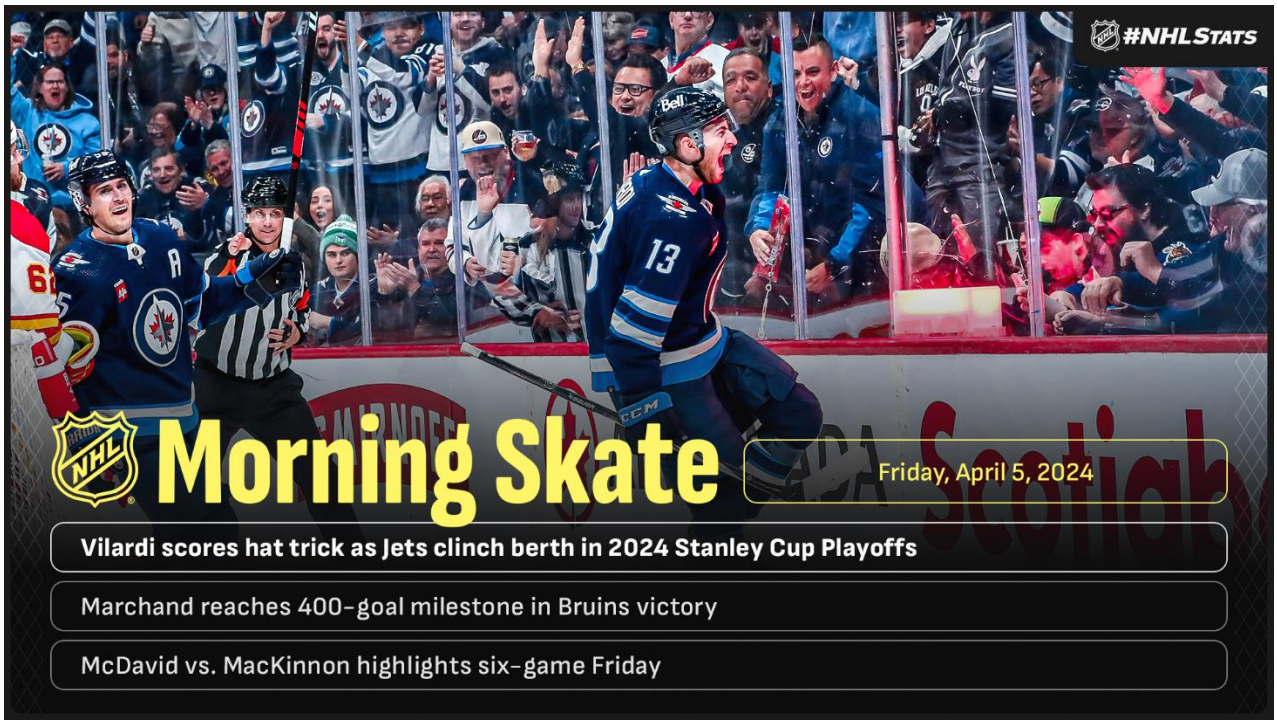
NHL MORNING SKATE – APRIL 5, 2024



* **Gabriel Vilardi** scored a hat trick to cap off a night that saw the Jets become the eighth team to clinch a berth in the 2024 Stanley Cup Playoffs.

* **Brad Marchand** became the fifth player in franchise history to reach the 400-goal milestone as the Bruins were one of a trio of Atlantic Division clubs to pick up wins during Thursday's nine-game slate.

* A six-game Friday will feature a TVA Sports doubleheader that pits **Nathan MacKinnon** and the Avalanche against **Connor McDavid** and the Oilers – the second- and third-ranked players in the 2023-24 Art Ross Trophy race.



WINNIPEG WORKS ITS WAY INTO ANOTHER PLAYOFF BERTH

Winnipeg had a lot to celebrate Thursday as **Gabriel Vilardi** scored his first career hat trick to help the Jets become the eighth team to secure a spot in the 2024 Stanley Cup Playoffs – their sixth postseason appearance in the past seven years.

* Vilardi became the fifth different Jets player to score a hat trick this season, following **Mark Scheifele** (March 19), **Sean Monahan** (Feb. 19), **Kyle Connor** (Nov. 9, 2023) and **Nino Niederreiter** (Nov. 4, 2023). The 2023-24 campaign became the third in franchise history to feature five different players score a hat trick (also 5 in 2018-19 & 2017-18).

* **Connor Hellebuyck**, who made 31 saves in Thursday's victory, owns every postseason win for the club (17) and can become the first goaltender in NHL history to claim each of a franchise's *first 18 playoff wins* (he enters 2024 tied with **Georges Vezina** who had Montreal's first 17 NHL playoff wins from 1918 to 1925). Click here for more on Winnipeg's postseason clinch.



TOP ATLANTIC DIVISION CLUBS SKATE TO WINS THURSDAY

The Atlantic Division playoff race continued to heat up as the Bruins (45-17-15, 105 points) and Panthers (48-24-5, 101 points), who rank first and second in the division, each picked up wins while the Lightning (43-26-7, 93 points), currently in a Wild Card spot, moved within two points of the idle third-place Maple Leafs (43-23-9, 95 points). Florida and Boston are set to go head-to-head for the final time this season on Saturday (3 p.m. ET on ABC, ESPN+, Sportsnet & TVA Sports).

* **Brad Marchand** opened the scoring with his 400th career goal – becoming the fifth player in Bruins history to reach the milestone – and **David Pastrnak** scored the game winner to move within three of his second 50-goal season as the Bruins gained ground on the idle League-leading Rangers (51-21-4, 106 points). Pastrnak's 60th career game winner tied **Ray Bourque** for the fifth most in franchise history – he trails **Johnny Bucyk** (88), **Patrice Bergeron** (81), Marchand (77) and **Phil Esposito** (77).

* **Matthew Tkachuk** (1-2—3) factored on three of his team's six goals, including one of their two tallies in the opening 1:37 of the game, while **Sergei Bobrovsky** made 30 saves to help the Panthers blank the Senators and eclipse the 100-point mark for just the third time in franchise history. In the process, **Paul Maurice** recorded his 865th career win and surpassed **Lindy Ruff** (864) for sole possession of fourth place on the League's all-time wins list among head coaches.



* Tkachuk recorded his 23rd three-point game with the Panthers and moved into a tie with **Pavel Bure** for the fourth most in franchise history behind only **Aleksander Barkov** (52), **Jonathan Huberdeau** (49) and **Olli Jokinen** (29).

* **Nikita Kucherov** (1-2—3) recorded another three-point game to boost his 2023-24 totals to 43-90—133 (75 GP) and maintain his lead atop the Art Ross Trophy race as the Lightning defeated the Canadiens to improve to 11-2-1 (.821 P%) since the beginning of March, trailing only Dallas (12-2-0, .857 P%) for the League's best points percentage over that span. Kucherov joined **Connor McDavid** (29-97—126 in 72 GP) as just the second player to reach the 90-assist mark this season.

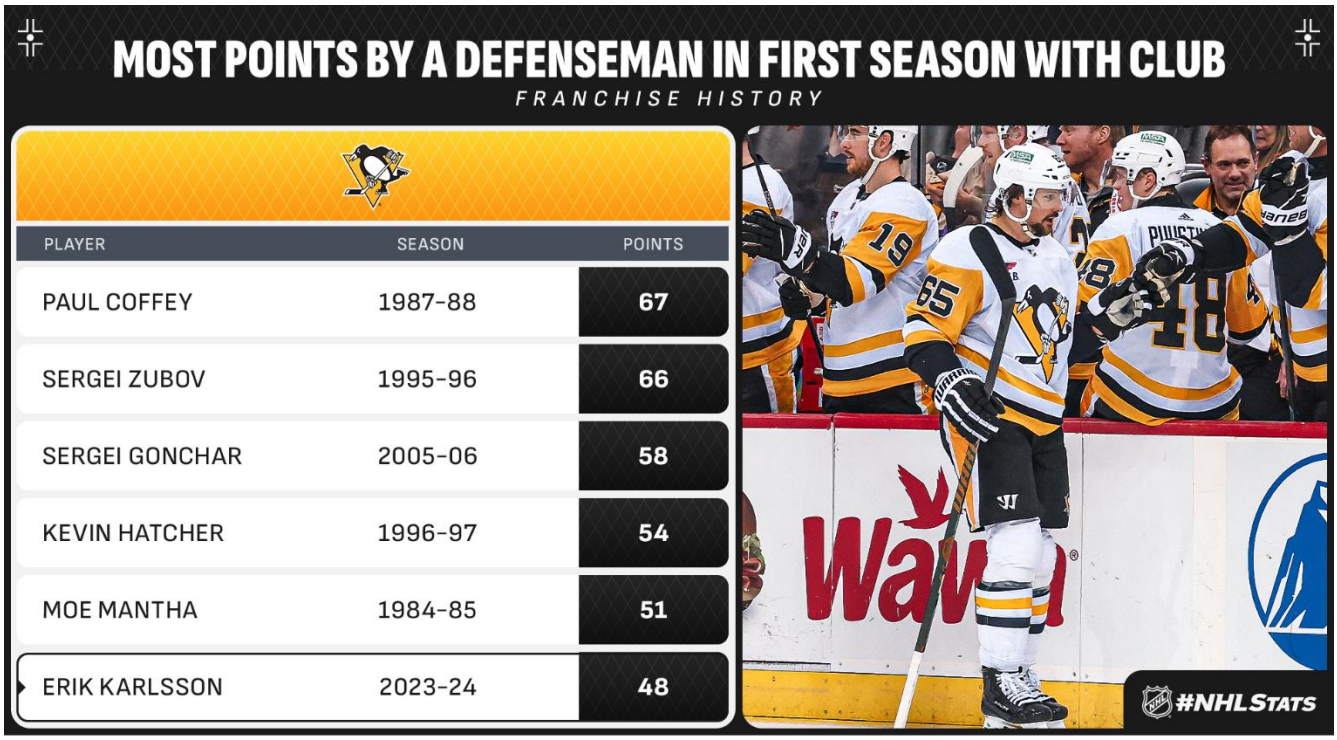


WILD CARD HOPEFULS CONTINUE THEIR PURSUIT

Two Eastern Conference Wild Card hopefuls, the Islanders (34-27-15, 83 points) and Penguins (35-30-11, 81 points), both earned wins – for eighth-seeded New York, it meant climbing into a playoff position for the first time since March 15, while for Pittsburgh it meant moving within two points of a spot. Both clubs have six games remaining in 2023-24 and will face each other in their final contest of the regular season.

* **Noah Dobson** scored his ninth career game-winning goal and tied **Ryan Pulock** as well as **Roman Hamrlik** for the third most by a defenseman in Islanders history, behind only **Denis Potvin** (44) and **Tomas Jonsson** (12).

* **Erik Karlsson** collected an assist to improve his season totals to 9-39—48 (76 GP) and help the Penguins earn a crucial win against the Capitals (36-29-10, 82 points), who are also in the midst of the Wild Card race, in a victory that knocked Washington out of the second Wild Card seed. The Penguins improved to 5-0-2 over their past seven games, which is their longest point streak since Nov. 29 – Dec. 15, 2022 (8 GP; 7-0-1). Pittsburgh will look to extend its run Saturday when it faces Tampa Bay in the first game of a doubleheader on ABC, ESPN+ and Sportsnet at 1 p.m. ET.



MACKINNON, RANTANEN HELP AVALANCHE GAIN GROUND ON IDLE STARS

Nathan MacKinnon (1-2—3) posted a three-point performance and **Mikko Rantanen** scored his 40th goal of the season as the Avalanche (48-22-6, 102 points) moved within three points of the idle Stars (48-19-9, 105 points) for the top spot in the Western Conference standings.

***** MacKinnon boosted his 2023-24 totals to 48-82—130 (76 GP) and became the second player in franchise history with 130 points in a season, joining **Peter Stastny** (1981-82: 46-93—139 in 80 GP). In the process, he also eclipsed Stastny (81 in 1985-86) for the third-most assists in a single campaign in Avalanche/Nordiques history.

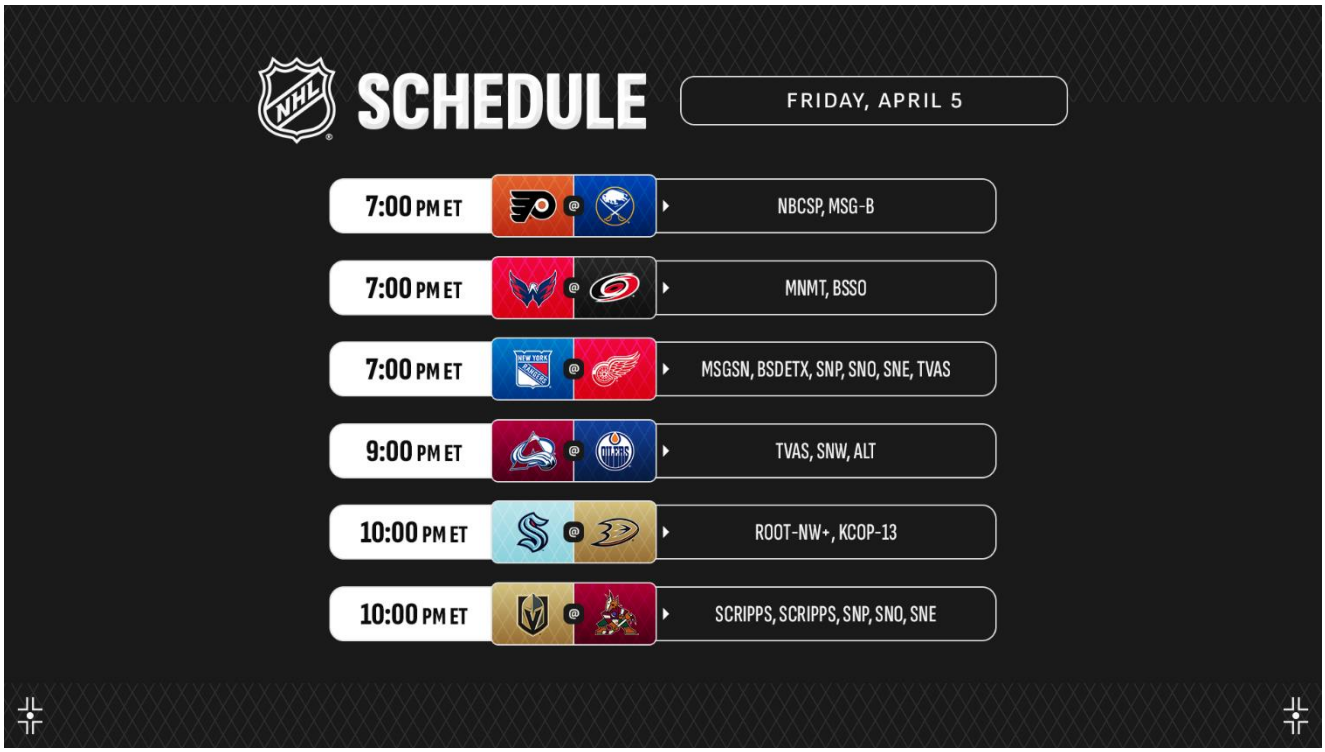


QUICK CLICKS

* #NHLStats: Live Updates – April 4
* **Willie O'Ree** Skills Weekend begins with on-ice showcase of youth players
* Young Predators fan thinks it over before super cute puck drop
* Unmasked: Trying too hard can be detrimental for goalies
* **Brandon Duhaime** reignites prank war with Fleury before matchup in Minnesota

MACKINNON, MCDAVID GO HEAD-TO-HEAD ON TVAS, SPORTSNET

A six-game Friday features multiple national broadcasts, including the League-leading Rangers (51-21-4, 106 points) taking on the Red Wings (37-30-8, 82 points), who are looking to get back inside the playoff picture, on TVA Sports and Sportsnet programming. Later on those same broadcasts, two players deep in the Art Ross Trophy race will go head-to-head when **Nathan MacKinnon** and the Avalanche (48-22-6, 102 points) take on **Connor McDavid** and the Oilers (45-24-5, 95 points).



STATS AND INFORMATION

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