

# NHL Pittsburgh Penguins begin journey to defend Stanley Cup

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Three months ago, the Pittsburgh Penguins were hoisting Lord Stanley's Cup. On Oct. 2 they will begin the long journey

to defend their title as Stanley Cup Champions.

The offseason for the Penguins was one of celebration as each member of the team spent his individual time with the 35 pound, silver cup.

The offseason also brought the departure of two of Pittsburgh's most important team members.

Defensemen Rob Scuderi and Hal Gill left the Penguins this summer and signed with

different teams.

Scuderi wanted to remain a Penguin, but could not refuse the four-year \$13.6 million contract offered to him by the Los Angeles Kings.

Gill signed with the Montreal Canadiens for a paycheck of \$2.5 million over two years.

The Penguins signed Jay McKee from St. Louis to help replace Scuderi.

The Penguins also worked to re-sign veteran forwards Bill Guerin, Craig Adams and Ruslan Fedotenko.

Guerin signed a one-year contract to remain with the Pens, and will most likely retire following the upcoming season.

Fedotenko also signed a one-year contract to stay with Pittsburgh and Adams signed a two-year contract.

All three players took pay cuts to remain on the team.

"I think it says a lot about Bill Guerin, Craig Adams and Ruslan Fedotenko to want to come

back here and be part of this group," general manager Ray Shero said.

The players took pay cuts to make room for forward Mike Rupp, left the New Jersey Devils and signed with the Pens.

The Penguins opened training camp on Sept. 10, their first step in the quest for the franchise's fourth Stanley Cup.

Forward Tyler Kennedy opened camp with the team's second line in place of Max Talbot.

Talbot had shoulder surgery in the offseason and is expected to miss the first few months of the regular season.

Kennedy knows his role on the team and play his part, no matter what it is.

"I'm just taking it day by day," Kennedy said. "I'm not asking questions, I'm just going to be out there playing the game."

The Penguins will also have to replace forward Petr Sykora,

who signed a one-year contract with the Minnesota Wild as a free agent on Sept. 17.

Sykora is one of only three players who have scored 20 goals per season over the last ten seasons.

The Pens are 1-3-1 so far in preseason play, with one game remaining on Sept. 27 against the Detroit Redwings.

The Penguins are also preparing to play their final season at Mellon Arena.

The Consol Energy Center is nearing its completion next door to the Mellon, and will be the new home of the Penguins come the 2010-'11 season.

The Pens open the regular season at home on Oct. 2 against the New York Rangers.

The 2008-09 Stanley Cup Championship banner will be raised in the Mellon Arena rafters as part of a pregame ceremony.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Penguins pose with the Stanley Cup after defeating the Detroit Redwings in the Stanley Cup finals.

## Young talent may help the Sabres back to the playoffs

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On Oct. 3 the Buffalo Sabres begin the regular season and their quest to get back to the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

The Sabres put up a strong fight down the stretch last year, but finished tenth in the Eastern Conference and missed the playoffs for a second straight season.

The Sabres have a group of young, solid forwards returning this season that will hopefully get the Sabres back to playoff form.

Last year, Thomas Vanek scored 40 goals in 73 games. The 25-year-old Austrian has averaged 36 goals per season in his first four NHL seasons.

Vanek did miss about a month of action last season due to a fractured jaw. If he can stay healthy and play all 82 games this season, he will be a great influence on his teammates.

Jason Pominville finished second to Vanek in scoring on the team last year, and at the age of 26 is an integral part of Buffalo's young team.

The Sabres also have a great goaltender in Ryan Miller, who will be entering his fifth season this year.

Last year, Miller set career highs in save percentage with .918, and GAA with 2.53. Miller posted a 34-18-6 record for the Sabres.

Like Vanek, though, Miller had an injury last season that

kept him out of 13 games.

The Sabres had a record of 4-7-2 without their star goaltender.

A very important factor for the Sabres to be successful this season will be keeping Spacek and Miller healthy.

Like the Penguins, the Sabres also lost two of their key defensemen in Jaroslav Spacek and Teppo Numminen. Spacek signed a three-year contract worth \$11.5 million with the Montreal Canadiens.

Numminen retired after 20 seasons in the NHL.

Buffalo signed veteran defenseman Steve Montador from the Boston Bruins and Joe DiPenta, who played in the Swedish Elite league last season, to help replace Spacek and

Numminen.

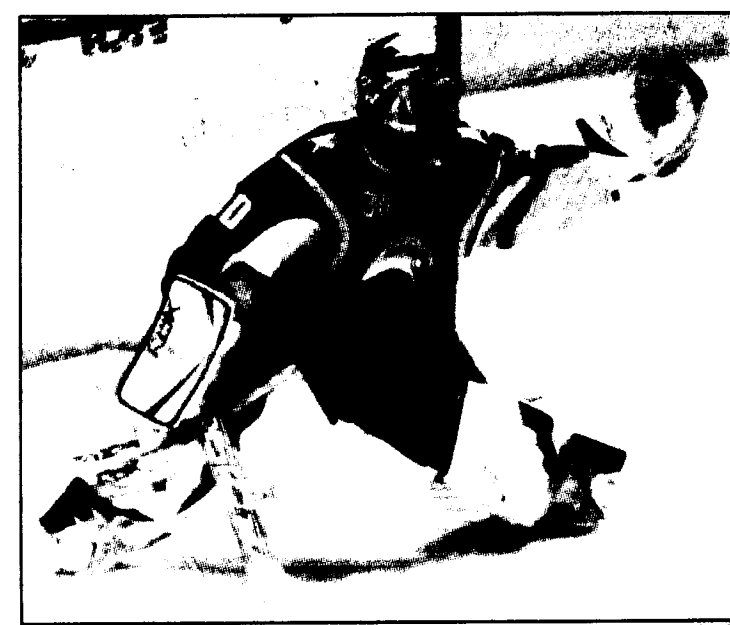
The Sabres opened camp on Sept. 8 with an hour long practice and a 45 minutes inter-squad scrimmage.

Head coach Lindy Ruff is having his team scrimmage a little more in this camp, than he has in the past.

"It's a better way to evaluate," Ruff said. "Having the week to get the young guys up to speed with the system, we're still going to give them one practice with each team."

Buffalo is 3-0-1 so far in preseason games with two remaining.

The Sabres will begin their regular season against the Canadiens on Oct. 3.



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Ryan Miller had career highs in save percentage and GAA last season with Buffalo.

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