

## The Next Level

By Jesse Almeida 5/10/21

The Boston Bruins have elevated themselves to a new level. Your 2021 Boston Bruins are headed to the 2021 Stanley Cup Playoffs. Right now if it stays the way it is, the Bruins will face off against Chara and the Washington Capitals in the first round of the Playoffs.

This year the NHL Playoffs are a different look compared to what it used to be. In the first round and second round, teams will face teams from their division. So for example, the Bruins are in the East Division, so are the Penguins, Capitals, and Islanders. The Penguins are playing the Islanders in the first round and the Bruins are facing the Capitals in the first round. The winner of Capitals vs Bruins will face the winner of Islanders vs Penguins. Then the winner of the series in the second round will face the team that comes out of the West Division, then the Stanley Cup Finals will be the winner of the North Division vs the Central Division.

If you are the Bruins and you can get past the second round, you have a legitimate chance at winning the Stanley Cup. Here is why that is. Your toughest guaranteed matchups at the moment are the Penguins and the Capitals, and you might avoid the Pens if the Islanders can knock them off. You do not have to worry about the Lightning, Hurricanes, Panthers, or the Leafs until the Finals if they make it there. The West Division has some very tough opponents on paper, but their division all season long for the most part was weak so who really knows how good those teams really are. The St. Louis Blues are the 4th seed in that division with 57 points. That alone speaks for how weak the West Division was.

So how did the Bruins get here? Well you can thank Trader Donny for the most part. Don Sweeney at the trade deadline, went out and got the Bruins the pieces they needed to elevate their game. Mike Reilly has been a great piece on the defensive end for the Bruins. In 14 games for the B's, Reilly has 7 assists, 7 points and has been a plus 7 on the ice for the Bruins. He is 27 years old and has the potential to be one of the best playmaking defensemen in the league. He's Torey Krug without the goal scoring. The biggest move that Don Sweeney made that looks like will be the steal of the century if they can keep him long term (which they most likely will) is Taylor Hall. All of the

narratives that he is a cancer in the clubhouse is gone after what he has done for the Bruins so far. He has turned his season around since being traded to the Boston Bruins. Taylor Hall has been fun to watch in a Bruins uniform. He has 6 goals on 6 assists, 12 points, and a plus/minus of +14 on the ice. The best part about the move was that Taylor Hall wanted to play for you not just for right now, but for the long term, and he has addressed that. So if you can get solid production from Hall in the future along with what you have gotten from him so far, that is a huge W for Don Sweeney.

What has also got the Bruins to where they are is the fact that this team plays hard and plays as a team. That is something that you can not say about the Celtics this season. Brad Marchand has arguably been the best player in the East Division with 28 goals on 39 assists totalling 67 points and a plus 25 on the ice. Bergeron is Bergeron who produces good numbers and elevates everyone's game, he has 23 goals on 25 assists and leads the team with plus 27 on the ice. Pastrnak has had a down year but has still managed to score 20 goals on 27 assists. Nick Ritchie after a year where every Bruins fan wrote him off came back and has been a huge impact on the team this year with 15 goals and 11 assists. McAvoy took a huge leap this year on the defense as he is not giving up the puck as much along with creating chances to score as he has 30 assists this year. McAvoy has been a plus 21 on the ice. Krejci the playmaker he has been all of his career continued again this year 8 goals on 33 assists totalling 41 points and a plus 14 on the ice. Finally a player that is in his first year on the team Craig Smith is already a fan favorite in Boston. Smith exceeded expectations and turned out to be a solid free agent signing. Smith has 13 goals on 19 assists totalling 32 points and is plus 21 on the ice. The Bruins have some solid pieces for the future and you should be excited for this team now and in the future.

Works Cited:

[2020-21 Boston Bruins Skating Stats | ESPN](#)