VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS

Pacific Division

Preseason Power Ranking | **14**

🏆 **x1**

🏆 **x2**
WESTERN CONF

🏆 **x0**
PRESIDENTS'

312
FRANCHISE WINS

45-29-8
98 Points
2023-24 SEASON

4th
DIVISION

Las Vegas, NV - T-Mobile Arena (19,289)
Head Coach: Bruce Cassidy (96-51-17, 3rd Season)

2023-24: Lost in First Round

Jack Eichel

Photo via The Hockey News

Is Vegas Still a Cup Threat?

Vegas has had a remarkable run since becoming the NHL's 31st franchise. With two Stanley Cup appearances in only seven seasons including a banner from the 2022-23 season, most teams would kill for the success of the Golden Knights. The team has been so successful that last year's first round exit felt like a major disappointment. The Dallas Stars ultimately got the best of the Golden Knights in a wild seven game series in which the road team won the majority of the games. Vegas again has their sights set on the cup, but they'll have to overcome some extremely deep and talented teams in the Pacific if they want to reach their goals.

Forwards

When healthy, **Jack Eichel** is as dangerous a player as there is in the National Hockey League. Still just 27, Eichel posted 68 points in 63 games including 31 goals, and he kept that pace rolling in the playoff series against Dallas (3 goals, 4 assists). He hasn't topped 70 games in a season since 2018-19, but if he can string a healthy season together this year, he's a legitimate Hart Trophy (MVP) candidate. The Golden Knights will be counting on his play more than ever with an injury to **William Karlsson**. One of the few remaining original Golden Knights, Karlsson spent several years chasing his career best season (2017-18) when he led the NHL in plus-minus and tallied 43 goals and 78 points. He finally found that form last year, scoring 30 goals and 30 assists in 70 games. However, Karlsson finds himself on the IL to begin the season, leaving a gap at center in his absence. The top point man from last year's time, Jonathan Marchessault, is now a Nashville Predator which leaves another big hole on offense. **Mark Stone** will do his best Marchessault impression, but the 32 year old played just 56 games last year and hasn't produced a season of more than 60 points since 2020-21, although he accomplished that feat in just 55 games. It's also worth noting that the injury that kept him out of the lineup was a freak injury to his spleen, so hopefully he'll be a bit more lucky in 2024-25.

The emergence of a capable second line should help the Golden Knights improve a somewhat average offense last season. **Pavel Dorofeyev** scored 13 goals in only 47 games last season. If he can score at that pace over a sample size of closer to 82 games, Vegas will get a big lift. **Tomas Hertl** and **Alexander Holtz** will fill into important roles as the Golden Knights must also replace Chandler Stephenson and Michael Amadio. Ertl has missed 110 games in just the last two seasons, but he's only a couple of years removed from back-to-back 60 point seasons with San Jose.

Defense/Goaltending

While the offense looks quite a bit different from last year, the defense remains mostly in tact. Golden Knights fans will be familiar with the names of the D-men, especially with the top line of **Shea Theodore** and **Alex Pietrangelo**, both of whom were critical in the title run two years ago. Pietrangelo is fearless, blocking nearly two shots a game last season. **Noah Hanifin** wasn't on the Golden Knights long last season after being traded at the deadline from Calgary, but he quickly made an impact on the offensive end with 17 points and he's also a key piece on a power play unit that could use some refining. Vegas will continue to run their zone defense under head coach Bruce Cassidy and with the returning talent, could be a top ten defense after just missing out on that ranking last season.

Last year, Logan Thompson and **Adin Hill** split time between the pipes. Statically, the two net minders were nearly identical and now that Thompson has moved on to Washington, Hill assumes the starting role. He was sharp in the three postseason games he played In addition to Hill, Vegas brings in **Ilya Samsonov** from Toronto. His numbers were far from impressive last season especially considering he played on a quality team in the Toronto Maple Leafs, but the change in scenery could be exactly what he needs to return to the quality form he displayed two seasons ago, complete with a 2.33 GAA and .919 save percentage in 40 starts.

The Bottom Line

It's difficult to be the main attraction in Las Vegas, but the Golden Knights have managed to get plenty of attention with their quality play and they have a dedicated fan following. Those fans have become spoiled with all of the success. At least, that's the view of the other jealous 31 franchises. However, expectations are perhaps a little lower than usual with some major concerns heading into this season. Will those issues prevent Vegas from reaching the playoffs? Perhaps not, but expecting the Golden Knights to actually contend for the cup might be too optimistic. Can the team really afford to lose Karlsson for an extended period of time, and will there be enough offense to replace the departure of Marchessault and others?

2024-25 Projection: 44-32-6 (94 points) - 4th in Pacific

Alex Pietrangelo

Photo via Vegas Hockey Now

GOLDEN KNIGHTS 5-YEAR POINT TREND

Season	Points
2019-20*	86
2020-21*	82
2021-22	94
2022-23	111
2023-24	98

(Axis: 30, 60, 90, 120)

Photo via New York Times

Projected VGK Lineup

Forwards

	Left Wing			Center			Right Wing	
Line 1	49	Ivan Barbashev	9	Jack Eichel	61	Mark Stone
Line 2	16	Pavel Dorofeyev	48	Tomas Hertl	26	Alexander Holtz
Line 3	95	Victor Olofsson	10	Nicolas Roy	55	Keegan Kolesar
Line 4	70	Tanner Pearson	21	Brett Howden	22	Cole Schwindt

Defense

Line 1	27	Shea Theodore	7	Alex Pietrangelo
Line 2	15	Noah Hanifin	14	Nicolas Hague
Line 3	3	Brayden McNabb	2	Zach Whitecloud

Goaltenders

Starter	33	Adin Hill
Backup	35	Ilya Samsonov

2023-24 NHL Ranks

- POINTS - 98 (13th)
- GF - 263 (14th)
- GA - 243 (12th)
- PP% - 20.24 (20th)
- PK% - 79.34 (16th)
- SV% - .902 (10th)

0.627 < Number to Know

Vegas' all-time point percentage, easily the best number among the other 30 franchises. Of course, they are entering only their seventh season, but it's impressive nonetheless.

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT
IVAN BARBASHEV - LW

2023-24 Statistics

GP	G	A	PTS	+/-
82	19	26	45	+15

Vegas will be hunting for offense early in the season and Barbashev will have the opportunity to provide it, and probably from the top line. The Golden Knights will need a much faster start than Barbashev provided last season. While the offense was inconsistent at times last year, you can count on him to take the ice every game, with only one missed game in the last three seasons combined. His plus-minus of +15 was a career best and he'll be eyeing a 50 point season or better in 2024-25.

2024-25 Schedule

October 2024

				COL 9 10:00		STL 11 10:00
ANA 13 10:00		WSH 15 7:00		TB 17 7:00		FLA 19 6:00
		LA 22 11:00			OTT 25 6:00	SJ 26 10:00
CGY 28 10:00		LA 30 10:00				

November 2024

						UTA 2 10:00
		EDM 6 8:30		SEA 8 10:00		
CAR 11 10:00		ANA 13 10:00		UTA 15 9:00		
WSH 17 8:00		TOR 20 7:30	OTT 21 7:00		MTL 23 7:00	
PHI 25 7:00		COL 27 10:00		WPG 29 8:30	UTA 30 10:00	

December 2024

		EDM 3 10:00	ANA 4 10:00		DAL 6 10:00	
			WPG 12 8:00		EDM 14 4:00	
MIN 15 6:00			VAN 19 10:00		SEA 21 10:00	
		ANA 23 10:00		SJ 27 10:30		
CGY 29 8:00		MTL 31 3:00				

January 2025

			PHI 2 10:00		BUF 4 10:00	
		SJ 7 10:30	NYI 9 10:00		NYR 11 10:00	
MIN 12 8:00		NSH 14 8:00		CAR 17 7:00	CHI 18 8:00	
	STL 20 6:00		STL 23 8:00	DAL 24 7:30		
FLA 26 8:00		DAL 28 10:00		CBJ 30 10:00		

February 2025

NYR 2 6:00		NYI 4 7:30		NJ 6 7:00		BOS 8 3:30
				2025 NHL 4 Nations Face-Off		
	2025 NHL 4 Nations Face-Off				VAN 22 10:00	
	LA 24 10:30		CHI 27 10:00			

March 2025

NJ 2 8:00		TOR 5 10:00		PIT 7 10:00		
LA 9 8:00		PIT 11 7:00		CBJ 13 7:00		BUF 15 12:30
DET 16 1:00				BOS 20 10:00		DET 22 8:00
TB 23 8:00		MIN 25 8:00		CHI 28 8:30	NSH 29 6:30	

April 2025

		EDM 1 10:00		WPG 3 10:00		CGY 5 10:00
VAN 6 10:00		COL 8 9:30		SEA 10 10:00		NSH 12 10:00
		CGY 15 9:00	VAN 16 10:00			

HOME AWAY