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National Hockey League And The Stanley Cup

By Sintilia Miecevole

Each team in the NHL plays 82 regular season games, 41 games at home and 41 on the road.

Teams used to play all other teams in the league at least once, but this will no longer be the case following implementation of post-lockout changes. Teams will now play 10 interconference (that is, not in their own conference) games throughout the entire season, 1 game against each team in two of the three divisions in the opposite conference. Teams will also play 40 games against non-divisional, conference opponents (4 games against each), and 32 games within their division (8 games against each). Two points are awarded for wins, one point for losing in overtime or a shootout, and zero points for a loss in regulation time. At the end of the regular season, the team that finishes with the most points in each division is crowned the division champion. Each Conference consists of three divisions, so these three division champions and five more teams fill out each Conference's playoff field. In total, 16 teams (3 division champions and 5 additional teams, for a total of 8 from each Conference) qualify for the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

The Stanley Cup Playoffs is an elimination tournament, where two teams battle to win a best-of-seven series in order to advance to the next round. If the score is tied at the end of the third period an overtime period is played. If the score is tied at the end of an overtime period, additional overtime periods are played until a winner is determined. Overtimes are also full periods of twenty minutes (of five-on-five hockey), rather than the five minutes (of four-on-four hockey, followed by a shootout,) in the regular season. The overtime is played with golden goal rule (sudden death) so the game ends as soon as either team scores a goal. The higher-ranked team is said to be the team with the home-ice advantage. Four of the seven games are played at this team's home venue – the first and second, and, where necessary, the fifth and seventh, with the other games played at the lower-ranked team's home venue.

One playoff that was contested in the NHL used the following format: the division winners were seeded one through three, and then the next five teams with the best records in the conference were seeded four through eight. However, the league has yet to announce the playoff format for the 2005–06 season, and with the new scheduling format that emphasises division play, the league is reportedly exploring placing greater emphasis on division standings by taking the top 2 teams in each division, along with the teams with the next two best records for each Conference's playoff field. In the event of

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a tie in points in the standings, ties are broken first by amount of wins, then by record against the team that is tied (disregarding the first game played at the arena of the team that hosted more games than the other during the season series, if applicable). Next, the tied team with the better positive differential between goals scored for and against is given preference, and in the rare circumstance these tiebreakers are insufficient, the Commissioner has the authority to devise some other means of breaking the tie. The first round of the playoffs, or Conference Quarterfinals, consists of the first seed playing the eighth seed, the second playing the seventh, third playing the sixth, and the fourth playing the fifth. In the Conference Semifinals, the top remaining Conference seed plays against the fourth remaining seed, and the second remaining seed plays the third remaining seed. In the next round, the Conference Finals, the two remaining teams in each conference play each other, with the Conference champions proceeding to the Stanley Cup Finals.

Sintilia Miecevole, Host of

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loves hockey along with all of the fans! Check out

this great site that has everything from the Hall of Fame, jerseys, memorabilia, news and games to gear, photos, skates, tournaments and much more. Click on to

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NHL Hockey Fans Left Out In Cold As The NHL Owners Lock Out Its Players

By Catherine Kenyeres

NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman has halted the start of the NHL hockey season by locking out its players. Can the impasse between the NHL owners and its players ever be mended? Bettman reports that the NHL league has a desolate bottom line that lost \$224 million US last season. The NHL hockey league is reported to have lost \$1.8 billion over the 10 years of its collective bargaining agreement.

Bob Goodenow, the executive director for the NHL Player's Association has another version of the story, claiming that it's not true at all. In the middle of this dispute is the salary cap. Goodenow concedes that the hockey players do indeed, make a lot of money. The salary cap is a device whereby the NHL team owners would remunerate the players less than they would normally get and the owners aren't budging on the issue. And for now, it's a stalemate.

But who, other than the owners, got the game into this mess. The owners, themselves have trailblazed into unstable market areas and unwisely, perhaps, invested most of their money into player's salaries instead of marketing and promotion. The owners have used the game of hockey to secure guaranteed programming for their cable TV investments or used professional hockey, for example, as an add on to

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an amusement park.

The players on the other hand, have worked tremendously hard from such a young age to become a spectacular athletics. Starting with the 6 a.m. morning practices involving numerous years in minor hockey. Given the above, it's no wonder why the players have little or no trust where the owners are concerned. The players have little faith in the numbers that the owners report. There is question about moving expenses from one business entity to another and dubious accounting of their ticket revenue.

The future of professional hockey is dependent upon a strong economic system. But what is that system? Some argue that the 2004–05 season is in jeopardy. If the season is cancelled, the Stanley Cup will not be awarded to any team and this hasn't happened since 1919 and Saturday night won't be the same in Canada without hockey.

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. She has

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