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2023-24 Washington Capitals Storylines

- The Capitals enter 2023-24 looking to make the playoffs for the ninth time in the last 10 seasons and the 33rd time in franchise history. The Capitals have reached the postseason in 14 of the last 16 seasons, joining the Pittsburgh Penguins (15) and the Boston Bruins (14) as the only teams with as many appearances in the last 16 years.
- Despite missing the playoffs for the first time in nine years last season, the Capitals own the NHL's eighth-best record since 2017-18 (253-150-50, .614 point percentage). Washington hasn't missed the playoffs in consecutive seasons since 2005-06 and 2006-07, Alex Ovechkin's first two years in the NHL.
- With 822 career goals, Alex Ovechkin needs 73 goals to pass Wayne Gretzky (894g) for first on the NHL's all-time goals list. Ovechkin, who is signed with the Capitals for the next three seasons, would need to average 25 goals per season during that span to supplant Gretzky as the NHL's all-time leading goal scorer. Ovechkin has scored 25 or more goals in 17 of his 18 NHL seasons, with the shortened 2020-21 campaign (24g in 45 GP) being the only season in which he did not reach the 25-goal mark.
- With a 30-goal season in 2023-24, Ovechkin would pass former Capital Mike Gartner (17) for the most 30-goal seasons in NHL history. Ovechkin also enters the season 15 points shy of 1,500 career points, 53 games shy of 1,400 career games and one power-play goal shy of 300 career power-play goals.
- John Carlson enters the season 73 games shy of 1,000 career games and could become the third player in franchise history to play 1,000 games with the Capitals, joining Alex Ovechkin (1,347 GP) and Nicklas Backstrom (1,097 GP). Carlson averaged 0.73 points-per-game in 2022-23 (9g-20a-29p in 40 GP), the third-highest rate on the team (minimum 20 GP). Since 2017-18, Carlson ranks second in the NHL in points among defensemen (79g-278a-357p in 401 GP) and first in points per game (0.89) (minimum 400 GP).
- Carlson missed 42 games last season, including 36 consecutive games from Dec. 27 to March 21 after taking a shot to the face on Dec. 23 versus Winnipeg. The Capitals went 14-18-4 (.444 point percentage) in Carlson's absence after a 19-13-4 (.583 point percentage) start to the season.
- 2023-24 will be Ovechkin's 19th season with the Capitals. Ovechkin, who made his Capitals and NHL debut on Oct. 5, 2005, is Washington D.C.'s longest-tenured athlete. In Washington, D.C., sports history, only Walter Johnson (Washington Senators: 1907-1927) and Darrell Green (Washington Redskins: 1983-2002) have played at least 20 seasons with their respective team.
- Nicklas Backstrom and John Carlson, who are entering their 17th and 15th seasons with Washington, respectively, are D.C.'s second and third-longest tenured athletes behind Ovechkin. Among each of D.C.'s professional teams, the longest-tenured players are Stephen Strasburg (Washington Nationals: 13 seasons), Tress Way (Washington Commanders: 10 seasons), Steve Birnbaum (D.C. United: 10 seasons), Tori Huster

(Washington Spirit: nine seasons), Natasha Cloud (Washington Mystics: eight seasons) and Deni Avdija (Washington Wizards: three seasons).

- Center Dylan Strome, 26, will look to build upon a career year after setting career highs in games played (81), goals (23), assists (42) and points (65) in his first season with the Capitals in 2022-23. Strome's 65 points in 2022-23 were the most by a Capital in their first season with the club since Nicklas Backstrom in 2007-08 (14g-55a-69p in 82 GP) and the most by a non-Capitals draft pick in their first season with Washington since Robert Lang in 2002-03 (22g-47a-69p in 82 GP). Strome recorded 28 points (11g, 17a) in his final 22 games and led Washington in points from Dec. 23 through the Capitals' regular-season finale on April 13 (17g-24a-41p in 46 GP). Strome, who signed a five-year contract extension with Washington on Feb. 3, finished the season ranked second on the Capitals in goals, assists, points and power-play points (21).

- T.J. Oshie returns for his ninth season with the Capitals, needing 42 more games to reach the 1,000-game mark. Oshie recorded 18 points (9g, 9a) in his final 21 games (0.86 P/GP) of the 2022-23 season, including 16 points (8g, 8a) during a 14-game stretch (1.14 P/GP) from Feb. 14 – March 15. Oshie's 10 multi-point games last season tied for the third most on the Capitals (Alex Ovechkin: 19; Dylan Strome: 17; Evgeny Kuznetsov: 10).

- Defenseman Rasmus Sandin, 23, is entering his first full season with the Capitals. Sandin, who was acquired from the Toronto Maple Leafs on Feb. 28, registered 15 points (3g, 12a) in 19 games with the Capitals last season, including three multi-point efforts in his first four games. Sandin averaged 22:59 of ice time per game after being acquired, which ranked second on the team.

- The Capitals acquired defenseman Joel Edmundson from the Montreal Canadiens on July 1. Edmundson recorded 13 points (2g, 11a) in 61 games with the Canadiens during the 2022-23 season and ranked second among Montreal defensemen in hits (112) and blocked shots (149), as well as fourth in ice time per game (19:34). In addition, Edmundson averaged 3:19 of shorthanded ice time per game, which ranked second in the NHL among all defensemen.

- The Capitals signed forward Max Pacioretty to a one-year contract on July 1. Pacioretty has recorded 645 points (326g, 319a) in 855 career games with the Carolina Hurricanes, Vegas Golden Knights and Montreal Canadiens. Pacioretty is a six time 30-goal scorer and his 236 goals from 2013-14 to 2020-21 were the seventh most in the NHL in that span. Pacioretty, who is recovering from an Achilles injury suffered last season, is not expected to be ready for the start of 2023-24.

- Goaltender Darcy Kuemper returns between the pipes for his second season in Washington. Kuemper appeared in 57 games for the Capitals in 2022-23, which tied his single-season career high in games played (2021-22: 57 GP). Among goaltenders with at least 50 starts in 2022-23, Kuemper ranked eighth in the NHL in goals-against average (2.87) and save percentage (.909) and his five shutouts were tied for the second most in the NHL (Ilya Sorokin, New York Islanders: 6 SO; Alexandar Georgiev, Colorado Avalanche: 5 SO; Jake Oettinger, Dallas Stars: 5 SO). The Capitals scored 2.75 goals per game with Kuemper on the ice, the fourth-lowest average in the NHL for a goaltender with at least 50 starts (Anaheim: 2.32 GF/GP with John Gibson; Philadelphia: 2.52 GF/GP with Carter Hart; Nashville: 2.57 GF/GP with Juuse Saros), but posted a record of 19-3-3 when they scored three or more goals with Kuemper in net.

- Forwards Connor McMichael, 22, Aliaksei Protas, 22, and Beck Malenstyn, 25, will look to bring their Calder Cup championship experience to Washington this season. The trio helped the Hershey Bears, the Capitals' American Hockey League (AHL) affiliate, win the franchise's 12th championship in June. Protas (5g-8a-13p in 20 GP) finished the Calder Cup Playoffs tied for third on Hershey in scoring and McMichael (6g-4a-10p in 20 GP) led the Bears in goals.

- Spencer Carbery enters his first season as head coach of the Capitals. Carbery, the youngest head coach in the NHL at 41, spent five seasons as head coach and director of hockey operations for the South Carolina Stingrays from 2011 to 2016, with the Stingrays serving as the Capitals' ECHL affiliate in Carbery's final two seasons in South Carolina. Carbery compiled a record of 207-115-38, leading the Stingrays to the Kelly Cup Playoffs in each of his five seasons. In 2013-14, Carbery won the John Brophy Coach of The Year Award after leading the Stingrays to their first division title since 2000-01. In addition, Carbery served as head coach of Washington's AHL affiliate the Hershey Bears for three seasons from 2018 to 2021. Under Carbery, Hershey posted a combined record of 104-50-9-8 (.658 point percentage), including an AHL-best 24-7-2-0 record (.758 point percentage) in his final season behind the Bears' bench in 2020-21. Carbery received the Louis A.R. Pieri Memorial Award as the AHL's outstanding coach for the 2020-21 season, becoming the fourth coach ever to win coach of the year awards at both the AHL and ECHL levels. During his three-year tenure with Hershey, Carbery coached and aided in the development of several players that appeared in games with the Capitals during the 2022-23 season, including Martin Fehervary, Aliaksei Protas, Connor McMichael, Alex Alexeyev, Beck Malenstyn, Lucas Johansen and Joe Snively.

