

The puck drops

by Greg Kristen
Collegian Staff

As the 1993-94 National Hockey League season nears, there's one thing that is different this year. Divisional play has been given a facelift and this year it is ring out the old, and bring in the new.

The NHL's new realignment has created four new divisions: the Atlantic, Northeast, Central, and Pacific. Formerly, they were known as the Patrick, Adams, Norris, and Smythe divisions.

The new realignment is to make competition in divisions more fair and to accommodate the cities and teams within each division to be lined up more geographically.

The Atlantic division will consist of the Florida Panthers, New Jersey Devils, New York Islanders, New York Rangers, Philadelphia Flyers, Tampa Bay Lightning and Washington Capitals.

As the division goes, the Islanders will be trying to build off of last year's major playoff

upset, when they beat the then defending Stanley Cup Champion Pittsburgh Penguins. The division looks wide open this year as opposed to the last couple of years.

The Rangers will be looking to get back on the winning track with their new head coach Mike Keenan, formerly with the Chicago Blackhawks. The Flyers with their great young talent like Eric Lindros, Mark Recchi and goalie Tommy Soderstrom look to make a huge impact.

The Devils and Capitals look to be in transition because of having the same teams for the last couple of years without any major impact players to catapult them into the elite of the NHL.

Finally, the expansion teams of Florida and Tampa Bay look to just stay alive in the division with all of the powerhouse teams of the old Patrick division.

The Northeast division seems to be the most competitive this year with teams consisting of the Boston Bruins, Buffalo Sabres, Hartford Whalers,

Montreal Canadiens, Ottawa Senators, Pittsburgh Penguins, and Quebec Nordiques. It looks as though one of these talent-laden teams in this division will be bringing home the Cup this year.

For Montreal, the Stanley Cup Champions, it looks as though the road to the Cup will be much harder this year.

Not only do they have to get by their division rivals, but now they have to contend with the Pittsburgh Penguins, Stanley Cup Champions in 1991 and 1992.

As for the Penguins, arguably the most talented team in the league, they want to reach the Stanley Cup Finals again this year, but the question is will the team be healthy enough? Mario Lemieux and Kevin Stevens are both coming off of off-season surgery.

For Quebec, the young talent made big strides by making the playoffs and scaring the Montreal Canadiens. But, are they ready to make the next step?

For Buffalo and Boston, the question is do they have the defense and offense to contend? Buffalo definitely has the offense with Pat Lafontaine and Alexander Mogilny, but the main reason they did not advance in the playoffs was the lack of a solid defense.

For Boston it has always been offense. With Ray Bourque on defense they are always solid.

Finally, Hartford and Ottawa have good young talent, but the fact is, with the division they are in they will be lucky to survive. The experience of playing these teams will help their future and ensure them that good times always come to those who wait.

The most intriguing division will be the Central division. All the teams in this division will be looking to win it. The teams are: the Chicago Blackhawks, Dallas Stars, Detroit Red Wings, St. Louis Blues, Toronto Maple Leafs and Winnipeg Jets. Who wants it this year?

The Chicago Blackhawks are coming off a disappointing year in which they lost four straight games to St. Louis in the

playoffs. This year they have the same team and all the awards in the off-season don't mean anything if you can't win in the playoffs.

For Dallas, it is a new year, a new city, and a new lease on hockey life for them. They moved to get a fresh and fast start, and make the first season in Dallas a memorable one.

For Detroit, they have a new coach, Scotty Bowman (ex-Penguins coach). They have just as much talent as the Penguins, and look to use their new coach as the inspiration for getting to the Stanley Cup.

As for St. Louis, they still have Brett Hull and Curtis Joseph to spark their team. To prove they're a legitimate contender, defense will be their big concern.

Finally, Toronto and Winnipeg will have to do more travelling this year, but that should not be a bit of a concern. For Toronto, just missing the Stanley Cup Finals is going to be their incentive to get back.

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Phinally!

by Matthew D. Cissne
Co-editor

Phillies 4, Pirates 4. Top of the seventh inning, the bases were loaded for the Phils' second baseman Mariano Duncan. Duncan stepped up to the plate, stared down the pitcher, and belted a grand slam into the red seats in left field.

At that moment, I was finally able to convince myself that the Phillies' dream season was more than a dream, and that they really were 9 outs away from winning the National League East crown. 1964 would be forgotten. This season was the best of times.

Wire to wire...

Worst to first...

I went down to Pittsburgh on Tuesday night to watch the Phillies clinch the National League East title against the Pirates. Halfway down to Pittsburgh, I started thinking about how unbelievable the Phillies' season had been, and how exhilarating the ride had been.

This season I saw the Phillies play every National League team except for the Dodgers and the Reds, and on most occasions I saw them win.

The Phillies' fast start in April

was incredible, but their early spring maelstrom of wins was almost unfathomable.

On Mother's Day, I went to my first game of the year and saw Mariano Duncan hit a grand slam off of Lee Smith. What a coincidence that he hit a grand slam in the last game I saw.

This season more than erased the memories of stiffs like John Wockenfuss, overrated stars like Juan Samuel, and ruined players like Jeff Cowan.

This season we actually got rid of players. Just talk to the Milwaukee Brewer's shortstop Juan Bell.

Even if the Phillies lose to the San Francisco Giants (who will finish first in the National League west), this season will be a major success.

The excitement I felt on Tuesday night was awesome.

After the misery I have gone through, I didn't think the Phillies would ever have a winning season again.

Maybe the win was sweeter because of the past trials and tribulations of the Phils.

But either way, it was definitely sweet, and the first playoff win will be even sweeter.

1964?

When the heck was that?

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Next Week

Major League Baseball Playoffs!

Beginning Tuesday Night!