

NHL OVERSEAS HISTORY

1938: Montreal Canadiens, Detroit Red Wings

Destination: Europe

The Canadiens and Red Wings become the first teams to play a series of postseason exhibition games in Europe.

New York Herald Tribune sportswriter Sparrow Robertson on the games played in Paris: "The professional ice hockey players of the two teams in Paris are a fine lot of players. Next week the two teams are scheduled to play in London and the hockey enthusiasts of the big city will see the fastest competition game played by humans as it should be played.

It is really thrilling to witness ice hockey such as we have seen played in Paris by the Montreal Canadiens and Detroit Red Wings."

May 1959: Boston Bruins, New York Rangers

Destination: Europe

After the 1959 season, the Boston Bruins and New York Rangers embarked on a 10-city, 23-game European tour.

The Bruins had finished second in the six-team league that year, while the Rangers had placed fifth. But European fans were treated to competitive, exciting games and introduced to some of North America's brightest stars.

The tour stopped in London, England; Geneva, Switzerland; Paris, France; Antwerp, Belgium; Zurich, Switzerland; Dortmund, Germany; Essen Germany; Krekfeld, Germany; Berlin, Germany and Vienna, Austria.

April 1976: Washington Capitals, Kansas City Scouts

Destination: Japan

The second-year Scouts, who would later become the Colorado Rockies and then the New Jersey Devils, faced the Washington Capitals, also a second-year franchise, in a four-game series in Tokyo and Sapporo.

The Caps, who had finished the regular season at the foot of the Wales Conference standings, handed the Scouts, the bottom team in the Campbell Conference, a 3-1 defeat in the series.

September 1980: Washington Capitals, Minnesota North Stars

Destination: Sweden

Again the Capitals found themselves starting the season with a trip abroad. This time, the Caps were joined by the Minnesota North Stars for a round-robin tournament in Sweden from Sept. 22-26.

The two NHL teams were joined by Swedish club teams, AIK and Djurgarden. The tournament was sponsored by a Swedish newspaper, which ponied up a \$28,000 prize for the winner.

The Capitals, who would go on to fashion a 26-36-18 regular season record, won the tournament with a perfect 3-0 record.

The action was followed closely by the hockey-mad Swedish population and the final game -- Washington vs. Djurgarden -- was televised live on "Hockey Night in Sweden."

September 1989: Washington Capitals, Calgary Flames

Destinations: Sweden, Czech Republic, U.S.S.R.

The well-traveled Capitals were at it again, holding training camp in Sweden and then conducting a pre-season tour of the Soviet Union. The Capitals were joined by the Stanley Cup champion

Calgary Flames, who held training camp in Prague, Czechoslovakia and then ventured to the Soviet Union.

Each team played four games against Soviet National League clubs. Games were played in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and Riga. The NHL clubs finished with a combined 6-2 record against the top Soviet teams, including the Red Army club and Dynamo Moscow.

Again, the NHLers were greeted with enthusiasm and curiosity wherever they went. The games drew huge crowds and the rabid Russian fans embraced the competition.

For the first time on this trip, the NHL's international forays were also followed closely back home. Five of the eight contests were televised in North America -- by the CBC in Canada and SportsChannel America in the U.S.

**September 1990: Montreal Canadiens, Minnesota North Stars
Destinations: Sweden, U.S.S.R.**

The fabled Montreal Canadiens, one of the League's Original Six franchises, joined the Minnesota North Stars in the fall of 1990 in traveling to the Soviet Union for the "Friendship Tour '90".

The Canadiens, who spent part of their training camp in Sweden, joined the North Stars in a similar tour to the 1989 odyssey undertaken by the Capitals and Flames.

Again, games were played in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and Riga and again they were enthusiastically greeted by the Soviet public.

But, this time the Soviet national League teams proved to be stronger, finishing with a 5-3 record against their NHL counterparts.

**September 1990: St. Louis Blues, Edmonton Oilers
Destinations: West Germany, Austria**

While the Canadiens and North Stars were blazing a trail through the Soviet Union, the Stanley Cup champion Edmonton Oilers and the St. Louis Blues traveled to West Germany for the Epron Cup.

Both teams held a four-day minicamp in West Germany before joining West German League champion EG Dusseldorf for the three-match tournament.

The Blues shocked the champion Oilers and went on to win the tournament with a 2-0 record. While St. Louis returned home with its trophy, the Oilers moved on to Austria for a five-day, two-game exhibition tour against Austrian pro teams.

**September 1992: Chicago Blackhawks, Montreal Canadiens
Destination: London, England**

The Chicago Blackhawks and Montreal Canadiens played a two-game exhibition series at Wembley Arena in September, 1992.

**September 1993: New York Rangers, Toronto Maple Leafs
Destination: London**

The New York Rangers and Toronto Maple Leafs were chosen by the NHL to bring the sport to England for the second time, playing a two-game preseason series sponsored by French's Mustard.

Occurring near the start of training camp for both clubs, the games featured mostly proven NHLers and sure-fire prospects. Other players were left home to get in a full training camp.

The Rangers, who went on to win the Stanley Cup in the spring of 1994, got their season off to a good start by winning both games, which were played at Wembley Arena in London. The Rangers won the first game, 5-3, and took the second contest, 3-1.

September 1994: Winnipeg Jets

Destination: Finland

With the National Hockey League once again looking to bring its game to a new European market, the Winnipeg Jets were chosen to travel to Finland for a preseason tournament against Finnish club teams.

The Jets were a natural choice as they boasted Finnish stars Teemu Selanne and Teppo Numminen on their European-heavy roster. The Jets won every game on the tour, including the centerpiece game against Jokerit -- Selanne's boyhood club.

October 1997: Mighty Ducks of Anaheim, Vancouver Canucks

Destination: Japan

The NHL broadened its global horizons with its inaugural trip to Japan to play a pair of regular-season games -- the first regular-season games outside of North America.

The games, at the Yoyogi Arena, were the focal point of nearly a week's worth of GAME ONE '97 activity designed to spread the word about the NHL and provide the Japanese public with exposure to the sport in advance on NHL participation in the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan.

Trevor Linden of the Canucks focused the hockey world's attention on Japan when he handed over the team's captaincy to the newly arrived Mark Messier.

That was followed by two well-played, enthusiastically received games by the two teams, with each team winning once by a 3-2 score. Both games drew sellout crowds of 10,500.

September 1998 Buffalo Sabres, Tampa Bay Lightning

Destination: Austria

To open the 1998 pre-season, the Buffalo Sabres and Tampa Bay Lightning traveled to Austria to participate in the International Challenge, taking on Austrian squads as well as each other.

October 1998: Calgary Flames, San Jose Sharks

Destination: Japan

Hockey returned to Japan after the success of GAME ONE '97 with a two-game series between the Flames and the Sharks, again at the Yoyogi Arena in Tokyo. Once more, the games were highly competitive and well-attended. The teams played to a 3-3 tie in the first game and then Calgary -- behind a Theo Fleury hat-trick -- took the second game, 5-3.

September, 2000: Vancouver Canucks

Destination: Sweden

The NHL returned to Sweden for the fourth time as Vancouver arrived to take part in the NHL Challenge. Swedish teams Djurgarden, AIK and MoDo joined the Canucks for the tournament, which took place at the Globe Arena in Stockholm.

Vancouver defeated MoDo and Djurgarden to win the tournament. The Canucks defeated Swedish champ Djurgarden in the final in a thrilling 2-1 overtime game. Swedish rookie Daniel Sedin scored the game-winning goal to cap a memorable trip.

AIK defeated MoDo to take third place in the tourney. Vancouver, which spent several days holding training camp in Sweden, beat MoDo, 5-3, in its opening game.

October, 2000: Pittsburgh Penguins, Nashville Predators

Destination: Japan

The NHL returned to Tokyo for the third time in four years, unleashing "Jagr-mania" on the Japanese public.

Pittsburgh's Jaromir Jagr was the main draw as the Penguins and Predators opened the NHL season with a pair of games at the Saitama Super Arena in the suburbs of Tokyo.

The Predators stole the show in the first game, winning 3-1 behind the brilliance of goaltender Mike Dunham and the game-winning tally by Vitali Yachmenev. A crowd of 13,849 -- the largest crowd to watch a professional hockey game in Japan -- watched the contest.

One night later, Jagr turned the tables by setting up two goals in Pittsburgh's 3-1 win. That win was new coach Ivan Hlinka's first win in the NHL.

September, 2001: Colorado Avalanche**Destinations: Sweden, Finland**

The NHL's fifth trip to Sweden, the 2001 NHL Challenge Series, was cut short by the horrific events of the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States.

The scheduled three-game tour was cut back to just one game, with the defending Stanley Cup champion Avs taking on Swedish Elite League side Brynas. Games against Djurgarden and Finnish first-division club Jokerit were cancelled.

In the one game that was played, Alex Tanguay netted a hat trick as Colorado took a 5-3 victory.

September, 2003: Toronto Maple Leafs**Destinations: Sweden, Finland**

The Toronto Maple Leafs traveled to Sweden and Finland for a three-game tour as part of the NHL Challenge Series. Swedish hero Mats Sundin lead the NHL team against Swedish powers Djurgarden and Farjestad, and Finnish club Jokerit.

The Maple Leafs swept all three games.

September, 2007: Anaheim Ducks, Los Angeles Kings**Destination: London, England**

The Stanley Cup – the most-cherished trophy in sports – returned to its ancestral homeland in the arms of the champion Anaheim Ducks for the two-game NHL Premiere 2007 series against the Los Angeles Kings in London.

History was made in front of two sellout crowds at the O2 Arena, as NHL regular-season games were played in Europe for the first time. The Kings and Ducks traded 4-1 wins in the two games.

September/October, 2008: Pittsburgh Penguins, Ottawa Senators, New York Rangers and Tampa Bay Lightning**Destinations: Germany, Slovakia, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Finland, Sweden**

Four NHL teams traveled to Europe in the Fall of 2008 to play an aggressive schedule of six exhibition games and four regular-season NHL games in six different European countries over the course of eight days.

Bridgestone NHL Premiere 2008 featured the New York Rangers taking on the Tampa Bay Lightning in two games in Prague, Czech Republic, and the Pittsburgh Penguins and Ottawa Senators opening their seasons with two games against each other in Stockholm, Sweden.

The Bridgestone NHL Premiere 2008 games in Prague provided a springboard to the Rangers' season. They controlled play against the Lightning for the majority of their two-game series and left Europe with four points after back-to-back 2-1 victories.

In Sweden, the Penguins and Senators traded victories as the Penguins triumphed in the first game, 4-3 in overtime, and the Senators responded with a 3-1 win.

To prepare for their season openers, all four NHL teams played exhibition games in Europe.

One night after dominating host SC Berne, 8-1, the Rangers represented the NHL in the highly competitive inaugural Victoria Cup game in Berne, Switzerland. Rallying from three goals down in the third period against European champion Metallurg Magnitogorsk, the Rangers pulled out a 4-3 victory on Ryan Callahan's breakaway goal with 20 seconds left in regulation.

Tampa Bay visited three countries in a span of 10 hours to play its two exhibition games. Based in Prague, the Lightning flew to Berlin, Germany, to play Berlin Eisbaren. Immediately following its 4-1 victory, the Lightning boarded a flight to Bratislava, Slovakia, where it would defeat home-standing HC Slovan, 3-2, in a shootout two nights later.

The Senators and Penguins made it a clean sweep for the NHL teams in European exhibition games when Ottawa defeated Captain Daniel Alfredsson's former team, the Forlunda Indians, by a 4-1 score in Gothenburg, Sweden, and Pittsburgh defeated Finnish team Jokerit in Helsinki by that same 4-1 mark.

September and October, 2009

Chicago Blackhawks, Detroit Red Wings, Florida Panthers and St. Louis Blues

Destinations: Switzerland, Sweden and Finland

The 2009-10 season was the third consecutive the NHL hosted regular-season games overseas as four NHL teams traveled to Europe in the Fall of 2009 to play six exhibition games and four regular-season NHL games in three different European countries over the course of six days.

In the 2009 Compuware NHL Premiere series, the Chicago Blackhawks and Florida Panthers played home-and-home games Friday, Oct. 2, and Saturday, Oct. 3, in Helsinki, Finland, at Hartwall Arena. On those same dates, the Detroit Red Wings and St. Louis Blues played a home-and-home series at Ericsson Globe Arena in Stockholm, Sweden.

Of note, Finland and Sweden during the 2008-09 season were among the top ranked countries in terms of overseas visitors to NHL.com. The roster of the Detroit Red Wings was comprised of numerous Swedish players – including captain Nicklas Lidstrom, 2008 Conn Smythe Trophy winner Henrik Zetterberg, Johan Franzen, Tomas Holmstrom and Niklas Kronwall.

Despite the large Stockholm crowds cheering on the Red Wings and their bevy of Swedish-born players, the Blues left Europe with 4 points in the standings. St. Louis on Saturday erased a two-goal deficit for the second-straight night and beat the Red Wings 5-3 to go home with two victories. On Friday, Paul Kariya scored two goals as the St. Louis rallied to edge the Red Wings 4-3 in their opening game of the NHL regular season.

The Blackhawks played in Europe for the first time in 17 years. The games were the first ever played in Europe by the Florida Panthers organization and the first regular-season NHL games ever played in Finland.

In the Friday opener in Helsinki, Panthers defenseman Ville Koistinen, the only Finn on the Panthers' roster, provided a fitting end to the first regular-season NHL game ever played in Finland. He scored the winning goal in the shootout, lifting the Florida Panthers to a 4-3 victory over the Chicago Blackhawks. Koistinen also scored in regulation.

In the second game on Saturday, the Blackhawks used three power-play goals to beat the Panthers 4-0. Pleasing the crowd of 12,000, Chicago played Antti Niemi, a Finnish goalkeeper, in place of Cristobal Huet, and stopped 23 shots.

NHL teams went 4-2 during the exhibition games. On September 28th, in Tampere, Finland, Finnish club Tappara Tampere defeated the Panthers 3-2 in a shootout. Ville Nieminen, who won a Stanley Cup with Colorado, was the only player to score in the shootout. Meanwhile that day in Zurich, Switzerland, the Blackhawks soundly defeated Swiss team HC Davos, 9-2.

The next day, the Blues skated to a 6-0 victory in Linköping, Sweden, against the home club Linköpings HC. Back in Zurich, ZSC Lions defeated the Blackhawks 2-1 in the Victoria Cup competition.

Wrapping up the exhibition season, the Panthers defeated Finnish club Jokerit 4-2 in a game played in Helsinki, and the Red Wings traveled to Karlstad, Sweden, defeating Färjestads BK by a score of 6-2.

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