

## **A Proposal for Realignment**

Uncertainty definitely rules the day when it comes to NHL realignment. It seems that the league wants to move teams in the same time zone closer together, but the fact that there are 16 teams in the Eastern Time Zone significantly complicates matters. But this much we know: the upcoming season will keep the same six-division alignment, meaning Winnipeg will play in the Southeast.

However, a major overhaul is fairly likely for 2012-13 and one that could look like this (in no particular order, with the number of teams by division in parentheses):

### *East (8)*

Boston Bruins  
Buffalo Sabres  
Montreal Canadiens  
New York Rangers  
Ottawa Senators  
New York Islanders  
New Jersey Devils  
Toronto Maple Leafs

### *South (7)*

**Washington Capitals**  
Carolina Hurricanes  
Nashville Predators  
Florida Panthers  
Philadelphia Flyers  
Pittsburgh Penguins  
Tampa Bay Lightning

### *Midwest (7)*

Chicago Blackhawks  
Colorado Avalanche  
Columbus Blue Jackets  
Dallas Stars  
Detroit Red Wings  
Minnesota Wild  
St. Louis Blues

### *Pacific (8)*

Anaheim Ducks  
Calgary Flames  
Edmonton Oilers  
L.A. Kings  
Phoenix Coyotes  
San Jose Sharks

Vancouver Canucks  
Winnipeg Jets

Although no system is perfect, the one above addresses many things:

**Rivalries:** The Patrick Division purists (myself included) will be somewhat appeased with the Caps being rejoined with the Penguins and Flyers, while the East and Pacific Divisions have too many feuds to name. The Midwest keeps Detroit and Chicago together and adds Colorado and St. Louis into the mix.

**Travel:** The above alignment makes the best of the South Division. Yes, Pittsburgh and Philly aren't in the South (Washington really isn't either), but you can't have a 10-team East Division and Pennsylvania is closer to Washington than New York, Boston or any of the Canadian cities.

**Red Wings Factor:** Detroit fans may not be entirely happy with this alignment, but there are too many factors preventing them from moving East. Yes, you can flop Detroit and Nashville in the above divisional alignment, but then the Wings are isolated from rivals and are misplaced in terms of geography. If the Midwest Division will be in what's now the Western Conference, then Detroit is pretty much stuck with a newer vision of the status quo. But I would argue that realignment will help them and reduce their travel, a legitimate gripe they've had for a very long time.

There is much time for the NHL to finalize the new alignment, but this provides a good starting point.