



# PITTSBURGH PENGUINS

Metropolitan Division

Preseason Power Ranking **24**

**x5**

**x6**  
EASTERN CONF

**x1**  
PRESIDENTS'

**2027**  
FRANCHISE WINS

**38-32-12**  
88 Points  
2023-24 SEASON

**5th**  
DIVISION

Pittsburgh, PA - PPG Paints Arena (18,187)  
Head Coach: Mike Sullivan (375-219-77, 10th Season)

**2023-24: Missed Playoffs**

## Any Gas Left in the Tank for the Pens?

The Penguins have been one of the most successful franchises in the NHL for the last two decades, with three Stanley Cups and 16 straight playoff appearances from 2007-2022. But the last four of those postseason runs ended in first round losses and the last two years have seen Pittsburgh finish outside of the playoff picture. The Penguins have resisted entering a rebuild thanks to still having **Sidney Crosby**, one of the great players in hockey on their squad, but Pittsburgh enters the '24-25 season with an aging roster and several question marks.

### Forwards

Crosby is the greatest player of his generation and shows no signs of slowing down with age. He is coming off a 42-goal, 94-point season and has a real shot of finishing in the top 5 in NHL history for career points scored. Fellow franchise legend **Evgeni Malkin** has played his entire career in Pittsburgh as well and while he no longer puts up the eye-popping point totals that he did earlier in his career, he still stays healthy and productive, putting up 67 points last year. **Rickard Rakell** had a terrific '22-23 season, but his point totals dropped quite a bit last year. The Penguins will likely use him as a first line option, but his career has largely been below that level of production. **Bryan Rust** was a depth piece earlier in his career who broke out during Pittsburgh's back-to-back Stanley Cup runs in 2016 and 2017. Since moving to the top line and getting a chance to play with Crosby, he has blossomed into a perennial 20-25 goal scorer. Pittsburgh received **Michael Bunting** in a trade from Carolina last year and he had nearly a point per game with the Pens. Prospect **Rutger McGroarty** was the 14<sup>th</sup> pick in the 2022 draft and came to Pittsburgh in a trade this offseason. He will have a shot at cracking the roster in training camp after scoring 52 points in 39 games for the Michigan Wolverines last year.

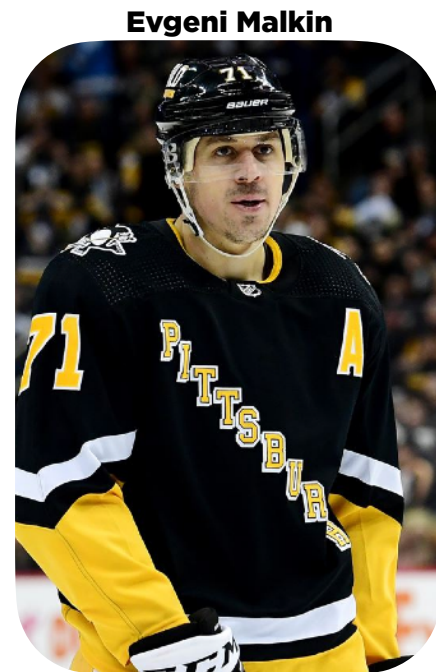


Photo via Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

**Anthony Beauvillier** had multiple years of being a solid third line scorer with the Islanders, but his production has dropped and he has bounced around the league recently. **Kevin Hayes** had one of the worst seasons of his career last year and probably can't be counted on for big offensive production at this stage of his career. **Lars Eller** is a solid, if unspectacular third line center. **Drew O'Connor** had his first full year in the NHL last year and showed promise with 16 goals. **Blake Lizotte** is coming off a down season, but he is still young and previously put up two solid seasons for the Kings.

### Defense/Goaltending

Two aging players lead the Penguins' offense and it is the same with their defense. **Erik Karlsson** has won the Norris Trophy for best NHL defenseman 3 times and as recently as the '22-23 season, led all NHL D-men in points. But his point production was cut nearly in half last year and while he has stayed healthy for the past two years, injuries have been a struggle for him throughout his career. **Kris Letang** will have his jersey in the rafters alongside Crosby and Malkin one day and is still effective at producing offense, though his defensive play has slipped a bit. **Marcus Pettersson** had a very good year defensively last year and is a good complement to the offensive-minded Karlsson on the top pair. **Ryan Graves**, however, had a subpar year defensively and doesn't provide much offense. **Sebastian Aho** (Yes, a different player than the Hurricanes star, and no, the two aren't related) could play on the third pair, but he has had little impact to this point in his career.

**Tristan Jarry** and **Alex Nedeljkovic** shared the goal crease at about a 60-40 split last season and that will likely continue this year. Both are serviceable goalies coming off of average seasons, but neither is likely to play well enough to steal a game all by themselves. The Penguins hope that Jarry can get back to playing at the level of his '21-22 season, where he had a 2.42 GAA and .919 save percentage, but the last two seasons have seen a big dip in those numbers.

### The Bottom Line

When you have one of the greatest players of all time on your team and he is still playing at a very high level, it's difficult to enter a full rebuild, even if it would benefit your team to do so. That's the situation that the Penguins find themselves in. Sidney Crosby has publicly stated that he doesn't want Pittsburgh to rebuild and the team re-signed the aging Malkin and Letang to new contracts largely at his request. But, the Pens roster hasn't been championship caliber for a while now and hasn't been playoff caliber for the last two years. None of the moves made this offseason look like they will change that. The roster is aging and there isn't a lot of depth on offense or defense beyond their top players. If age or injuries begin to catch up with Crosby, Malkin or Karlsson, there isn't much there to replace their production. This is a team that probably should be beginning a rebuild, particularly since there are other ascending young teams in the Metro Division. But for now, the team has decided to bank on their veterans. It likely will result in their 3<sup>rd</sup> straight year finishing out of playoff position.

**2024-25 Projection: 36-36-10 (82 points) - 7th in Metro**



# PITTSBURGH

## Kris Letang



Photo via Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

### PENGUINS 5-YEAR POINT TREND

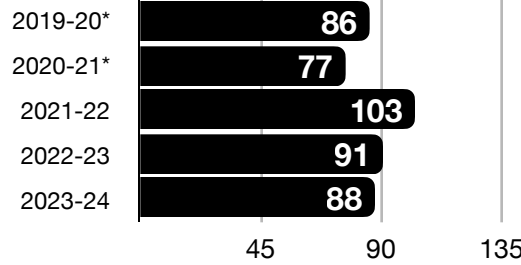


Photo via Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

### 2024-25 Schedule

#### October 2024

			NYR 7:30	DET 8:00	TOR 7:00
	MTL 7:30		BUF 7:00	CAR 7:00	
WPG 3:00		CGY 9:30		EDM 9:00	VAN 10:00
		MIN 7:00		ANA 7:00	

#### November 2024

					MTL 7:00
	NYI 7:30		CAR 7:00	WSH 7:30	
	DAL 7:00		DET 7:30	CBJ 7:00	SJ 7:00
		TB 7:00		WPG 7:00	UTA 7:00
			VAN 7:30	BOS 6:30	CGY 7:00

#### December 2024

		FLA 7:00		NYR 7:30	TOR 7:00
		COL 7:00		MTL 7:00	OTT 7:00
		LA 7:00		NSH 8:00	NJ 7:00
					NYI 7:30
	PHI 7:00				
NYI 5:30			DET 8:00		

#### January 2025

				FLA 7:00	
CAR 6:00		CBJ 7:00		EDM 7:00	OTT 4:00
TB 5:00		SEA 7:00		BUF 7:00	WSH 7:00
	LA 10:30			ANA 10:00	SEA 4:00
	SJ 10:30		UTA 9:30		

#### February 2025

					NSH 7:00
		NJ 7:00		NYR 7:00	PHI 7:00
2025 NHL 4 Nations Face-Off					
2025 NHL 4 Nations Face-Off					WSH 3:00
NYR 3:30		PHI 7:00		PHI 7:00	

#### March 2025

					BOS 3:00
TOR 1:00		COL 9:00		VGK 10:00	
MIN 3:30		VGK 7:00		STL 7:00	NJ 3:00
		NYI 7:00			CBJ 7:00
FLA 6:00		TB 7:00		BUF 7:00	

#### March/April 2025

OTT 5:00				STL 8:00	DAL 3:00
CHI 6:00		CHI 7:00			NJ 7:00
BOS 3:30				WSH 7:00	

### Projected PIT Lineup

#### Forwards

	Left Wing	Center	Right Wing
Line 1	67 Rickard Rakell	87 Sidney Crosby	17 Bryan Rust
Line 2	8 Michael Bunting	71 Evgeni Malkin	48 Valtteri Puustinen
Line 3	72 Anthony Beauvillier	20 Lars Eller	13 Kevin Hayes
Line 4	46 Blake Lizotte	19 Cody Glass	10 Drew O'Connor

#### Defense

Line 1	28 Marcus Pettersson	65 Erik Karlsson
Line 2	27 Ryan Graves	58 Kris Letang
Line 3	24 Matt Grzelcyk	5 Ryan Shea

#### Goaltenders

Starter	35 Tristan Jarry
Backup	39 Alex Nedeljkovic

#### 2023-24 NHL Ranks

POINTS - 88 (19th)  
 GF - 253 (18th)  
 GA - 248 (14th)  
 PP% - 15.27 (30th)  
 PK% - 80.66 (11th)  
 SV% - .900 (14th)

### 30.9 < Number to Know

The average age of Pittsburgh players entering the '24-25 season, the highest in the league. Only one other team has an average team age over 30.

### PLAYER SPOTLIGHT

#### SIDNEY CROSBY - C



#### 2023-24 Statistics

GP	G	A	PTS	+/-
82	42	52	94	+7

Crosby turned 37 this summer, but age hasn't slowed him down to this point. Remarkably, he still has put up more than 90 points in each of the last two seasons. Last season saw him score 42 goals, the most he had scored in a season since 2016-17. If Pittsburgh is to have any hope of contention this season, Crosby will need to continue to produce at a high level. Love him or hate him, enjoy watching one of the best to ever do it while you still can.

HOME

AWAY