



CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS

Central Division

Preseason Power Ranking **30**

x6

x4
WESTERN CONF

x2
PRESIDENTS'

2889
FRANCHISE WINS

23-53-6
52 Points
2023-24 SEASON

8th
DIVISION

Chicago, IL - United Center (19,719)
Head Coach: Luke Richardson (49-102-13, 3rd Season)

2023-24: Missed Playoffs

Long Rebuild Could Finally Pay Off

The debut of rookie phenom Connor Bedard went about as well as it possibly could, minus an injury that cost him 14 games. Unfortunately, outside of Bedard, the rest of the team was less than stellar, and that's putting it lightly. The 52 points registered by the Blackhawks were the fewest since the 1956-57 season and one of their worst all-time in terms of win percentage. What could go wrong last year did. The silver lining to another non-competitive season was another addition to what is now the best minor league system in the National Hockey League. Will the youth movement lead Chicago to immediate success, or are the Blackhawks still knee-deep in their rebuild?

Connor Bedard



Photo via USA Today

Forwards

Connor Bedard was a good as advertised last season. That's saying something considering the #1 pick in the draft was advertised as the best prospect since Sidney Crosby, and the hype surrounding him matched the expectations. As an 18-year-old rookie, he dazzled with 22 goals which tied for the team lead, and he led Chicago in assists (39) and points (61). Ignore his -44 +/- rating, the team around him was one of the worst in the NHL. He's a highlight waiting to happen and with even more opportunities on the first line and on the power play, Bedard could very well top the numbers in his rookie campaign. The expectations placed on Bedard were in some ways unfair of an 18-year-old, yet he rose to the challenge. There's still a lot of room for improvement on defense, but he's the obvious new face of the franchise. Clearly, the next step in the rebuild is to find some legitimate talent to surround Bedard. The hope is that the influx of recent draft picks will eventually become a young core that guides the Blackhawks into the future. In the interim, Chicago made a couple of roster additions to, ideally, at least avoid the basement of the Central division in 2024-25.

Tuevo Teräväinen and **Tyler Bertuzzi** appear to be the primary candidates to play alongside Bedard on the first round. Teräväinen arrives from Carolina following a season that included 25 goals and 28 assists and he's a quality option on the power play. Bertuzzi arrives from Toronto and he too had 20+ goals and assists.

The top line should improve with this new-look trio, but there were issues all throughout the lineup last year. A healthy **Taylor Hall** would go a long way in the Blackhawks improving on offense. He appeared in just 10 games last year for Chicago. While his best years are probably behind him, he's only two seasons removed from a 61-point performance with Boston. **Jason Dickinson** is a prototypical third-line center with physical defensive abilities to match. **Nick Foligno** was named the 35th team captain in franchise history, a role he held for many years in Columbus. His 37 points last year with Chicago marked his best performance since 2016-17 and it's no coincidence that he also topped 75 games played since that same season.

Defense/Goaltending

Alex Vlasic may not start on the first defensive line at the beginning of the season, but it may not be long before he ascends to one of the top two spots. In his first full season in the NHL, he showed promise. Considering how bad his team was last year, his +/- rating of -4 is notable. **Seth Jones** hasn't quite lived up to what was hoped for after several successful years in Columbus, but it hasn't been bad, either. He's contributed 20 or more assists in eight straight seasons and if healthy, he's a candidate for double-digit goals. Frankly, Chicago will take scoring wherever they can find it this season especially with an offensively-challenged group of blue line defenders. The additions of **Alec Martinez** and **T.J. Brodie** should help provided badly needed depth.

In fairness to Chicago goaltending, opponents frequently peppered the net and the Blackhawks faced 2,681 shots as a team, the fifth-most in the NHL. Chicago posted only a single shutout performance across all 82 games. That shutout belonged to **Petr Mrazek** who was by far the better of the two goalies with a respectable 3.05 GAA and .908% save percentage, given the circumstances. **Laurent Brossoit** offers a better option at the backup position than the Blackhawks had previously in Arvid Soderblom.

The Bottom Line

Fans in Illinois will be able to watch the Blackhawks on the new Chicago Sports Network channel. But, will they want to? It would be almost impossible to not improve on the record from last year, especially with the front office making moves this offseason. The problem? The Blackhawks could be 20 points better than last season and yet they'll be another 20 points away from playoff contention. Still, a 20 point improvement would be a big step in the right direction and would mark a five-year high in points. Health will be paramount for the Blackhawks this year. The starting lineup looks much better on paper but if injuries pop up, there's major questions at almost every position. The Blackhawks need to help support Bedard especially as he finds his footing on defense. If they do that successfully, he'll continue to develop into one of the best players in the game and the entire franchise will get a facelift. If that doesn't happen, the franchise will flirt with their longest postseason drought in their storied history.

2024-25 Projection: 30-43-9 (69 points) - 8th in Central



CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS

Alex Vlasic



Photo via Bleacher Nation

BLACKHAWKS 5-YEAR POINT TREND

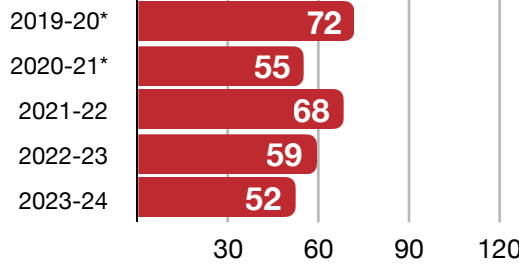


Photo via Chicago Sun-Times

2024-25 Schedule

October 2024

		UTA 10:00			WPG 8:00	EDM 10:00
		CGY 9:00		SJ 8:30		BUF 8:00
		VAN 8:15			NSH 8:30	DAL 8:00
		COL 9:00		SJ 10:30		

November 2024

						LA 4:00
ANA 8:00			DET 8:00	DAL 8:00		
MIN 7:00				SEA 10:00		VAN 10:00
		ANA 8:30		FLA 8:30		PHI 1:00
			DAL 8:30		MIN 2:00	

December 2024

CBJ 3:00	TOR 7:30		BOS 7:30			WPG 4:00
	NYR 7:00			NYI 7:30		NJ 1:00
NYI 3:00		WSH 8:30		SEA 8:30		CGY 4:00
	MIN 8:00					BUF 7:00
DAL 8:30			STL 5:00			

January 2025

					MTL 8:00	
NYR 3:00			COL 7:30		DET 7:00	EDM 7:00
	CGY 7:30				NSH 8:00	VGK 8:00
	CAR 8:30					TB 8:00
MIN 7:00		TB 7:00			CAR 7:00	

February 2025

						FLA 1:00
				EDM 9:30		NSH 8:30
						STL 7:00
2025 NHL 4 Nations Face-Off						
2025 NHL 4 Nations Face-Off						
TOR 7:00		UTA 8:00			VGK 10:00	

March 2025

						ANA 10:00
	LA 8:30		OTT 7:30		UTA 8:30	NSH 8:00
	COL 9:00			SJ 10:30		VAN 10:00
		SEA 8:30		LA 8:30		STL 3:00
PHI 3:00			NJ 7:30			VGK 8:30

March/April 2025

UTA 4:00			COL 9:30		WSH 7:00	
PIT 6:00		PIT 7:00			BOS 7:00	WPG 7:00
		MTL 7:00	OTT 7:00			

Projected CHI Lineup

Forwards

	Left Wing	Center	Right Wing
Line 1	86 Teuvo Teravainen	98 Connor Bedard	59 Tyler Bertuzzi
Line 2	71 Taylor Hall	23 Philipp Kurashev	73 Lukas Reichel
Line 3	17 Nick Foligno	16 Jason Dickinson	95 Ilya Mikheyev
Line 4	89 Andreas Athanasiou	8 Ryan Donato	15 Craig Smith

Defense

Line 1	72 Alex Vlasic	4 Seth Jones
Line 2	25 Alec Martinez	78 T.J. Brodie
Line 3	41 Isaak Phillips	5 Connor Murphy

Goaltenders

Starter	34 Petr Mrazek
Backup	39 Laurent Brossoit

2023-24 NHL Ranks

POINTS - 52 (31st)
 GF - 178 (32nd)
 GA - 289 (29th)
 PP% - 16.60 (28th)
 PK% - 75.76 (27th)
 SV% - .892 (31st)

7.9 < Number to Know

The defensive rating of Alex Vlasic, ranking the 23-year-old fifth in the NHL behind only Gustav Forsling, Jonas Borden, Drew Doughty, and Vladislav Gavrikov.

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT

TYLER BERTUZZI - RW



2023-24 Statistics

GP	G	A	PTS	+/-
80	21	22	43	+2

Bertuzzi is being paid \$22 million over four years to add production to a lean Chicago offense and to help Connor Bedard to reach new heights. His two previous stints, although brief, were with Boston and Toronto, so he should bring over wisdom and experience in addition to his play as he heads into his 10th NHL season. Here's a fearless competitor, often willing to sacrifice his body and to perform the dirty work in the front of the crease. He should compliment the play of Bedard.

HOME

AWAY