

NHL MORNING SKATE: STANLEY CUP PLAYOFFS EDITION – APRIL 11, 2018



2018 STANLEY CUP PLAYOFFS BEGIN WITH THREE SERIES OPENERS

The 2018 Stanley Cup Playoffs begin tonight with three Game 1s:

A graphic titled 'TONIGHT'S SCHEDULE' for the Stanley Cup Playoffs on Wednesday, April 11, 2018. The graphic is framed by the words 'STANLEY CUP' on the left and 'PLAYOFFS' on the right. It lists three games: Minnesota vs. Winnipeg (7:00 PM ET), Philadelphia vs. Pittsburgh (7:00 PM ET), and Los Angeles vs. Vegas (10:00 PM ET). Each game entry includes the team logos, the game time, the broadcast channels, and 'GAME 1'. The bottom of the graphic features the 'ticketmaster' logo and the hashtag '#STANLEYCUP'.

EXPANSION GOLDEN KNIGHTS SET FOR HISTORIC POSTSEASON DEBUT

For the first time in 38 years – and for just the 12th time ever – a first-year NHL franchise will play in the Stanley Cup Playoffs when the expansion Golden Knights host the Kings for Game 1 of their First Round series.

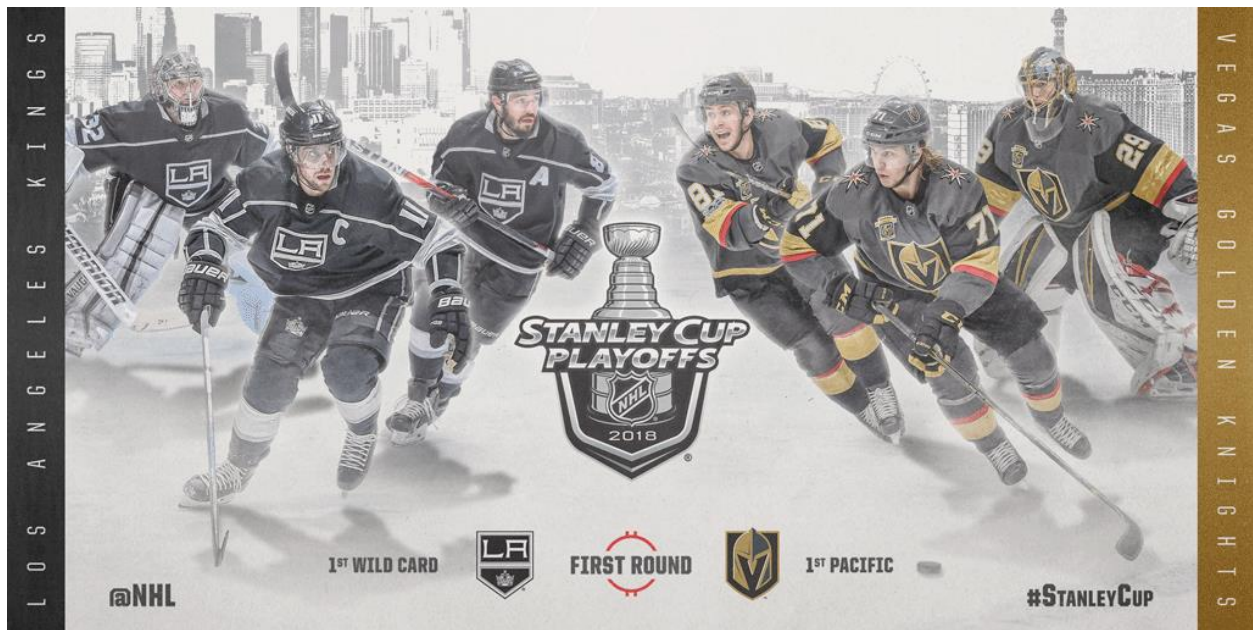
* Vegas won the Pacific Division in 2017-18 and will become just the second expansion team from any of the four North American professional sports leagues to *host* its first-ever playoff

game (since 1961; excluding 1968 Stanley Cup Playoffs). Elias notes that the Denver Nuggets also did so in the 1977 NBA Playoffs.

* The Golden Knights will make their Stanley Cup Playoffs debut on home ice, six months and one day after playing their first regular-season game at T-Mobile Arena, a victory that was part of their [record-setting season](#). The historic matchup also represents a “full-circle” moment for the two clubs – whose arenas are only 266 miles apart – as they met in Vegas’ first-ever home preseason game on Sept. 26.

* Three-time Stanley Cup champion **Marc-Andre Fleury** of the Golden Knights has 115 career playoff games to his credit, tied with **Glenn Hall** for 13th place all-time among NHL goaltenders and second-most among active netminders behind **Henrik Lundqvist** (128). Fleury’s 62 career playoff wins are the most among active goaltenders.

* Kings captain **Anze Kopitar** enjoyed a resurgent campaign on offense, leading his club with 35-57—92 – nearly tripling his goal total from 2016-17. He ranks third in franchise history in playoff assists and points (20-44—64 in 75 GP), trailing **Wayne Gretzky** (29-65—94 in 60 GP) and **Luc Robitaille** (41-48—89 in 94 GP) in both categories.



* The NHL will open the *2018 Stanley Cup Playoffs* with a free concert headlined by GRAMMY-nominated rapper **Logic** on Toshiba Plaza, located outside T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas. The *2018 Stanley Cup Playoffs Party featuring Logic* will begin at 5 p.m. PT before the 7 p.m. PT start of the Golden Knights’ inaugural postseason game. The concert is free and open to the public. [Click here](#) for more information.

PENGUINS HOST FLYERS, BEGIN QUEST FOR RARE THREE-PEAT

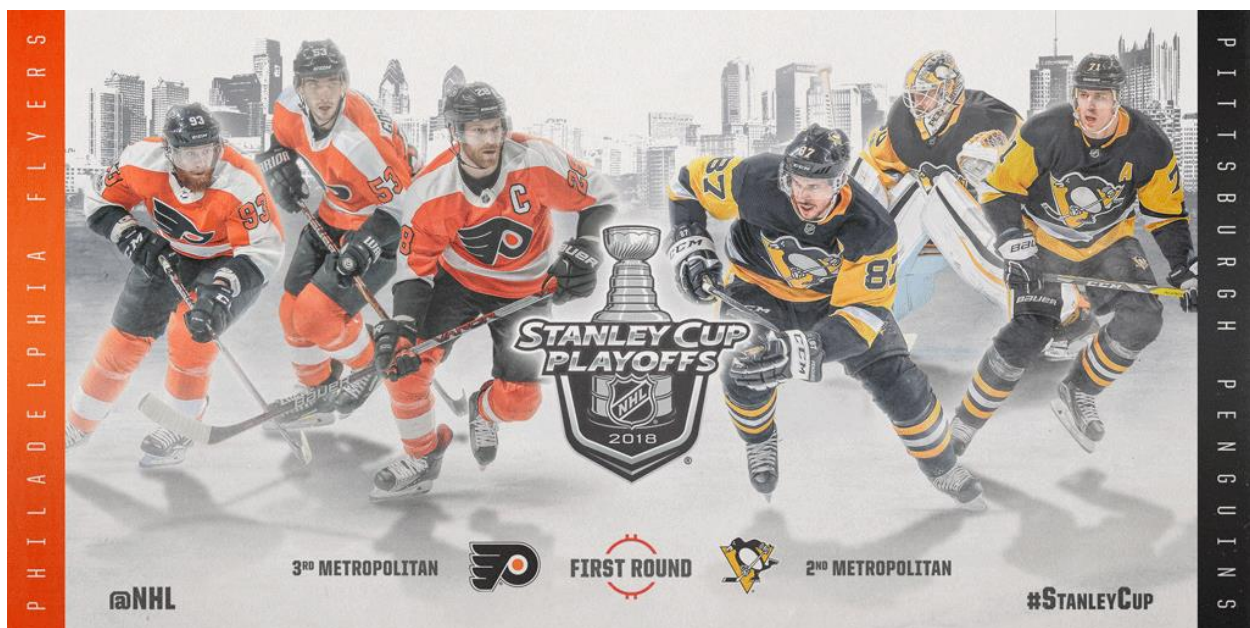
The Penguins host the Flyers at PPG Paints Arena in Game 1 of their First Round series as Pittsburgh aims to become just the fourth different franchise in NHL history to capture the Stanley Cup in at least three consecutive seasons and first to do so since the Islanders won four straight from 1980-83.

* Intrastate rivals since entering the NHL together in 1967-68, the Penguins and Flyers are meeting in the Stanley Cup Playoffs for the seventh time overall and fourth time in the past 10 years.

* Philadelphia has won four of the prior six postseason series between the clubs, including their most recent matchup in the 2012 Eastern Conference Quarterfinals (4-2 W). Pittsburgh, however, has advanced to the Stanley Cup Final each time after defeating the Flyers in the postseason, ultimately losing in 2008 (4-2 L vs. DET) and winning in 2009 (4-3 W vs. DET).

* The Penguins boast three players who finished in the top 10 in points: **Evgeni Malkin** (4th; 43-56—98), **Phil Kessel** (8th; 34-58—92) and **Sidney Crosby** (10th; 29-60—89).

* The Flyers are led offensively by captain **Claude Giroux**, who ranked second in League scoring with 34-68—102 and blueliners **Shayne Gostisbehere** (13-53—65), who ranked fourth in points among defensemen and **Ivan Provorov** (17-24—41), who tied for the League lead in goals by a defender.



WINNIPEG READY FOR A WHITEOUT AS JETS HOST WILD

After setting franchise records for wins (52) and points (114) in 2017-18, the Jets set out to win a postseason game for the first time in franchise history when they host the Wild at Bell MTS Place in Game 1 of their First Round series – the first ever playoff meeting between the clubs.

* The two Central Division foes are close geographically – the province of Manitoba shares a border with the state of Minnesota and only 445 miles separate Bell MTS Place and Xcel Energy Center. Winnipeg won the head-to-head season series between the rivals with a 3-1-0 record (MIN: 1-3-0).

* The Jets, whose fans famously dress in all-white to [create a “Winnipeg Whiteout”](#) for home playoff games, had the best season in franchise history led by captain and points leader **Blake Wheeler** (23-68—91) and 19-year-old scoring sensation **Patrik Laine**, who ranked second in the NHL with 44 goals.

* The Wild are returning to the playoffs for the sixth consecutive season and boast a 40-goal scorer of their own. Veteran forward **Eric Staal** matched **Marian Gaborik**'s franchise mark with 42 goals in 2017-18 – his first 40-goal season since 2008-09. In doing so, he became just the second player in League history to have at least [eight seasons between 40-goal campaigns](#), joining **Gordie Howe**.



REMINDER: The 2018 *Stanley Cup Playoffs Information Guide* now is available for download to subscribers of [the NHL's Media site](#). The guide features year-by-year scores, all-time standings and team-by-team postseason histories as well as club and individual playoff records. Guides for all 16 playoff teams also are available on the Media site.

QUICK CLICKS

- [Jets win Stanley Cup in EA Sports NHL 18 playoff simulation](#)
- [10 storylines entering Stanley Cup Playoffs](#) (via **Dan Rosen**)
- [Maurice eager to meet playoff expectations with Jets](#) (via **Tim Campbell**)
- [Fleury is backbone of Golden Knights improbable run](#) (via **Nick Cotsonika**)
- [Marleau chasing elusive Stanley Cup with Maple Leafs](#) (via **Mike Zeisberger**)