



NASHVILLE PREDATORS

Central Division

Preseason Power Ranking **9**

x0

x1
WESTERN CONF

x1
PRESIDENTS'

986
FRANCHISE WINS

47-30-5
99 Points
2023-24 SEASON

4th
DIVISION

Nashville, TN - Bridgestone Arena (17,500)
Head Coach: Andrew Brunette (47-30-5, 2nd Season)

2023-24: Lost in First Round

Big Spenders, Big Expectations

The Nashville Predators were a largely mediocre team through the first few months of the '23-24 season, struggling to stay in playoff contention. Then, they caught fire with a 16-0-2 run in February and March, vaulting themselves into the top wild card spot in the West. Nashville lost a hard fought first round series to the Canucks, and they clearly weren't satisfied with that result. They went out in free agency and spent the most money of any NHL team, signing some of the best players available. The Preds hope that their spending spree will complement their already solid team and make them one of the best in the West.

Forwards

Despite the new faces in Nashville's lineup, **Filip Forsberg** should remain the Preds' best player. He's coming off a career best season that saw him score 48 goals (6th most in the league) and 94 points. The Predators added two more players coming off 40-goal seasons and both are former Stanley Cup champions. **Steven Stamkos** left Tampa Bay after 16 years and has topped 40 goals in 2 of the last 3 seasons. As he has gotten older, he has become more dependent on the power play to score points and the huge contract Nashville gave him may not age well. But for now, he still should have a lot left to give and will help the Predators' offense immensely. **Jonathan Marchessault's** 42 goals led Vegas last year and was a career high. Marchessault led the Golden Knights to the 2023 Stanley Cup with a playoff-best 13 goals and was named playoff MVP. **Ryan O'Reilly** is another former champion (2019 with the Blues) and an elite two-way center with the ability to win faceoffs at a high rate and defend well, while also providing a scoring threat. **Gustav Nyquist** had a career high 75 points last year in his age-34 season. That level of production seems unsustainable, but isn't completely out of the question if he continues to get top-line minutes. **Tommy Novak** has accumulated 15+ goals and 20+ assists in each of the last two seasons and could see his numbers improve while likely getting to play alongside Stamkos and/or Marchessault.



Photo via The Tennessean

Luke Evangelista had his first full NHL season last year and he had a very good year with 16 goals and 39 points. The 22-year-old was an offensive star in the junior leagues and there's plenty of potential for continued growth. **Colton Sissons** is one of the Predators' best penalty killers, finishing 5th in the NHL in shorthanded goals last season. He also set new career highs with 15 goals and 35 points. Hard-working fourth-liner **Cole Smith** has gone from going undrafted to carving out a nice career for himself in Music City. **Michael McCarron's** 12 goals last year helped him stick in the NHL after a few years of bouncing up and down from the minor leagues.

Defense/Goaltending

Predators' captain **Roman Josi** is a top-5 defenseman in hockey and his 23 goals last year were the most for a defender. He has won the Norris Trophy as best D-man in the NHL in the past and his lethal slapshot and passing skill allows him to create lots of offense. **Brady Skjei** signed a big free agent contract with Nashville after a career high 47 points last year with Carolina. The veteran has plenty of past playoff experience and played well in the 2024 postseason with 9 points in 11 games. **Jeremy Lauzon** set the NHL record for hits in a season last year with an astounding 388. He had a league-high 4 games with 10 or more hits and was also effective on the penalty kill. **Alexandre Carrier** has developed into a superb defender in his 4 seasons with the Preds. **Luke Schenn** is another defenseman who loves to hit opponents with 202 in just 63 games last year.

Juuse Saros starts in goal for Nashville and is coming off a down season, with his GAA and save percentage declining to career worsts. The two seasons before last, however, saw Saros make the All-Star team. A 2.02 GAA in last year's postseason along with improved talent in front of him provide reason for optimism that he can bounce back this year. **Scott Wedgewood** joins the Predators after two serviceable seasons with Dallas as their backup goaltender. The majority of his career numbers are relatively poor, but he did have his two best seasons with the Stars. Saros is a workhorse, averaging 65 games played in the last three years, so Wedgewood probably won't see much time.

The Bottom Line

Former Nashville head coach and now general manager Barry Trotz made some big moves this offseason in hopes of taking the Predators from playoff team to legitimate contender. On paper, it appears he has done that, at least for the next couple of years. Admittedly, the big contracts given out to Stamkos, Marchessault and Skjei are a bit of a risk with all three getting older and it's rare to see big spending sprees lead to Stanley Cups. But, the talent added can't be ignored. With the signing of former champions Stamkos and Marchessault, the team now possesses a wealth of playoff experience, as well as a lineup that can matchup with Central Division juggernauts Colorado and Dallas. If Saros can play at the level he is capable of, it could be a fun year for hockey fans in Music City.

2024-25 Projection: 46-28-8 (100 points) - 3rd in Central



