

After the [NHL's brightest stars descended upon Toronto](#) and more than [150,000 fans attended two outdoor hockey games](#) at MetLife Stadium within a 24-hour period, all eyes are now on the rush to the 2024 Stanley Cup Playoffs as the League enters the final quarter of the 2023-24 regular season. The NHL will reach the three-quarter mark (984 GP) when the Blues visit the Islanders on Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. ET on ESPN+ and Hulu.

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## **HONING IN ON THE HOME STRETCH**

\* The NHL is averaging 6.2 goals-per-game, with 42% of games ending as comeback wins. This will mark the fifth time over the last six seasons that the League has averaged over 6.0 goals per game at this stage of the campaign (6.3 in 2022-23; 6.2 in 2021-22; 5.9 in 2020-21; 6.1 in 2020-21 & 6.1 in 2019-20).

\* The Art Ross Trophy race features three skaters on pace for at least 130 points. It has been more than 30 years since the last campaign with at least three [130-point players](#).

\* After hitting the [50-goal mark in his 54th game](#), **Auston Matthews** has a significant edge in pursuit of his third Maurice "Rocket" Richard Trophy as he vies for the first [70-goal campaign](#) since 1992-93 and first ever by a U.S.-born player.

\* The Canucks, Flyers, Predators and Red Wings all occupy playoff positions after failing to qualify in 2022-23. Vancouver has one postseason appearance in the past eight seasons (2019-20), Philadelphia has two in the past seven seasons (2019-20 & 2017-18), Detroit has gone seven straight seasons without qualifying and Nashville had an eight-season run end last year.

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# LEADERS OF THE PACK



\* All players in the mix for the Maurice “Rocket” Richard Trophy and Art Ross Trophy have had [significant streaks this season](#), including [lengthy home point streaks](#) by both **Nathan MacKinnon** (30 GP) and **Connor McDavid** (25 GP) – both of which are active entering the final quarter. MacKinnon’s is the second-longest home point streak *from the start of a season* in NHL history behind **Wayne Gretzky** (40 GP in 1988-89 w/ LAK) – the only player in the past 102 years to notch a point in *all* his team’s home games in a campaign.

*In pursuit of the Maurice “Rocket” Richard Trophy*

\* **Auston Matthews** enters the final quarter with nine more goals than the next-closest skater (**Sam Reinhart**: 44) and has done so thanks in part to a [franchise-record six hat tricks](#) – the [most by any NHL player](#) since **Mario Lemieux** in 1995-96. It has been more than 30 years since a player had at least seven hat tricks (**Alexander Mogilny**: 7 in 1992-93 w/ BUF).

\* Matthews (53 goals) next pursues a second [60-goal campaign](#), achieved by only [eight different players in NHL history](#). He can join Ovechkin (9x) as the second active player to win the Maurice “Rocket” Richard Trophy [at least three times](#) and the 13th in NHL history to lead the League in goals on three separate occasions. Ten players have done so *in the League’s modern era* (listed below) along with two before that: Toronto forwards **Charlie Conacher** (5x) and **Babe Dye** (4x).

## MOST SEASONS AS NHL GOALS LEADER

MODERN ERA (SINCE 1943-44), OUTRIGHT OR TIED

PLAYER	SEASONS
ALEX OVECHKIN	9
BOBBY HULL	7
PHIL ESPOSITO	6
WAYNE GRETZKY	5
GORDIE HOWE	5
MAURICE RICHARD	5
PAVEL BURE	3
TEEMU SELANNE	3
MARIO LEMIEUX	3
BRETT HULL	3



\*Auston Matthews (2x) can join this list

*In pursuit of the Art Ross Trophy*

\* After nearly one month with **Nikita Kucherov** as the outright leader in the [Art Ross Trophy](#) race, **Nathan MacKinnon** took the pole position Monday (based on the goals tiebreaker). Kucherov and MacKinnon are the only players to at least share the scoring lead since the NHL resumed play after U.S. Thanksgiving (9 days tied, 5 days outright for MacKinnon, 89 days outright for Kucherov) – though three-time reigning winner **Connor McDavid** is hot on their heels.

**Nathan MacKinnon (39-66—105 in 63 GP)**: On pace for 136 points, he would become the eighth player to capture his *first* Art Ross Trophy at age 28 or older – a list that includes the only player in [franchise history](#) to win

(**Peter Forsberg**: age 29 in 2002-03). The first time in his 11-season career that he held the outright lead in points (at any stage of a season) was Jan. 20.

**Nikita Kucherov (38-67—105 in 62 GP)**: On pace for 137 points, he can become the [second Lightning player](#) with multiple Art Ross Trophy wins and fourth active player to earn it more than once. When Kucherov claimed the award in 2018-19, he set a career high with 128 points – the first player in 13 years with [more than 120 points in a season](#). Since then, two others have hit the mark and three are on pace to do so in 2023-24.

**Connor McDavid (23-74—97 in 57 GP)**: On pace for 136 points, he can become the seventh different player with consecutive [130+ point seasons](#) (and first in more than 30 years). McDavid is seeking his fourth straight Art Ross Trophy – streaks attained by **Wayne Gretzky** (7), **Jaromir Jagr** (4), **Phil Esposito** (4) and **Gordie Howe** (4) – [and sixth overall](#). His climb up the scoring race has seen him move from [outside the top 100 entering play Nov. 20](#) to third place entering the final quarter – despite [significant gaps](#) between him and the League leader along the way.

**WILL CONNOR CLIMB ALL THE WAY UP?**

Connor McDavid trailed the NHL scoring leader by as many as 22 points this season. Only 3 players have won the Art Ross Trophy after facing a deficit of more than 20 points at any point: Peter Forsberg (32 in 2002-03), Mario Lemieux (23 in 1987-88) and Bobby Hull (22 in 1961-62).

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## THE PURSUIT OF THE PRESIDENTS' TROPHY

\* The [2023-24](#) campaign is the fifth since 2013-14 (when the Wild Card format was introduced) in which at least the top six teams have been separated by five or fewer points after each playing 60-plus games (also [2013-14](#), [2014-15](#), [2016-17](#) & [2017-18](#)). Before that, it had occurred in only three campaigns ([1992-93](#), [2003-04](#) & [2006-07](#)).

\* Florida's victory Feb. 29 propelled them into first place in the NHL standings for the first time since they won the Presidents' Trophy in 2021-22. They are among a group of five teams to occupy the League's No. 1 seed since Jan. 1: Vancouver (42 days), Winnipeg (10 days), Florida (5 days), Boston (4 days) and NY Rangers (3 days).

**PURSUIT FOR THE PRESIDENTS' TROPHY**

Among seasons to span calendar years, only 4 have seen 5+ teams hold the No. 1 seed in the NHL from Jan. 1 onward: 2003-04 (7), 2021-22 (6), 2011-12 (5) and 2023-24 (5).

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\* The top six entering the final quarter includes two Canadian clubs, two Original Six franchises and two teams from the Sun Belt (both of whom reached the Conference Finals in 2023). Only three of the six have [won the Stanley Cup](#), with the others claiming only [three of the past 50 championships](#): Boston (2011), Dallas (1999) and NY Rangers (1994).

**Florida Panthers (42-16-4, 88 points):** Can become the first franchise to debut in the 1990s or later to have multiple [Presidents' Trophy](#) wins. The last team to lose in the Final and then finish as the No. 1 seed was Boston in the COVID 19-condensed 2019-20 campaign; the last before them was Nashville in 2017-18.

**Boston Bruins (36-13-14, 86 points):** Can finish first overall in consecutive seasons for the [first time in more than 50 years](#) and become the seventh different team to win the [Presidents' Trophy](#) in consecutive seasons.

**Vancouver Canucks (39-17-7, 85 points):** Can become the third team in the NHL's modern era (since 1943-44) to finish first overall after missing the playoffs (1993-94 NYR & 1969-70 CHI) and become the first Canadian club to win the [Presidents' Trophy](#) three times.

**New York Rangers (40-18-4, 84 points):** Can join Detroit (6) and Boston (4) as the third team to win the [Presidents' Trophy](#) four times as they pursue a Stanley Cup 30 years after their last championship in 1993-94 (when they also claimed their second of three [first-overall finishes](#) in the League's modern era, since 1943-44).

**Winnipeg Jets (39-16-5, 83 points):** Can become the fifth different Canadian team to win the [Presidents' Trophy](#) and first in a dozen years (CGY, EDM, VAN: 2x; OTT: 1x) as they pursue the third top-10 finish in [franchise history](#) (2nd in 2017-18 & 10th in 2018-19).

**Dallas Stars (37-17-9, 83 points):** Can claim the [Presidents' Trophy](#) for the first time in 25 years – following back-to-back wins in 1997-98 and 1998-99 – and become the sixth franchise to win at least three times. They are among a group of eight teams to win the Presidents' Trophy and Stanley Cup in the same season.

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# RUSH TO THE PLAYOFFS



\* All teams outside the playoff picture but within seven points of the bracket have at least one game in hand on the club holding the last Wild Card spot. The last team to overcome a deficit of *six or more points in their final 20 games of a season* to make the playoffs was Colorado in 2018-19 ([they were six points out after their 71st game](#)).

**Metropolitan Division:** The Islanders (3), Capitals (3), Devils (2) and Penguins (4) all have multiple games in hand on the Flyers, who rank third in the Metropolitan Division and have the same number of points as the two Eastern Conference Wild Card teams. Their deficits behind Philadelphia range from six to 10 points.

**Central Division:** The difference between first place and third place in the Central Division has been five points or less for all but four days this season (97% of 2023-24). Winnipeg, Dallas and Colorado have occupied the top three spots for the past four months and for 88% of the season overall (129 of 147 days), taking turns as the No. 1 seed.

**Atlantic Division:** After the Panthers rallied from a 3-1 series deficit to eliminate the record-setting, Presidents' Trophy-winning Bruins in the First Round [last year](#), the two clubs have been the only teams to hold the No. 1 seed in the Atlantic since the third week of the season. The gap between them has been less than five points for 24 straight days.

**Pacific Division:** The reigning Stanley Cup champion Golden Knights occupied first place in the Pacific Division for all but two days until late December when the Canucks overtook them to start what is now a 75-day run as the No. 1 seed. Vancouver holds a nine-point edge on Edmonton, who have four games in hand. The Oilers trailed the lowest-ranked playoff team in the Western Conference by as many as 10 points this season (entering U.S. Thanksgiving).

\* There have been 19 instances in NHL history of a team making the playoffs after being 10 or more points outside the playoff picture at any point. Three of those rallies came under the Wild Card format (since 2013-14, excluding 2020-21), including the largest in NHL history (14 points by OTT in 2014-15) and the only instance of a team winning the Stanley Cup after being 10-plus points outside the playoffs.

**UPDATE:** A previous version of the graphic below was missing the 2020-21 Predators, who overcame a maximum deficit of 11 points under a [playoff format](#) adopted to accommodate scheduling needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic.



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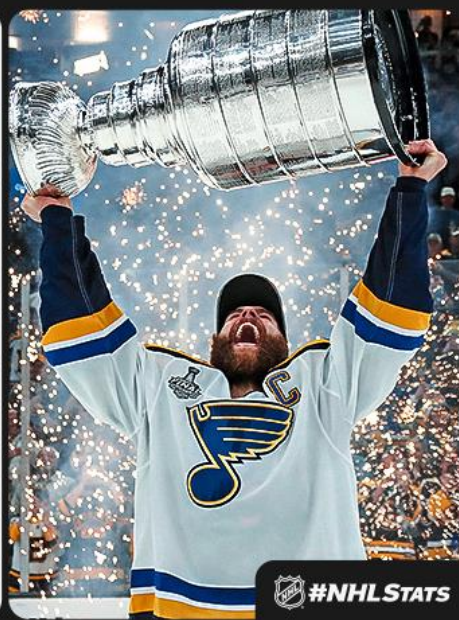
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# LARGEST STANDINGS DEFICITS OVERCOME TO MAKE PLAYOFFS

LAST 30 YEARS (SINCE 1993-94)



TEAM	SEASON	LATEST DATE OF DEFICIT	POINTS DEFICIT
OTTAWA SENATORS	2014-15	FEB. 9, 2015	14
NEW YORK ISLANDERS	1993-94	JAN. 31, 1994	12
NASHVILLE PREDATORS	2020-21	MARCH 6, 2021	11
ST. LOUIS BLUES*	2018-19	JAN. 2, 2019	11
ST. LOUIS BLUES	2008-09	JAN. 30, 2009	11
SAN JOSE SHARKS	2005-06	DEC. 1, 2005	11
LOS ANGELES KINGS	2001-02	DEC. 8, 2001	11
CALGARY FLAMES	1995-96	NOV. 25, 1995	11
CAROLINA HURRICANES	2018-19	JAN. 3, 2019	10
BUFFALO SABRES	2010-11	JAN. 17, 2011	10
WASHINGTON CAPITALS	2007-08	DEC. 9, 2007	10



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\*Only team in NHL history to win Stanley Cup after being 10+ points out of playoffs at any point in season

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## YOU CAN CUE THE COMEBACKS

\* To date, **42% of games have been comeback wins** which stands as a top-three rate at this stage of a campaign in NHL history (980 GP). That equates to **412 comeback wins**, a top-five count at this stage behind 2005-06 (429), 2018-19 (420), 2022-23 (419) and 2019-20 (416). The single-season record is 551 in 2021-22.

\* The **116 multi-goal comeback wins** are the third most at this stage of a season (980 GP) behind 1985-86 (123 in 840 GP) and 2022-23 (117). The single-season NHL record is 143 in 2022-23.

\* The **176 third-period comeback wins** are tied with 2014-15 for the second most at this stage of a season behind 2006-07 (181). The single-season NHL record is 228 in 2006-07.

\* The **37 multi-goal, third-period comeback wins** are among the top five in NHL history at this stage of a season behind 2022-23 (48), 2019-20 (40), 2009-10 (39) and 2013-14 (38). The single-season NHL record is 56 in 2022-23.

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## ATTENDANCE, RATINGS REMAIN STRONG

\* The League is on track to set an [attendance record](#) for a second straight season after 22,436,532 caught the action in 2022-23, with NHL teams currently playing to 97% capacity in 2023-24 – the second-highest rate ever at this stage of a campaign behind 98% in 2012-13.

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\* NHL fans came out in strong numbers from the start, with teams playing to 95% capacity in October, and momentum has built throughout the season with per-game attendance above 17,400 in December, January and February. That figure has increased to 17,940 to date in March – up 5% relative to the first month of the season (17,044 in October).

\* So far in 2023-24, **48.2 million fans across North America have watched NHL games, up 8% from last season.** In the U.S., audiences are up 25% from last season across ABC, ESPN and TNT (515,000 average viewers). Across Canada, Hockey Night in Canada is up 7% YOY (1.23 million), and TVA Sports on Saturday night (Montreal Canadiens) is up 6% YOY (546,000 average audience). The rush to the Stanley Cup Playoffs will take center stage over the final seven weeks of the season, with plenty of key matchups slated for national telecasts.

# NOTABLE GAMES

## MARCH

MARCH 9 • 10 ET  VS  CBC, CITY, SPORTSNET, TVAS

MARCH 14 • 7:30 ET  VS  ESPN+, HULU

MARCH 23 • 8 ET  VS  ABC, ESPN+

MARCH 30 • 12:30 ET  VS  NHL NETWORK, SPORTSNET

## APRIL

APRIL 7 • 10 ET  VS  ESPN, SPORTSNET

APRIL 10 • 8:30 ET  VS  TNT, MAX, SPORTSNET

APRIL 18 • 9:30 ET  VS  ESPN, SPORTSNET ONE, TVAS

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## THE 'EDGE' ON THEIR OPPONENTS



\* The top three goal scorers in the NHL also happen to make up the top three for high-danger goals according to [NHL EDGE](#), with **Zach Hyman** (35) topping that list followed by **Sam Reinhart** (30) and **Auston Matthews** (25). Hyman became the 11th player in NHL history to record his first 40-goal season at age 31 or older and second active player to do so after **Matt Duchene** in 2021-22.

\* Rookie **Luke Hughes** set the fastest skating speed by a defenseman in 2023-24 during the first of two games as part of the [2024 Navy Federal Credit Union NHL Stadium Series](#) and then [bested his own mark 10 days later](#) by producing a max skating speed of 24.19 mph on Feb. 27. He still ranks second among all skaters in terms of max speed recorded by [NHL EDGE](#) in 2023-24, behind forward **Owen Tippett** (24.19 on Jan. 10).

\* [NHL EDGE](#) shows that Colorado's **Alexandar Georgiev** (402) and Vancouver's **Thatcher Demko** (385) enter the home stretch of the season ranked first and second in the League in shots-against from the high-danger zone, with Demko posting the third-highest save percentage in that territory (.842; tied) and best among netminders with

40-plus games played. Georgiev is tied for the League lead in wins in 2022-23 and shares the current pace of 31 victories with Demko and Florida's **Sergei Bobrovsky**.

**THREE-WAY SHARE OF WINS LEAD**

Alexandar Georgiev (2022-23) can become the first Avalanche/Nordiques goaltender to at least share the NHL wins lead multiple times. Sergei Bobrovsky (2021-22) is the only Panthers goaltender to top the list and Thatcher Demko can become the third Canucks goaltender to do so.

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## BY THE NUMBERS: THE FINAL QUARTER OF 2023-24

**425,000** – Running donation total by AstraZeneca to the Hockey Fights Cancer Fund of the V Foundation; they will contribute \$5,000 for every hat trick in 2023-24, up to \$500,000 (click here for more information). The **85 hat tricks to date** are the most at this stage of a season since 1995-96 (91) and 17 shy of the highest end-of-season total recorded over the past 30 years (102 in 2021-22). The single-season NHL record for hat tricks is 139 in 1981-82.

**103** – Number of assists **Connor McDavid** is on pace to record in 2023-24. Only three players have had **100+ helpers in a season**: **Wayne Gretzky** (11x), **Mario Lemieux** and **Bobby Orr**.

**43.2** – Percent of penalty shot attempts that have resulted in goals in 2023-24 (16-of-37). The last campaign to feature a penalty-shot conversion rate of at least 40.0% was 1999-00 (40.0%; 16-of-40).

**30** – Years since the NHL has had a 60-goal scorer in three straight seasons. [Click here](#) for more on 60-goals campaigns.

**19** – Number of points needed by **Sidney Crosby** (32-31—63 in 59 GP) to guarantee his 19th career point-per-game season and tie **Wayne Gretzky** for the most such campaigns in NHL history. He also needs 14 points to match **Ray Bourque** for 11th place [all-time](#) and 25 to match **Phil Esposito** for 10th place.

**16** – Consecutive goals scored by **Sam Reinhart** from [Jan. 6 to March 4](#) that were either power-play or shorthanded tallies, the longest streak of special-teams goals in NHL history. Reinhart became the second player in League history with at least [25 power-play goals and five shorthanded goals in a season](#) (**Mario Lemieux**: 2x).

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**12** – Number of No. 1 picks from the NHL Draft who have [gone on to lead their team in scoring the season after being drafted](#) – a feat last achieved by **Auston Matthews** in 2016-17. [Eighteen-year-old Connor Bedard](#) paces Chicago with 41 points despite missing 14 games due to injury.

**10** – Number of players on pace for 100+ points (plus another three tracking toward 97-plus point campaigns). Eleven players hit triple digits in 2022-23, which marked the highest count since 1995-96 (12).

**5** – Defensemen on pace to record 80 points in 2023-24 (**Quinn Hughes, Cale Makar, Noah Dobson, Roman Josi** and **Evan Bouchard**). The only season in NHL history that had at least five blueliners with [80-plus points in a season](#) was in 1992-93 (6).

**4** – Teams that made a coaching change during the 2023-24 season who are currently in a playoff position or within six points of the bracket (EDM, LAK, STL & NYI). Since the Blues won the Stanley Cup in 2018-19 following an in-season coaching change, nine others have played in the postseason after making a head coach change during the regular season: 2021-22 Panthers & Oilers; 2020-21 Canadiens; 2019-20 Maple Leafs, Predators, Flames, Stars, Wild and Golden Knights. The Stanley Cup Final has included a team that made a coaching change three times in the past five years (2019 STL, 2020 DAL & 2021 MTL).

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