2023-24 Regular Season Awards

Welcome to the third Stapled to the Bench (STTB) regular season awards article.

At STTB we believe that awards are too important to rely on the voting habits of a bunch of overfed sports writers. Instead of votes, statistics will be used to determine who is the best player in a particular category.

Three awards have been renamed because I found a better name for them. There are two new awards.

Best Player Plaque (Previously called the Most Valuable Player Trophy)

The STTB Best Player Plaque is awarded to the player who has the highest Productivity Rating. This used to be called the Most Valuable Player award, but I found the name was a contradiction, as I use Productivity Rating instead of Value Rating to determine the winner.

The winner of the plaque is Nathan MacKinnon (F, COL), who had a PR-Score of 13.38.

Second place went to Auston Matthews (F, TOR, PR-Score 12.61). Nikita Kucherov (F, T.B, PR-Score 12.15) was in third and Connor McDavid (F, EDM, PR-Score 12.07, last season's winner) was fourth.

In a season that featured one 69-goal scorer and two 100-assist players, the winner was none of those players? For a comparison of the top four players' statistics, see the *2023-24 Best Player Award* article.

Most Valuable Player Trophy (new award with an old name)

The STTB MVP is awarded to the player with the highest Value Rating.

Having both a Most Valuable Player and a Best Player could be confusing. The source of the confusion is that the adjectives (most valuable, best) have extremely similar meanings. STTB has two rating systems for players, and both systems are now the basis for awards.

Value Rating evaluates players over three seasons rather than one season, as it takes time and consistency to prove value (according to me).

The Most Valuable Player in 2023-24 is Connor McDavid (F, EDM, VR-Score 13.36).

Runners-up are Cale Makar (D, COL, VR-Score 12.40) in second place and Nathan MacKinnon (F, COL, VR-Score 12.27) in third place. Just off the podium is Auston Matthews (F, TOR, VR-Score 12.24).

While this is a new trophy, or an old trophy with a new set of rules for its awarding, I do have player data back to 2007-08 and did figure out who would have won this award in those seasons. A discussion of the "history" of this award can be found in the *2023-24 Most Valuable Player Award* article.

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Defenseman of the Year Trophy

The Defenseman of the Year trophy goes to the defenseman who has the highest PR-Score.

The winner is Quinn Hughes (D, VAN, PR-Score 11.59): he had a heck of a season.

In second place we find Cale Makar (D, COL, PR-Score 11.47). Makar missed five games in the regular season (Hughes missed only one) and would have won the Trophy had he played one more game at his average level of play.

Third place goes to Roman Josi (D, NSH, PR-Score 10.94), while fourth place goes to Evan Bouchard (D, EDM, PR-Score 10.80).

The article *2023-24 Best Defenseman Award* compares the statistics of Hughes and Makar.

Last year's winner, Erik Karlsson (D, S.J 2022-23, PIT 2023-24, PR-Score 9.11), was in 16th place in the league this season.

Goalie of the Year Shield (New Award)

I have never had a good rating system for goalies. Until now.

My newest rating system is GxPts, which stands for "Goalie Expected Points", which reflects the number of points in the standings an average team would get with a goalie. GxPts is an intoxicating mix of time played, goals saved above average, the Pythagorean theory and a little touch of the Fibonacci sequence.

The winner is Connor Hellebuyck (G, WPG), who had a GxPts value of 72.6. Runners up were Jordan Binnington (G, STL, GxPts=63.7) and Juuse Saros (G, NSH, GxPts=60.5). An honourable mention goes to Sergei Bobrovski (G, FLA, GxPts=60.4).

Last season's winner would have been Ilya Sorokin (G, NYI, GxPts=79.0), had GxPts existed.

A detailed examination of GxPts can be found in the *Goalie Expected Points* article. In it you will find how it works, who it helps, who it hurts, what it eats for breakfast and there will be a list of the top ten goalies since 2007-08.

Rookie of the Year Silver Spoon

The Silver Spoon is awarded to the player who was: a) a rookie and 2) had the highest PR-Score. I used NHL.com to determine who was a rookie (as NaturalStatTrick.com did not consider Connor Bedard to be a rookie – that has to have been a technical error).

The "surprise" winner is Brock Faber (D, MIN, PR-Score 8.70). Second place goes to Luke Hughes (D, N.J, PR-Score 7.30) and third place goes to the player everyone thought would be Rookie of the Year at the start of the season, Connor Bedard (F, CHI, PR-Score 5.75).

Missing the podium by the skin of his teeth is Marco Rossi (F, MIN, PR-Score 5.74).

Last season, STTB awarded the Silver Spoon to Jake Sanderson (D, OTT) while the NHL chose to honour Matty Beniers (F, SEA). Not that I'm bragging, but Sanderson had a much

better sophomore season (PR-Score 8.40, PR-Star) than did Beniers (PR-Score 5.53, PR-Regular).

For a more detailed investigation of the ROTY candidates, please see the *2023-24 Rookie of the Year* article.

Most Gentlemanly Player Fabergé Egg

Fans of hitting in hockey have a derisive image of a player that doesn't hit, saying he could have six eggs in his uniform and play a game without breaking any of them. STTB chooses not to look down on these players: there is a skill level to sharing the ice with players like Brady Tkachuk and Matt Martin without getting hit.

The Fabergé Egg goes to the player who was involved in the least number of total hits (given and received) per 60 minutes of ice time, provided they played at least 820 minutes. The statistic is called TH60 (total hits per 60 minutes).

For the second straight season, the winner of the Egg is Johnny Gaudreau: 2 hits given and 31 hits taken in more than 1,500 minutes of ice time (TH60=1.30). Artemi Panerin (F, NYR, TH60=1.96) came in second, and the surprising third-place player is Cale Makar (D, COL, TH60=2.04). Makar was a surprise because defensemen, stereotypically, deliver hits and are always getting hit on dump-and-chases.

At the black and blue end of the Fabergé Egg spectrum are Keegan Kolesar (F, VGK, TH60=24.75) and Garnet Hathaway (F, PHI, TH60=24.43).

Sixth Man Six-Pack

"Sixth Man" is a basketball concept that works for hockey. The winner is the best player in the league who was the sixth-best player on his team. Players who were traded during the season were excluded from consideration.

This season's winner is "the Nuge": Ryan Nugent-Hopkins (F, EDM, PR-Score=8.40). His PR-Score puts him at the bottom of the PR-Star category, and Edmonton had FIVE players better than him.

The second and third-best sixth guys are Matt Roy (D, L.A, PR-Score=7.68) and Anthony Cirelli (F, T.B, PR-Score=7.39).

Last season's winner was Carter Verhaeghe (FLA), whose PR-Score was 7.97.

Five teams didn't have a player with a PR-Score higher than Ryan's 8.40: Arizona, San Jose, Vegas, Seattle and Chicago. Vegas? The Golden Knights' highest-rated player was Jack Eichel (PR-Score=7.88), who played only 63 games for Vegas. William Karlsson played 70, Alex Pietrangelo played 64, Chandler Stephenson played 75 and Mark Stone played 56.

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Least Defensive Forward Titanic Tureen

The Least Defensive Forward Award is a tureen from the Titanic: a souvenir of a big floater.

The Tureen is awarded to the forward who had the least total PR-Points from five statistics that have a defensive flavour: penalty-kill time on ice, blocks, take-aways, hits and defensive zone starts. As we are looking at low levels of accomplishment, a player must have played at least 72 games to be considered for the Tureen.

This season's winner is Artemi Panerin, who now has a second Tureen to put on his award shelf to put beside the one he won last year. His credentials for the award are: 2.8 minutes of penalty-kill time (for the season, not per game!); 15 blocked shots; 34 takeaways; 14 hits, and; only 139 of his 1,315 faceoffs were held in the defensive zone.

Second place went to Andrei Kuzmenko (F, CGY, VAN0 and third went to Tyler Toffoli (F, N.J, WPG).

Best Defensive Forward Shin Guard

The Shin Guard award uses the same formula as the Titanic Tureen award but looks at the other end of the results (highest score instead of lowest score).

This year's winner of the Shin Guard is Blake Malenstyn (F, WSH), who had 212.3 minutes of penalty-kill time, 93 blocked shots, 30 takeaways, 223 hits and 842 of his 1,217 faceoffs were in the defensive zone. He was the yin to Panerin's yang.

In second and third place were Jake Evans (F, MTL) and Charlie Coyle (F, BOS).

Last season's winner was Colton Sissons (NSH). He finished 16th this year.

Most Offensive Defenseman Jug

The Most Offensive Defenseman Jug is given to the defenseman who was on the ice for the most total shot attempts by both teams, a player who would be at home on the 1982 Edmonton Oilers.

The statistic created for evaluating players was "total shot attempts (Corsi) for both teams per 60 minutes of five-on-five play (CFA60)." A time-played requirement (820 minutes) is used so that only players who played a non-trivial amount of time are eligible for this coveted prize.

The most offensive defenseman is Nick Seeler (D, PHI, CFA60=134.8). Tortorella, the coach of the Flyers, must just love him. Seeler just edged out Zach Werenski (D, CBJ, CFA60=134.6) and Alex Pietrangelo (D, VGK, CFA60=133.1)

For a little context, the average CFA60 of the defensemen who qualified for this award was 119.2, and the most defensive defenseman was Vincent Desharnais (D, EDM, CFA60=105.8).

Last season's winner, Noah Dobson (D, NYI), finished in 11th place this season.

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Team-Relative Corsi Loving Cup

STTB gives an award to the player who's with the highest Team-Relative Corsi. Team-Relative Corsi (TRC) is the difference between a player's personal Corsi and his team's Corsi. Jake Sanderson (D, OTT) had a personal Corsi of +175, while Ottawa would have had a Corsi of +76 in the amount of time that Sanderson was on the ice. Sanderson's TRC is +99.

The winner is Quinn Hughes (D, VAN, TRC +347). The runners-up were also defensemen: Evan Bouchard (D, EDM, TRC +315) and Mattias Ekholm (D, EDM, TRC +302). I would wager a good amount that Bouchard and Ekholm were frequently on the ice together.

Last season's winner was Matthew Tkachuk (FLA), and he was the runaway winner. This year he was 135th in the league, which leads me to the conclusion that there is a good element of luck in Team-Relative Corsi.

This season's last-place finisher has data that is so surprising, I felt it merited being documented. Barclay Goodrow (F, NYR) earned last place with a TRCorsi of -367. He was 121 shot attempts worse than second-last place. The following table shows a breakdown of Corsi data for the Rangers, with a bonus row.

Team	Breakdown	CF60	CA60	Corsi
New York Rangers	Total	62	59	3
New York Rangers	Goodrow on bench	66	57	9
New York Rangers	Goodrow on ice	45	69	-24
Anaheim Ducks	Total	53	70	-17
CF60 = Corsi For per 60 Minutes; CA60 = Corsi Against per 60 Minutes				

How does Goodrow help a team win? When he is on the ice, the Rangers shot attempt data is significantly worse than that of the Anaheim Ducks (53-70). Please, don't be so silly as to say he earns his ice time by delivering hits. Will Cuylle (F, NYR) delivers way more hits per 60 minutes than does Goodrow and has a way better TRCorsi at -83.

A short discussion of Team-Relative Corsi data can be found in the *2023-24 Team-Relative Corsi* article.

Jolly Green Giant's Left Shoe (award renamed, slightly)

The Jolly Green Giant's left shoe goes to the player whose Productivity Rating increased the most from 2022-23, provided he played at least 72 games in 2022-23 (the previous season). We are looking for a player who greatly improved his play rather than a player who had a good season after not having played much the season before.

The winner is Evan Bouchard (D, EDM) who had a PR-Score increase of 3.54. His closest improvers were Seth Jarvis (F, CAR, 3.34) and Wyatt Johnson (F, DAL, 3.23).

Last season's winner was Elias Pettersson (VAN). Pettersson's PR-Score decreased this season, because it is nearly impossible to make massive improvements two seasons running.

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It is like a five-pin bowler who's average three-game score is 480 and then one week he strings together a couple of strikes and gets a three-game score of 600. In his next game, he is far more likely to return to the 480 range than to improve to the 720 range.

The Rockem Sockem Shoulder Pad (award renamed)

The Shoulder Pad will go to the player who delivered the most hits per 60 minutes (H60), provided he played a minimum of 820 minutes. The time criterion eliminates players who played a couple of games and were ultra-aggressive when allowed on the ice.

The winner is Keegan Kolesar (F, VGK), a repeat winner of the Shoulder Pad. His H60 was 17.69, so he has become more placid as he has aged (his H60 was 19.71 last year).

Garnet Hathaway (F, PHI, H60=16.58) battled his way to second place over third place Keifer Sherwood (F, NSH, H60=15.51).

With an H60 of 10.56, Brady Tkachuk (F, OTT) had the highest H60 of players rated PR-First5 or better.

The Lone Ranger Silver Bullet

At the end of almost every Lone Ranger show, as he rode off into the sunset, somebody would ask "Who was that masked man?" The Silver Bullet award goes to the player who is most likely to ask that about his own goalie, as he rarely starts a shift in the defensive zone. Technically, it goes to the player who has the lowest PR-Score in the DZF (defensive zone faceoff) category.

This season's winner is Artemi Panerin (F, NYR), who was on the ice for 1,315 faceoffs, of which only 139 were in his defensive zone. I think that tells us exactly how many times Panerin was on the ice when the Rangers were called for icing.

Second place went to Alex Ovechkin (F, WSH), who was last season's winner. Third place went to Nathan MacKinnon (F, COL).

All three of these players are offensive stars. They were not expected to play defense.

The Milton Waddams Red Swingline Stapler

Milton Waddams is a character from the movie Office Space. He liked his stapler, a red Swingline. The STTB Swingline is given to the player who spent the most time stapled to the bench, as determined by games played times 60 minutes minus his time on ice. While the "stapled to the bench minutes" figure includes time spent in the penalty box, it does not include time spent in the press box.

We have a tie. Trevor Lewis (F, L.A) and Alexander Holtz (F, N.J) both played 82 games, and both had 954.1 minutes of time on the ice. Which means they both had 3,966 minutes on the bench. In third place was Morgan Barron (F, WPG) at 3,960 minutes of bench time, followed by Will Cuylie (F, NYR) at 3,959 minutes of bench time.

Last season's winner, Garnet Hathaway (F, PHI), came in 10th this year.

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Summary

You'd think the nice thing about using statistics to determine awards, as opposed to voting, is that it would remove bias. At STTB, you can't vote for a player just because you like him, and you can't ignore a player because you don't like him.

Unfortunately, the statistics themselves have a trace of bias in them. For one example, some game statisticians hand out hits like candies on Halloween, and some statisticians hand out hits like Conservative governments hand out pay raises to teachers and nurses.

To be clear, the bias is not against visiting players: it is against the statistics. When a game statistician rarely hands out hits, he rarely hands out hits equally for players on both teams.

I considered adjusting the statistics based on the tendencies of each player's home-arena statistician, but that was way too much work for an article that I wanted to finish quickly.

Reference Articles

Introduction to Productivity Rating

Introduction to Value Rating

2021 Regular Season Awards

2022-23 Regular Season Awards

2023-24 Best Player Award

2023-24 Most Valuable Player Award

2023-24 Best Defenseman Award

2023-24 Rookie of the Year

2023-24 Team-Relative Corsi

Goalie Expected Points