

# SPORTS

## NHL teams gear up for 2008-2009 season

### PITTSBURGH PENGUINS

#### READY TO PLAY

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Although Pittsburgh's current focus is on the Steelers, the pond is about to freeze over. Get ready Pens fans, hockey season is fast approaching and the team is looking forward to another successful year. On Sept 7, the Penguins hit the ice for the first time this year to start their training camp. "It's good. It's always a little anticipation and you never know what you're going to feel like," said Captain Sidney Crosby.

Playoff powerhouse goalie Marc-Andre Fleury is ready to get his season started as well. "I am really excited to get started again. We had such a good end of the season. That was our goal, to improve all year and win the Cup and we were so close. We have some unfinished business to take care of," said Fleury. Fleury played a huge role in the Pens Stanley Cup run last season, and he wants to win it this year.

In two years, the Penguins went from the worst record in the NHL to playing in the Stanley Cup Finals, and General Manager Ray Shero wants that trend to continue. "The natural progression of the franchise from two

Penguins lost some very high talent in Marian Hossa, Ryan Malone and Gary Roberts, who were traded to other teams.

It may be difficult to repeat another great year without those players, but the franchise brought in some talent to help fill the spaces. Right wing Miroslav Satan, formerly of the New York Islanders, was signed in July to take the place of Hossa. Satan had 16 goals and 25 assists for the Islanders last season.

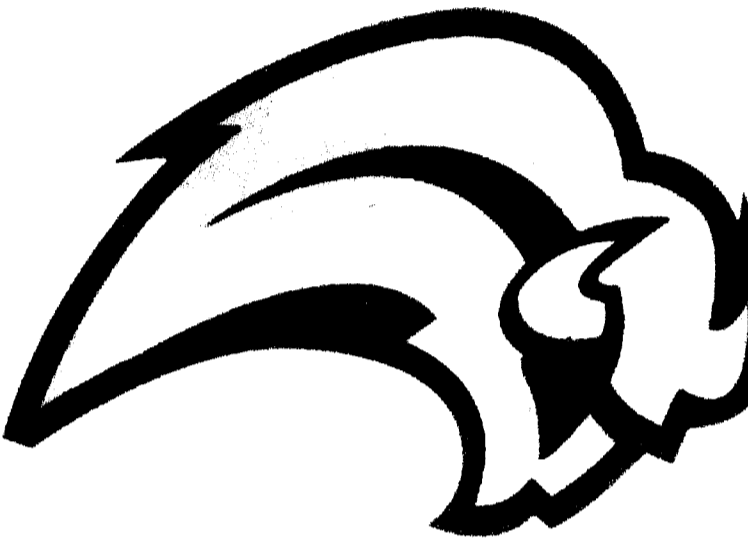
The Penguins also signed Left wing Ruslan Fedotenko, another former Islander. Although some big names left the Steel City, the biggest names are still there, and will be for some time.

21-year-old Captain, Sidney Crosby was signed to a 5-year contract extension which will go through the 2012-13 season. "I really enjoy playing and living in Pittsburgh and I want to be here for a long time," said Crosby. "Individual honors and scoring championships are great, but my No. 1 goal is to win the Stanley Cup. I'd love to be a part of bringing the Cup back here to Pittsburgh," he said.

Offensive standout Evgeni Malkin was also signed to a five-year contract extension. Malkin lead the team in points last year with 106. That was also good enough for second in the NHL.

Another big contract extension went to goalie Marc-Andre Fleury. Fleury was signed to a 7-year contract extension. Fleury played a stellar role in the playoffs, posting a 93 percent save rate. Defensemen Ryan Whitney and Brooks Orpik were also given contract extensions. It is true, the roster won't be quite the same this season, but chances are, that won't affect this young, talented team.

Now, with a great deal of experience, the Penguins will surely be a force to be reckoned with in the 2008-09 season.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
 Tim Connolly of the Sabres makes an attempt at a goal against the Penguins goal keeper, Marc-Andre Fleury.

### LOOKING AHEAD

#### IN THE NHL

By Christine Newby  
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As the 2008-2009 NHL season begins to sneak up on its hibernating fans, hockey fanatics are wondering who will be the team to survive the playoffs and raise the 35 pound Stanley Cup.

The Detroit Red Wings brought the Stanley Cup back to Hockeytown for the eleventh time as they defeated the Pittsburgh Penguins in the Stanley Cup Finals last year. The Red Wings won the series in six games including one game that went into triple sudden death overtime. Left winger, Henrik Zetterberg, was awarded the Conn Smythe Trophy for the most valuable player in the playoffs.

The Pittsburgh Penguins return this season with one unaccomplished goal in mind from last season: winning the Stanley Cup. Many changes in the offseason included losing Marian Hossa, Ryan Malone, Jarkko Ruutu, Gary Roberts, Adam Hall, and Geroges Laraque. However, the Pens re-signed forward Evgeni Malkin, goaltender Marc-Andre Fleury, and defenseman Brooks Orpik. Captain Sidney Crosby anchors the team.

A strong force in the Eastern Conference this year is the Philadelphia Flyers. The Flyers went to the Eastern Conference Finals last season and lost to the Pittsburgh Penguins. Finishing in last place in the Atlantic Division for the 2006-2007 season, many were shocked to see the Flyers go as far as they did.

"The Flyers look better now than they did a year ago, thanks to the evolution of Mike Richards and fellow forward Jeff Carter," said ESPN's Scott Burnside.

The Buffalo Sabers hope to have a better season than last year after ending with 90 points total and missing the playoffs by just four points. Re-signing goalie Ryan Miller and winger Daniel Paille were two crucial moves by the team after losing the two co-captains, Chris Drury and Daniel Briere and also defensemen Brian Campbell.

Sabers General Manager, Darcy Regier said, "He's [Miller] established himself as one of the top young goaltenders." Regier also stated, "Danny [Paille] is a talented young player that can make a difference at both ends of the ice."

In the Western Conference, the Detroit Red Wings are still the team to beat this year. Former Penguin Marian Hossa agreed to a one year contract with the Red Wings because he believes that Detroit can once again win the cup. "The Wings benefit from adding a world-class player in Hossa to their already impressive list of supreme talent that includes Nicklas Lidstrom, Pavel Datsyuk, and Henrik Zetterberg," said ESPN's Darren Eliot. "If ever a team was set up to repeat in the cap era, it is the 2008-09 edition of the Detroit Red Wings."

According to ESPN.com, the Dallas Stars and Edmonton Oilers are two other teams predicted to do well this season in the Western Conference. Dallas went to the Western Conference Final where they faced the Red Wings last season. "The Stars have young leadership in Brendan Morrow," said Eliot. "Premier playmakers in the middle with Brad Richards and Mike Ribeiro; key veterans in Mike Modano and Sergei Zubov who are still capable of contributing significantly and a diligent defensive identity back up by goaltender Marty Turco."

The Oilers key additions in the offseason included defenseman Lubomir Visnovsky and right winger Erik Cole. "There's so many good things happening right now," said Oilers head coach Craig MacTavish. "I've been around a lot of young guys over the years and this group is just not going to be denied."

Predictions are tossed around before the season begins, but fans will have to wait until the start of the regular season, Oct. 4, to see which teams outlast the hype.

*A team with potential for success.*

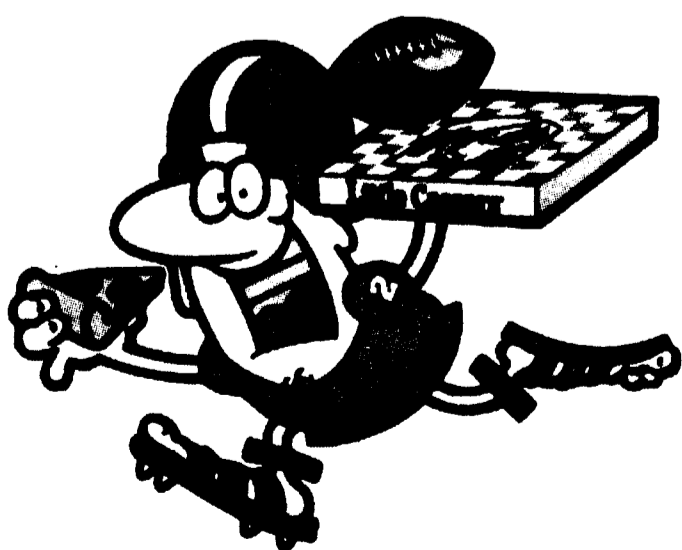
years ago was to be competitive and be a playoff team, and once we got there, to remain a playoff team," said Shero. The Penguins are going to focus hard in this training camp and try to repeat what they accomplished last year, and then some.

Last year, the Penguins were the Eastern Conference Champions and earned a trip to the Stanley Cup Finals. Even though the Pens lost to the very skilled Detroit Redwings, they still had a very successful season. During the offseason, the



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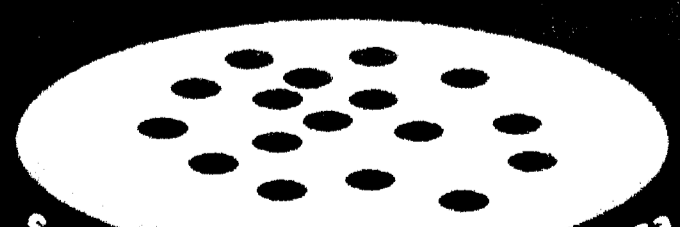
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