underrated players in the league, Jaccob Slavin. They brought in Dmitry Orlov in the offseason to round out this group that had the second-best goals against in the league last year (2.56). Carolina could arguably be the best defensive team in the NHL.

### GOALTENDING

Goaltending has been another strong area for the Hurricanes. They have three very strong netminders, Frederik Andersen, Antti Raanta, and Pyotr Kochetkov. The biggest issue that they have is staying healthy. Andersen is the go-to guy when they're all healthy, but we've seen Raanta and Kochetkov play in a ton of games in previous seasons. I wouldn't consider any of these goalies as elite, but they're all capable of helping the team win games.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - F SETH JARVIS

Jarvis is entering his third NHL season, and this feels like a year that he can truly break out. He's only tallied 79 points in 150 career games played, but it is assumed that he will get first-line minutes as well as reps on the first power play unit. I could easily see Jarvis hitting the 60-point mark, the 21-year-old has a very high ceiling.

### OUTLOOK

The Hurricanes are without a doubt a playoff team. I would actually go on to say that it's a lock. They can potentially compete to win the entire Eastern Conference, but the Hurricanes have struggled to find success in the playoffs. They're my pick to win the Metropolitan Division for the fourth straight year, but I don't think this team has enough talent to win the Stanley Cup.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

**52-21-9**

Over/Under

**39-39-4**

Against the Spread

**42-40**

3.20

(#15 of 32)

Goals Scored  
Per Game

2.56

(#2 of 32)

Goals Allowed  
Per Game

19.8

(#19 of 32)

Power Play  
Percentage

84.4

(#2 of 32)

Penalty Kill  
Percentage

1.00

(#10 of 32)

Goals Scored in  
1st Period

0.62

(#2 of 32)

Goals Allowed in  
1st Period



# CHICAGO Blackhawks

CENTRAL DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

1.92 (#29 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

200-1

The Chicago Blackhawks decision to tank in the 2022-23 season paid dividends, as they were the lucky organization that won the 2023 Draft Lottery. The fortunate ping-pong ball allowed them to snag generational talent Connor Bedard as the first overall pick. The hope is that Bedard can help turn the ship around in Chicago, but this won't be an overnight solution. They've taken some positive steps, but I still think the Blackhawks will struggle yet again this season.

### OFFENSE

Chicago was far and away the worst offensive team in the NHL last season. The team finished at the bottom of the league in multiple categories, including goals for per 60 minutes, high-danger chances per 60, and scoring chances per 60. This team is completely rebuilding and looking to bring in pieces that can surround Bedard. In addition to drafting the young phenom, the Blackhawks added Taylor Hall, Nick Foligno, Corey Perry, and Ryan Donato.

These additions are positive, but they might not be enough to make the team that much better offensively. Last season's Blackhawks finished with the second-fewest shots on goal per game (27.0) and their power play finished toward the bottom as well, as it only converted at a 16.4% rate. They're going to be a fun team to watch because of the hype around Bedard, but finding offensive success might take some time. They should finish toward the bottom of the league yet again.

### DEFENSE

Outside of Seth Jones, there isn't too much on Chicago's blue line to get excited about. They struggled mightily in their defensive zone last season and I suspect that they will have similar issues once again this year. Chicago didn't make any moves this offseason to strengthen their blue line, so it can be assumed that the team will finish towards the bottom of the league in defensive metrics. The Blackhawks finished towards the bottom of the league in high-danger chances against per 60 minutes, goals against per 60, as well as expected goals against per 60.

### GOALTENDING

Chicago has a ton of weaknesses on their roster, but goaltending might be the biggest crutch. The Blackhawks allowed a total of 301 goals last season, which was tied for the fifth-most in the league, and their -97 goal differential was the third-worst in the NHL. Petr Mrazek saw most of the action, appearing in 38 games and finishing with a 10-22-3 record, an .894 save percentage, and a 3.66 goals against average. His -6.3 goals saved above expected ranked 90th among goalies.

Arvid Soderblom will begin as Mrazek's backup, but the team used six different netminders last year, so I don't think his job is safe. Mrazek will take most of the grunt work in goal again and I don't expect many wins out of him this season because of the team in front of him.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - F CONNOR BEDARD

Bedard hasn't even set foot in an NHL game yet and the kid is already a league celebrity. The hype is warranted. There haven't been expectations this high for a rookie since Connor McDavid in 2015. Bedard put up some ridiculous numbers in junior hockey that should be able to translate to the pros, but that also comes with a lot of pressure. His team might not be one of the league's best, but this kid is going to be a joy to watch.

### OUTLOOK

Outside of Connor Bedard, the expectations aren't very high for Chicago this season. I think they'll finish last in the division again because of their defense and goaltending.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

26-49-7

Over/Under

41-34-7

Against the Spread

40-42

2.46

(#32 of 32)

Goals Scored  
Per Game

3.65

(#28 of 32)

Goals Allowed  
Per Game

16.4

(#28 of 32)

Power Play  
Percentage

76.2

(#22 of 32)

Penalty Kill  
Percentage

0.63

(#32 of 32)

Goals Scored in  
1st Period

1.02

(#26 of 32)

Goals Allowed in  
1st Period



# COLORADO

## Avalanche

CENTRAL DIVISION

**Steve Makinen's Power Rating**  
**3.79** (#3 of 32)

**Odds to Win the Stanley Cup**  
**10-1**



After being riddled with injuries during the 2022-23 season, Colorado is looking for a massive bounce back year in 2023-24. The Avalanche may have won their division for the third year in a row last season, but a first-round exit in the 2023 playoffs was a massive disappointment after winning the Stanley Cup the season prior. They are one of, if not the most, electrifying squads to watch and I have high expectations for this team, which I definitely view as a Stanley Cup contender.

### OFFENSE

On paper, I don't think this roster is as strong as their Stanley Cup team in 2022, but Nathan MacKinnon, Mikko Rantanen, and defenseman Cale Makar still provide a ton of offense. Rantanen had a breakout year last season, as he tallied 55 goals and 105 points, which were new career-highs. Colorado's biggest issue is that the team is very top-heavy, so the Avalanche need more depth scoring if they want to reach their potential.

It could be argued that the Avalanche have the most elite talent in the NHL with MacKinnon, Rantanen and Makar. Unfortunately, they lost depth pieces like Evan Rodrigues, J.T. Compher, and Alex Newhook this summer. That should hurt a bit, but they were able to bring in Ryan Johansen, who will replace their captain — Gabriel Landeskog will unfortunately miss this season due to injury. Other names that the Avalanche have added are Ross Colton, Miles Wood, and Jonathan Drouin.

### DEFENSE

Colorado's blue line is absolutely outstanding, starting with their first pair of Makar and Devon Toews. Had Makar been able to stay healthy all season, he could have had a real shot at winning the Norris Trophy for a second straight season (66 PTS in 60 G). In my opinion, he is hands down the best defenseman in the entire NHL.

This blue line is "complete", as I love what the Avalanche have with their defensive depth. Last season, they finished in the top 10 of the league in expected goals against per 60, while finishing second in scoring chances against (per 60). They simply don't have many flaws.

### GOALTENDING

Last season was Alexandar Georgiev's first full campaign as a starting goaltender and he did not disappoint for Colorado. He finished tied for first in wins (40) and boasted a .919 save percentage with a 2.53 goals against average, while also finishing in the top 10 with +21.9 goals saved above expected. He had the third-highest number of starts last season (62 G) and I expect him to get most of them again this season, but Pavel Francouz is a more than capable backup to help the Avalanche win some games. Colorado has a very solid one-two punch in net.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - F JONATHAN DROUIN

Drouin was the third overall pick back in the 2013 NHL Draft. He was a guy that had tremendous upside and high expectations. He hasn't had a true breakout season just yet, but as of right now, he is slotted as the left wing with MacKinnon and Rantanen, so if there was ever a year for him to do it, it's this one. Drouin and MacKinnon played together in junior hockey when they were both in Halifax, so reuniting these two could provide the spark that he has needed.

### OUTLOOK

Colorado's elite talent will help the team surge into the playoffs once again. And the Avalanche are looking to win the division for the fourth season in a row. They will have some tough competition, but with MacKinnon, Rantanen and Makar at the helm, there are some nights where those three could be flat out unstoppable. The ceiling for this team is very high and I am confident this group will be competing for Lord Stanley once again in the spring of 2024.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)  
**51-24-7**

Over/Under  
**43-33-5**

Against the Spread  
**39-43**

**3.34**  
(#10 of 32) **Goals Scored Per Game**

**2.72**  
(#9 of 32) **Goals Allowed Per Game**

**24.5**  
(#6 of 32) **Power Play Percentage**

**79.0**  
(#17 of 32) **Penalty Kill Percentage**

**1.01**  
(#8 of 32) **Goals Scored in 1st Period**

**0.70**  
(#4 of 32) **Goals Allowed in 1st Period**



# COLUMBUS

## Blue Jackets

METROPOLITAN DIVISION

### Steve Makinen's Power Rating

1.96 (#28 of 32)

### Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

150-1

The Columbus Blue Jackets have had a very interesting past few weeks. With Mike Babcock resigning before even coaching practice, it will be interesting to see how this team rallies around going through that off-season adversity. Pascal Vincent is now the new bench boss and he has a ton of talent to work with on this roster. I don't think Columbus is a playoff team, but they should take a ton of positive steps this season.

#### OFFENSE

The top six on this team have a ton of talent and skill, but there's a solid mix of young and old. Columbus struggled mightily when it came to scoring goals last season, but they can't be fully to blame considering that they were riddled with injuries. They didn't have one single player that participated in all 82 games, so this year if the group can stay healthy it should be a much different story. Three players that will get a ton of attention are Johnny Gaudreau, Patrik Laine, and the third overall pick, Adam Fantilli. The Blue Jackets have a ton of weapons up front, and I'm expecting them to be a much stronger and scarier team offensively.

#### DEFENSE

The Blue Jackets were an absolute disaster defensively last season, but once again, a lot of that had to do with their roster issues. They had the second-worst goals against in the NHL (4.01) as well as the 25th-ranked penalty kill (75.1%). They added Damon Severson as well as Ivan Provorov to their blue line and having a healthy Zach Werenski will do them wonders. Columbus will be a better defensive team, but will they be extraordinary? Probably not.

#### GOALTENDING

Columbus' goaltending could have been considered to be very ugly last season, but to be fair, the netminders didn't have much help in front of them. Elvis Merzlikins will be the starter and he is heading into his fifth NHL season. He only appeared in 30 games last year, but he has shown a ton of positives in the early parts of his career. With a stronger blue line in 2023-24, Merzlikins game should be much better. Daniil Tarasov will be his backup and he is reliable, but won't be much of a difference-maker.

#### PLAYER TO WATCH - F ADAM FANTILLI

Even though he hasn't played in a real NHL game yet, there is a ton of hype and excitement around the 18-year-old. He will definitely be competing for the Rookie of the Year and I would not be surprised if he puts up 60 points in his first season as a pro. Fantilli is surrounded by a ton of skilled players and will benefit greatly. I'm very excited to watch this kid play.

#### OUTLOOK

The Blue Jackets will be an exciting team because of all of the talented players on their roster, but I don't see this team coming close to the playoffs. They'll compete and give their opponents a tough game, but my expectations aren't very high for this team.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

### Record (W-L-OTL)

25-48-9

### Over/Under

49-28-5

### Against the Spread

47-35

2.60

(#30 of 32)

Goals Scored  
Per Game

4.01

(#31 of 32)

Goals Allowed  
Per Game

18.3

(#26 of 32)

Power Play  
Percentage

75.1

(#25 of 32)

Penalty Kill  
Percentage

0.68

(#31 of 32)

Goals Scored in  
1st Period

1.10

(#30 of 32)

Goals Allowed in  
1st Period



# DALLAS Stars

CENTRAL DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

**3.53** (#6 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

**14-1**

The Dallas Stars are going to be a very exciting team to watch in the 2023-24 season. This is a team that is looking to build off its run to the 2023 Western Conference Finals with another excellent regular season. The Stars finished one point behind the Avalanche last season, but this group got stronger this summer. Dallas has elite goaltending, a ton of goal scorers, and a good enough defense. This team is a top Stanley Cup contender.

### OFFENSE

Dallas is as strong as it gets when it comes to offensive talent and this group is incredibly deep. Jason Robertson and Roope Hintz have made themselves household names at this point of their careers. Robertson has put up back-to-back 40+ goal seasons while at the same time, Hintz has put up back-to-back 37-goal seasons. Wyatt Johnston is looking to build off of a strong 24-goal rookie campaign and they have added some depth by bringing in NHL veteran Matt Duchene, along with Sam Steel and Craig Smith to help round out the bottom six.

As a team, the Stars finished with the league's fifth-best power play (25.0%), 10th in high-danger scoring chances per 60 minutes, and seventh in expected goals for percentage (54%). Dallas is an offensive juggernaut.

### DEFENSE

The Stars aren't necessarily one of the best defensive teams in the league. Outside of Miro Heiskanen, this blue line is slightly average, but I wouldn't say deep. One of the major reasons they weren't able to get by Vegas in the Western Conference Finals was due to their defensive struggles. With that said, they did finish with the third-best goals against per game last season (2.62), but that was largely due to their goaltending. They got better defensively last season, as they finished in the top 5 for expected goals against (2.79), but they'll have to tighten up a bit at 5-on-5 if they want to win the Stanley Cup.

### GOALTENDING

After a disappointing showing in the 2023 postseason, the goaltending will need to get back on track. Jake Oettinger was one of the best goaltenders in the league last season, but struggled come playoff time. That being said, this was a good experience for him to gain and he will look to build off of his 37-win season last year. He started in 61 contests, boasting a .919 save percentage with a 2.37 goals against average, and the league's 12th best +11.8 goals saved above expected. I don't expect Scott Wedgewood to get that many looks as the backup netminder, but he held his own last season earning nine wins with a .915 save percentage. When Oettinger is at his best, this Dallas team is very scary.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - G JAKE OETTINGER

There are plenty of talented players on this Stars roster, but I think the most important one of all is their goaltender. Oettinger solidified himself last season as one of the NHL's most elite netminders and he could be a serious Vezina candidate in the 2023-24 campaign. He's only 24, so he will continue to get better and take further steps in his career, but Oettinger put up insane numbers last season and I think he will have a chip on his shoulder after losing in last year's Western Conference Finals.

### OUTLOOK

This team didn't have many flaws during the regular season last year, but a couple of mistakes cost the group a trip to the Stanley Cup Final. I think the Stars got better this offseason due to some strong acquisitions and their postseason run should give them a boost of confidence. This is a very deep team with excellent goaltending. I think they could compete for the division title and I wouldn't be surprised if they win the Western Conference.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

**47-21-14**

Over/Under

**36-43-2**

Against the Spread

**34-48**

3.43

(#7 of 32)

**Goals Scored  
Per Game**

2.62

(#3 of 32)

**Goals Allowed  
Per Game**

25.0

(#5 of 32)

**Power Play  
Percentage**

83.5

(#3 of 32)

**Penalty Kill  
Percentage**

1.05

(#4 of 32)

**Goals Scored in  
1st Period**

0.72

(#6 of 32)

**Goals Allowed in  
1st Period**



# DETROIT Red Wings

ATLANTIC DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

2.38 (#23 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

75-1

Last season was a step in the right direction for the Detroit Red Wings. After a busy offseason of adding players to this roster, most notably Alex DeBrincat, it feels like this team could take a big leap in the 2023-24 season. With that said, I'm still not ready to call the Red Wings a playoff team and neither is DraftKings Sportsbook, as they are +230 to make the postseason.

### OFFENSE

Detroit finished in the bottom 10 of multiple offensive categories in the 2022-23 season, but this team got much stronger over the offseason. The Red Wings only averaged 2.89 goals per game while having the third worst high-danger chances per 60 (10.14), but they did happen to finish in the middle of the pack with a 21.1% power play.

Over the summer, this team added DeBrincat, J.T. Compher, Daniel Sprong and Klim Kostin up front, making them a stronger offensive group than last year, especially down the middle with the three ex-Michigan Wolverines (Dylan Larkin, Compher, Andrew Copp). I wouldn't consider Detroit to be an elite offensive team, but they will definitely be better than last season.

### DEFENSE

I think it's fair to say that Detroit was incredibly average in their own end last season. They added Shayne Gostisbehere, Jeff Petry, and Justin Holl on the back end, which rounds out their blue line nicely, but I still think there will be some struggles in their own zone. Moritz Seider didn't have the strongest sophomore season after winning the Rookie of the Year in 2022, but he is a player that can certainly bounce back. Detroit should finish in the middle of the pack defensively.

### GOALTENDING

Ville Husso will be the Red Wings go-to guy in the blue paint as he enters his second season with the group. Last year was a down year for him after a stellar 2021-22 season, but he started in 18 more games than he did the season prior. He will take on most of the work, but the organization acquired James Reimer to come in and back him up. The 35-year-old veteran has spent the last two seasons on a poor San Jose Sharks team so this could be a nice fresh start for Reimer. Detroit's goaltending isn't elite, but it's good enough to help them compete.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - F ALEX DEBRINCAT

After a down year with the Ottawa Senators, DeBrincat is returning home to play for his beloved Red Wings. He has had two 40+ goal seasons and is easily capable of doing that as a member of the Red Wings, and he will certainly give this team an offensive boost. This is going to be a fresh start for DeBrincat and I believe that he will benefit a ton from playing alongside Larkin. I can see DeBrincat reaching a new career-high in points this season.

### OUTLOOK

The Red Wings are getting close to the end of what feels like a very long rebuild, but they're not quite ready yet to make the playoffs. They'll remain competitive in the standings, but I expect them to fall short of a postseason appearance.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

**35-37-10**

Over/Under

**45-33-4**

Against the Spread

**34-48**

2.89

(#24 of 32)

Goals Scored  
Per Game

3.35

(#22 of 32)

Goals Allowed  
Per Game

21.1

(#17 of 32)

Power Play  
Percentage

78.3

(#18 of 32)

Penalty Kill  
Percentage

0.85

(#19 of 32)

Goals Scored in  
1st Period

1.00

(#22 of 32)

Goals Allowed in  
1st Period



# EDMONTON Oilers

PACIFIC DIVISION

**Steve Makinen's Power Rating**  
3.58 (#4 of 32)

**Odds to Win the Stanley Cup**  
10-1

After losing to the eventual Stanley Cup Champions in back-to-back postseasons, the Edmonton Oilers could be the team to beat in the Western Conference this year. Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl continue to get more and more dangerous each season, but they need the rest of the group to help get them over the hump. They finished two points shy of the Vegas Golden Knights to win the Pacific Division last season, but this year, they are my pick to win it.

### OFFENSE

Scoring goals is the least of the Oilers' concerns. McDavid led the league in scoring for the third straight season (153 points) and Draisaitl was right there behind him (128 points). They are clearly the league's most dangerous dynamic duo, but the Oilers actually had some other key contributors last season, like Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, who put up 104 points, and Zach Hyman, who tallied 83 points.

Their power play is the most dangerous weapon in the repertoire, finishing with an incredible 32.4% success rate in the regular season, while also skating to a 46.1% conversion rate in the postseason. What they're able to do on the man-advantage is absolutely ridiculous. The offense will once again be reliable for Edmonton and I don't see anyone having more points than McDavid for the fourth straight year.

### DEFENSE

Defense has always been a concern for the Oilers in the McDavid era, but in my opinion, this is a strong defensive group. They allowed 3.12 goals against per game last season and that is something that has to improve going into the 2023-24 campaign. Their blue line has plenty of size with guys like Darnell Nurse, Evan Bouchard, Vincent Desharnais, and Matthias Ekholm, but an area that needs improvement is their penalty kill. They finished 20th last season, only converting successfully on 77% of their kills.

Ekholm was a very strong acquisition at last year's deadline for this team and having him for a full season should benefit the group. What they lack defensively, they make up for by scoring a ton of goals, so at least they can always rely on their best defense being a strong offense.

### GOALTENDING

Things got a little tricky for the Oilers last season when it comes to goaltending. Stuart Skinner and Jack Campbell shared the blue paint for most of the season, but towards the end of the year it became apparent that the crease belonged to Skinner. He earned 29 wins, while skating to a .913 save percentage, as Campbell was able to secure 21 wins, but wasn't as pretty while doing it with a .888 save percentage. The net should belong to Skinner for the majority of this season, but as is tradition, goaltending will be this team's biggest question mark.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - F ZACH HYMAN

Everyone loves to talk about McDavid and Draisaitl whenever the Oilers come up in conversation, but I want to talk about a guy that is almost equally as important to the success of this team. Hyman put up a career-high in goals (36), assists (47), and points (83) last season, and I believe that he can potentially up those numbers in the 2023-24 campaign. He is arguably the main beneficiary of playing with McDavid at 5-on-5 and on the power play. I think Hyman can easily tally 40 goals this season and possibly surpass the 90-point mark.

### OUTLOOK

This team is right there with the best of the best in the NHL and I feel that this could be the year that McDavid finally gets his team over the hump. The Oilers offense is one of the scariest groups that this league has ever seen. If they can just tighten up defensively, they're going to be a very hard team to beat. I have no doubt that they will make the playoffs and I am pretty confident that we will be watching the Oilers play come June.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

**Record (W-L-OTL)**  
50-23-9

**Over/Under**  
42-36-4

**Against the Spread**  
39-43

3.96  
(#1 of 32)

**Goals Scored  
Per Game**

3.12  
(#17 of 32)

**Goals Allowed  
Per Game**

32.4  
(#1 of 32)

**Power Play  
Percentage**

77.0  
(#20 of 32)

**Penalty Kill  
Percentage**

1.12  
(#1 of 32)

**Goals Scored in  
1st Period**

0.87  
(#15 of 32)

**Goals Allowed in  
1st Period**



# FLORIDA Panthers

ATLANTIC DIVISION

**Steve Makinen's Power Rating**  
**3.30** (#11 of 32)

**Odds to Win the Stanley Cup**  
**16-1**

After what felt like a Cinderella story type of playoff run, the Florida Panthers are going to have to face some injury adversity to kick off the 2023-24 season. This group was very inconsistent in the regular season last year, but they were able to play their best hockey at the most important time. With that said, the way they battled last year might have a negative impact on them this season, physically speaking.

## OFFENSE

It became clear during the 2023 postseason that Matthew Tkachuk is the heartbeat of this team. Tkachuk has put up back-to-back 100+ point seasons, but his first year in Florida came with new career highs (69 assists, 109 points). The Panthers have other offensive weapons aside from Tkachuk, like Aleksander Barkov, Sam Reinhart and Carter Verhaeghe. And they added Evan Rodrigues this offseason.

Thanks to these guys, the Panthers were a top-10 offensive team last season, scoring 3.51 goals per game while skating to a 22.8% power play success rate. They finished with the best expected goals per 60 in the NHL (3.76), as well as the most high-danger chances per 60 (15.74).

This is a solid offensive group, but it will be interesting to see how they produce after a short summer.

## DEFENSE

The Panthers were not a very strong defensive team in 2023-24, but one of their main objectives this offseason was to strengthen their blue line. They brought in Oliver Ekman-Larsson, Niko Mikkola, and Dmitry Kulikov to help round out the back-end. In 2022-23, they finished toward the bottom of the league defensively, allowing 3.32 goals against per game and also finishing with a bottom 10 penalty kill (76%).

They were slightly below average defensively last season, and I would say that they should be slightly above average this season, though not exceptional.

## GOALTENDING

Goaltending was one of the biggest storylines of the Panthers' postseason run, but Sergei Bobrovsky has had plenty of mediocre regular season performances. The Panthers brought in Anthony Stolarz to back him up and he is solid, but it all depends on Bobrovsky. If Bobrovsky can carry his performance from the 2023 playoffs into this season, he could be in the Vezina Trophy conversation.

## PLAYER TO WATCH - G SERGEI BOBROVSKY

The Panthers goaltending was an absolute roller coaster last season, but after an immaculate playoff run, the question is if Bobrovsky can sustain his performance from the postseason. Bobrovsky carried this team through the playoffs after coming in to relieve Alex Lyon in round one against the Bruins. His regular season was average, he skated to a .901 save percentage and a 3.07 goals against average, but in the playoffs he boasted a .915 save percentage along with a 2.78 goals against average and an incredible +16.3 goals saved above expected. Bobrovsky's play can make or break the Panthers season in 2023-24.

## OUTLOOK

Don't let recency bias fool you. The Panthers will have to deal with a ton of injury adversity to kick off the season with players like Tkachuk, Brandon Montour and Aaron Ekblad and it will be interesting to see how this team looks physically out of the gate. Considering that they are in a very strong division, I don't think it's crazy to say that they will miss the playoffs. DraftKings Sportsbook has them at +180 to miss the playoffs and I love the value on that. They will certainly compete, but they snuck into the playoffs last year by a singular point and we could see a similar situation this season.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)  
**42-32-8**

Over/Under  
**46-30-6**

Against the Spread  
**42-40**

**3.51**  
(#6 of 32)

Goals Scored  
Per Game

**3.32**  
(#21 of 32)

Goals Allowed  
Per Game

**22.8**  
(#10 of 32)

Power Play  
Percentage

**76.0**  
(#23 of 32)

Penalty Kill  
Percentage

**1.02**  
(#6 of 32)

Goals Scored in  
1st Period

**0.90**  
(#17 of 32)

Goals Allowed in  
1st Period



# LOS ANGELES Kings

PACIFIC DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

**3.31** (#10 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

**22-1**

When looking at overall team depth, the Los Angeles Kings are right up there with the rest of the league. They are undoubtedly going to be a playoff team and I am confident that they will give the Edmonton Oilers and Vegas Golden Knights a run for the Pacific Division title. Adding Pierre-Luc Dubois really solidified their strength in the middle of the ice. The Kings are going to be a very difficult team to play against.

### OFFENSE

This group is four lines deep with offensive firepower. The Kings finished in the top 10 last season in creating high-danger chances at even strength per 60 minutes (13.03) and they had the fourth best power play percentage in the NHL (25.3%). In my opinion, they got even stronger offensively by adding Dubois. Between Dubois, Anze Kopitar, Adrian Kempe, Kevin Fiala, Viktor Arvidsson, and Phillip Danault, this team won't have any issues scoring goals.

They're very strong at 5-on-5 and if their power play clicks like it did in the 2022-23 season, the Kings can make a postseason run.

### DEFENSE

Team defense is arguably the Kings' biggest strength. They might not have the blue line that they did when they won two Stanley Cups in a three-year span, but this group knows how to play in their own end. They finished second in multiple categories, like expected goals against per 60 at even strength (2.53), as well as high-danger chances against per 60 (11.17) in all situations.

Their blue line is highlighted by Drew Doughty, who has been a top defenseman in the league for north of a decade, but the Kings have some other secret weapons like Mikey Anderson and Vladislav Gavrikov on the back end. They should be a strong defending team once again.

### GOALTENDING

Goaltending was a bit of an issue for Los Angeles in the 2022-23 season, but this year they are rocking with a tandem that is made up of Pheonix Copley and veteran Cam Talbot. This area will certainly be a question mark once again for the Kings, but they are confident that this duo can be a solid one-two punch. Copley earned 24 wins last season, skating to a .903 save percentage, while Talbot had 17 wins, but his save percentage wasn't as strong at .898 during his time as an Ottawa Senator. Copley should be their #1 guy, but they will compete against one another for time in the blue paint.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - F PIERRE-LUC DUBOIS

This choice seems a bit obvious, but with Dubois coming off of a career year in Winnipeg with 63 points, I think he will absolutely pop off this season in his debut as a member of the Kings. Dubois has been a bit misunderstood early on in his NHL career, but now that he has a fresh start in a place that he wants to be in, it's going to do wonders for his confidence. I think PLD has a 30-goal season in him.

### OUTLOOK

I have zero doubt that the Kings finish in a top-three seed in the division and, depending on how their goaltenders perform, this team could be a sneaky Stanley Cup contender.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

**47-25-10**

Over/Under

**34-44-4**

Against the Spread

**50-32**

**3.34**  
(#11 of 32) **Goals Scored Per Game**

**3.10**  
(#16 of 32) **Goals Allowed Per Game**

**25.3**  
(#4 of 32) **Power Play Percentage**

**75.8**  
(#24 of 32) **Penalty Kill Percentage**

**0.98**  
(#12 of 32) **Goals Scored in 1st Period**

**0.84**  
(#13 of 32) **Goals Allowed in 1st Period**

# MINNESOTA

## Wild

CENTRAL DIVISION

### Steve Makinen's Power Rating

3.06 (#15 of 32)

### Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

30-1



Minnesota has a strong hockey club, but it seems that the team always finds a way to disappoint and not meet expectations. The Wild had a strong season last year with 103 points, but they got worse in the offseason with some of their departures. They have one or two big-time players on their roster, but this team doesn't scare anyone.

#### OFFENSE

The Wild were insanely top-heavy last season. Kirill Kaprizov led the way with 75 points, followed by Mats Zuccarello, Matt Boldy and Joel Eriksson Ek, with each having 60+ points as well. After that, there was a massive drop off in offensive production. I'd say that this is a very subpar offensive team with how their roster currently stands. They brought in a veteran player in Pat Maroon, who makes them a bit grittier, but this team needs another forward to step up and have a breakout season. Minnesota finished toward the bottom in most offensive categories, only averaging 2.91 goals per game and a 21.4% conversion rate on the man-advantage. They can count on Kaprizov, Zuccarello and Boldy to produce, but other than that, this team needs some help putting the puck in the net.

#### DEFENSE

Minnesota might not have a ton of flair on their blue line, but they are consistently a team that fares well when it comes to expected goals against per 60 minutes. They finished toward the top of the league in this category, while at the same time finished as the third-best team in the league at preventing high-danger chances against per 60.

The Wild's blue line took a big hit this off-season, losing two veteran defensemen in Matt Dumba and John Klingberg, but the highly touted Brock Faber is entering his first full NHL season after appearing in two regular season games and six playoff games last year. Faber was very impressive in his brief showing, and he could turn out to be a very important piece this year.

#### GOALTENDING

Marc-Andre Fleury and Filip Gustavsson became quite the one-two punch last season, as they essentially split the time in the blue paint, but I have a very strong feeling that it will be the Swede's crease this season. Gustavsson just signed a much-deserved extension with Minnesota after putting up a .931 save percentage and a 2.10 goals against average. He also finished with the league's seventh-best +24.2 goals saved above expected. The 38-year-old Fleury can still help this team win games, but ultimately they are going to go as far as Gustavsson takes them.

#### PLAYER TO WATCH - F MATT BOLDY

The 22-year-old had a phenomenal first full NHL season in 2022-23, as he potted home 31 goals, finishing second on the team in that category. Boldy is a very skilled player who's not afraid to be physical and throw his body around. There were a ton of games that he completely took over this past season, but he'll have to find some more consistency to be as effective as he can be. He's still a young kid, so there will be some growing pains, but I wouldn't be surprised if Boldy scores 35+, maybe even 40 goals this season.

#### OUTLOOK

I'd say the Wild have a very strong chance at making the playoffs due to the fact that this division is a tad weaker than others. With that said, I don't expect them to make much noise come postseason time.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

**46-25-11**

Over/Under

**47-33-2**

Against the Spread

**39-43**

**2.91**  
(#23 of 32) **Goals Scored Per Game**

**2.67**  
(#6 of 32) **Goals Allowed Per Game**

**21.4**  
(#15 of 32) **Power Play Percentage**

**82.0**  
(#10 of 32) **Penalty Kill Percentage**

**0.74**  
(#28 of 32) **Goals Scored in 1st Period**

**0.78**  
(#10 of 32) **Goals Allowed in 1st Period**



# MONTREAL

## Canadiens

ATLANTIC DIVISION

### Steve Makinen's Power Rating

1.77 (#31 of 32)

### Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

250-1



The Montreal Canadiens are fully committed to the rebuild and despite a ton of injuries, last season was a step in the right direction for this young group. The expectations for Montreal won't be very high yet again, but there are some bright spots and the team should perform a little bit better than they did in 2022-23.

#### OFFENSE

The Canadiens were missing two very important offensive players for half of the 2022-23 season. Cole Caufield only appeared in 46 games (26 goals, 10 assists) and the first overall pick in the 2022 NHL Draft, Juraj Slafkovsky, only skated in 39 games (4 goals, 6 assists). To no surprise, this team finished at the bottom of many offensive categories such as high-danger chances per 60 (10.24) as well as shots on goal per game (27.3) and power play percentage (16.1%). The Canadiens first line that consists of Caufield, Nick Suzuki and Kirby Dach should be a fun one to watch, but after that, this team doesn't pose much of an offensive threat. They brought in a young Stanley Cup champion in Alex Newhook, which was a strong acquisition, but it doesn't necessarily move the needle.

#### DEFENSE

To no surprise, Montreal was one of the worst defensive teams in the NHL last season as they found themselves in the bottom five of multiple categories such as goals against per game (3.72) as well as scoring chances against per 60 (33.57). The names on the Canadiens blue line don't necessarily jump out of the page and considering that they didn't make the core any stronger this offseason, I see Montreal struggling in their own end again this season.

#### GOALTENDING

Montreal is running it back with the same goaltending trio that they had in 2022-23. Jake Allen (39 starts) and Sam Montembeault (41 starts) will split most of the time in the blue paint yet again, but don't sleep on Cayden Primeau who could potentially see some action this season. Montembeault was Montreal's best goalie last season based on numbers, but his performance was subpar as he skated to a .901 save percentage and a 3.42 goals against average. The Canadiens goaltending won't steal them many wins.

#### PLAYER TO WATCH - F COLE CAUFIELD

The former Hobey Baker Trophy winner has yet to play a full 82-game season, but he has shown an unbelievable scoring touch early on in his NHL career. If Caufield were able to stay healthy last season, there was no doubt that he was going to score 40+ goals. In 46 games, he already had 26 goals and I feel strongly that his ceiling is extremely high. Caufield has thrived under head coach Martin St. Louis, and even if the expectations for the team aren't high, there is still a standard to meet for the Canadiens young talented forward.

#### OUTLOOK

Montreal finished at the bottom of the Atlantic Division and I suspect that they'll finish in the exact same position. They should take another step in the right direction, especially that first line of Caufield, Suzuki, and Dach. I'd say they're a couple of years away from competing for a playoff spot.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

**31-45-6**

Over/Under

**47-33-2**

Against the Spread

**39-43**

2.77

(#26 of 32)

Goals Scored  
Per Game

3.72

(#29 of 32)

Goals Allowed  
Per Game

16.1

(#29 of 32)

Power Play  
Percentage

72.7

(#29 of 32)

Penalty Kill  
Percentage

0.79

(#23 of 32)

Goals Scored in  
1st Period

1.06

(#28 of 32)

Goals Allowed in  
1st Period



# NASHVILLE

## Predators

CENTRAL DIVISION

### Steve Makinen's Power Rating

2.48 (#22 of 32)

### Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

75-1

A lot of changes have been made in the Predators organization, which means that there are plenty of questions to be asked about what this team could be. And overall, the expectations aren't high in Nashville this season. This team still has some big names like Roman Josi and Filip Forsberg, along with the addition of Ryan O'Reilly, but the Predators are in a clear culture shift and I'm not positive that they will find success right away.

#### OFFENSE

Goal-scoring is going to be the Predators' biggest crutch this season. The Predators finished with the fifth-worst goals per game average in the entire league last season (2.72) and they didn't make the necessary moves this summer to increase their offensive approach. Sure, they brought in a big name like O'Reilly who can score some goals, but they lost both Matt Duchene and Ryan Johansen.

Nashville was incredibly weak offensively last season, finishing towards the bottom of the league on shots on goal per game as well as high-danger chances per 60 minutes. The changes they made this offseason don't make them any scarier up front. They'll struggle to score goals this year.

#### DEFENSE

On paper, the Predators actually have a pretty solid defensive core. Obviously, it all starts with Josi — the team's captain — but they brought in Luke Schenn, who is a veteran Stanley Cup champion, to strengthen out their blue line. And they have some other big names like Ryan McDonagh and Tyson Barrie.

Last season they were riddled with injuries which made them a much weaker defensive team. Their metrics in their own end were not very pleasing, coming in at the bottom of the league in scoring chances against per 60 and expected goals against per 60. Luckily for them, Juuse Saros is there to bail them out. I think they will be stronger defensively this season if they can remain healthy.

#### GOALTENDING

Goaltending is Nashville's biggest strength, by far. Saros has solidified himself as a top-five goalie in the NHL and he has the ability to single-handedly carry this team to the playoffs. I don't ultimately think they will make it, but it's a possibility because of him. Kevin Lankinen is a solid backup netminder, but all of the responsibility falls on Saros.

#### PLAYER TO WATCH - G JUUSE SAROS

Saros finished fourth in Vezina Trophy voting last season, which some people considered a snub, as he skated to a .919 save percentage with a 2.68 goals against average while leading the league with a +46.7 goals saved above expected. He should be in the mix for the Vezina again this year.

#### OUTLOOK

The only way that the Predators make the playoffs is if Saros performs at a Vezina level once again. Luckily, they aren't in the strongest division in the NHL, so they could very well steal a spot. But I don't think it's very likely. I just don't trust Nashville enough offensively.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

42-32-8

Over/Under

49-33-0

Against the Spread

44-38

2.72

(#28 of 32)

Goals Scored  
Per Game

2.88

(#12 of 32)

Goals Allowed  
Per Game

17.6

(#27 of 32)

Power Play  
Percentage

82.6

(#6 of 32)

Penalty Kill  
Percentage

0.88

(#18 of 32)

Goals Scored in  
1st Period

0.87

(#16 of 32)

Goals Allowed in  
1st Period



# NEW JERSEY Devils

METROPOLITAN DIVISION

**Steve Makinen's Power Rating**  
**3.81** (#2 of 32)

**Odds to Win the Stanley Cup**  
**+900**

After making a ton of noise in the 2022-23 season, the New Jersey Devils were one of the most talked about teams this past summer and they enter the 2023-24 campaign with very high aspirations. If there was a winner of the offseason, it would be the Devils considering they re-signed Timo Meier, and added Tyler Toffoli. The Devils are going to be a very fun team to watch.

## OFFENSE

New Jersey has such a dynamic offensive team and to make matters worse for their opponents, they should be even better this season. Jack Hughes emerged as an NHL superstar last season, skating to a new career-high 99 points, while Nico Hischier, Jesper Bratt, and now Meier along with Toffoli help form a very strong top-six group of forwards. The Devils had the fifth best goals per game (3.52) and the league's second-best expected goals percentage (56.30). This team is incredibly deep offensively.

## DEFENSE

New Jersey's blue line lost a couple of important players like Damon Severson and Ryan Graves, but their departures shouldn't impact the group in such a drastic way. The Devils finished as a top-10 defensive group in 2022-23, only allowing 2.71 goals against per game while having the fourth-best penalty kill (82.6%) and also the best team at limiting high-danger chances against per 60 (10.92). Their defensive success was no fluke and I expect them to defend well in their own end again this season.

## GOALTENDING

Goaltending is far and away the biggest concern for this team. They're running it back with Vitek Vanecsek and Akira Schmid, which is the way they finished the season last year. Vanecsek had a strong regular season but fell off a bit during the playoffs, which was the total opposite for Schmid. The playoffs were the moment when Schmid arrived, as he boasted a .921 save percentage and 2.35 goals against average on eight starts. These two will be battling for the starting job. There is no guarantee who will get it, but the Devils certainly need to figure out their goaltending situation if they want to make a deep run.

## PLAYER TO WATCH - F TYLER TOFFOLI

The 31-year-old set new career highs last season (34 G, 39 A for 73 P) on a Calgary Flames team that had some struggles. Per The Daily Faceoff, Toffoli is slotted on the first line with Hughes and Bratt, meaning that he shouldn't have any problems putting up points. I don't think it's crazy to say that Toffoli can possibly hit 90 points if he's on a line with those two. He is a phenomenal off-season pick-up for the Devils and has the chance to come in and be a difference-maker right away.

## OUTLOOK

Taking the Devils to win the Metropolitan Division at +240 seems like a popular play. This team will definitely make the playoffs and they can certainly come away with the division title. The only concern for me with the Devils is how they handle the pressure. They were very successful in 2022-23, but they were playing with house money. Now, they have a target on their backs and it will be interesting to see how they deal with it. I don't think this is their year to win a Stanley Cup, but they are a great team with a bright future.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

**Record (W-L-OTL)**  
**52-22-8**

**Over/Under**  
**48-32-2**

**Against the Spread**  
**39-43**

**3.52**  
(#4 of 32)

**Goals Scored Per Game**

**2.71**  
(#8 of 32)

**Goals Allowed Per Game**

**21.9**  
(#13 of 32)

**Power Play Percentage**

**82.6**  
(#4 of 32)

**Penalty Kill Percentage**

**0.84**  
(#20 of 32)

**Goals Scored in 1st Period**

**0.82**  
(#11 of 32)

**Goals Allowed in 1st Period**



# NEW YORK Islanders

METROPOLITAN DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

2.69 (#18 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

50-1

It seems that every team around them got better, but the New York Islanders are essentially the same exact team that they were in 2022-23. This team will be competitive, but they don't pose much of a threat. Ilya Sorokin put this group on his back last season, and they will go as far as he takes them, but I think the Islanders may miss out on the playoffs.

### OFFENSE

Scoring goals is where the Islanders struggle most, especially on the man advantage. New York finished with the third worst power play in the entire NHL (15.8%), and as a whole, this team was averaging less than three goals per game. A full season with Bo Horvat could help the Islanders, but he didn't necessarily tear it up once he got to Long Island (7 G, 9 A, 30 GP). Mathew Barzal missed some time due to injury last season, so that didn't help their case, but the Islanders need more from him if they want to be considered elite. The Islanders' offensive ceiling is the middle of the pack in the league.

### DEFENSE

Thankfully for the Islanders, their defense hasn't really been an issue, but there is certainly room for improvement. With that said, they didn't do anything this offseason to strengthen their blue line, so this core is going to rely on Sorokin to bail them out most of the time. New York had the fifth best goals against per game in the NHL (2.65) and the ninth best penalty kill (82.2%), but those impressive numbers are mostly thanks to Sorokin. This group allowed the sixth most high-danger chances per 60 (13.42), so there is a ton of cleaning up to do.

### GOALTENDING

The Islanders might have the best goaltending tandem in the NHL with Sorokin and Semyon Varlamov. Sorokin handles most of the work as he got 60 starts last season, but Varlamov had a strong showing in the 22 games in which he got the nod. He earned 11 wins and skated to a .913 save percentage with a 2.70 goals-against average. The success of this team lies in the goaltenders.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - G ILYA SOROKIN

Sorokin has played himself into the conversation for the best goalie in the NHL. He was a Vezina Trophy finalist last season as he skated to a .924 save percentage with 2.34 goals against average while having a league's third best +38.7 goals saved above expected. Sorokin has a ton of pressure on him going into this season because this team's destiny falls on his shoulders, but it appears that he doesn't crumble under pressure. Taking Sorokin to win the Vezina could be a very safe bet.

### OUTLOOK

As of right now, the Islanders are favored to miss the playoffs at -130 at DraftKings Sportsbook. There aren't many people that have faith in this group and for good reason. Unless Sorokin is inhuman, I don't see this team reaching the postseason.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

42-31-9

Over/Under

40-41-1

Against the Spread

38-44

2.95

(#22 of 32)

Goals Scored Per Game

2.65

(#5 of 32)

Goals Allowed Per Game

15.8

(#30 of 32)

Power Play Percentage

82.2

(#9 of 32)

Penalty Kill Percentage

0.68

(#30 of 32)

Goals Scored in 1st Period

0.70

(#5 of 32)

Goals Allowed in 1st Period



# NEW YORK Rangers

METROPOLITAN DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

3.40 (#7 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

13-1

The 2022-23 season might have been the biggest letdown in the history of the New York Rangers franchise. The team and the organization have voiced their frustrations and they are eager to get the season going under new head coach Peter Laviolette. They don't have the same kind of hype that they did going into last season, but the Rangers will compete for the top of the division and will certainly be a playoff team.

### OFFENSE

New York can always rely upon Mika Zibanejad, Artemi Panarin, Chris Kreider, and Adam Fox to provide scoring, but there are a ton of questions about how new acquisition Blake Wheeler will fit in. The Rangers also need to figure out if guys like Filip Chytil, Kaapo Kakko, Alexis Lafreniere, and Vincent Trocheck can finally live up to expectations. The Rangers have a very strong group up front, but last year they didn't finish as well as they could have (3.33 goals per game). This group could potentially have 6+ players with a minimum of 60 points, but it all depends on how they respond to Laviolette's coaching style. With that said, the Rangers power play has been in the top 10 in the last two seasons and should be up there once again.

### DEFENSE

It's fair to say that this blue line got stronger in the offseason, not because of any crazy acquisitions, but because they gained another year of playoff experience. Fox was nominated for his second Norris Trophy in his first four seasons and K'Andre Miller more than doubled his point total from the season before. The Rangers will need more consistent play from their captain Jacob Trouba, but overall, this backend is pretty well-rounded.

### GOALTENDING

This position is where the Rangers always seem to thrive. After winning the Vezina Trophy in 2022, Igor Shesterkin had something of a down year, but by no means could it be considered a letdown. Shesterkin earned 37 wins while skating to a .916 save percentage and a 2.48 goals-against-average while finishing with a fifth-best +28.1 goals saved above expected. He will be in the Vezina conversation again this season. The Rangers also brought in three-time Stanley Cup champion Jonathan Quick to back him up. Quick's best playing days are behind him, but he can be a big help and leader for this group as he is in the backup role for the first time in his career.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - F KAAPO KAKKO

The second overall pick from the 2019 NHL draft is poised to make a big splash this season. He voiced at the end of 2022-23 that he wanted a bigger role on the team and now the opportunity will be there for the taking. Kakko should get plenty of minutes on the Rangers top-two lines, so he has to make the most of this opportunity. Last season, he recorded new career-highs (18 G, 22 A, 40 P) and I feel strongly that he can reach 60 points this season.

### OUTLOOK

Laviolette will make sure that this group is a playoff team. And with the amount of talent on this roster, it's fair to say that they could make a run for the Stanley Cup. They have plenty of competition around them, but with Shesterkin, Panarin, Zibanejad, Fox, and the rest of the talent on this team, the ceiling is very high.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

47-22-13

Over/Under

32-46-4

Against the Spread

41-41

3.33

(#12 of 32)

Goals Scored  
Per Game

2.63

(#4 of 32)

Goals Allowed  
Per Game

24.1

(#7 of 32)

Power Play  
Percentage

81.2

(#13 of 32)

Penalty Kill  
Percentage

0.95

(#13 of 32)

Goals Scored in  
1st Period

0.76

(#7 of 32)

Goals Allowed in  
1st Period



# OTTAWA Senators

ATLANTIC DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

2.59 (#20 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

40-1

Ottawa might be the team that I am most excited about for this coming NHL season. After finishing six points shy of a playoff spot last season, I am very confident that this group will be playing hockey in the spring of 2024. The Senators have loaded up their top six, as well as their blue line which can only insist that it will be a fun year in the Canadian capital.

### OFFENSE

The Senators may have lost Alex DeBrincat this Summer, but in my opinion, this top six is still a scary one, especially now they've replaced DeBrincat with Vladimir Tarasenko. Sure, Tarasenko might not be the threat that he used to be, but with Brady Tkachuk, Tim Stutzle and a healthy Josh Norris leading the way, the Senators shouldn't have any problem scoring goals.

They were a top offensive team in the league last season, skating to a 3.48 expected goals per 60 and a 23.5% power play success rate, but there is still room to improve.

### DEFENSE

Ottawa's blue line is highlighted by Thomas Chabot, Jakob Chychrun and Jake Sanderson, who are incredible players in the National Hockey League. Chychrun will be in his first full season with the squad, which should boost them in their own end. Last season, the Senators were essentially an average defensive team, allowing 3.29 goals against per game while allowing 31.4 shots on goal per game. These numbers should be easy for this group to improve upon this season and I have much higher expectations for Ottawa's defense in 2023-24.

### GOALTENDING

Ottawa has put all of their trust into Joonas Korpisalo, who is entering his first season with the club after splitting time between Columbus and Los Angeles in the 2022-23 season. It's tough to judge his play on a horrendous Blue Jackets team, but Korpisalo had a strong showing in his brief stint with the Kings. He went 7-3-1 with Los Angeles, skating to a .921 save percentage and a 2.13 goals-against average. He should be the number one goalie, but he does have some competition against Anton Forsberg, who wasn't his best last season but was solid enough to help this team compete. I have a good feeling about the goaltending tandem in Ottawa.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - F JOSH NORRIS

Unfortunately for Ottawa, they lost Norris eight games into the 2022-23 season due to a shoulder injury. The year prior, Norris was a 35-goal scorer and was a massive threat on their power play. Ottawa is being a little cautious with Norris during training camp as he is still in recovery mode, but he should be fully healthy for opening night. If Norris were healthy last season, Ottawa could have potentially pushed for the playoffs. Having him back is going to impact this team significantly up front and he could potentially flirt with 30 goals yet again.

### OUTLOOK

If there is one team in the NHL that I am willing to take a risk on this season, it's the Ottawa Senators. DraftKings Sportsbook has them at +130 to make the playoffs which tells me that it's certainly a strong possibility. Tkachuk is one of the best leaders in the league and the vibe that this team has going into the season is one that I can get behind. Mark my words, Ottawa will be a playoff team.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

39-35-8

Over/Under

33-45-4

Against the Spread

46-36

3.16

(#18 of 32)

Goals Scored  
Per Game

3.29

(#20 of 32)

Goals Allowed  
Per Game

23.5

(#8 of 32)

Power Play  
Percentage

80.1

(#14 of 32)

Penalty Kill  
Percentage

0.94

(#15 of 32)

Goals Scored in  
1st Period

1.02

(#24 of 32)

Goals Allowed in  
1st Period



# PHILADELPHIA Flyers

METROPOLITAN DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

2.10 (#27 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

150-1

It was an ugly 2022-23 season for the Philadelphia Flyers, but now, just like their NBA team, it's time to "trust the process". There is a culture shift going on in the city of brotherly love with Keith Jones as the new President of Hockey Operations. This group will be in the basement of the division yet again, but this season is all about building a foundation for the Flyers.

### OFFENSE

Losing Kevin Hayes and James Van Riemsdyk probably isn't what was best for the Flyers' offensive production, but these moves were necessary. With that said, this team had some health issues last year with Sean Couturier and Cam Atkinson, but those two are fully healthy going into 2023-24. The Flyers had the fourth worst offense last season, only scoring 2.68 goals per game and they had the league's worst power play at 15.6%. This team will struggle to score goals again, but there should be some improvement from last year.

### DEFENSE

The Flyers weren't good in their own end last season, but they also weren't as horrendous as people may have expected. Let's face it, this is not a very strong blue line, but with John Tortorella as the bench boss, you can always count on this team to compete. The Flyers finished in the bottom half of most defensive metrics last season, like high-danger chances against per 60 (13.31) as well as expected goals against per 60 (3.18). They will most likely finish in a very similar spot this season.

### GOALTENDING

The early years of Carter Hart's career have been something of a roller coaster ride. He has the potential to be an elite goaltender in the NHL, but he just has to find consistency in his game. Of course, that's much easier said than done, especially if the group in front of him isn't strong, but Hart has a lot of potential. The Flyers brought in Cal Petersen to back him up after he had an off year in Los Angeles, but Petersen also has some promise. A fresh start could be good for him.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - F MORGAN FROST

The Flyers 2017 first-round pick had a strong 2022-23 season, tallying 19 goals and 27 assists. This season, it is more likely than not that Frost will take on the responsibility of playing as the top-line center. The Flyers have very high hopes for this 24-year-old and this could be his break-out season with all of the opportunities that he is bound to get.

### OUTLOOK

The Flyers will take a step in the right direction this season, but ultimately, they will finish in the bottom 10 of the league yet again and probably in eighth in the Metropolitan Division.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

**31-38-13**

Over/Under

**42-39-1**

Against the Spread

**37-45**

2.68

(#29 of 32)

**Goals Scored  
Per Game**

3.37

(#23 of 32)

**Goals Allowed  
Per Game**

15.6

(#32 of 32)

**Power Play  
Percentage**

74.7

(#26 of 32)

**Penalty Kill  
Percentage**

0.72

(#29 of 32)

**Goals Scored in  
1st Period**

1.00

(#23 of 32)

**Goals Allowed in  
1st Period**



# PITTSBURGH

## Penguins

METROPOLITAN DIVISION

### Steve Makinen's Power Rating

3.13 (#12 of 32)

### Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

28-1

I don't think anyone had as exciting of a summer as the Pittsburgh Penguins. They brought in the Norris Trophy-winning defenseman Erik Karlsson, thanks to the help of their new President of Hockey Operations, Kyle Dubas. This team is eager to get back into the playoffs after missing out by one point last season.

#### OFFENSE

On paper, the Penguins might have the most talented offensive group in the NHL. I mean, this roster is absolutely loaded with Sidney Crosby, Evgeni Malkin, Kris Letang, Karlsson, and Jake Guentzel, who will unfortunately miss some time early on due to injury. They also brought in Stanley Cup champion Reilly Smith to help round out the top six, but this is a much deeper team than last year.

They finished as a middle-of-the-pack offensive team last year, but there is so much room to improve offensively this season. The biggest area of improvement will most likely be their power play. It is expected that the first unit will consist of Letang, Karlsson, Crosby, Malkin, and Guentzel, which is an insane amount of talent.

#### DEFENSE

Sticking to the theme of their offense from last year, the Penguins also happened to be very average in their own zone both at even strength (2.9 expected goals against per 60) and on the penalty kill (79.1%). Pittsburgh struggled to keep the puck out of their own net last season, which is somewhat out of character, so I imagine that Mike Sullivan will have his team play much tighter in the defensive zone this season. This team should be much stronger on defense now that they have a completely different look.

#### GOALTENDING

Tristan Jarry's ability to stay healthy will be critical to how well this team performs. Jarry played in 47 games last year, earning 24 wins while skating to a .909 save percentage and a 2.90 goals-against average. He has the ability to be a massive difference-maker for this group, but he needs to find consistency. The Penguins brought in Alex Nedeljkovic to back up Jarry. He needed a fresh start after having two decent years in Detroit, but we've seen Nedeljkovic have success in this league and he certainly has the ability to help this team win games.

#### PLAYER TO WATCH - D ERIK KARLSSON

Everyone knows what Karlsson is capable of. The three-time Norris Trophy-winning defenseman is going to have to adjust to this well-established Penguins machine. The biggest question going into the season is how Karlsson can co-exist with Letang and if he can help improve this team's defense. He has faced a lot of criticism about his defensive play, so I'm sure that will be a main focus of his.

#### OUTLOOK

I can't imagine any world where Crosby misses the playoffs two years in a row. The 2022-23 season seemed like a fluke for the Penguins. Of course, they are one of the oldest teams in the league, so health will be a concern. But I have no doubt that this a playoff team, and possibly, even a Stanley Cup contender. I don't see them winning the division, but they could fall anywhere from second to fourth.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

40-31-11

Over/Under

40-39-3

Against the Spread

40-42

3.18

(#16 of 32)

Goals Scored  
Per Game

3.21

(#19 of 32)

Goals Allowed  
Per Game

21.7

(#14 of 32)

Power Play  
Percentage

79.1

(#16 of 32)

Penalty Kill  
Percentage

0.84

(#21 of 32)

Goals Scored in  
1st Period

0.91

(#18 of 32)

Goals Allowed in  
1st Period



# SAN JOSE Sharks

PACIFIC DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

1.61 (#32 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

250-1



The expectations are very low for the San Jose Sharks this season. After trading away Erik Karlsson to the Pittsburgh Penguins, this team doesn't have much firepower. They are in a full rebuild mode, so this could be a very frustrating season for the Sharks. I'd be very surprised if they don't finish in the bottom three of the league.

### OFFENSE

In the 2022-23 season, the Sharks finished among the bottom 10 teams in multiple offensive categories, such as goals per game (2.84) and power play conversion rate (18.4%). Over the summer, they added Anthony Duclair, Mike Hoffman, Filip Zadina, and Mikael Granlund to their forward group which were much-needed acquisitions, but I'm not quite sure that they make this team any scarier.

Tomas Hertl and Logan Couture can be relied upon to record at least 60 points, but the Sharks are going to struggle to score goals this season.

### DEFENSE

To no surprise, the Sharks were very weak defensively last season, finishing in the bottom 10 of the league in expected goals against per 60 (3.33), as well as goals against per game played (3.84). With that said, they did happen to finish in the top 10 for their success on the penalty kill, but the organization didn't do much to strengthen their blue line this offseason. They added Jan Rutta, who is a veteran that has won a Stanley Cup, but he doesn't move the needle all that much for this group.

The Sharks will most likely finish in the bottom 10 of the league in defensive categories yet again this season.

### GOALTENDING

Goaltending was one of the Sharks biggest crutches in the 2022-23 campaign and it most likely will be the biggest question mark for them this season. They brought in Mackenzie Blackwood from the New Jersey Devils this offseason and his career has been a roller coaster thus far. He appeared in 22 games last season, earning 10 wins while skating to a .893 save percentage. His partner, Kaapo Kahkonen appeared in 37 games last season for San Jose, earning just nine wins and a .883 save percentage. They will be battling for the No. 1 position, but I'm not confident that either of these two can help the Sharks compete for a playoff berth.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - F ANTHONY DUCLAIR

After having a breakout season in the 2021-22 campaign, Duclair's games were limited in 2022-23 due to injury. He only played in 20 games with the Florida Panthers during the regular season, but he also appeared in 20 postseason games, helping his team get to the Stanley Cup Final. He played a massive role in helping the Panthers turn their organization around and since this is a contract year for Duclair, he'll have the extra motivation to perform. I think Duclair will lead this team in scoring.

### OUTLOOK

The Sharks finished seventh in the division last year, but now that they have fully embraced the rebuild, I expect this team to come in last in the Pacific Division. They're going to struggle offensively and having a mediocre goalie tandem doesn't help. They will finish in the bottom five of the league.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

**22-44-16**

Over/Under

**34-46-2**

Against the Spread

**42-40**

2.84

(#25 of 32)

**Goals Scored  
Per Game**

3.84

(#30 of 32)

**Goals Allowed  
Per Game**

18.4

(#25 of 32)

**Power Play  
Percentage**

82.4

(#8 of 32)

**Penalty Kill  
Percentage**

0.94

(#17 of 32)

**Goals Scored in  
1st Period**

1.04

(#27 of 32)

**Goals Allowed in  
1st Period**



# SEATTLE Kraken

PACIFIC DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

3.01 (#16 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

35-1

After a rough inaugural season in 2021-22, the Seattle Kraken had quite the sophomore season, finishing one win shy of the Western Conference Finals. They really turned things around and became one of the league's best stories, but now that they are on the map, the pressure is on for this group to perform. They're one of the fastest teams in the league, making them very difficult to play against. I expect the Kraken to compete for one of the top three spots in the division.

### OFFENSE

When thinking about overall team depth, the Kraken are one of the top teams that come to mind. Last season, they had six different players with at least 20 goals. Starting at the top with Jared McCann, who absolutely exploded (40 G), followed by the NHL's Rookie of the Year Matty Beniers (24 G). They did lose Daniel Sprong, but still have Jaden Schwartz (21 G) along with Oliver Bjorkstrand and Jordan Eberle, who tallied 20 goals each.

Seattle completely turned their offensive game around last season. In 2021-22, they finished in the bottom five of the league, averaging 2.60 goals per game, but last year, they erupted into the top five, finishing fourth with 3.52 goals per game. Now, the question is if they can sustain that this season, and I think they will.

### DEFENSE

Team defense was one of Seattle's biggest strengths in the 2022-23 campaign. They finished in the top 10 of the league in allowing high-danger chances against per 60 (11.54), as well as the top three in expected goals against per 60 (2.77). As a whole, they are very sound defensively, but one area they can improve upon is their penalty kill. They finished toward the bottom of the league last year when being a man down, only successful at a 76.7% rate. They can easily bump that up to 80% this season.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - F MATTY BENIERS

This one might be the obvious choice, but winning the Rookie of the Year is not an easy accomplishment in the NHL. Now that Beniers has established himself as an elite talent, opponents will be more locked in on the Kraken's young stud. Last season, he tallied 24 goals with 33 assists and I have no doubt that he will put up 30+ goals this coming season, with the chance of putting up a total of 70+ points. Beniers is a stud.

### GOALTENDING

Philipp Grubauer had a phenomenal postseason run last year for the Kraken after what was a mediocre regular season. In the playoffs, he boasted a 2.7 goals saved above expected, as well as a .903 save percentage. His regular season numbers weren't as strong, but at least he has this to build off of leading into the 2023-24 season. Chris Driedger will be backing him up after spending the 2022-23 season in the AHL with the Coachella Valley Firebirds. Seattle's goaltending isn't the strongest, but both Grubauer and Driedger can at least help them remain competitive every night.

### OUTLOOK

I have no doubt that the Kraken are a playoff team. They put up 100 points in 2022-23 and I don't know if they'll reach that plateau again, but they should compete for the third spot in the division. I don't see them finishing any higher than that, but once they're in the playoffs, they could make some noise.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

46-28-8

Over/Under

44-32-5

Against the Spread

36-45

3.52

(#5 of 32)

Goals Scored  
Per Game

3.07

(#14 of 32)

Goals Allowed  
Per Game

19.8

(#21 of 32)

Power Play  
Percentage

76.7

(#21 of 32)

Penalty Kill  
Percentage

1.05

(#5 of 32)

Goals Scored in  
1st Period

0.93

(#19 of 32)

Goals Allowed in  
1st Period



# ST. LOUIS Blues

CENTRAL DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

2.37 (#24 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

80-1

The St. Louis Blues were arguably one of the biggest disappointments of last season. They missed the playoffs because they completely underperformed, but this is a pretty strong roster if you ask me. They just need more guys to step up. I think they can finish third in this division if they play up to their standards.

### OFFENSE

The biggest frustration for St. Louis this past season was the power play. After finishing with the league's second-best conversion rate in 2021-22 (27%), the Blues dropped all the way to 22nd last year (19.3%). The Blues will need their younger veterans like Jordan Krou and Robert Thomas to truly elevate their games to the next level. These two are the stars now that Ryan O'Reilly and Vladimir Tarasenko are gone. Adding another veteran in Kevin Hayes should make them stronger down the middle as well.

The Blues were very average offensively last season, but they have the personnel that can bring them success. Krou, Thomas, Hayes, Pavel Buchnevich, and Brayden Schenn can all score goals, they just need to find consistency. Torey Krug and Justin Faulk can also help provide offense from the blue line.

### DEFENSE

One of the other major reasons why the Blues weren't able to make the playoffs last season was their inability to keep the puck out of their own net. They didn't make many changes to their back-end, so I don't expect the defense to be any better this season. At the same time, they completely underperformed last season.

St. Louis finished with the sixth-worst goals against average in the league (3.63) and the eighth-worst scoring chances against per 60. Even though the team has some recognizable names on the blue line, like Krug, Faulk, and Colton Parayko, the struggles may continue in the defensive zone.

### GOALTENDING

Last season was one that Jordan Binnington would soon like to forget. That was, by far, his worst year out of the five that he's participated in for the Blues. Binnington had an .894 save percentage with a 3.31 goals against average and finished 97th with a -9.2 goals saved above expected. We've seen what he's capable of when he's at the top of his game, but the question is if he can once again find that. With the departure of Thomas Greiss, Joel Hofer will be his backup and he has only started in eight career games, so time will tell with him.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - F ROBERT THOMAS

Thomas had a very disappointing 2022-23 season, finishing with two fewer goals and 12 fewer points than the year prior. With that said, he is an electrifying young talent that was a big part of their Stanley Cup championship back in 2019. As this team's first-line center, Thomas has a ton of responsibility and this team needs him to be at his best in order to compete. He can easily be a 25+ goal scorer if he figures it out.

### OUTLOOK

At best, the Blues will be competing for a wild card position. I don't think they're strong enough to finish in the top three of the division, but I also know that they shouldn't be as weak as they were last year. Goaltending will be their biggest question mark.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

37-38-7

Over/Under

44-34-4

Against the Spread

48-34

3.17  
(#17 of 32) Goals Scored Per Game

3.63  
(#27 of 32) Goals Allowed Per Game

19.3  
(#23 of 32) Power Play Percentage

72.4  
(#30 of 32) Penalty Kill Percentage

0.79  
(#24 of 32) Goals Scored in 1st Period

0.96  
(#20 of 32) Goals Allowed in 1st Period



# TAMPA BAY Lightning

ATLANTIC DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

3.12 (#13 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

20-1

For the first time in quite a long time, the Tampa Bay Lightning had an extended summer after losing in the first round to the Toronto Maple Leafs. For some odd reason, the Lightning seem to be a bit underrated going into the 2023-24 campaign. As long as Tampa Bay has Nikita Kucherov, Steven Stamkos, Brayden Point, and Andrei Vasilevskiy, this team is going to be competitive.

### OFFENSE

Tampa Bay has been a strong offensive team for quite some time now and that narrative did not change last season. The Lightning finished eighth in goals per game (3.41) while also having the third-highest scoring chances per 60 (33.91). Point may have had the quietest 51-goal season in NHL history and of course, Kucherov put up another incredible offensive season. Tampa might not be as deep as they have been offensively due to the departures of Ross Colton, Pat Maroon, Alex Killorn, Corey Perry, and Pierre-Edouard Bellemare, but they'll be just fine feeding off of their first line and very successful man-advantage unit that finished third last season.

### DEFENSE

The 2022-23 season was a down year for the Lightning, defensively speaking. That could partially be due to the exhaustion of three straight years of runs to the Stanley Cup Final. A long summer could be very beneficial to this group, which has a strong defensive core that is highlighted by Victor Hedman and Mikhail Sergachev.

They finished in the middle of the pack in goals against (3.07) as well as their penalty kill (79.7%) and they finished toward the bottom in shots against per game (31.5). Tampa should definitely improve on their own this coming season.

### GOALTENDING

The one area that hasn't been a concern for the Lightning is their goaltending. Vasilevskiy is still the best netminder in the NHL in my opinion. He had another strong season in 2022-23, skating to 34 wins while maintaining a .915 save percentage and 2.65 goals against average, along with a league's sixth best +25.3 goals saved above expected. The Bolts brought in Jonas Johansson to be a backup, but he has only appeared in 35 games in his NHL career which leads me to think that he won't have a big impact on this group.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - F STEVEN STAMKOS

Stamkos has been an offensive weapon in almost every season of his 15-year career (all with the Lightning), but lately, he has voiced his frustrations with the lack of conversation around renewing his contract with the organization. He is entering his 16th season, and the final year of his contract with Tampa, so it will be interesting to see how that pressure affects his play. He is coming off of an 84-point season (34 goals, 50 assists), but the trade rumors are inevitable. Stamkos can still perform at a very high level and it will be fun to follow this storyline in the 2023-24 season.

### OUTLOOK

There will certainly be some drama surrounding Stamkos this season, but Vasilevskiy should be able to carry this team to the playoffs. I don't think Tampa will win the division, but they should be able to compete for the second or third spot without worrying about the wild card.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

**46-30-6**

Over/Under

**44-36-2**

Against the Spread

**39-43**

3.41

(#8 of 32)

**Goals Scored  
Per Game**

3.07

(#15 of 32)

**Goals Allowed  
Per Game**

25.4

(#3 of 32)

**Power Play  
Percentage**

79.7

(#15 of 32)

**Penalty Kill  
Percentage**

1.01

(#7 of 32)

**Goals Scored in  
1st Period**

0.84

(#12 of 32)

**Goals Allowed in  
1st Period**



# TORONTO Maple Leafs

ATLANTIC DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

3.56 (#5 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

+900

Toronto finally exercised their first-round demons this past season by defeating the Tampa Bay Lightning in six games, but that all went crashing and burning down in the second round as they went down easily to the Florida Panthers. It feels like we say every year is the "Leafs year", but this is truly the first time where I feel confident enough to say that this team could win the Eastern Conference.

### OFFENSE

The Leafs may have lost some important pieces from last year's team like Ryan O'Reilly, Michael Bunting, Alexander Kerfoot, and Noel Acciari, but I really like the pieces they brought in like Tyler Bertuzzi, Max Domi, and Ryan Reaves. Toronto is an offensive juggernaut, that's not up for debate. They have way too many weapons up front, starting with Auston Matthews, Mitch Marner, William Nylander, and the captain, John Tavares.

As a group, this team has so much potential to be scary. Last season, they finished with the second best power play in the NHL (26%), and they were in the top 10 for expected goals for per 60 (3.4). This group has the potential to be the best offensive team in the entire league this season.

### DEFENSE

Toronto has typically been known to be weaker on the defensive end, but last year was a strong season for them in their own zone. They were top 10 in multiple categories, including high-danger scoring chances against per 60 (12.05) as well as shots against per game (29.5). They added John Klingberg to their blue line, which should benefit the team on both ends of the ice, but the most important thing for this group is to stay healthy.

### GOALTENDING

Unfortunately for the Leafs, Matt Murray was put on LTIR, so the goaltending responsibilities will go to Ilya Samsonov and Joseph Woll, who took over last season. Samsonov played in 42 games and skated to a 27-10-5 record, he will be the number one guy for sure with Murray out. Samsonov boasted a .919 save percentage and a 2.33 goals-against average. Woll is a more than capable backup, he only played in seven games last season so he should have some more reps in 2023-24.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - F AUSTON MATTHEWS

This might be the obvious choice for the Leafs, but I had to pick Matthews. DraftKings had a head-to-head prop between Matthews and Connor McDavid of who will score more goals (Matthews +115) and I truly feel that Matthews can lead the league in goals this season. He has put up 40+ goal seasons in four straight years, including a 60-goal campaign in 2022-23. It can be argued that he is the greatest goal-scorer in today's NHL and he will flourish again in 2023-24.

### OUTLOOK

DraftKings Sportsbook has the Maple Leafs at +200 to win the Atlantic Division, which might not be the most incredible value, but I do think it's highly likely that they do finish on top. In fact, I would say it's possible that they compete for the President's Trophy which is at +750. This could very well be the Leafs' year.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

50-21-11

Over/Under

45-31-6

Against the Spread

39-43

3.39

(#9 of 32)

Goals Scored  
Per Game

2.68

(#7 of 32)

Goals Allowed  
Per Game

26.0

(#2 of 32)

Power Play  
Percentage

81.9

(#11 of 32)

Penalty Kill  
Percentage

1.00

(#9 of 32)

Goals Scored in  
1st Period

0.77

(#8 of 32)

Goals Allowed in  
1st Period



# VANCOUVER

## Canucks

PACIFIC DIVISION

### Steve Makinen's Power Rating

2.49 (#21 of 32)

### Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

60-1

It was somewhat of an ugly season last year in Vancouver, but the team had some improvements toward the back end of the season that they can build on going into 2023-24. It will be Rick Tocchet's first full season behind the bench for the Canucks after finishing 20-12-4 last season when he replaced Bruce Boudreau. This team has potential to sneak into the playoffs, but consistency will be their biggest task.

#### OFFENSE

Scoring goals wasn't one of the main concerns for the Canucks last season. Elias Pettersson, J.T. Miller, Quinn Hughes, and Andrei Kuzmenko can all be relied upon to post at least 70+ points, but one guy that is going to need more of a boost this season is Brock Boeser. Vancouver finished 13th in goals per game last season (3.29), but 19th in creating high-danger chances per 60 minutes. Their power play was crucial and kept them in games, but there is still room to improve on their man-advantage.

#### DEFENSE

The Canucks defense absolutely killed them last season and one of their main focuses this offseason was to make their blue line stronger. They brought in some veteran presences on the backend like Ian Cole and Carson Soucy, so they are hopeful that will strengthen this team's play in their own end. The Canucks finished in the bottom 10 for goals against per game (3.61) and their penalty kill was last in the league, skating to a 71.6% success rate. They need their man-down unit to step it up if they want to compete for a playoff spot.

#### GOALTENDING

Thatcher Demko's numbers from last season shouldn't be judged too critically. If you look at the season he had in 2021-22, Demko has the ability to take over a game in the National Hockey League and I could see him being a guy that's in the conversation for the Vezina Trophy if he can stay healthy. Spencer Martin will back him up, and he struggled in his first full NHL season, but that experience could help him going into this year. Goaltending isn't an issue for the Canucks, but Demko and Martin will most likely have nights where they need to bail out the team's defense.

#### PLAYER TO WATCH - G THATCHER DEMKO

Due to injury, Demko only appeared in 32 games last season which really hurt this team. If Demko is able to remain fully healthy in 2023-24, he can keep this team in games on nights that they fail to defend well. In 2021-22, Demko skated to a .915 save percentage while earning 33 wins. He is easily one of the better goaltenders in the league when he's at the top of his game. His ceiling is very high and if the Canucks are going to make the postseason, Demko will most likely be the main reason.

#### OUTLOOK

DraftKings currently has the Canucks at +145 to make the postseason and I love the value on that. With Tocchet behind the bench and Hughes as the new captain, this group can take a very positive leap. Hughes is a top defenseman in the league and quietly put up 76 points last season. I think he can make a run for the Norris Trophy. To me, the Canucks are a fringe playoff team and I think that they are worth investing in to make the postseason at +145.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

**38-37-7**

Over/Under

**41-38-3**

Against the Spread

**48-34**

3.29

(#13 of 32)

**Goals Scored  
Per Game**

3.61

(#25 of 32)

**Goals Allowed  
Per Game**

22.7

(#11 of 32)

**Power Play  
Percentage**

71.6

(#32 of 32)

**Penalty Kill  
Percentage**

1.05

(#3 of 32)

**Goals Scored in  
1st Period**

1.18

(#31 of 32)

**Goals Allowed in  
1st Period**



# VEGAS

## Golden Knights

PACIFIC DIVISION

### Steve Makinen's Power Rating

**3.38** (#8 of 32)

### Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

**12-1**

Winning back-to-back Stanley Cups is never an easy task for anyone, but the Golden Knights essentially have the same group that won it this past spring. Vegas will once again compete for the Pacific Division title.

#### OFFENSE

Vegas had a very interesting 2022-23 regular season. They weren't all that dominant offensively, finishing in the middle of the pack for goals per game (3.26) and power play success (20.3%), but they really turned it on in the playoffs (4.00 goals per game) and they can carry that momentum into 2023-24. Vegas is a very deep team, especially down the middle with Jack Eichel, Chandler Stephenson, and William Karlsson. Goal-scoring won't be an issue for the Golden Knights, but staying healthy after winning the Stanley Cup will be something to look out for.

#### DEFENSE

Team defense is the Golden Knights' bread and butter. They finished in the top five at allowing high-danger chances against per 60 minutes and under Bruce Cassidy, they have become a flawless team when it comes to defensive structure. Starting with Alex Pietrangelo, their core is as strong as they come in the NHL. We saw it more in the playoffs than we did during the regular season, but since they didn't make any changes to their blue line, I expect this team to continue that trend of being strong in their own end.

#### GOALTENDING

Adin Hill made himself a household name during the Cup run last season, but the question is if he will be able to sustain that for a full regular season. He only appeared in 27 games last season, but he was very strong and earned 16 wins while skating to a .915 save percentage and a 2.50 goals against average. Luckily for Vegas, they will have a strong backup in Logan Thompson, who had an incredible rookie season before being injured. Thompson played in most of their games last season, boasting a .915 save percentage as well and earning 21 wins. Hill and Thompson need to prove that last season wasn't a fluke.

#### PLAYER TO WATCH - F JACK EICHEL

Eichel finally quieted his haters this past season. He led the team in points during the regular season (66 P in 67 GP) and continued that into the playoffs, leading all skaters with 26 points in 20 games. Now that he got his Cup, Eichel can play more of a stress-free game and I am very excited to see how he follows up last season. He has solidified himself as one of the best centers in the NHL and I could see him putting up 80+ points if he stays healthy.

#### OUTLOOK

There's no denying that the Golden Knights should return to the playoffs. I think that they will compete for a top-three spot in the division, but I don't see them winning it this year. The regular season could be tough for them after a long playoff run and shortened summer, but this group will be scary yet again next spring.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

**51-22-9**

Over/Under

**45-33-4**

Against the Spread

**33-49**

**3.26**  
(#14 of 32)

**Goals Scored  
Per Game**

**2.74**  
(#11 of 32)

**Goals Allowed  
Per Game**

**20.3**  
(#18 of 32)

**Power Play  
Percentage**

**77.4**  
(#19 of 32)

**Penalty Kill  
Percentage**

**1.06**  
(#2 of 32)

**Goals Scored in  
1st Period**

**0.70**  
(#3 of 32)

**Goals Allowed in  
1st Period**



# WASHINGTON Capitals

METROPOLITAN DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

2.22 (#25 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

80-1

There's going to be a very interesting dynamic this season for the Washington Capitals. After missing the playoffs last season, the Capitals have hired a new head coach in Spencer Carbery, who is only 41 years old and he is in this role for the first time in his NHL career. This team hasn't won a playoff round since the year they won the Stanley Cup in 2018, so they are hungry, but their competitive window is starting to close.

### OFFENSE

Everyone knows that the Capitals have the best offensive player to ever lace up the skates in Alex Ovechkin, but the Capitals aren't the offensive juggernaut that we've seen over the past 15 years anymore. They're a bit of an older group nowadays, but having Nicklas Backstrom and Tom Wilson fully healthy will definitely boost the team offensively. Last season, Washington finished with the 16th-best power play, which is very uncharacteristic of them in the Ovechkin era, so there is plenty of room to improve on that front. The Capitals should perform better than they did in 2022-23, but I don't expect the improvement to be drastic.

### DEFENSE

It's fair to say that the Capitals blue line is perfectly average. John Carlson has been a staple of this defensive core his entire NHL career, and it really hurt them last season that he only participated in 40 games. Having him back and ready to go is huge for this group, but they don't have other names that truly jump off of the page. They were slightly below average last season, mostly due to injuries, so they should improve this season, but they'll still struggle to keep pucks out of their own net.

### GOALTENDING

Darcy Kuemper is entering his second full season with the Capitals and he is hopeful that it will be much better than the first one. He appeared in 57 games and earned only 22 wins, but he didn't have much help in front of him as the Capitals allowed 12.31 high-danger chances against per 60. Charlie Lindgren is a solid backup, but he could also be better as well considering that his save percentage was below .900. The goaltending won't steal them any games, but they should be better than last year.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - F ALEX OVECHKIN

There has been so much chatter over the years about if Ovechkin can realistically beat Wayne Gretzky's goal record of 894, and now that he is entering this season with 822, it seems like it's only a matter of when, not if that he will break it. He put up 42 goals last season, so I have no doubt that he will flirt with that total again in 2023-24. Watching Ovechkin play is must-watch television now that he is cutting close to Gretzky. He is only 72 goals away.

### OUTLOOK

The Capitals are heavily favored to miss the playoffs at -320 at DraftKings Sportsbook and I happen to agree that their window with this core has shut. They have a solid team, but the Metropolitan Division and the Eastern Conference as a whole is just too strong. They'll be competitive, but I don't see them finishing above eight other teams. But with that said, it will be exciting to watch them due to Ovechkin's scoring race.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

**35-37-10**

Over/Under

**47-32-3**

Against the Spread

**43-39**

3.09

(#20 of 32)

Goals Scored  
Per Game

3.18

(#18 of 32)

Goals Allowed  
Per Game

21.2

(#16 of 32)

Power Play  
Percentage

81.9

(#12 of 32)

Penalty Kill  
Percentage

0.76

(#25 of 32)

Goals Scored in  
1st Period

0.85

(#14 of 32)

Goals Allowed in  
1st Period





# WINNIPEG Jets

CENTRAL DIVISION

## Steve Makinen's Power Rating

2.66 (#19 of 32)

## Odds to Win the Stanley Cup

50-1

The Winnipeg Jets are going to have a much different look to their group this season. They were eliminated by the eventual Stanley Cup champion Golden Knights in the first round of the playoffs, and then lost two key members to their roster in Blake Wheeler and Pierre-Luc Dubois this offseason. This is still a good team, but the organization is certainly going through some changes.

### OFFENSE

Losing two out of the team's top five scorers never seems like a good thing, but the Jets still have a ton of offensive firepower. Kyle Connor is one of the most underrated players in the league. Mark Scheifele still has some game in him and they brought in Gabriel Vilardi and Alex Iafallo from the Los Angeles Kings.

The Jets finished at the top of the league last season in expected goals per 60 minutes, but they totally underperformed, as they were actually toward the bottom of the league in goals per game and power play success.

### DEFENSE

Josh Morrissey had a breakout season last year (76 P in 78 G) and it was very surprising that he wasn't nominated as a Norris Trophy finalist. The Jets defensive core is solid; it's not the strongest, but not the weakest either. They were strong last season, skating to the top of the league in scoring chances against per 60 and they also had the league's seventh-best penalty kill. They didn't make any offseason moves to strengthen this core, but the group they have now is solid enough to sneak them into a wild card position.

### GOALTENDING

Connor Hellebuyck is the first player that most people think of when they think of the Jets and for good reason. He was the 2020 Vezina Trophy winner as the league's best goalie and he could definitely have his name in the conversation for that award almost every season. The Jets brought in Laurent Brossoit as his backup for his second stint in Winnipeg. Brossoit helped the Golden Knights win the Stanley Cup this past season, starting in eight postseason games before getting injured. Winnipeg will have a very strong goalie tandem with these two.

### PLAYER TO WATCH - G CONNOR HELLEBUYCK

Hellebuyck has been the backbone of this team since entering the league, but there are a ton of questions about the potential of him being traded if things don't go well for the Jets this season. Their success lies in his hands. He had a strong season last year, earning 37 wins with a .920 save percentage and a 2.49 goals against average. He also had the fourth-best goals saved above expected at +30.8. Hellebuyck is easily one of the best goalies in the league when he's at the top of his game, but there will be a ton of outside noise about this season. I'm interested to see how he handles it.

### OUTLOOK

The Jets culture is the most concerning thing to me. They had a rocky finish last season and their head coach Rick Bowness wasn't shy to call out some of the players. If they struggle out of the gate, things could get ugly really quick. On the flip side, if they can figure out the internal issues and come together, this can be a strong group.

## 2022-23 IN REVIEW

Record (W-L-OTL)

**46-33-3**

Over/Under

**42-37-2**

Against the Spread

**42-39**

3.00

(#21 of 32)

Goals Scored  
Per Game

2.73

(#10 of 32)

Goals Allowed  
Per Game

19.3

(#22 of 32)

Power Play  
Percentage

82.4

(#7 of 32)

Penalty Kill  
Percentage

0.84

(#22 of 32)

Goals Scored in  
1st Period

0.78

(#9 of 32)

Goals Allowed in  
1st Period