



# EDMONTON OILERS

Pacific Division

Preseason Power Ranking 10



1617  
FRANCHISE WINS

49-27-6  
104 Points  
2023-24 SEASON

2nd  
DIVISION

Edmonton, Alberta - Rogers Place (18,347)  
Head Coach: Kris Knoblauch (46-18-5, 2nd Season)

2023-24: Lost in Finals

## Oilers Gearing Up for Title Run

The Oilers have had the current best hockey player in the world, **Connor McDavid**, since the 2015-16 season. While Edmonton struggled to build around him and have playoff success for several years, that has changed in recent times with a Western Conference Finals appearance in 2022 and a run to Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Finals in 2024. An incredible performance from McDavid dragged Edmonton back from a 3-0 series deficit to the Panthers, but they came up just short in a 2-1 Game 7 loss. The Oilers will look to regroup and challenge for a title again this upcoming season.

### Forwards

McDavid's greatness could be an article in itself. Despite coming up short in the Finals, he finished with the fourth-most points in a postseason in history and was the sixth player ever to win the Conn Smythe Trophy (Playoff MVP) while playing for the runner up. Only a Covid-shortened season in 2020 has stopped him from having 100+ points in each of the last 8 years. Early in the '24-25 season, he will reach 1,000 career points faster than anyone not named Wayne Gretzky or Mario Lemieux. We simply are watching one of the greatest players ever. But McDavid isn't the only superstar on Edmonton's team. **Leon Draisaitl** puts up some prolific point totals himself, with 3 career 50-goal seasons and 100+ points in 5 of the last 6 seasons. The duo leads a lethal power play that scored on over 25% of its opportunities during '23-24.



Photo via AP News

The team leader in goals last season wasn't McDavid or Draisaitl, though, it was **Zach Hyman**, whose 54 goals was third-most in the league. **Ryan Nugent-Hopkins** has been with Edmonton for 13 years and is a reliable 60-point scorer. Another veteran, **Jeff Skinner**, joins the Oilers from Buffalo looking for his first career playoff appearance. He should be able to achieve that with Edmonton and his 92 goals scored over his last three seasons with the Sabres will help. **Viktor Arvidsson** joins the team after an injury-plagued year in Los Angeles. If healthy, his speed and scoring will give the Oilers a boost. **Adam Henrique** is a very good defensive center who wins faceoffs and scores quite a bit too (24 goals last season). **Corey Perry** must feel like he is cursed after joining the Oilers last year and losing his 4th Cup Final in the last 5 years (with 4 different teams!) At age 39, the veteran who won a Cup as a 22-year old is looking to finally get back to the top of the mountain and his grinding style of play and ability to still put the puck in the net on occasion will help. **Vasily Podkolzin** is an intriguing prospect who was drafted #10 overall by Vancouver in 2019. It didn't work out for him with the Canucks, but he and Edmonton hope that a fresh start will help him realize his potential. **Evander Kane** will miss the start of the season after major offseason surgery and it remains to be seen how much he will be able to give Edmonton this year. If healthy, the Oilers will gain a perennial 20-goal scorer with a bit of a nasty side (he has led the NHL in penalty minutes twice in his career).

### Defense/Goaltending

The Oilers often prefer to outscore teams with their elite offense rather than shut them down defensively, but that doesn't mean the defense is completely without talent. **Evan Bouchard** became a star in '23-24 while quarterbacking the Edmonton power play and setting a career high in goals (18) and assists (64). He then added 26 more assists in the playoffs, the most for a defenseman in playoff history. **Mattias Ekholm** contributes offensively and defensively (11 goals and 136 hits last year). **Darnell Nurse** has never lived up to the massive contract extension that Edmonton gave him in 2021 with his defensive play leaving a lot to be desired, but he does contribute offensively. The Oilers will need more consistency on the defensive end from him. The young **Ty Emberson** played well in 30 games with San Jose last year with 10 points and 94 hits.

**Stuart Skinner** will start in net and he had a good season last year, tying for the 3rd most wins in the league. His 2.62 GAA was solid, but a .905 save percentage was one of the lower numbers for a playoff team's starting goaltender. While he played well in the playoffs, he is prone to shaky stretches and was benched for a couple of postseason games. There is room for improvement in his game, but he is a goalie you can win with. He is still young at age 25 and certainly could get better. Journeyman **Calvin Pickard** is the backup and he performed admirably while filling in for the benched Skinner in the playoffs.

### The Bottom Line

When you consider the greatness of McDavid and Draisaitl, the emergence of Hyman and Bouchard, as well as having solid two-way players like Henrique and Perry, it's easy to see why the Oilers broke through to the Finals last year. But Edmonton lost some depth in the offseason and on paper, their defense doesn't appear to be championship caliber. The Oilers will remain strong playoff contenders thanks to McDavid and Draisaitl and a Pacific Division that is weak overall, but expecting them to make a Finals run again might be a stretch without improvements at the trade deadline. As they proved last year though, anything is possible with Connor McDavid.

2024-25 Projection: 46-28-8 (100 points) - 2nd in Pacific



