TEAM STORYLINES AND KEY PLAYERS

2025-26

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Anaheim Ducks
The Ducks enter the 2025-26 season with one of the youngest rosters in the League, but with a wealth of experience behind the bench in new head coach **Joel Quenneville**, who has three Stanley Cup championships and the second most wins by a head coach in NHL history (behind **Scotty Bowman**). The new coach will look to help a young group take the next step, including star forwards **Mason McTavish** (age 22), **Cutter Gauthier** (age 21) and **Leo Carlsson** (age 20), and halt the longest playoff drought in franchise history (last appearance: 2017-18). **Chris Kreider** and **Mikael Granlund**, veteran forwards with playoff experience signed via free agency, will join the young core alongside captain **Radko Gudas** and goaltender **Lukas Dostal** – who both will head to the Olympics as they were each named to Team Czechia's preliminary roster in June.

Player Focus: Leo Carlsson, Chris Kreider

Boston Bruins
Just three years removed from a season in which they set an NHL record for wins (65 in 2022-23), the Bruins start a campaign without at least one of their two longtime leaders and the last remnants of their most recent Stanley Cup-winning team in 2011, **Patrice Bergeron** (retired after 2022-23 season) or **Brad Marchand** (traded to Florida in 2024-25). It will be the first time since 2002-03 that neither player is in the lineup for Boston's opening game. Filling the leadership void will be five-time 40-goal scorer **David Pastrnak**, who enters the season nine goals shy of 400, and standout two-way defenseman **Charlie McAvoy**, who could climb as high as fifth on the Bruins all-time points list by a blueliner this season. Both Pastrnak (Team Czechia) and McAvoy (Team USA) were named to preliminary rosters for the Olympics, as was forward **Pavel Zacha** (Team Czechia). The new era will also include a new coach, **Marco Sturm**, the first German-born head coach in NHL history and a former Bruin (302 GP from 2005-06 to 2009-10).

Player Focus: David Pastrnak, Charlie McAvoy

Buffalo Sabres
The Sabres look to snap the NHL's longest active playoff drought (last appearance: 2010-11), with one of the youngest rosters in the League captained by **Rasmus Dahlin**. Already named to Team Sweden's Olympic roster, Dahlin is one of two Buffalo defensemen selected first overall in the NHL Draft (also: **Owen Power**) and ranks second in goals among defensemen over the past three seasons. Up front, Team USA Olympic hopeful **Tage Thompson** has scored 40 goals in two of the last three seasons and possesses one of the hardest shots in the League, including an NHL EDGE-era record 106.00 mph slap shot registered last season.

Player Focus: Rasmus Dahlin, Tage Thompson

Calgary Flames
The Flames were the closest non-playoff team to the postseason in 2024-25, with a standings tiebreaker keeping them from their first playoff appearance since 2021-22. Calgary returns with much of the same core in tact, including breakout goaltender **Dustin Wolf**, the Calder Trophy runner-up last season. Now the franchise's No. 1 netminder, Wolf will look to lead the Flames back into the postseason before his new seven-year contract kicks in for 2026-27. Veteran **Nazem Kadri**, Calgary's scoring leader in each of the last two seasons, enters year four of his seven-year deal on the verge of the 1,000 games played milestone. One intriguing add to the back end could be **Zayne Parekh**, the ninth overall pick in the 2024 NHL Draft. Parekh made his NHL debut last season, scoring a goal and a plus-3 rating in his lone Flames appearance after leading OHL defensemen in points for the second consecutive season (33-74—107 in 61 GP). Forward **Martin Pospisil**, who signed a three-year contract extension in July, will head to the Olympics with Team Slovakia.

Player Focus: Dustin Wolf, Nazem Kadri

Carolina Hurricanes
The Hurricanes have qualified for the playoffs in each of the last seven seasons, tied for a franchise record, and in 2024-25 advanced to the Conference Finals for the third time during that stretch – though they still pursue their first Stanley Cup Final appearance since winning in 2005-06. Led by head coach **Rod Brind'Amour**, the team known for its consistency and hard-working style returns with many key veterans including **Sebastian Aho**, **Andrei Svechnikov**, **Jaccob Slavin** and captain **Jordan Staal** alongside a slew of impact forwards age 23 or younger including **Seth Jarvis** (age 23), **Jackson Blake** (age 22) and **Logan Stankoven** (age 22). Two key off-season acquisitions include eight-time 20-goal scorer **Nikolaj Ehlers** up front and two-way defenseman **K'Andre Miller** on the back end. Aho (Team Finalnd), Ehlers (Team Denmark) and goaltender **Frederik Andersen** (Team Denmark) were named to preliminary Olympic rosters in June.

Player Focus: Seth Jarvis, Sebastian Aho

Chicago Blackhawks
The Blackhawks have had 11 first-round draft picks in the last four years, including a top-three selection in each of the previous three, with those high-end prospects expected to take on more prominent roles as the franchise starts its Centennial year with what will likely be the NHL's youngest roster in 2025-26. Led by 20-year-old **Connor Bedard** (No. 1 in 2023), who has paced the team in points in each of his two NHL seasons, the Blackhawks will look for **Artyom Levshunov** (No. 2 in 2024) to become a permanent fixture on the blueline after averaging over 20:00 of time on ice across his 18 NHL games in 2024-25. Forward **Frank Nazar** (No. 13 in 2022), who signed a seven-year extension in August (kicking in for the 2026-27 campaign), was invited to Team USA's Olympic Orientation Camp, as was Bedard for Team Canada. They will vie to join Olympic-bound teammate **Lukas Reichel** (Team Germany).

Player Focus: Connor Bedard, Artyom Levshunov

Colorado Avalanche
The Avalanche are set to shine on NHL and Olympic ice this season with three-time 100-point scorer **Nathan MacKinnon** (Team Canada), defending Norris Trophy winner **Cale Makar** (Team Canada), captain **Gabriel Landeskog** (Team Sweden) and forward **Martin Necas** (Team Czechia) each having secured a spot at the Games. After an emotional return from injury in the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs, Landeskog will compete in his first NHL regular-season game since Colorado's Cup-winning season of 2021-22. MacKinnon, who was named MVP of the 4 Nations Face-Off last February, needs 34 points to surpass **Peter Stastny** for second place on the Avalanche/Nordiques' all-time points list behind **Joe Sakic**. Makar could become the third defenseman in NHL history with three consecutive 90-point seasons – he would join **Bobby Orr** (6 from 1969-70 to 1974-75) and **Paul Coffey** (4 from 1982-83 to 1985-86 and 3 from 1988-89 to 1990-91).

Player Focus: Nathan MacKinnon, Cale Makar

Columbus Blue Jackets
The Blue Jackets pushed until the end of an inspiring 2024-25 season, closing with a six-game winning streak but ultimately finishing as the first team outside the playoffs in the Eastern Conference. **Zach Werenski**, who starred for USA at the 4 Nations Face-Off by leading all skaters in points, is a strong candidate to be back playing for his country at the Olympics and will look to build on a 2024-25 campaign in which he set single season records for goals (23), assists (59) and points (82) by a Blue Jackets defenseman. Werenski also finished in second place for points among NHL defensemen and in Norris Trophy voting, behind **Cale Makar** (COL) in each. Forward **Adam Fantilli** finished his sophomore NHL season on a four-game goal streak and, after at least doubling his goal (31) and point (54) totals in 2024-25, can become the second Columbus player with consecutive 30-goal seasons after **Rick Nash**. Goaltender **Elvis Merzlikins** enters his seventh season six shy of 100 career wins (a feat achieved by only one goaltender in franchise history) and will return from his Olympic debut (Team Latvia) with sights set on leading Columbus to its first playoff appearance since 2019-20.

Player Focus: Zach Werenski, Sean Monahan

Dallas Stars
After falling in the Conference Finals for a third consecutive season, the Stars will take another crack at a Stanley Cup with largely the same roster in tact – but now with a new (returning) leader behind the bench in head coach **Glen Gulutzan**, who held the same role with Dallas from 2011-12 to 2012-13. Dallas' big acquisition came at the 2025 NHL Trade Deadline, when they secured high-scoring forward **Mikko Rantanen** who went on to lead the team in postseason scoring highlighted by his historic Game 7 performance. Rantanen joins a collection of Finnish star players on Dallas – he has already been named to the nation's Olympic team alongside defensemen **Miro Heiskanen** and **Esa Lindell**. **Roope Hintz** could join his fellow Finns in Italy after skating with them at the 4 Nations Face-Off last season, a campaign in which he notched his fourth consecutive 20-goal season and finished fourth in team scoring behind high-profile players **Matt Duchene, Jason Robertson** and **Wyatt Johnston.**

Player Focus: Mikko Rantanen, Wyatt Johnston

Detroit Red Wings
The Red Wings are starting their Centennial year celebration and the franchise that has witnessed greatness from **Gordie Howe**, **Steve Yzerman** and **Nicklas Lidstrom** are expected to be part of a new piece of history, with forward **Patrick Kane** only 32 points away from passing **Mike Modano** for the most all-time points by a U.S.-born player in NHL history. Modano has held the mark since passing **Phil Housley** on Nov. 7, 2007. Kane will also be aiming to return to the Olympics with Team USA after previous appearances in 2010 (silver) and 2014 – he along with Red Wings captain **Dylan Larkin** were both part of the country's Olympic Orientation camp in August. **Lucas Raymond** (Team Sweden), who has led the team in points for two straight seasons, and **Moritz Seider** (Team Germany), Detroit's highest-scoring defenseman in three of the last four seasons, were named to preliminary Olympic rosters.

Player Focus: Patrick Kane, Lucas Raymond

Edmonton Oilers
It is expected to be another year of milestones and starring on the international stage for the Oilers duo of **Connor McDavid** and **Leon Draisaitl**, as they take another crack at a championship after falling in back-to-back trips to the Stanley Cup Final. McDavid, who has already been named to Team Canada's Olympic roster after scoring the overtime-clinching goal at the 4 Nations Face-Off in February, enters the 2025-26 campaign 18 points from 1,100; 39 goals shy of 400; and 79 assists from 800. Draisaitl, named to Team Germany's Olympic roster, enters the campaign one goal shy of 400 and needs 44 points to reach the 1,000-point milestone. Draisaitl's father, **Peter Draisaitl**, also skated for Germany at the Olympics in 1998, 1992 and 1988. Across the 10 seasons McDavid and Draisaitl have played together, they have combined to win two Maurice "Rocket" Richard Trophies, five Ted Lindsay Awards, four Hart Trophies and six Art Ross Trophies.

Player Focus: Connor McDavid, Leon Draisaitl

Florida Panthers
The Panthers will look to become the first team in 43 years, and sixth in NHL history, to win three consecuteve Stanley Cups, a feat last achieved by the Islanders (4 straight from 1980-83). They will do so with largely the same roster after locking up key members of their latest championship: Conn Smythe Trophy winner **Sam Bennett**, Trade Deadline acquisition **Brad Marchand** and 2014 No. 1 pick **Aaron Ekblad** all agreed to forego unrestricted free agency and re-sign with the team. Alongside them are two-time champions including captain **Aleksander Barkov**, **Matthew Tkachuk**, **Sam Reinhart** and **Sergei Bobrovsky**. The Panthers led all team with eight players who participated in the 4 Nations Face-Off, and are set to have a big presence on Olympic rosters with Tkachuk (Team USA), Reinhart (Team Canada), Barkov (Team Finland) and **Uvis Balinskis** (Team Latvia) named to preliminary rosters.

Player Focus: Matthew Tkachuk, Brad Marchand

Los Angeles Kings
The Kings were one of the top defensive teams in the NHL in 2024-25, ranking second in goals against while playing a complete game backstopped by Vezina Trophy finalist **Darcy Kuemper**. In the playoffs, Los Angeles was elimnated in the First Round by Edmonton for the fourth consecutive year and will aim to remedy that with two key pieces from those Oilers teams: **Ken Holland** takes over as general manager and longtime rival **Corey Perry** joins the roster after appearing in the Stanley Cup Final in five of the past six seasons. The key to L.A.'s success will still lean heavily on veterans from the Cup years in **Anze Kopitar** (playing what could be his final NHL season and 30 points shy of passing **Marcel Dionne** for the most in franchise history) and **Drew Doughty**, as well as impact forwards **Quinton Byfield**, **Adrian Kempe** and **Kevin Fiala**. Kempe (Team Sweden) and Fiala (Team Switzerland) were named to preliminary rosters for the Olympics.

Player Focus: Anze Kopitar, Quinton Byfield

Minnesota Wild
The Wild have played in the postseason in 11 of the last 13 campaigns but last won a series in 2015. Minnesota will seek a deeper run with the help of full seasons from offensive star **Kirill Kaprizov** (who missed 41 games in 2024-25 but scored 40 goals in each of the three prior seasons) and two-way forward **Joel Eriksson Ek** (who missed 36 games last season but had his first 30-goal campaign in 2023-24). The lineup was infused with Stanley Cup pedigree with the addition of veteran forwards **Vladimir Tarasenko** (2019 & 2024) and **Nico Sturm** (2022 & 2025), the latter heading for his first Olympics with Team Germany. Another bump could come from high-profile rookie defenseman **Zeev Buium** (age 19), who is set for his NHL regular-season debut after skating in four games with Minnesota during the 2025 playoffs. Buium's resume already includes an NCAA championship won in his first of two seasons at the University of Denver (2023-24), as well as two gold medals at the World Junior Championship (2024 & 2025) and a World Championship Gold Medal (2025).

Player Focus: Kirill Kaprizov, Matt Boldy

Montreal Canadiens
In 2024-25, the Canadiens sat last place in their conference as late as Dec. 16 before rallying all the way back to become the youngest team to qualify for the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs. They did so on the backs of career-high point production from captain **Nick Suzuki**, high-scoring forward **Cole Caufield** and 2022 No. 1 pick **Juraj Slafkovský**, as well as the emergence of Calder Trophy-winning defenseman **Lane Hutson**. Slafkovský will play for Team Slovakia at the Olympics after being named tournament MVP in 2022 when he led all players in goals and points (tied) to help his country secure bronze – its first Olympic medal for ice hockey. Montreal will attempt to qualify for the postseason in back-to-back years for the first time since 2019-20 to 2020-21 – and first time across 82-game seasons since the Wild Card format was introduced in 2014-15 – and take another step with the addition of veteran defenseman **Noah Dobson** (acquired in a trade with the Islanders) and a full season from top prospect **Ivan Demidov**, the No. 5 pick in the 2024 NHL Draft who scored during his League debut in April and played in all five Montreal playoff games.

Player Focus: Lane Hutson, Nick Suzuki

Nashville Predators
After a booming offseason prior to the 2024-25 campaign that saw the team add veteran forwards **Steven Stamkos**, **Jonathan Marchessault** and defeneseman **Brady Skjei**, the Predators had a quieter offseason in the summer of 2025 – though they did add towering defenseman **Nicolas Hague** in a trade with the Golden Knights. Nashville will aim for a return to the postseason – where they have been in nine of the last 11 campaigns – and avoid missing the playoffs in consecutive seasons for the first time in a dozen years (they last did so from 2012-13 to 2013-14). They will rely on a core that includes Olympic-bound stars in captain **Roman Josi** (Team Switzerland) and No. 1 goaltender **Juuse Saros** (Team Finland).

Player Focus: Roman Josi, Filip Forsberg

New Jersey Devils
The Devils made a 10-point improvement in the standings in 2024-25, the first under head coach **Sheldon Keefe**, before being eliminated in the First Round of the playoffs while missing key players like **Jack Hughes** and **Luke Hughes** in the postseason due to injury. The Hughes brothers – both vying to join oldest sibling **Quinn Hughes** (VAN) on Team USA's Olympic roster – will be key contributors as the Devils seek consecutive postseason appearances for the first time since a 13-season run from 1996-97 to 2009-10. Devils players will be front and center for the NHL's return to the Olympics, with captain **Nico Hischier**, **Timo Meier** and **Jonas Siegenthaler** already named to Team Switzlerland's roster, and **Simon Nemec** (Team Slovakia) and **Ondrej Palat** (Team Czechia) also set to represent their country.

Player Focus: Jack Hughes, Luke Hughes

New York Islanders
A fresh start on Long Island will include a rookie general manager in **Mathieu Darche**, armed with the most recent first overall draft selection in defenseman **Matthew Schaefer**. Schaefer was the fifth No. 1 pick in Islanders history and the second defenseman, following franchise icon and four-time Stanley Cup champion **Denis Potvin**. The last line of defense will again be star goaltender **Ilya Sorokin**, who has the fourth-highest save percentahe (tied) since entering the League in 2020-21 and needs six wins to move into third place on the all-time franchise list. The returning cast of key forwards includes 2024-25 Islanders leading scorer **Bo Horvat**, flashy forward **Mathew Barzal** as well as captain and nine-time 20-goal scorer **Anders Lee**.

Player Focus: Matthew Schaefer, Anders Lee

New York Rangers
The Rangers will start their Centennial year celebration with a new captain (**J.T. Miller**) and new head coach (**Mike Sullivan**; Team USA) as they seek a playoff return after missing for the first time since 2020-21. Outside of departing veteran forward **Chris Kreider** and the addition of minute-munching defensman **Vladislav Gavrikov**, the Rangers will have a returning core of goaltender **Igor Shesterkin**, defenseman **Adam Fox**, and forwards **Will Cuylle**, **Alexis Lafreniere**, Miller, **Artemi Panarin**, **Mika Zibanejad**. Zibanejad is approaching the 1,000 games played milestone, while Panarin (600 assists), Shesterkin (200 wins) and Sullivan (500 wins) are pursuing benchmarks of their own.

Player Focus: Artemi Panarin, J.T. Miller

Ottawa Senators
The Senators broke a seven-season playoff drought in 2024-25 on the backs of a young core of stars led by captain **Brady Tkachuk** (age 26), high-scoring forward **Tim Stützle** (age 23) and defenseman **Jake Sanderson** (age 23). Tkachuk (Team USA) and Stützle (Team Germany) have already been named to their country's preliminary Olympic roster, while Sanderson played for the Americans in the 4 Nations Face-Off last February and was part of its Olympic Orientation Camp in August. After breaking the aforementioned playoff drought, next-step goals for the Senators this season include qualifying for the postseason in back-to-back years (last accomplished 2011-12 to 2012-13) and to win a playoff round for the first time since 2017 (when they came within one goal of securing a spot in the Stanley Cup Final).

Player Focus: Brady Tkachuk, Tim Stützle

Philadelphia Flyers
The biggest change in Philadelphia is behind the bench, where **Rick Tocchet** – a Flyers fan favorite during his playing days – takes over as head coach. Tocchet skated for 11 seasons with the Flyers across two stints (232-276—508 in 621 GP) and is two seasons removed from capturing the Jack Adams Trophy as head coach of the Canucks (2023-24). Tocchet looks to guide Philadelphia to the postseason for the first time since 2019-20, with a roster that includes sophomore **Matvei Michkov** (the 2024-25 rookie goals leader), veteran forward **Travis Konecny** (the team points leader in each of the last four seasons), flashy new forward **Trevor Zegras**, all skating in front of defensemen **Travis Sanheim** (who won a championship alongside Konecny at the 4 Nations Face-Off) and **Cam York** (who signed a five-year contract in July). Konecny can be the second player in Flyers history to lead the team in points in at least five consecutive seasons; he would join **Bobby Clarke** (6 from 1970-71 to 1975-76).

Player Focus: Matvei Michkov, Travis Konecny

Pittsburgh Penguins
While the 2025-26 season is expected to be a season of growth in Pittsburgh, it is also slated to be a milestone year for two of its biggest stars. **Sidney Crosby**, who will again skate for Team Canada at the Olympics, enters the campaign 13 points from the 1,700-point milestone and 37 points from surpassing **Mario Lemieux** for the most in Penguins history. Crosby (21st season), alongside **Evgeni Malkin** (20th season) and **Kris Letang** (20th season) will skate in their 20th season together as teammates – a first for any trio of NHL teammates and a run that includes three Stanley Cup championships. They are the highest scoring teammate trio in NHL history (3,703 combined points since 2006-07), while Crosby and Malkin (2,931 combined points since 2006-07) are the second-highest scoring teammate duo all-time behind **Wayne Gretzky** and **Jari Kurri** (3,054 points). After reaching the 200-goal milestone last season, **Erik Karlsson** needs 30 points to become the 14th defenseman in NHL history to reach 900 and 30 assists to become the 12th blueliner to 700.

Player Focus: Sidney Crosby, Erik Karlsson

San Jose Sharks
The focus in San Jose remains on the young core that includes three standout forwards who were top-10 picks in the NHL Draft: **Macklin Celebrini** (age 19; No. 1 in 2024), **Will Smith** (age 20; No. 4 in 2023) and **William Eklund** (age 22; No. 7 in 2021) – with **Michael Misa** (age 18; No. 2 in 2025) also on the horizon. The young Sharks will be supported by a crop of veterans added during the offseason, including **Jeff Skinner** and **Ryan Reaves** at forward and **John Klingberg** and **Dmitry Orlov** on defense. Celebrini, Eklund and Smith were three of San Jose's top producers last season in a grouping that included veteran leader **Tyler Toffoli**. The Sharks and Blackhawks are the only two clubs that have held a top-five pick in each of the previous three drafts.

Player Focus: Macklin Celebrini, Will Smith

Seattle Kraken
The Kraken enter their fifth NHL season looking to recapture the excitement of their playoff year of 2022-23, with changes including new general manager **Jason Botterill** (**Ron Francis** remains with the team as President of Hockey Operations) and new head coach **Lane Lambert**. Forward **Mason Marchment** was acquired via trade after being a key contributor to helping the Stars make three straight trips to the Conference Finals. Coming off back-to-back 20-goal seasons, Marchment joins a group that includes a mix of veterans (**Jordan Eberle**, **Jared McCann**, **Chandler Stephenson, Jaden Schwartz**) and under-25 skaters (**Shane Wright**, **Matty Beniers**, **Kaapo Kakko**). In his first season in Seattle, **Brandon Montour** set a career high with 18 goals in 2024-25 and helped the Kraken produce the third most goals from defensemen (tied). They all skate in front of a goaltending duo with Olympic aspirations: **Joey Daccord** was part of Team USA's Olympic Orientation Camp in August and **Philipp Grubauer** has already been named to Team Germany.

Player Focus: Brandon Montour, Matty Beniers

St. Louis Blues
The Blues rallied from an eight-point deficit at the 4 Nations Face-Off break to secure the League's best post-tournament record (19-4-3) and lock in their first postseason appearance since 2021-22 – then proceeded to take the Presidents' Trophy-winning Jets to double overtime of Game 7 in the First Round. All the key pieces from last season remain for 2025-26, including holdovers from their 2019 Stanley Cup-winning team: goaltender and franchise wins leader **Jordan Binnington**, leading scorer **Robert Thomas**, captain **Brayden Schenn** and top minute-munching defenseman **Colton Parayko**. Binnington and Parayko helped Canada win the 4 Nations championship in February and were joined by Thomas at Team Canada's Olympic Orientation Camp in August as they look to impress **Doug Armstrong** (GM for the Blues and Canada) on both the international and NHL stages in 2025-26.

Player Focus: Robert Thomas, Jordan Binnington

Tampa Bay Lightning
The Lightning have won 52 playoff games and two Stanley Cup championships since 2019-20, tied with the state rival Panthers for the most in the League in both categories over that span. With a history of success and a hunger to advance past the opening round of the playoffs for the first time since 2022, the Lightning are bringing back a familiar roster that will lean on that championship pedigree, including eight players who were part of both their Stanley Cup championships in 2020 and 2021. Highlights of that list are back-to-back Art Ross Trophy winner **Nikita Kucherov**, Conn Smythe Trophy winners **Victor Hedman** and **Andrei Vasilevskiy**, and four-time 40-goal scorer **Brayden Point**. The Lightning already have five players who have secured an Olympic roster spot: Point (Team Canada), Hedman (Team Sweden), **Erik Cernak** (Team Slovakia), **Oliver Bjorkstrand** (Team Denmark) and **Zemgus Girgensons** (Team Latvia), as well as **Jon Cooper** who will serve as head coach for Team Canada. Kucherov is six points shy of 1,000 in his career and could become the seventh player to claim the Art Ross Trophy in three consecutive seasons.

Player Focus: Brayden Point, Victor Hedman

Toronto Maple Leafs
The Maple Leafs extended their streak of postseason appearances to nine – the longest active run in the NHL and the club's longest in the expansion era (since 1967-68) – but were eliminated in the Second Round for the second time in three seasons. After taking the eventual Cup-winning Panthers to seven games, the Maple Leafs began an offseason of change that saw 2024-25 leading scorer **Mitch Marner** traded to the Golden Knights. Top goal scorers and soon-to-be Olympians **William Nylander** (Team Sweden) and **Auston Matthews** (Team USA) will lead a forward group that includes returnees such as **John Tavares** and **Matthew Knies** (who both signed new deals this summer) and newcomers including **Nicolas Roy** (from VGK), **Mattias Maccelli** (from UTA) and **Dakota Joshua** (from VAN). Another potential addition is 2025 Memorial Cup MVP **Easton Cowan**. Matthews enters the campaign 20 goals from surpassing **Mats Sundin** for the all-time franchise record – no active player currently holds the all-time goals (or points) mark for an Original Six franchise.

Player Focus: Auston Matthews, William Nylander

Utah Mammoth
With a team name and logo finalized, the Mammoth now look to follow in the footsteps of the last two franchises to join the League before them: qualify for the playoffs within their first two seasons, after Vegas (season 1) and Seattle (season 2) both did so. Captain **Clayton Keller** (age 27), who had a career-high 90 points in 2024-25, leads a dynamic group of young forwards that includes **Logan Cooley** (age 21) and **Dylan Guenther** (age 22), both of whom registered career highs for goals and points last season, and newly-acquired 23-year-old forward **JJ Peterka**, who has 55 goals across his past two campaigns. On defense, the Mammoth signed 2025 Stanley Cup champion **Nate Schmidt** via free agency, strengthening a blue line already packed with Cup-winning pedigree in the form of **Mikhail Sergachev** (2020 & 2021), **Ian Cole** (2016 & 2017) and **Olli Maatta** (2016 & 2017).

Player Focus: Clayton Keller, Logan Cooley

Vancouver Canucks
Captain **Quinn Hughes** has major goals and milestones on the horizon entering the 2025-26 season, including attempting to earn gold at the Olympics (he was part of Team USA's preliminary roster), leading the Canucks back to the playoffs (they missed last season after advancing to the 2024 Second Round) and becoming the club's all-time points leader among defensemen (he needs one point to claim the record outright). In addition to looking for bounceback years from forward **Elias Pettersson** and goaltender **Thatcher Demko**, Vancouver will welcome the return of **Brock Boeser** (who chose to remain in Vancouver on a seven-year deal after testing free agency) and add former division rival **Evander Kane** (a nine-time 20-goal scorer). Kane hails from Vancouver and played junior hockey for the Vancouver Giants, with whom he won a WHL championship (2006) and Memorial Cup (2007). A new look behind the bench will put **Adam Foote** in the head coaching role following three seasons as an assistant to **Rick Tocchet** (PHI).

Player Focus: Quinn Hughes, Brock Boeser

Vegas Golden Knights
The Golden Knights have made the playoffs in all but one of their eight seasons to date, including five trips past the opening round (they fell to Edmonton in the 2025 Second Round) and two trips to the Stanley Cup Final (2018 & 2023). Vegas has developed a reputation for making big moves, and they did so again this offseason with the addition of 100-point scorer **Mitch Marner** in a trade with Toronto. Marner joins a team that ranked fifth in offense last season, led by **Jack Eichel** who set a career high and franchise record with 94 points in 2024-25. The two also figure to be prominent players at the Olympics, with Eichel already named to Team USA's roster and Marner an attendee at Team Canada's orientation camp after playing a key role in the country's 4 Nations Face-Off championship (OT winner in opener and primary assist on championship-clinching OT goal). Three years removed from their Stanley Cup win in 2023, key players from that championship run remain as part of the Vegas core: goaltender **Adin Hill**, captain **Mark Stone**, defenseman **Shea Theodore** and original "Misfits" **William Karlsson** and **Reilly Smith**.

Player Focus: Jack Eichel, Mitch Marner

Washington Capitals
The predominant storyline of the Capitals' 2024-25 season was **Alex Ovechkin**'s pursuite and ultimate claiming of the NHL all-time goals record from **Wayne Gretzky**, but it also included the franchise's first division title since 2019-20 and first time as the conference's top seed since 2016-17. The Capitals can continue to use Ovechkin's storied career as motivation to chase another division title, high seed and Stanley Cup – "The Great 8" needs three goals to become the first player to reach 900; sits 43 from passing Gretzky for the most career NHL goals, including playoffs; needs 19 points to overtake **Joe Sakic** and enter the top 10 on the NHL all-time points list; and is 77 points shy of 1,700 in his career (a milestone reached by only eight players, with longtime rival **Sidney Crosby** also closing in). Washington will look for many key players to build on strong 2024-25 campaigns, including **Dylan Strome** (led team with career-best 82 points), **Tom Wilson** (first career 30-goal season and Team Canada Olympic Orientation Camp invitee), **Aliaksei Protas** (30-goal scorer and +40 rating, tops among NHL forwards) and **Logan Thompson** (career-best 31 wins). **Martin Fehérváry** (Team Slovakia) is currently Washington's lone Olympic-bound player.

Player Focus: Alex Ovechkin, Tom Wilson

Winnipeg Jets

The Jets claimed plenty of hardware in 2024-25, securing the franchise's first Presidents' Trophy as the No. 1-ranked team during the regular season as well as its first Hart Trophy, won by goaltender **Connor Hellebuyck** who also captured his third Vezina Trophy and second consecutive/career William M. Jennings Trophy. Despite a historic comeback victory in Game 7 of the 2025 First Round, the Jets remain in pursuit of the first Stanley Cup in franchise history and will vie for it with a roster loaded with impact players. Skating in front of Hellebuyck are **Mark Scheifele**, who sits nine points from surpassing **Blake Wheeler** for the franchise record, after claiming the goals benchmark last season; seven-time 30-goal scorer **Kyle Connor**, who ranked seventh in the NHL for both goals (41; tied) and points (97) in 2024-25; and top defenseman **Josh Morrissey**, who has hit 60 points in each of the last three seasons. The Jets lost high-scoring forward **Nikolaj Ehlers** (CAR) to free agency but added three-time Stanley Cup-winning captain and hometown hero **Jonathan Toews, who will return to the NHL** following a two-season absence to recover from illness (last game: April 13, 2023 w/ CHI). Hellebuyck (Team USA), Connor (Team USA), Scheifele (Team Canada) and Morrissey (Team Canada) all are in the mix for Olympic roster spots after orientation camp invites, and will look to head to Italy alongside teammate **Nino Niederreiter** (Team Switzerland), the all-time NHL goals and games played leader among Swiss players.

Player Focus: Connor Hellebuyck, Jonathan Toews

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