

# **\*!streaming-live!\* Toronto Maple Leafs vs Montreal Canadiens Live Free NHL @HQ 13 October 2021**



Montreal Canadiens at Toronto Maple Leafs odds, picks and prediction

The Montreal Canadiens and Toronto Maple Leafs open their 2021-22 NHL regular seasons Wednesday at Scotiabank Arena in Toronto. Puck drop is scheduled for 7 p.m. ET. Below, we look at the Canadiens vs. Maple Leafs odds and lines, and make our expert NHL picks, predictions and bets.

The Canadiens look to build upon their magical postseason run that took them to the Stanley Cup Final and within a whisker of a championship. On the way to that Finals appearance, they dispatched of the Toronto Maple Leafs.

The Leafs are looking to exact a little revenge after blowing a 3-1 series lead, eventually losing in seven games to the Habs in the first round. Toronto went 7-2-1 in 10 meetings during the regular season against Montreal.

### Canadiens at Maple Leafs odds, spread and lines

With no Auston Matthews, a game-time decision for Mitch Marner, and no Ilya Mikheyev, this 2021-22 season is kicking off with an early dose of adversity for the Maple Leafs starting tonight against Montreal (7 p.m. EST, Sportsnet).

That means expanded opportunities are in store for the likes of Michael Bunting, David Kampf, Alex Kerfoot, and Pierre Engvall, all of whom should see more ice time at the left wing and center positions.

Montreal is facing a little bit of adversity themselves early in the season with the indefinite absences of Carey Price and Shea Weber as well as the day-to-day injury status of their biggest offseason addition up front in Mike Hoffman. Paul Byron is also out long term after undergoing hip surgery in late July.

Unsurprisingly, Dominique Ducharme will be trotting out a balanced-looking forward group that is well-suited to rolling four lines:

The Leafs, too, will need a good amount of depth involvement from the likes of Engvall – Kampf – Kase and Simmonds – Amadio – Spezza without their 20+ minute stud center in Matthews and potentially without their 20+ minute, all-situations winger in Marner, although the forecast seems positive on Marner's likelihood of participating tonight. There might be some silver-lining value in terms of getting some of the important supporting cast members, particularly those that have been newly added over the offseason, more involved in the early going.

This year more than any other, the perennial exercise of turning the page on the past year's failures and renewing hope for the new season has been a more difficult proposition for the fan base (to speak generally), but fans are back in the Scotiabank Arena, and the Maple Leafs are entering a critical — dare one say make-or-break? — year for the player core and management group.

We've heard a lot of talk about the team really learning its lesson this time about honing its killer instinct at playoff time, but the saying "put up or shut up" has never applied more fairly than it does this season for this Leafs team.

The new power play coach is breathing new life into the disappointing-when-it-matters power play? The Leafs may have found an actually credible checking line center? They've added some hungry (and younger) complementary pieces on the cheap to the forward group via free agency? It all matters a good deal in a sport with these kinds of margins between winning and losing, but the main storyline all year is unquestionably going to be whether the Leafs' stars can deliver when it counts.

We won't know the answer until eight months from now, but it has to start with a great 82-game regular season inside a tougher division, and that begins tonight exactly where it left off so disappointingly last May — Leafs vs. Habs, at Scotiabank Arena.

It's really big. Our ability to play in front of the fans is a really big deal. Family connections are also very important. Just having them at a few preseason games, for me, having the family waiting after the game... Having them in the building is important for our players as well.

We have a fair number of local guys who have come in here and haven't played a game in front of their family before. It is a big deal. The season is long, and to have that family connection — not just for the player but for the family themselves — is really important for everyone across the league.

Keefe on the Leafs vs. Habs rivalry:

I think it is a new season. Given we have played them three times in preseason as well, you get some of that stuff out of the system, but it is going to be going at a whole other level today.

I think the Leafs and Montreal rivalry is there, whether we played them in the playoffs last season or not. It exists and it is a great thing.

I am pumped. It is going to be a lot of fun. Guys have their parents in town for the first time in a long time. Guys are happy to have the crowd back in the mix. We are anxiously waiting to see what it is going to look like. Once we get playing, I think it will be interesting — a fun and cool atmosphere we haven't experienced for a long time.

Jake Muzzin on his past LA Kings teammate Mike Amadio making the team:

He is a really smart player. He has a great stick. He sees the ice well. I am excited for him.

Muzzin on the vote of confidence from Kyle Dubas in keeping the team together:

We talked about how it shows belief in us and the group. He could've made changes. He could've made a lot of people happy by trading someone, but he believes in this group. It is on us to go and show him we are who he thinks we are.

Toronto Maple Leafs Projected Lines

Forwards

#20 Nick Ritchie – #91 John Tavares – #16 Mitch Marner\*

#58 Michael Bunting – #15 Alex Kerfoot – #88 William Nylander

#47 Pierre Engvall – #64 David Kampf – #25 Ondrej Kase

#24 Simmonds – #18 Michael Amadio – #19 Jason Spezza