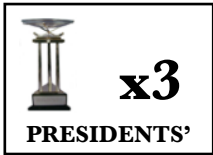




COLORADO AVALANCHE

Central Division

Preseason Power Ranking **8**



1661
FRANCHISE WINS

50-25-7
107 Points
2023-24 SEASON

3rd
DIVISION

Denver, CO - Ball Arena (18,000)
Head Coach: Jared Bednar (341-217-60, 9th Season)

2023-24: Lost in 2nd Round

The NHL's Top Duo Returns

After a Stanley Cup title in 2022, the Colorado Avalanche lost a lot of the depth that helped propel them to that championship and to some degree, they've struggled to replace it. That's not to say that Colorado hasn't been successful, after all, they have had over 100 points in both seasons since their Cup win. But in two straight years, the team has made early exits from the postseason and their offense has dried up at times. The "Avs" have some of the NHL's very best players and hope to get back to title contention this year.

Forwards

Nathan MacKinnon is Colorado's best offensive player and the reigning NHL MVP. He's been a superstar pretty much from the moment he arrived in Denver as the 1st overall pick in the 2013 draft, but he took his game to another level last year. He shattered his career highs with 51 goals, 89 assists, and 140 points. There aren't many players in the league who can match his elite speed and puck handling. **Mikko Rantanen** plays alongside MacKinnon on the top line and he too is elite offensively with 100+ points in each of the last two seasons. **Jonathan Drouin** suffered through many injury riddled seasons before seeing a career resurgence in his first season with Colorado last year. His 56 points were a career high and his first season of 50+ points since '18-19. **Casey Mittelstadt** struggled to find his footing in Buffalo for several years, but had 47 points in 62 games last season before being traded to the Avalanche. He had 9 points in 11 games during Colorado's playoff run and will serve as the 2nd line center. **Artturi Lehkonen** is a productive player when healthy, but he will miss the start of the season with injury. Last year he put up 34 points despite missing nearly half of the season. 24-year-old **Nikolai Kovalenko** will get an NHL opportunity after a couple of successful seasons in Russia.



Nathan MacKinnon

Photo via The Denver Post

The Avalanche forward depth looks a bit weak to start the year, but reinforcements could arrive throughout the season. Captain **Gabriel Landeskog** hasn't played a game since Colorado's Cup clinching win in 2022 due to multiple knee surgeries. He hopes to return early on in the '24-25 season and has always been productive when on the ice, but it's impossible to know what to expect from him after he has missed so much time. **Valeri Nichushkin** has been a 25-goal scorer despite missing a lot of time while with Colorado. He has had quite a few off-ice issues in recent times and will miss the start of the season while serving a suspension for off-ice conduct. The suspension officially ends in November, but he will need to apply to be reinstated before returning to the ice. If the Avs can get Nichushkin and a healthy Landeskog back, it would go a long way to improving the team. In the meantime, **Ross Colton**, **Logan O'Connor**, and **Miles Wood** will try to provide some depth scoring. Colton had a career high 40 points last season, O'Connor had a career high 13 goals, and Wood has good speed.

Defense/Goaltending

Cale Makar is arguably the best D-man in the NHL. He is the total package with great speed and puck handling, a lethal shot, and very effective defense. At age 25, he is already a Stanley Cup champion, Norris Trophy winner, and Conn Smythe Trophy winner. He put up 21 goals and 90 points (both second-most among D-men) last year. **Devon Toews** is Makar's partner on the top pair and is very capable offensively as well, with more than 50 points in each of the last three seasons. **Josh Manson** is a big hitter with a team-high 211 last year. **Samuel Girard** struggled last year at times and will hope for a rebound. **Calvin de Haan** and **Erik Brannstrom** joined the team as free agents to fill out the third pair and Brannstrom in particular is coming off of a great year defensively.

In goal, **Alexandar Georgiev** will start. He has led the NHL in wins each of the last two seasons thanks in part to the superb team playing in front of him, but last year in particular he was prone to some very shaky stretches and finished with a 3.02 GAA and .897 save percentage (second worst for any playoff team's starting goaltender). He is capable of being very effective (2.53 GAA and .919 SV% in '22-23), but especially since Colorado may not be able to outscore opponents as easily this year due to the lack of forward depth, he will need to play better. **Justus Annunen** has bounced between the NHL and the minors for a couple of years, but he locked up a place as the backup goaltender this year after 14 very good games at the NHL level last year (2.25 GAA and .928 SV%). 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

There aren't many teams that can claim to have two all-world players like the Avalanche have in MacKinnon and Makar. That alone gives Colorado a high floor and makes them contenders for the playoffs. But a lack of forward depth has been a major reason why the team has gone home early from the postseason the last two years and the forward group on paper appears weaker yet to start the season. Colorado will put a lot on the shoulders of their big three: MacKinnon, Makar and Rantanen. Reinforcements should arrive throughout the year with the return of Lehkonen and potentially Nichushkin and Landeskog. If those three players can return and be healthy and productive, it raises the team's ceiling quite a bit. Even without them, they are a very good team, but they may struggle to be Cup contenders or keep up with Dallas in the Central.

2024-25 Projection: 47-27-8 (102 points) - 2nd in Central



Cale Makar



Photo via Mile High Hockey

AVALANCHE 5-YEAR POINT TREND

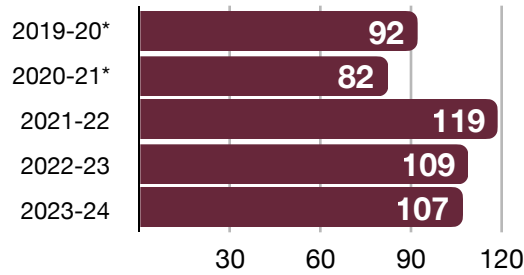


Photo via CBS News

2024-25 Schedule

October 2024

			VGK 10:00 9		CBJ 12 9:00
	NYI 14 9:00		BOS 16 9:30		ANA 18 9:00
SJ 20 8:00		SEA 22 8:30		UTA 24 9:00	OTT 26 9:00
	CHI 28 9:00		TB 30 9:00		

November 2024

					NSH 2 8:00
		SEA 5 9:00		WPG 7 8:00	CAR 9 9:00
	NSH 11 9:00		LA 13 10:00		WSH 15 9:00
	PHI 18 7:00			WSH 21 7:00	FLA 23 6:00
	TB 25 7:00		VGK 27 10:00		DAL 29 9:00
					EDM 30 10:00

December 2024

		BUF 3 7:00		CAR 5 7:00	DET 7 7:00
NJ 8 7:00		PIT 10 7:00		UTA 12 9:00	NSH 14 9:00
	VAN 16 10:30			SJ 19 10:30	ANA 20 10:00
SEA 22 8:00					UTA 27 9:30
			WPG 31 8:00		

January 2025

				BUF 2 9:00	MTL 4 7:00
	FLA 6 9:00		CHI 8 7:30	MIN 9 8:00	WPG 11 7:00
		NYR 14 9:00		EDM 16 9:30	DAL 18 4:00
	MIN 20 3:00			WPG 22 9:30	BOS 25 1:00
NYR 26 1:00		NYI 28 7:30			STL 31 9:00

February 2025

	PHI 2 3:00		VAN 4 10:00		CGY 6 9:00
					EDM 7 9:00
2025 NHL 4 Nations Face-Off					
					NSH 22 6:00
STL 23 6:00			NJ 26 9:30		MIN 28 9:00

March 2025

		PIT 4 9:00		SJ 6 9:00	TOR 8 7:00
		CHI 10 9:00	MIN 11 8:00		CGY 14 9:00
DAL 16 3:30			TOR 19 7:00	OTT 20 7:00	MTL 22 7:00
		DET 25 9:00		LA 27 10:00	STL 29 4:30

March/April 2025

		CGY 31 8:30		CHI 2 9:30	CBJ 3 7:30
			VGK 8 9:30		VAN 10 9:00
ANA 13 10:00					LA 12 4:00

HOME

AWAY

Projected COL Lineup

Forwards

	Left Wing	Center	Right Wing
Line 1	27 Jonathan Drouin	29 Nathan MacKinnon	96 Mikko Rantanen
Line 2	62 Artturi Lehkonen	37 Casey Mittelstadt	51 Nikolai Kovalenko
Line 3	28 Miles Wood	20 Ross Colton	25 Logan O'Connor
Line 4	17 Parker Kelly	71 Calum Ritchie	94 Joel Kiviranta

Defense

Line 1	7 Devin Toews	8 Cale Makar
Line 2	49 Samuel Girard	42 Josh Manson
Line 3	44 Calvin de Haan	67 Keaton Middleton

Goaltenders

Starter	40 Alexandar Georgiev
Backup	60 Justus Annunen

2023-24 NHL Ranks

POINTS - 107 (8th)
 GF - 302 (1st)
 GA - 252 (17th)
 PP% - 24.46 (5th)
 PK% - 79.92 (12th)
 SV% - .897 (18th)

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT

MIKKO RANTANEN - RW

2023-24 Statistics



GP	G	A	PTS	+/-
80	42	62	104	+19

Other than his rookie season, Rantanen has posted more than a point per game in every season he has been healthy. He has topped 100 points in each of the past two seasons, including a 55-goal effort in 2022-23. The 6'4" winger has great size, an excellent shot, and he's able to get to the front of the net to consistently score. He has stepped his game up in the postseason historically with 101 points in 81 career games. Playing alongside MacKinnon, he should continue to pile up points this year.

302 < Number to Know

Colorado led the NHL in goals scored last year with 302. 68 of those tallies were on the power play, the second most in the league and the fifth-most efficient rate.