



COLUMBUS BLUE JACKETS

Metropolitan Division

Preseason Power Ranking **32**



767
FRANCHISE WINS

27-43-12
66 Points
2023-24 SEASON

8th
DIVISION

Columbus, OH - Nationwide Arena (18,500)
Head Coach: Dean Evason (1st Season)

2023-24: Missed Playoffs

Can CBJ Move Forward in 2024?

Boone Jenner



Photo via The Columbus Dispatch

The hockey world is still reeling from the tragic deaths of Matthew and Johnny Gaudreau. "Johnny Hockey" was beloved across the league and he will be dearly missed. While the most important emphasis belongs on who Johnny was as a person, father, husband, and a friend, there is no mistaking the impact Gaudreau also had on the ice. He was a leader in the Blue Jackets locker room and may very well have been their best player (leading points scorer in both 2022-23 and 2023-24). The team will hang his jersey in his locker every game this season and he will be a rallying cry for a team looking to escape the bottom of the Metro division where they have lived in each of the past two seasons. Given the fact that the Blue Jackets could again be one of the youngest in the National Hockey League, it will be up to the veterans to help guide the team and manage the emotions of what could be a tumultuous season.

Forwards

Goals were hard to come by for the Blue Jackets last season (234 total, 25th in the NHL). The front office tried to remedy that situation by bringing in **Sean Monahan** in free agency. He finished last year with 59 points which would have ranked second on the Blue Jackets and would have topped the stat sheet from any center dressed in Union Blue. Captain **Boone Jenner** would have claimed his third straight season of 40+ points had a plethora of injuries not caused him to miss so much time. **Adam Fantilli** also suffered a freak injury when a skate blade cut his calf, causing him to miss nearly half of the season. The 19-year-old had an otherwise promising season in his rookie campaign after being drafted third overall in 2023. The Blue Jackets again had a top four pick in the draft and selected **Cayden Lindstrom** fourth overall, although he may not see playing time Fantilli did, at least for this season. **Cole Sillinger** is also a former first round pick (2021) and the Columbus native topped his career points mark with 32 last season and there's hope that he can take another step forward after signing a two year extension with the Blue Jackets. **Sean Kuraly** is the likely candidate to anchor the fourth line.

Kent Johnson's sophomore season barely got started before a shoulder injury derailed his campaign after 6 goals and 10 assists. Another former first round pick, Johnson could be a candidate for a breakout season, especially if Monahan can stay healthy and add to his 294 career assists. **Yegor Chinakhov** brings a rare blend of blazing speed and heavyweight power and he too will be far more productive if he can stay on the ice. **Kirill Marchenko** returns after leading the Blue Jackets with 23 goals. Columbus was woeful on the power play and Marchenko was a rare bright spot (9 of the 32 power play goals). The new front office brings in veteran **James van Riemsdyk** on the wing. The second overall pick way back in 2007 now has 300+ goals and assists to his name and his veteran presence and net-front skills on the power play will be greatly appreciated.

Defense/Goaltending

Only the San Jose Sharks (league-worst 47 points) allowed more goals than the Columbus Blue Jackets last season. For a team ill-equipped to outscore their opponents on a nightly basis, it's no wonder Columbus amassed just 66 points last year. **Zach Werenski** leads the defensive group and is one of the most talented scorers and assisters at a defensive position the league has to offer but at times his aggressiveness leads the Blue Jackets on the wrong end of odd-man situations. Almost everyone outside of Werenski finished poorly in advanced analytic categories like defensive goals above replacement. The towering **Erik Gudbranson** is an exception and he notably appeared in all but four games. **Jack Johnson** returns to Columbus for his second stint with the Blue Jackets following a Stanley Cup win with Colorado and at the very least he'll offer a lot of wisdom to young players like **David Jiricek**.

Elvis Merzlikins still figures to be the top goaltender for the Columbus Blue Jackets despite requesting a trade last season, inconsistent play, and a contract set to expire after this season. He finished with a 3.63 GAA, an .897 save percentage, and a record of 13-17-8. From a statistical perspective, **Daniil Tarasov** was actually the best goalie of the five utilized last year, but only marginally. Elvis could be a trade candidate, so it wouldn't be surprising to see Tarasov take over at some point during the year.

The Bottom Line

How well the Blue Jackets start the season could go a long way in determining whether they can avoid another last-place finish in the Metro. Ironically, Columbus will head to Minnesota for their first game of the season which is where new head coach Dean Evason worked the past five seasons. It's critical that he brings some stability to this franchise that has recently seen a rotating door at the coaching position. There's really no realistic expectations of competing for a playoff spot this season (unfortunately, it's more likely the CBJ finish dead last in the NHL). Instead, there's hope that the plethora of young talent can establish themselves as legitimate options in the NHL and establish a building block for the franchise moving forward. Staying healthy will also be critical and is something that Columbus has failed to do in the past two seasons, especially.

2024-25 Projection: 26-48-8 (60 points) - 8th in Metro



Zach Werenski



Photo via Axios

BLUE JACKETS 5-YEAR POINT TREND

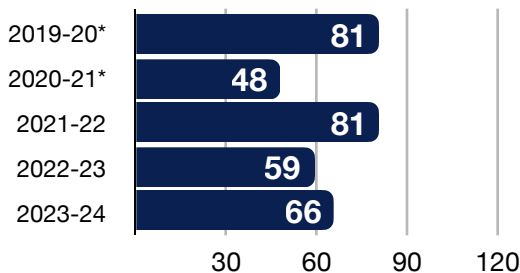


Photo via Nationwide Arena

2024-25 Schedule

October 2024

			MIN 10 8:00	COL 12 9:00
		FLA 15 7:00	BUF 17 7:00	MIN 19 7:00
		TOR 22 7:30		NSH 26 8:00
	EDM 28 7:00		NYI 30 7:00	

November 2024

			WPG 1 7:00	WSH 2 5:00
		SJ 5 10:30		LA 9 9:00
ANA 10 8:00	SEA 12 10:00		PIT 15 7:00	MTL 16 7:00
	BOS 18 7:00		TB 21 7:00	CAR 23 7:00
		MTL 27 7:30	CGY 29 3:00	

December 2024

CHI 1 3:00	CGY 3 9:00	EDM 5 9:00	VAN 6 10:00	
WPG 8 6:00	PHI 10 7:00	WSH 12 7:00		ANA 14 7:00
CAR 15 5:00	TB 17 7:00	NJ 19 7:00		PHI 21 7:00
	MTL 23 7:00		BOS 27 7:00	BOS 28 7:00
		CAR 31 8:00		

January 2025

			DET 2 7:00	STL 4 7:00
		PIT 7 7:00	SEA 9 7:00	STL 11 7:00
		PHI 14 7:00	SJ 16 7:00	NYR 18 7:00
	NYI 20 7:30	TOR 22 7:30	CAR 23 7:00	LA 25 7:00
			VGK 30 10:00	

February 2025

DAL 2 6:00	BUF 4 7:00	UTA 6 7:00		NYR 8 7:00
2025 NHL 4 Nations Face-Off				
				CHI 22 7:00
	DAL 25 7:00		DET 27 7:00	

March 2025

				DET 1 6:00
		TB 4 7:00	FLA 6 7:00	
NYR 9 6:00		NJ 11 7:00	VGK 13 7:00	NYR 15 7:00
	NJ 17 7:00		FLA 20 7:00	PIT 21 7:00
	NYI 24 7:30			VAN 28 7:00
				OTT 29 7:00

April 2025

		NSH 1 7:00	COL 3 7:30	TOR 5 7:00
OTT 6 5:00	OTT 8 7:00		BUF 10 7:00	WSH 12 7:00
WSH 13 6:00	PHI 15 7:00		NYI 17 7:00	

Projected CBJ Lineup

Forwards

	Left Wing	Center	Right Wing
Line 1	91 Kent Johnson	23 Sean Monahan	86 Kirill Marchenko
Line 2	38 Boone Jenner	19 Adam Fantilli	59 Yegor Chinakhov
Line 3	21 James van Riemsdyk	4 Cole Sillinger	10 Dimitri Voronkov
Line 4	17 Justin Danforth	7 Sean Kuraly	24 Mathieu Olivier

Defense

Line 1	8 Zach Werenski	78 Damon Severson
Line 2	9 Ivan Provorov	55 David Jiricek
Line 3	3 Jack Johnson	44 Erik Gudbranson

Goaltenders

Starter	90 Elvis Merzlikins
Backup	40 Daniil Tarasov

2023-24 NHL Ranks

POINTS - 66 (29th)
 GF - 234 (25th)
 GA - 298 (31st)
 PP% - 15.09 (31st)
 PK% - 76.27 (26th)
 SV% - .894 (22nd)

42 < Number to Know

The injury bug bit Columbus repeatedly, leading them to playing 42 total players, 37 skaters and 5 goalies and only a handful of players made it past the 70 game threshold.

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT

ADAM FANTILLI - C



2023-24 Statistics

GP	G	A	PTS	+/-
49	12	15	27	-21

Chicago's Connor Bedard understandably received most of the attention given to NFL rookies last season, but Fantilli was having a great season in his own right before a freak injury ended his season. Fantilli is the "leader" of the youth movement and a more stable coaching staff should only help the young Ontario native. Learning behind Sean Monahan could also prove invaluable. Fantilli has the talent and skill to become the face of the franchise.

HOME

AWAY