

# **\*!streaming-live!\* New York Rangers vs Washington Capitals Live Free NHL @TV 13 October 2021**



New York Rangers at Washington Capitals odds, picks and prediction

The New York Rangers and Washington Capitals open their 2021-22 NHL regular seasons Wednesday at Capital One Arena. Puck drop is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. ET. Below, we look at the Rangers vs. Capitals odds and lines, and make our expert NHL picks, predictions and bets.

The Rangers added a little sandpaper this past offseason, picking up RW Ryan Reaves. He is questionable to play due to a leg injury, however. The Blueshirts won two of four appearances last season in D.C.

The Capitals were already going to be without C Nicklas Backstrom due to a hip injury, and now LW Alex Ovechkin (leg) is a huge question mark for the opener, too. Both players skated Tuesday.

#### Rangers at Capitals odds, spread and lines

Odds provided by Tipico Sportsbook; access USA TODAY Sports' betting odds for a full list.  
Lines last updated at 7:45 a.m. ET.

Money line: Rangers +110 (bet \$100 to win \$110) | Capitals -133 (bet \$133 to win \$100)

Against the spread (ATS): Rangers +1.5 (-250) | Capitals -1.5 (+180)

Over/Under (O/U): 6.5 (O: +110 | U: -135)

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#### Rangers at Capitals projected goalies

Igor Shesterkin (16-14-3, 2.62 GAA, .916 SV%) vs. Ilya Samsonov (13-4-1, 2.69 GAA, .902 SV%)

Shesterkin showed well against the Capitals last season, going 3-1-0 with a 2.53 GAA and .924 SV% in his four starts. He was a .500 goalie in 18 home decisions, but he posted a 7-5-3 record with a 2.65 GAA on the road in 2020-21.

Samsonov was actually better last season on the road, too. He had a sparkling 9-1-1 record away from home, but he was just 4-3-0 in seven games at home. That's a bit misleading,

however, as Samsonov did post a strong 2.17 GAA with a .916 SV% at home, while he had a 3.01 GAA and .894 SV% on the road.

Rangers at Capitals odds, lines, picks and predictions

Prediction

Rangers 4, Capitals 2

Money line

The RANGERS (+110) are worth a look as short ‘dogs on the road against the Capitals (-133), who are expected to be shorthanded. While the Rangers are just 2-8 in the past 10 trips to D.C., you can ignore that with Backstrom out and Ovie likely to join him in street clothes.

Against the spread

Rangers +1.5 (-250) is a little on the expensive side, costing you two-and-a-half times your potential return. That’s too much for a little bit of insurance. I like them straight up, and that’s the best value. AVOID.

Over/Under

UNDER 6.5 (-135) is the lean here. Again, with Backstrom out, and Ovechkin a good bet to sit out, the Caps will not be firing on all cylinders. As it stands, the Under is 27-13-4 in the past 44 meetings in D.C. The injury situation, and the trends, each point to the Under.

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### Caps Open Season vs. Rangers

Backstrom is out and Ovechkin is questionable, but McMichael and Lapierre are ready to roll if needed

Wednesday night is go time for the Capitals and the New York Rangers, who will open their 2021-22 season against one another in Washington. The contest between the two Metro rivals marks the first time they've clashed since last May 5 when they engaged in a fight-filled contest at Madison Square Garden. Washington prevailed 4-2 on the strength of a T.J. Oshie hat trick in that one, Oshie's first game after the passing of his father.

For the Caps, the main question for Wednesday night's opener is whether or not team captain Alex Ovechkin will suit up for action against the Rangers. Early in Washington's preseason finale against the Flyers last Friday, Ovechkin incurred a lower body injury while attempting to lay a hit on Philly winger Travis Konecnny. He missed practice sessions on Sunday and Monday, but Ovechkin did take the ice for a Tuesday morning optional practice.

"That's a good sign," says Caps coach Peter Laviolette, of Ovechkin's presence on the ice Tuesday morning. "We'll get an update and an evaluation once he is off the ice - he's not off and I haven't spoken to him yet - but it's certainly a positive sign that he's out there."

"Like with Nick [Backstrom] we'll do what's best for the player and make sure that they're healthy; we won't put them in any situations where they might be jeopardized out there. But it's obviously great to see him out there."

Peter Laviolette | October 12

07:31 • October 13th, 2021

And speaking of "great to see him out there," that's true for Backstrom as well. The Caps have been planning on starting the season without Backstrom, who is week-to-week while he rehabs a hip injury. The Caps placed Backstrom on long-term injured reserve on Tuesday, so he will miss at least the first 10 games of the season. The earliest Backstrom could play would be on Nov. 6 when the Caps host Philadelphia

The veteran center did spend some time skating on Tuesday, a small step forward in his rehab process.

"It's part of a progression for him," says Laviolette of Backstrom. "That was obviously more of a long-term thing the whole way, where Alex was day-to-day and Nick was week-to-week, and you hadn't seen him out here."

"So just the fact that he got out there and just got on his edges a little bit, I think that's a positive. He's working hard back here with the therapist to continue to improve on a daily basis, but again just to get him out on the ice today and get him on his edges is a positive thing."

Being without Backstrom is sub-optimal for sure, but his absence has given the Caps an opportunity to take longer looks at the team's top two prospects and most recent first-round picks. Twenty-year-old Connor McMichael and 19-year-old Hendrix Lapierre were Washington's first-rounders in 2019 and 2020, respectively, and both are among a quartet of rookies to crack the Capitals' opening night roster. Defenseman Martin Fehervary and winger Beck Malenstyn are also on Washington's opening night roster.

Both McMichael and Lapierre are centers, and both are likely to be in the lineup on Wednesday against the Blueshirts if Ovechkin is unable to play. If the Caps' captain is able to suit up, only one of the two kids is likely to be in the lineup.

McMichael made his NHL debut in a Jan. 24 game against Buffalo, before going down to AHL Hershey and excelling at that level. He totaled 14 goals and 27 points, leading the Bears in both categories and he paced the circuit with eight game-winning goals. McMichael had the benefit of being mentored by longtime NHLer Matt Moulson in Hershey, and he spent the summer working with Gary Roberts, also a longtime NHL player and now a fitness/nutrition guru who works with a number of current NHL players.

Prior to last season, McMichael had been playing for London of the OHL. Under normal circumstances, he almost certainly would have played there again in 2020-21, even though he had nothing left to prove at that level following a monster '19-20 season there. But because the OHL didn't resume operations amidst the pandemic last season, McMichael was able to turn pro a year early.

"The last year and a bit have been tough for everyone," says McMichael. "But I've been lucky enough that I've been included in a handful of people who have benefited from this, and last year being able to play pro hockey. It benefited me a lot, it made me learn the systems and you really play against a higher level of competitiveness. I had a great year last year, so I was really happy that it worked out that way."

When the 2020 NHL Draft was finally held early last October, the Caps used their first-round pick on Lapierre, whose draft year had been marred by injuries. Initially, the ailment was misdiagnosed as a concussion, but it turned out to actually be a neck injury that limited him to just 19 games in '19-20. Last season, Lapierre was able to play 21 regular season and nine playoff games in a shortened QMJHL season, so he arrived on the scene at training camp this year having played only 49 games (including playoffs) in a prime development time during his career.

"Obviously I've been through a lot," says Lapierre. "Two years ago, you come into your draft season and you don't really know what to expect, but you really want to play a lot of games and show everyone what you're made of. It was pretty unfortunate what happened with the neck injury, but I feel like I did everything in my power in that situation to come back and be healthy and be 100 percent."

"Last year, the draft was pretty special. It was the start of something great and getting drafted here was really special. For me, I just see it as a lot of resilience and a lot of obstacles, but right now I feel like I'm in a really good position and I just want to keep playing hockey. I love it so much and I just want to be at the rink every day and be with my teammates."

The Caps can play Lapierre in as many as nine NHL games before returning him to Acadie-Bathurst of the QMJHL for one more year of junior hockey, and as long as he plays fewer than 10 games here, the first year of his three-year entry level contract will defer to next season. Given the strength and depth of the Washington forward group, that's the likely scenario. But nothing is carved in stone, and few players of Lapierre's age are possessed with his maturity and his determination, to say nothing of his skill.

Laviolette is not bothered by the fact that Lapierre's résumé is relatively light on games played over the past two seasons.

"I can only go by what I've seen," says the bench boss of Lapierre. "I wasn't a part of his life three years ago, and I wasn't a part of the evaluation process three years ago. I saw him last year at training camp, and I saw this year at training camp, and I saw him play games against good lineups. I thought he handled himself well, and that's all we have to go by right now. That's why he's here, and he has to continue to work and prove that he belongs here."