

NHL MORNING SKATE: STANLEY CUP PLAYOFFS EDITION – MAY 22, 2024

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STANLEY CUP PLAYOFFS

ULTRA

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Morning Skate

Wednesday, May 22, 2024

Rangers, Panthers begin Conference Finals at Madison Square Garden

Shesterkin, Bobrovsky set to combine for NHL feat last seen more than 20 years ago

Stars and Oilers will start Western Conference Final on Thursday

* The Eastern Conference Final will begin tonight on ESPN, ESPN+, Sportsnet, TVA Sports and CBC when the Panthers and Rangers square off at Madison Square Garden in a battle between the Eastern Conference's top two seeds.

* Two of the game's top goaltenders are expected to man the pipes tonight when Vezina Trophy winners **Igor Shesterkin** and **Sergei Bobrovsky** will achieve an NHL feat that hasn't been seen in more than 20 years.

* The Oilers and Stars will contest Game 1 of their Conference Finals matchup Thursday on TNT, truTV, Max, Sportsnet, TVA Sports and CBC.

STANLEY CUP PLAYOFFS 2024

GAME 1s · CONFERENCE FINALS

EASTERN CONFERENCE FINAL



MAY 22 · 8 ET

ESPN, ESPN+,
SN, CBC, TVAS

WESTERN CONFERENCE FINAL



MAY 23 · 8:30 ET

TNT, TRUTV, MAX,
SN, CBC, TVAS

WATCH THE STANLEY CUP PLAYOFFS ON

READY FOR PUCK DROP IN THE 2024 CONFERENCE FINALS

The Eastern Conference Final is set to get underway when the Rangers, with only two losses to date, welcome the Panthers, with just three losses to this point, to Madison Square Garden at 8 p.m. ET on ESPN+, ESPN, SN, TVAS, CBC. New York has its sights set on becoming the first No. 1 seed to advance to the Stanley Cup Final since Chicago in 2013, while Florida can join Pittsburgh (2008 & 2009) as just the second team in the past 40 years to return to the championship series after losing the previous year.

* **Mika Zibanejad** (3-11—14 in 10 GP) and **Vincent Trocheck** (6-8—14 in 10 GP) co-lead the Rangers in points entering the Conference Finals, with the former having found the score sheet in all but one game of the 2024 Stanley Cup Playoffs. Zibanejad is one assist shy of at least 12 in a single postseason for the second time with the Rangers after he collected 14 in 2022 and can become the first player in franchise history to [reach the mark in multiple playoff years](#).

* **Matthew Tkachuk** (4-10—14 in 11 GP) collected an assist on Florida's series-clinching goal in the Second Round and boosted his career playoff totals to 22-31—53 (58 GP). The 26-year-old forward enters the Conference Finals within three points of tying his father, **Keith** (28-28—56 in 89 GP), in career playoff points – a total that reached its conclusion during the 2007 Stanley Cup Playoffs as a 35-year-old with the Atlanta Thrashers (1-2—3 in 4 GP).

* The 2024 Eastern Conference Final will also pit a pair of the NHL's top goaltenders against one another when two-time Vezina Trophy winner **Sergei Bobrovsky** (8-3, 2.37 GAA, .902 SV% in 2024) and 2021-22 Vezina Trophy winner **Igor Shesterkin** (8-2, 2.40 GAA, .923 SV% in 2024) square off in the postseason for the first time. The Panthers netminder holds the edge in three previous head-to-head regular-season battles (Bobrovsky: 2-0-1, 2.59 GAA, .918 SV%; Shesterkin: 1-2-0, 3.31 GAA, .890 SV%).



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WILL MASKED MEN MAKE THEIR MARK?

Two Vezina Trophy winners will go head-to-head in the round before the Stanley Cup Final for the first time since Dominik Hasek (DET) and Patrick Roy (COL) did so in 2002.

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BEEN THERE, DONE THAT: THE NHL'S FINAL FOUR

Florida and Dallas are back in the Conference Finals for a second straight year, while both New York and Edmonton return for the second time in three seasons. A quick look back on each club's last Conference Finals opener:

* The Panthers and Hurricanes dropped the puck on [Game 1 of the 2023 Eastern Conference Final](#) at 8:10 p.m. ET on May 18, 2023, and found the finish line at 1:54 a.m. ET on May 19, 2023, when Florida's **Matthew Tkachuk** scored the winning goal with 13 seconds remaining in the fourth overtime period to end the [sixth-longest game in NHL history](#) (139:47).

* One night after the Panthers and Hurricanes contested their marathon opener, the Stars and Golden Knights also went to overtime – the [first time since 2017](#) that both Conference Finals Game 1s extended past regulation. However, the extra frame lasted only 95 seconds in [Game 1 of the 2023 Western Conference Final](#) with Vegas claiming a victory on home ice to overcome a [tying goal by Jamie Benn with 1:59 remaining in regulation](#).

* The Oilers and Avalanche entered [Game 1 of the 2022 Western Conference Final](#) as the two highest-scoring teams in the 2022 Stanley Cup Playoffs, a trend that carried into the opener. The teams combined for at least three goals in every period and 14 overall in the contest, the most in any Conference Finals game in 37 years and [10th-highest scoring game in Stanley Cup Playoffs history](#) (tied). **Connor McDavid** (1-2—3) and **Leon Draisaitl** (0-2—2) combined for five points that night and 13 during the four-game series, their first trip to the final four (McDavid: 3-4—7; Draisaitl: 0-6—6).

* Like the Oilers, the Rangers also scored six goals in the opener of their last series in the final four but had a better fate as they cruised to a 6-2 victory on home ice in [Game 1 of the 2022 Eastern Conference Final](#) against the Lightning. New York's high-scoring victory one night after the 8-6 opener in the West marked the third time in NHL history – and first instance in 54 years – that both Game 1s in the round before the Final featured eight or more combined goals (also [1968 SF](#) and [1958 SF](#)).

**RECORD IN GAME 1
IN ROUND BEFORE FINAL**

Panthers: 2-0 (both on road)
Oilers: 6-4 (last win: 2006 CF at ANA)
Rangers: 14-16-2 (ties in 1927 & 1928)
Dallas Stars: 4-8 (1-5 as DAL, 3-3 as MNS)

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ENTERING THE FINAL FOUR WITH EXPERIENCE


Familiar faces make their return to the Conference Finals as each of New York, Florida, Edmonton and Dallas turn to their experienced stars with the final four of the Stanley Cup Playoffs underway Wednesday and Thursday.

* **Chris Kreider** helped the Rangers punch their ticket to the Conference Finals thanks to a natural hat trick in the third period of [Game 6 against the Hurricanes](#). Kreider (47-27—74 in 117 GP), already the franchise leader in [playoff goals](#) and six games shy of the [most in postseason franchise history](#), has notched 10 career goals in the round before the Stanley Cup Final (10 in 25 GP) – tied with **Vic Hadfield** (10 in 27 GP) for the second most in Rangers history and trailing just **Rod Gilbert** (15 in 31 GP).

MOST CAREER GOALS IN THE ROUND BEFORE THE FINAL
ACTIVE PLAYERS

STANLEY CUP PLAYOFFS 2024

PLAYER	GP	GOALS
ONDREJ PALAT	40	17
STEVEN STAMKOS	35	17
JEFF CARTER	24	13
EVGENI MALKIN	27	12
BRAYDEN POINT	18	12
NIKITA KUCHEROV	40	11
PATRICK KANE	28	10
SIDNEY CROSBY	27	10
CHRIS KREIDER	25	10



* **Matthew Tkachuk** returns to the Eastern Conference Final for the second time in as many years after the Panthers forward found the score sheet in every contest against the Hurricanes in 2023 – a stretch that included three game-winning goals (including two in overtime). Tkachuk can join **Evgeny Kuznetsov** (7 GP) and **Filip Forsberg** (6 GP) as just the third active skater to collect a point in each of his first five or more career games in the round before the Final. **Wayne Gretzky** and **Jari Kurri** (each w/ 10 GP) share the longest such stretch in NHL history.

* **Corey Perry** (7-7—14 in 40 GP) is eight wins away from his second career Stanley Cup and first in 17 years when the Ducks captured the franchise’s first championship in 2007. The Oilers could be the fifth team the 39-year-old has appeared in a game with during the round before the Final – a list that includes his opponent in 2024 (2020 w/ DAL), the Canadiens (2021) and Lightning (2023). He can become the first player to appear in the final four of the Stanley Cup Playoffs with five different teams.

* Thirty-nine-year-old duo **Ryan Suter** and **Joe Pavelski** continue their chase toward their first-ever Stanley Cup as the Stars have their sights set on returning to the Final and redeeming their loss in the 2020 championship series. Suter (1,444 GP) and Pavelski (1,332 GP) rank first and third, respectively, in regular-season games played among active players without a Stanley Cup – **Brent Burns** (1,415 GP) is the only other active skater with at least 1,300 career contests in that scenario.

MOST CAREER GAMES IN THE ROUND BEFORE THE FINAL
ACTIVE PLAYERS

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PLAYER	TEAM(S)	GP
VICTOR HEDMAN	TBL	47
RYAN MCDONAGH	NYR, TBL	45
NIKITA KUCHEROV	TBL	40
ONDREJ PALAT	TBL	40
COREY PERRY	ANA, DAL, MTL, TBL, EDM	40
ALEX KILLORN	TBL	39
STEVEN STAMKOS	TBL	35
TYLER JOHNSON	TBL	34
ANDREI VASILEVSKIY	TBL	34
PAT MAROON	ANA, STL, TBL	32
JOE PAVELSKI	SJS, DAL	31




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SECOND ROUND RECAP: 2024 STANLEY CUP PLAYOFFS

The final few days of the Second Round featured a frenzy of frenetic finishes and the round itself featured 15 one-goal games (one shy of the second-round record) and 16 road victories (a new all-time high for the round). [Click here](#) for the 10 storylines you need to know about the 2024 Second Round.

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SECOND ROUND RECAP

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QUICK CLICKS

- * [Panarin-Bobrovsky friendship to reach boundary during Eastern Final](#)
- * [NHL EDGE stats: Conn Smythe Trophy contenders](#)
- * [2024 NHL Draft order set through first 28 picks](#)
- * [2024 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs on ESPN Nets Up 15% To Conclude Second Round](#)
- * [TNT Sports sets new network records for its Second Round coverage](#)

STANLEY CUP PLAYOFFS 2024

FIRST TWO ROUNDS OF 2024 STANLEY CUP PLAYOFFS MOST-WATCHED EVER; ROUND TWO UP 12% AND IS MOST-WATCHED EVER ON CABLE

- Across the U.S., the Second Round of the 2024 Stanley Cup Playoffs is the most-watched Round 2 ever on cable, delivering an average audience of 1.546 million viewers, up 12% from 2023 (ESPN, TNT, TBS, and truTV).
- The 2024 Stanley Cup Playoffs are the most-watched Stanley Cup Playoffs through the first two rounds ever, delivering an average audience of 1.158 million viewers, up 9% YOY. (ESPN, ABC, ESPN2, TNT, TBS, and truTV).



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