



NHL STANLEY CUP FINAL 2026

History | Team Evaluations | Projections



2025-26 Season Analysis & 2026 Stanley Cup Prediction



STANLEY CUP FINAL

A Century of Champions (1918-2025)

107

Finals Played

24

Different Champions

23

Canadiens Cups (Most)

2

Years Not Awarded

The Stanley Cup Final has been contested since 1918 in the NHL era, producing legendary dynasties and unforgettable moments. From the Montreal Canadiens' record 23 championships to modern-era dominance by franchises like Tampa Bay and Vegas, the Cup remains the hardest trophy to win in professional sports.

Two years saw no champion: 1919 (Spanish Flu epidemic) and 2005 (season lockout).

STANLEY CUP CHAMPIONS

1918-1945 — The Original Six Emergence

| Year | Winner | Runner-Up | Series |
|------|----------------------|------------------------|--------|
| 1918 | Toronto Arenas | Vancouver Millionaires | 3-2 |
| 1919 | Not Awarded | Influenza Epidemic | — |
| 1920 | Ottawa Senators | Seattle Metropolitans | 3-2 |
| 1921 | Ottawa Senators | Vancouver Millionaires | 3-2 |
| 1922 | Toronto St. Patricks | Vancouver Millionaires | 3-2 |
| 1923 | Ottawa Senators | Edmonton Eskimos | 2-0 |
| 1924 | Montreal Canadiens | Calgary Tigers | 2-0 |
| 1925 | Victoria Cougars | Montreal Canadiens | 3-1 |
| 1926 | Montreal Maroons | Victoria Cougars | 3-1 |
| 1927 | Ottawa Senators | Boston Bruins | 2-0 |
| 1928 | New York Rangers | Montreal Maroons | 3-2 |
| 1929 | Boston Bruins | New York Rangers | 2-0 |
| 1930 | Montreal Canadiens | Boston Bruins | 2-0 |
| 1931 | Montreal Canadiens | Chicago Black Hawks | 3-2 |
| 1932 | Toronto Maple Leafs | New York Rangers | 3-0 |
| 1933 | New York Rangers | Toronto Maple Leafs | 3-1 |
| 1934 | Chicago Black Hawks | Detroit Red Wings | 3-1 |
| 1935 | Montreal Maroons | Toronto Maple Leafs | 3-0 |
| 1936 | Detroit Red Wings | Toronto Maple Leafs | 3-1 |
| 1937 | Detroit Red Wings | New York Rangers | 3-2 |
| 1938 | Chicago Black Hawks | Toronto Maple Leafs | 3-1 |
| 1939 | Boston Bruins | Toronto Maple Leafs | 4-1 |
| 1940 | New York Rangers | Toronto Maple Leafs | 4-2 |
| 1941 | Boston Bruins | Detroit Red Wings | 4-0 |
| 1942 | Toronto Maple Leafs | Detroit Red Wings | 4-3 |
| 1943 | Detroit Red Wings | Boston Bruins | 4-0 |
| 1944 | Montreal Canadiens | Chicago Black Hawks | 4-0 |
| 1945 | Toronto Maple Leafs | Detroit Red Wings | 4-3 |

STANLEY CUP CHAMPIONS

1946-1970 — The Dynasty Years

| Year | Winner | Runner-Up | Series |
|------|---------------------|---------------------|--------|
| 1946 | Montreal Canadiens | Boston Bruins | 4-1 |
| 1947 | Toronto Maple Leafs | Montreal Canadiens | 4-2 |
| 1948 | Toronto Maple Leafs | Detroit Red Wings | 4-0 |
| 1949 | Toronto Maple Leafs | Detroit Red Wings | 4-0 |
| 1950 | Detroit Red Wings | New York Rangers | 4-3 |
| 1951 | Toronto Maple Leafs | Montreal Canadiens | 4-1 |
| 1952 | Detroit Red Wings | Montreal Canadiens | 4-0 |
| 1953 | Montreal Canadiens | Boston Bruins | 4-1 |
| 1954 | Detroit Red Wings | Montreal Canadiens | 4-3 |
| 1955 | Detroit Red Wings | Montreal Canadiens | 4-3 |
| 1956 | Montreal Canadiens | Detroit Red Wings | 4-1 |
| 1957 | Montreal Canadiens | Boston Bruins | 4-1 |
| 1958 | Montreal Canadiens | Boston Bruins | 4-2 |
| 1959 | Montreal Canadiens | Toronto Maple Leafs | 4-1 |
| 1960 | Montreal Canadiens | Toronto Maple Leafs | 4-0 |
| 1961 | Chicago Black Hawks | Detroit Red Wings | 4-2 |
| 1962 | Toronto Maple Leafs | Chicago Black Hawks | 4-2 |
| 1963 | Toronto Maple Leafs | Detroit Red Wings | 4-1 |
| 1964 | Toronto Maple Leafs | Detroit Red Wings | 4-3 |
| 1965 | Montreal Canadiens | Chicago Black Hawks | 4-3 |
| 1966 | Montreal Canadiens | Detroit Red Wings | 4-2 |
| 1967 | Toronto Maple Leafs | Montreal Canadiens | 4-2 |
| 1968 | Montreal Canadiens | St. Louis Blues | 4-0 |
| 1969 | Montreal Canadiens | St. Louis Blues | 4-0 |
| 1970 | Boston Bruins | St. Louis Blues | 4-0 |

STANLEY CUP CHAMPIONS

1971-1995 — Expansion & New Powers

| Year | Winner | Runner-Up | Series |
|------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------|
| 1971 | Montreal Canadiens | Chicago Black Hawks | 4-3 |
| 1972 | Boston Bruins | New York Rangers | 4-2 |
| 1973 | Montreal Canadiens | Chicago Black Hawks | 4-2 |
| 1974 | Philadelphia Flyers | Boston Bruins | 4-2 |
| 1975 | Philadelphia Flyers | Buffalo Sabres | 4-2 |
| 1976 | Montreal Canadiens | Philadelphia Flyers | 4-0 |
| 1977 | Montreal Canadiens | Boston Bruins | 4-0 |
| 1978 | Montreal Canadiens | Boston Bruins | 4-2 |
| 1979 | Montreal Canadiens | New York Rangers | 4-1 |
| 1980 | New York Islanders | Philadelphia Flyers | 4-2 |
| 1981 | New York Islanders | Minnesota North Stars | 4-1 |
| 1982 | New York Islanders | Vancouver Canucks | 4-0 |
| 1983 | New York Islanders | Edmonton Oilers | 4-0 |
| 1984 | Edmonton Oilers | New York Islanders | 4-1 |
| 1985 | Edmonton Oilers | Philadelphia Flyers | 4-1 |
| 1986 | Montreal Canadiens | Calgary Flames | 4-1 |
| 1987 | Edmonton Oilers | Philadelphia Flyers | 4-3 |
| 1988 | Edmonton Oilers | Boston Bruins | 4-0 |
| 1989 | Calgary Flames | Montreal Canadiens | 4-2 |
| 1990 | Edmonton Oilers | Boston Bruins | 4-1 |
| 1991 | Pittsburgh Penguins | Minnesota North Stars | 4-2 |
| 1992 | Pittsburgh Penguins | Chicago Blackhawks | 4-0 |
| 1993 | Montreal Canadiens | Los Angeles Kings | 4-1 |
| 1994 | New York Rangers | Vancouver Canucks | 4-3 |
| 1995 | New Jersey Devils | Detroit Red Wings | 4-0 |

STANLEY CUP CHAMPIONS

1996-2025 — The Modern Era

| Year | Winner | Runner-Up | Series |
|------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------|
| 1996 | Colorado Avalanche | Florida Panthers | 4-0 |
| 1997 | Detroit Red Wings | Philadelphia Flyers | 4-0 |
| 1998 | Detroit Red Wings | Washington Capitals | 4-0 |
| 1999 | Dallas Stars | Buffalo Sabres | 4-2 |
| 2000 | New Jersey Devils | Dallas Stars | 4-2 |
| 2001 | Colorado Avalanche | New Jersey Devils | 4-3 |
| 2002 | Detroit Red Wings | Carolina Hurricanes | 4-1 |
| 2003 | New Jersey Devils | Mighty Ducks of Anaheim | 4-3 |
| 2004 | Tampa Bay Lightning | Calgary Flames | 4-3 |
| 2005 | Not Awarded | Season Lockout | — |
| 2006 | Carolina Hurricanes | Edmonton Oilers | 4-3 |
| 2007 | Anaheim Ducks | Ottawa Senators | 4-1 |
| 2008 | Detroit Red Wings | Pittsburgh Penguins | 4-2 |
| 2009 | Pittsburgh Penguins | Detroit Red Wings | 4-3 |
| 2010 | Chicago Blackhawks | Philadelphia Flyers | 4-2 |
| 2011 | Boston Bruins | Vancouver Canucks | 4-3 |
| 2012 | Los Angeles Kings | New Jersey Devils | 4-2 |
| 2013 | Chicago Blackhawks | Boston Bruins | 4-2 |
| 2014 | Los Angeles Kings | New York Rangers | 4-1 |
| 2015 | Chicago Blackhawks | Tampa Bay Lightning | 4-2 |
| 2016 | Pittsburgh Penguins | San Jose Sharks | 4-2 |
| 2017 | Pittsburgh Penguins | Nashville Predators | 4-2 |
| 2018 | Washington Capitals | Vegas Golden Knights | 4-1 |
| 2019 | St. Louis Blues | Boston Bruins | 4-3 |
| 2020 | Tampa Bay Lightning | Dallas Stars | 4-2 |
| 2021 | Tampa Bay Lightning | Montreal Canadiens | 4-1 |
| 2022 | Colorado Avalanche | Tampa Bay Lightning | 4-2 |
| 2023 | Vegas Golden Knights | Florida Panthers | 4-1 |
| 2024 | Florida Panthers | Edmonton Oilers | 4-3 |
| 2025 | Florida Panthers | Edmonton Oilers | 4-2 |

ALL-TIME WINS BY FRANCHISE

NHL Era Stanley Cup Championships

| Franchise | Cups | Key Dynasty Runs |
|-------------------------|------|--|
| Montreal Canadiens | 23 | 5 straight (1956-60), 4 straight (1976-79) |
| Toronto Maple Leafs | 13 | 3 straight (1947-49), 3 straight (1962-64) |
| Detroit Red Wings | 11 | Back-to-back (1936-37, 1954-55, 1997-98) |
| Chicago Blackhawks | 6 | 3 in 6 years (2010, 2013, 2015) |
| Boston Bruins | 6 | Back-to-back (1970, 1972) |
| Edmonton Oilers | 5 | 5 in 7 years (1984-90) |
| Pittsburgh Penguins | 5 | Back-to-back twice (1991-92, 2016-17) |
| New York Islanders | 4 | 4 straight (1980-83) |
| New York Rangers | 4 | 1928, 1933, 1940, 1994 |
| Ottawa Senators (orig.) | 4 | 1920, 1921, 1923, 1927 |
| New Jersey Devils | 3 | 1995, 2000, 2003 |
| Colorado Avalanche | 3 | 1996, 2001, 2022 |
| Tampa Bay Lightning | 3 | 2004, 2020-21 |
| Florida Panthers | 2 | Back-to-back (2024-25) |
| Philadelphia Flyers | 2 | Back-to-back (1974-75) |
| Los Angeles Kings | 2 | 2012, 2014 |
| + 8 one-time winners | 1 ea | Calgary, Dallas, Carolina, Anaheim, Washington, St. Louis, Vegas, Victoria |

Playoffs Overview

A New Champion Awaits

16 Teams entered the chase for hockey's ultimate prize

0 Defending champs — Florida Panthers missed the playoffs entirely

1st New Stanley Cup champion guaranteed since 2023

6 Teams returning to playoffs after missing last season



2025-26 STANLEY CUP FINAL

CAROLINA HURRICANES

53-22-7 | 113 pts

1st Metro | 12-1 Playoffs

Home Ice Advantage

VS

VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS

39-26-17 | 95 pts

1st Pacific | 12-4 Playoffs

2023 Cup Champions

Game 1 Tonight | 8 PM ET | Raleigh

CAROLINA HURRICANES

2025-26 Season Evaluation

53-22-

24.9

7

Record

113

Points (2nd)

296

Goals For (2nd)

+56

Goal Differential

%

Power Play (4th)

- Relentless consistency all season — no bad stretches longer than a few games. February was a perfect 5-0-0.
- Depth scoring was the real engine: five players scored 20+ goals, eight cleared 30+ points.
- Nikolaj Ehlers acquisition (from Winnipeg) gave Aho an elite winger for the first time.
- Survived early-season injury crisis (Kochetkov, Slavin, Gostisbehere, Miller all out simultaneously).
- Rod Brind'Amour: longest-tenured coach in the league. Stability, no drama.

CAROLINA — REGULAR SEASON

Statistical Profile

| Stat | Value | League Rank |
|-------------------|--------------|------------------------------|
| Record | 53-22-7 | 1st East, 1st Metro |
| Points | 113 | 2nd overall (behind COL 121) |
| Home | 29-10-2 | — |
| Road | 24-12-5 | — |
| Goals For | 296 (3.61/G) | 2nd |
| Goals Against | 240 (2.93/G) | 5th |
| Goal Differential | +56 | — |
| Power Play | 24.9% | 4th |
| Penalty Kill | 80.5% | 11th |
| Shots/Game | 32.18 | — |
| Shooting % | 11.0% | — |

CAROLINA — KEY PLAYERS

Regular Season Individual Stats

| Player | Pos | GP | G | A | Pts | +/- |
|---------------------|-----|----|----|----|-----|-----|
| Sebastian Aho | C | 79 | 27 | 53 | 80 | +11 |
| Nikolaj Ehlers | LW | 82 | 26 | 45 | 71 | +8 |
| Andrei Svechnikov | RW | 79 | 31 | 39 | 70 | +1 |
| Seth Jarvis | RW | 71 | 32 | 34 | 66 | +6 |
| Jackson Blake | RW | 81 | 22 | 31 | 53 | +4 |
| Shayne Gostisbehere | D | 55 | 13 | 37 | 50 | +11 |
| Taylor Hall | LW | 80 | 18 | 30 | 48 | +6 |
| Logan Stankoven | C | 81 | 21 | 23 | 44 | +12 |
| Alexander Nikishin | D | 81 | 11 | 22 | 33 | +18 |

CAROLINA — GOALTENDING

Regular Season Goaltender Stats

| Goalie | GP | W | L | OT | GAA | SV% | SO |
|-------------------|----|----|----|----|------|------|----|
| Brandon Bussi | 39 | 31 | 6 | 2 | 2.47 | .895 | 2 |
| Frederik Andersen | 35 | 16 | 14 | 5 | 3.05 | .874 | 0 |
| Pyotr Kochetkov | 9 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 2.33 | .899 | 1 |

The Bussi Story: Claimed off waivers from Florida on Oct 5, Bussi became the de facto starter when Kochetkov went down with a preseason injury requiring surgery. Posted a stunning 31-6-2 record.

Andersen's Transformation: Below-average .874 SV% in the regular season, but has been the playoff starter with a completely different level of play (more on this later).

CAROLINA — DECISIVE MOVES

Front Office & Key Decisions

K'Andre Miller Trade (Jul 1, from NYR)

Cost a conditional 1st, a 2nd, and Scott Morrow. Miller posted 37 points from the blue line and a team-high +14 in the playoffs. A franchise-altering move.

Brandon Bussi Off Waivers (Oct 5, from FLA)

One of the great waiver-wire steals of the season. Bussi became the de facto starter and posted a 31-6-2 record.

Coaching Stability

Brind'Amour is the longest-tenured coach in the league. No drama, no distractions, no questions about the bench.

GM Eric Tulsky's Approach

Analytical, system-first roster building. Deslauriers added at deadline for physicality. The roster was built to win in the summer.

VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS

2025-26 Season Evaluation

39-26-

24.6

17

Record

95

Points (13th)

265

Goals For (14th)

+15

Goal Differential

%

Power Play (6th)

- A tale of two seasons: 32-26-16 under Cassidy, then 7-0-1 under Tortorella to close.
- 17 overtime losses — an enormous number. 17 points left on the table.
- March collapse (5-9-2) forced the coaching change. Cassidy fired March 29.
- Goaltending carousel: four goalies started games, none above .893 SV% in regular season.
- Discipline was elite: 1st in fewest penalties taken/60 (3.06), 2nd in fewest PIM/game (7.42).

VEGAS — REGULAR SEASON

Statistical Profile

| Stat | Value | League Rank |
|-------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Record | 39-26-17 | 1st Pacific, 4th West |
| Points | 95 | 13th overall |
| Home | 20-12-9 | — |
| Road | 19-14-8 | — |
| Goals For | 265 (3.23/G) | 14th |
| Goals Against | 250 (3.05/G) | 12th |
| Goal Differential | +15 | — |
| Power Play | 24.6% | 6th |
| Penalty Kill | 81.4% | 7th |
| Shots/Game | 29.0 | 8th |
| Shooting % | 11.1% | — |

VEGAS — KEY PLAYERS

Regular Season Individual Stats

| Player | Pos | GP | G | A | Pts | +/- |
|-----------------|-----|----|----|----|-----|-----|
| Jack Eichel | C | 74 | 27 | 63 | 90 | +23 |
| Mitch Marner | RW | 81 | 24 | 56 | 80 | +17 |
| Mark Stone | RW | 60 | 28 | 45 | 73 | +26 |
| Pavel Dorofeyev | LW | 82 | 37 | 27 | 64 | -3 |
| Ivan Barbashev | LW | 82 | 23 | 38 | 61 | +20 |
| Tomas Hertl | C | 82 | 24 | 34 | 58 | -17 |
| Shea Theodore | D | 70 | 10 | 29 | 39 | +19 |
| Noah Hanifin | D | 71 | 3 | 25 | 28 | 0 |

VEGAS — GOALTENDING

Regular Season Goaltender Stats

| Goalie | GP | W | L | OT | GAA | SV% | SO |
|--------------|----|----|----|----|------|------|----|
| Akira Schmid | 34 | 16 | 10 | 6 | 2.59 | .893 | 2 |
| Carter Hart | 18 | 11 | 3 | 3 | 2.71 | .891 | 0 |
| Adin Hill | 27 | 10 | 9 | 6 | 3.04 | .871 | 1 |
| Carl Lindbom | 8 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3.00 | .873 | 0 |

Carter Hart's Resurrection: Claimed from Philly in October, used sparingly (18 GP) in the regular season. Tortorella made him the playoff starter and Hart has been outstanding: 12-4, 2.22 GAA, .924 SV%. The biggest single-player performance swing on either roster.

Team SV% of .879 ranked 27th in the league during the regular season — then Hart elevated to .924 in the playoffs.

VEGAS — DECISIVE MOVES

Front Office & Key Decisions

Mitch Marner Trade (Jul 1, from Toronto)

For Nicolas Roy. Marner formed a lethal combo with Eichel: 80 reg. season pts, and the leading playoff scorer in the NHL with 21 pts (7G, 14A) in 16 games.

Rasmus Andersson Trade (Jan 18, from Calgary)

Cost multiple conditional 1st-round picks. Filled the blue line gap left by Pietrangelo's season-ending hip injury.

Cassidy Fired, Tortorella Hired (Mar 29)

The season's defining moment. Tighter defensive structure. Results: 7-0-1 to close regular season, then a 12-4 playoff run.

Carter Hart Claimed (Oct, from Philadelphia)

Used sparingly in regular season, then became the playoff starter under Tortorella. 12-4, 2.22 GAA, .924 SV%.

HEAD-TO-HEAD: REGULAR SEASON

2025-26 Season Meetings

| Date | Location | Score | Notes |
|--------|----------------------|---------------|--|
| Oct 20 | T-Mobile Arena (VGK) | VGK 4 - CAR 1 | Vegas PP: 0/4; CAR PP: 0/4. Dominant Vegas win. |
| Oct 28 | Lenovo Center (CAR) | VGK 6 - CAR 3 | Vegas 1/4 PP; CAR 1/1. High event, Vegas controlled. |

Context: Why This Means Very Little

- Both games were in October, when Carolina was in the middle of its injury crisis (missing Slavin, Kochetkov, Gostisbehere, and more), and Vegas was still operating under Cassidy.
- The Hurricanes' lineup, system, and goaltender are fundamentally different now.
- These teams have never met in the playoffs before.

CAROLINA PLAYOFF PATH

13 GP: 12-1 | First team since 1985 Oilers to start playoffs 8-0

Round 1 vs Ottawa Senators (WC2) — Won 4-0

| G | Score | Key Detail |
|---|-------------------|--|
| 1 | CAR 2, OTT 0 | Andersen shutout. Suffocating defense. |
| 2 | CAR 3, OTT 2 (OT) | Gutted out in overtime. |
| 3 | CAR 2, OTT 1 | Another controlled win. |

Round 2 vs Philadelphia Flyers (M3) — Won 4-0

| G | Score | Key Detail |
|---|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 | CAR 3, PHI 0 | Andersen shutout. |
| 2 | CAR 3, PHI 2 (OT) | Tight game; survived. |
| 3 | CAR 4, PHI 1 | First comfortable win. |
| 4 | CAR 3, PHI 2 (OT) | Blake OT winner to complete sweep. |

8-0 start to playoffs — first since 1984-85 Edmonton Oilers

CAROLINA — ECF VS MONTREAL

Eastern Conference Final (A3) — Won 4-1

| Game | Score | Key Detail |
|------|-------------------|---|
| 1 | MTL 6, CAR 2 | Only loss. Montreal dominated; wakeup call. |
| 2 | CAR 3, MTL 2 (OT) | Immediate response. Season-saving win. |
| 3 | CAR 3, MTL 2 (OT) | Won in Montreal. Two straight OT road wins. |
| 4 | CAR 4, MTL 0 | Andersen shutout. Strangled Montreal. |
| 5 | CAR 6, MTL 1 | Blowout closeout. Hall, Blake, Stankoven multi-point games. |

The pattern: Lost Game 1 at home (6-2), needed OT twice against a 98-pt Montreal team, then locked down completely in Games 4-5. The question: which version of Carolina shows up in the Final?

CAROLINA PLAYOFF LEADERS

| Player | GP | G | A | Pts | +/- |
|-----------------|----|---|----|-----|-----|
| Taylor Hall | 13 | 5 | 11 | 16 | +11 |
| Jackson Blake | 13 | 5 | 10 | 15 | +8 |
| Logan Stankoven | 13 | 9 | 3 | 12 | +8 |
| Nikolaj Ehlers | 12 | 4 | 5 | 9 | +3 |
| Seth Jarvis | 13 | 3 | 5 | 8 | +3 |
| K'Andre Miller | 13 | 0 | 8 | 8 | +14 |

FREDERIK ANDERSEN — PLAYOFF GOALTENDING

12-1

Record

1.41

GAA

.931

SV%

3

Shutouts

In 12 of 13 games, allowed 2 goals or fewer. The one game with more than 2, they lost.

VEGAS PLAYOFF PATH

16 GP: 12-4 | Overcame 1-2 deficit in Round 1

Round 1 vs Utah Mammoth (WC1) — V R2 vs Anaheim (P3) — Won 4-2

| G | Score | Key Detail |
|---|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | VGK 4, UTA 2 | Comfortable opener. |
| 2 | UTA 3, VGK 2 | Utah pushed back. |
| 3 | UTA 4, VGK 2 | Down 2-1. Pressure mounting. |
| 4 | VGK 5, UTA 4 (OT) | Must-win OT victory. |
| 5 | VGK 5, UTA 4 (2OT) | Double OT. Survived again. |
| 6 | VGK 5, UTA 1 | Blowout closeout. |

| G | Score | Key Detail |
|---|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | VGK 3, ANA 1 | Clean start. |
| 2 | ANA 3, VGK 1 | Ducks respond. |
| 3 | VGK 6, ANA 2 | Dominant. Stone injured. |
| 4 | ANA 4, VGK 3 | Without Stone, drops one. |
| 5 | VGK 3, ANA 2 (OT) | OT win without captain. |
| 6 | VGK 5, ANA 1 | Clinch. Dorofeyev x2. |

Resilience defined: won 3 OT games (including a double OT) in the first two rounds

VEGAS — WCF VS COLORADO

Western Conference Final (C1, Presidents' Trophy) — Swept 4-0

| Game | Score | Key Detail |
|------|--------------|---|
| 1 | VGK 4, COL 2 | Stone still out. Tortorella neutralized MacKinnon. |
| 2 | VGK 3, COL 1 | Hart outstanding. Colorado's offense evaporated. |
| 3 | VGK 5, COL 3 | Stone returned. Scored comeback-sparking goal (down 3-0). |
| 4 | VGK 2, COL 1 | Stone & Smith scored. Colorado held to 21 SOG. Series over. |

The Most Impressive Series of 2026

- Colorado had 121 points, the best offense in the NHL (3.87 GF/G), MacKinnon, Rantanen, Makar.
- Vegas held them to 7 goals in 4 games (1.75/G) — historic suppression of a generational offense.
- Won Games 1-2 without Mark Stone. He returned Game 3, scored the comeback-sparking goal.

VEGAS PLAYOFF LEADERS

| Player | GP | G | A | Pts | +/- |
|-----------------|----|----|----|-----|-----|
| Mitch Marner | 16 | 7 | 14 | 21 | +12 |
| Jack Eichel | 16 | 2 | 16 | 18 | +7 |
| Pavel Dorofeyev | 16 | 10 | 4 | 14 | +5 |
| Brett Howden | 16 | 10 | 2 | 12 | +9 |
| Ivan Barbashev | 16 | 5 | 7 | 12 | +4 |
| Shea Theodore | 16 | 4 | 7 | 11 | +8 |

CARTER HART — PLAYOFF GOALTENDING

12-4

Record

2.22

GAA

.924

SV%

0

Shutouts

Marner is the leading playoff scorer in the entire NHL. Howden (10G) has been a revelation as a depth scorer.

THE MATCHUP

Key Factors Compared

| Factor | Carolina | Vegas |
|--------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Playoff Record | 12-1 | 12-4 |
| GA/Game (Playoffs) | ~1.62 | ~2.31 |
| Goaltender | Andersen: 1.41 GAA / .931 | Hart: 2.22 GAA / .924 |
| Top Playoff Scorer | Hall (16P) / Stankoven (9G) | Marner (21P) / Dorofeyev (10G) |
| Rest Advantage | Finished May 29 (4 days off) | Finished May 26 (7 days off) |
| Coaching | Brind'Amour (7th season) | Tortorella (hired Mar 29) |
| Injury Concern | Nikishin limited | Stone (missed 5 GP, returned) |
| Home Ice | Carolina | — |
| H2H (Reg Season) | Lost both | Won both |

Carolina is the better regular-season team (113 vs 95 pts) with home ice and the hotter goaltender. Vegas has better top-end talent, more playoff experience, and the Tortorella effect: 19-1-1 in their last 20 meaningful games.

10-YEAR PLAYOFF RECORDS

2017-2026 Postseason History

CAROLINA HURRICANES

- 8 of 10 seasons in playoffs
- 59-43 overall (.578)
- 13 series won, 7 series lost
- 0 Cups
- 3 ECF losses (all sweeps: BOS '19, FLA '23, FLA '25)
- **This year's 12-1 is a categorical departure**

VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS

- 8 of 9 seasons in playoffs
- 74-48 overall (.607)
- 15 series won, 7 series lost
- **1 Cup (2023)**
- 2 prior Final appearances
- **Most playoff wins of any franchise since 2018**

Carolina: perennial contender that repeatedly hit a wall in the ECF. Vegas: treats the playoffs like a second season.

CONFERENCE FINAL ANALYSIS

Recency Adjustment: ECF vs WCF Performance

| Factor | CAR vs Montreal | VGK vs Colorado |
|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Opponent Reg. Season Pts | 98 | 121 (Presidents' Trophy) |
| Series Result | 4-1 | 4-0 (sweep) |
| Games Needing OT | 2 | 0 |
| Goals Allowed in Series | 12 (2.40/G) | 7 (1.75/G) |
| Lost at Home? | Yes (Game 1, 6-2) | No |
| Won Without Key Player? | No | Yes (Stone out G1-G2) |
| Margin of Dominance | Moderate | Overwhelming |

Vegas' sweep of the Presidents' Trophy winners is the most impressive single series of the 2026 playoffs. Colorado scored just 7 total goals in 4 games against the best regular-season team in hockey.

Eastern Conference — First Round

Buffalo Sabres vs. Boston Bruins

Buffalo wins 4–2

Sabres snap 14-year playoff drought with dominant run

Montreal Canadiens vs. Tampa Bay Lightning

Montreal wins 4–3

Epic 7-game series — 4 games went to overtime

Carolina Hurricanes vs. Ottawa Senators

Carolina wins 4–0

Complete sweep — Hurricanes never trailed in any game

Philadelphia Flyers vs. Pittsburgh Penguins

Philadelphia wins 4–2

Battle of Pennsylvania returns for first time since 2018

Western Conference — First Round

Colorado Avalanche vs. Los Angeles Kings

Colorado wins 4–0

Presidents' Trophy winners cruise with a dominant sweep

Minnesota Wild vs. Dallas Stars

Minnesota wins 4–2

Wild topple Stars behind Kaprizov's 15-point playoff run

Vegas Golden Knights vs. Utah Mammoth

Vegas wins 4–2

Games 4 and 5 both decided in overtime — nailbiter series

Anaheim Ducks vs. Edmonton Oilers

Anaheim wins 4–2

Stunning upset — Ducks knock out back-to-back finalists

First Round Highlights



Montreal's Overtime Marathon

4 of 7 games vs. Tampa Bay went to OT — Canadiens won Game 7 on the road 2–1

Carolina's Iron Grip

Hurricanes never trailed a single game in their entire first round sweep of Ottawa

Oilers Dethroned

Anaheim knocked out the back-to-back Cup finalists in 6 games — biggest upset of the round

Buffalo's Breakout

Sabres ended an NHL-record 14-season playoff drought by winning the Atlantic Division

East — Second Round

Carolina Hurricanes vs. Philadelphia Flyers

Carolina wins 4–0

- Back-to-back sweeps — first team in modern playoff history
- Stankoven scored in every game, Blake's OT winner sealed Game 4
- Andersen posted a shutout in Game 1 (3–0)
- Hurricanes outshot Flyers 40–17 in the clincher

Buffalo Sabres vs. Montreal Canadiens

Montreal wins 4–3

- Another 7-game grind — Canadiens' second consecutive 7-game series
- Montreal won decisive Game 7 on the road 3–2 in overtime
- Lane Hutson emerged as a star with 16 playoff points at age 21
- Buffalo's historic season ended just short of the Conference Finals

West — Second Round

Colorado Avalanche vs. Minnesota Wild

Colorado wins 4–1

- Presidents' Trophy winners rolled after a Game 3 hiccup
- MacKinnon dominant with 15 points (7G, 8A) in 13 playoff games
- Kaprizov's 15 points weren't enough to overcome Colorado's depth
- Quinn Hughes matched Kaprizov with 15 points from the blue line

Vegas Golden Knights vs. Anaheim Ducks

Vegas wins 4–2

- Golden Knights dispatched the Cinderella Ducks in 6 games
- Carter Hart continued his elite play with a .924 save percentage
- Dorofeyev's goal-scoring prowess emerged — 10 playoff goals total
- Tortorella's defensive system taking hold just weeks after arriving

CONFERENCE FINALS

EAST

Carolina vs. Montreal

Carolina wins 4-1

WEST

Vegas vs. Colorado

Vegas wins 4-0



Eastern Conference Final

Carolina Hurricanes 4 — Montreal Canadiens 1

| | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Game 1 | Montreal 6, Carolina 2 | <i>Canes rusty after 12-day layoff</i> |
| Game 2 | Carolina 3, Montreal 2 (OT) | <i>Ehlers OT winner</i> |
| Game 3 | Carolina 3, Montreal 2 (OT) | <i>Svechnikov OT winner</i> |
| Game 4 | Carolina 4, Montreal 0 | <i>Andersen shutout</i> |
| Game 5 | Carolina 6, Montreal 1 | <i>Clincher — dominant</i> |

Key Takeaways

- Carolina outshot Montreal 153–77 from the second period of Game 1 on
- Hurricanes won 5 straight after an opening loss — 5-0 in OT games this postseason
- Hall–Stankoven–Blake line produced 42 of the team's 121 playoff points (35%)
- Andersen's shutout in Game 4 was his 3rd of the playoffs

Western Conference Final

Vegas Golden Knights 4 — Colorado Avalanche 0

| | | |
|---------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Game 1 | Vegas 4, Colorado 2 | <i>Hart: 36 saves</i> |
| Game 2 | Vegas 3, Colorado 1 | <i>Barbashev GWG</i> |
| Game 3 | Vegas 5, Colorado 3 | <i>Erased 3–0 deficit</i> |
| Game 4 | Vegas 2, Colorado 1 | <i>Stone, Smith goals</i> |

Key Takeaways

- Vegas swept the Presidents' Trophy-winning Avalanche — a stunning result
- Game 3 comeback from 3–0 down was the series' defining moment
- Hart stopped 25 of 29 high-danger shots in the series
- Theodore led all players with 46 blocked shots in the playoffs

Playoff Scoring Leaders

21 PTS

Mitch Marner

VGK — 7G, 14A in 16 GP

18 PTS

Jack Eichel

VGK — 2G, 16A in 16 GP

16 PTS

Taylor Hall

CAR — 5G, 11A in 13 GP

| | | | |
|------------------|-----|---------------|---------|
| Nick Suzuki | MTL | 16 PTS | 4G, 12A |
| Lane Hutson | MTL | 16 PTS | 3G, 13A |
| Nathan MacKinnon | COL | 15 PTS | 7G, 8A |
| Jackson Blake | CAR | 15 PTS | 5G, 10A |
| Kirill Kaprizov | MIN | 15 PTS | 4G, 11A |
| Pavel Dorofeyev | VGK | 14 PTS | 10G, 4A |

Goaltending Battle



Frederik Andersen — CAR

1.41 **.928**

GAA **SV%**

12 wins • 3 shutouts • Best GAA in the playoffs

Carter Hart — VGK

2.22 **.924**

GAA **SV%**

12 wins • 12 quality starts • .873 high-danger SV%

Carolina's Dominant Run

First team to reach the Cup Final with just 1 loss since the 1983 Oilers

12-1

Playoff
Record

113

Regular Season
Points

5-0

In Overtime
Games

1st

Back-to-Back
Sweeps (Modern Era)

The Blake-Hall-Stankoven Line

Taylor Hall

16 PTS (5G, 11A)

6th player in franchise history with 5+ goals and 10+ assists in a single postseason

Logan Stankoven

9 goals

Scored in every first-round game; 3rd most goals in a single postseason in franchise history

Jackson Blake

15 PTS (5G, 10A)

OT winner sealed the second-round sweep vs. Flyers; just 22 years old

The Tortorella Effect

From unemployed to the Stanley Cup Final in 65 days

- **Mar 28** Tortorella out of work — unsure if he'd coach again
- **Mar 29** Hired by Vegas after Bruce Cassidy fired (8 games left in season)
- **Apr 14** Goes 7–0–1 to close regular season — revives playoff chances
- **May 1** Eliminates Utah Mammoth in 6 games (1st round)
- **May 16** Dispatches Anaheim Ducks in 6 games (2nd round)
- **May 26** Sweeps Presidents' Trophy-winning Colorado (Conf. Final)

Carter Hart under Tortorella: 18–4 record • .924 SV% • 3rd coach in history to reach the Cup Final after joining in final 10 games

STANLEY CUP FINAL

Carolina Hurricanes

(M1) 53–22–7 • 113 PTS

12–1 in playoffs

VS

Vegas Golden Knights

(P1) 39–26–17 • 95 PTS

12–4 in playoffs

| | | | |
|----------------|--------|------------|---------|
| Game 1 | Jun 2 | VGK at CAR | 8 PM ET |
| Game 2 | Jun 4 | VGK at CAR | 8 PM ET |
| Game 3 | Jun 6 | CAR at VGK | 8 PM ET |
| Game 4 | Jun 9 | CAR at VGK | 8 PM ET |
| Game 5* | Jun 11 | VGK at CAR | 8 PM ET |
| Game 6* | Jun 14 | CAR at VGK | 8 PM ET |
| Game 7* | Jun 17 | VGK at CAR | 8 PM ET |

* if necessary • All games on ABC

SUCCESS PROJECTION INDEX

Adjusted SPI Breakdown (100-Point Scale)

| Factor | Max | CAR | VGK | Key Rationale |
|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|---|
| Current Playoff Form | 20 | 17 | 17 | Sweeping 121-pt COL = going 4-1 vs 98-pt MTL with OT survivals |
| Goaltending | 20 | 19 | 16 | Andersen still superior (.931 vs .924), but Hart's WCF closes gap |
| Offensive Firepower | 15 | 11 | 13 | Eichel-Marner tandem is the best forward pair in this series |
| Defensive Structure | 15 | 13 | 13 | Holding COL to 1.75 G/G is the defensive masterpiece of 2026 |
| Historical Pedigree | 10 | 5 | 9 | Vegas has Cup experience; Carolina swept in 3 of last 6 ECFs |
| Special Teams | 5 | 3 | 4 | Slight Vegas edge |
| Coaching | 5 | 3 | 5 | Tortorella's COL game plan was the coaching performance of 2026 |
| Momentum | 5 | 3 | 5 | Vegas: 6-game win streak, swept best team in hockey |
| Home Ice | 5 | 4 | 3 | Carolina 7-0 at home in playoffs |

ADJUSTED FINAL SPI

CAROLINA

78

/ 100

VEGAS

85

/ 100

Previous: CAR 82, VGK 78 → Adjusted: CAR 78, VGK 85

The recency adjustment flips the picture. Vegas gained 7 points; Carolina lost 4. The swing is driven by the WCF.

SERIES PROJECTION

Game-by-Game Projected Outcomes

| Game | Location | Winner | Score | Key Reasoning |
|------|----------|--------|--------|--|
| 1 | Raleigh | CAR | 2-1 | Tight opener. Andersen is a wall. Home crowd carries. |
| 2 | Raleigh | CAR | 3-2 | Carolina takes 2-0 lead. Marner scores; Vegas finds gaps. |
| 3 | Vegas | VGK | 4-1 | T-Mobile erupts. Tortorella adjusts. Dorofeyev scores twice. |
| 4 | Vegas | VGK | 3-2 OT | Series levelled. Howden OT winner. Momentum shifts. |
| 5 | Raleigh | CAR | 2-0 | Andersen shutout. Brind'Amour's system reasserts. |
| 6 | Vegas | VGK | 5-2 | Marner 4-point night. Vegas forces Game 7. |
| 7 | Raleigh | VGK | 3-2 | Vegas wins on the road. Eichel go-ahead goal. Hart 34 saves. |

WHO LIFTS THE CUP?



Vegas Golden Knights win in 7 games.

Why the projection flips to Vegas:

- The Colorado sweep is the biggest signal in these playoffs. The team that just held MacKinnon, Rantanen, and Makar to 1.75 goals per game across a sweep is not going to be fazed by Carolina's system. Tortorella has proven, in real time, that his defensive structure works against the highest-calibre offence in hockey. Carolina's offence is good, but it's not Colorado-good.
- Marner and Eichel are the best forward tandem in this series. They've combined for 39 points in 16 games. Carolina doesn't have a pairing that matches that.
- Vegas' pedigree matters in a 7-game series. They've been to the Final twice. They've won the Cup. Stone, Theodore, Eichel, and Marchessault have all played in elimination games at this level. Carolina's core has been swept in 3 of their last 6 conference final appearances. This is new territory for them. The pressure of being 1 series away from the Cup has historically broken this group.
- Tortorella's in-series adjustments. He just out-coached Jared Bednar across 4 games with zero margin for error. Brind'Amour is excellent, but Tortorella in a 7-game chess match against a team he's never faced is a dangerous proposition for Carolina.

Why Carolina takes it to 7 (and doesn't lose in 5 or 6):

- Andersen is still the better goaltender. Even with Hart's WCF brilliance, Andersen's .931 SV% and 3 shutouts mean Carolina will always have a chance to win low-scoring games. He'll steal at least 2, maybe 3.
- Home ice. Carolina is 7-0 at home. They'll win at least 2 of their 4 home games, probably 3. The Lenovo Center crowd in a Cup Final is a genuine factor.
- Brind'Amour's system is battle-tested over years, not weeks. Tortorella's been coaching Vegas for 2 months. Over a long series, cracks in a new system are more likely to appear than cracks in one that's been refined for 7 seasons.

ure if he'd coach again

FINAL CALL



VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS IN 7

Marner Wins the Conn Smythe

- Andersen holds if he stays at .931 — Carolina probably wins in 6.
- Stone's health is the wildcard. Fully fit = Vegas' ceiling is a Cup.
- Tortorella's system has only been tested ~20 games. A 7-game series is the ultimate stress test.
- This is a coin-flip series dressed up in structure. Either team winning in 6 or 7 would be entirely reasonable.

HISTORICAL NOTE

The Florida Panthers became back-to-back champions in 2024-25, the 10th franchise in NHL history to repeat.

Captain Aleksander Barkov became the first European to captain multiple Cup-winning teams.

2025-26 Stanley Cup Final

Carolina Hurricanes vs Vegas Golden Knights

Game 1 Tonight | 8 PM ET | Raleigh, North Carolina

