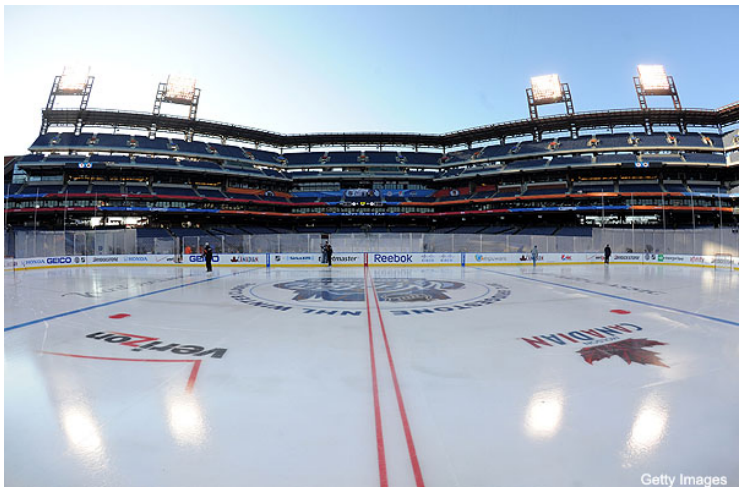

Greetings from Philadelphia! It was just two days ago that we saw legends from both the Philadelphia Flyers and the New York Rangers take the ice. Eric Lindros was welcomed back to Philadelphia with style skating with Bobby Clarke, and Bernie Parent received a standing ovation for his five-minute performance. Mark Messier and Brian Leetch reminded us how talented they are, and Glenn Anderson scored the lone goal for the blue shirts.

But then we move on to the real game we have all been waiting for. Each year the league holds (at least) one outdoor game, with the hope of a snowy, magical setting reminiscent of the game that started it all, Pittsburgh at Buffalo on January 1st, 2008. Unfortunately, we will not see snow this year. The weather forecast today in Philadelphia is partly sunny and breezy. The highs are supposed to be in the low 40's and with winds potentially up to 30 mph. The game, originally slated for 1:00 EST has been moved back to 3:00 to provide for less sunshine directly on the ice surface.

The big news out of Philadelphia is that starting netminder Ilya Bryzgalov will not be starting the Winter Classic. Bryzgalov, who had a mask painted specifically for the Classic, is taking it all in stride, lightheartedly. Instead, Flyers' coach Peter Laviolette feels he has the best chance to win with the other Russian netminder, Sergei Bobrovsky. Bobrovsky is 1-1-1 with a 2.22 GAA and .924 save percentage against the Rangers and has lost only two games in regulation this season.

From the Rangers side, the big news is the status of Marc Staal, who appeared potentially ready to return from a concussion, delivered at the hand of brother Eric last season. Although he has been practicing, Staal is still not scheduled to play. A year ago, his other brother Jordan likely returned early from injury to partake in the Winter Classic in Pittsburgh, but Marc will not follow suit.

The New York Rangers enter the Classic two points ahead of Philadelphia, with sole possession of the top seat in the Eastern Conference. The Rangers have won six of their last seven games and are hungry for a big win today. The Flyers on the other side have won only two of their last six and appear struggling to find consistency as of late.

Below is a preview, courtesy of the Frozen Tools function right here on dobberhockey.com.

23-9-4	REGULAR SEASON RECORD	22-10-4
2-1-0	REGULAR SEASON LAST 3 GAMES	1-2-0

LAST 3 REGULAR SEASON GAMES VS NHL

Rangers Dec 26-Dec 30

Name	Pos	GP	G	A	Pts	PPG	PPP	PPTOI	TOI	SOG	F/A	PIM
HAGELIN,C.	L	3	3	1	4	1.33	0	00:10	13:33	8	2	0
CALLAHAN,R.	R	3	0	4	4	1.33	0	03:13	18:52	8	4	6
DEL ZOTTO,M.	D	3	1	2	3	1.00	0	03:56	24:13	9	3	4
DUBINSKY,B.	C	3	2	0	2	0.67	0	01:30	17:23	8	0	0
RICHARDS,B.	C	3	1	1	2	0.67	0	04:07	18:03	11	2	2
MCDONAGH,R.	D	3	0	2	2	0.67	0	00:50	25:04	4	0	0
WOYWITKA,J.	D	2	0	1	1	0.50	0	00:00	09:14	1	0	0
GABORIK,M.	R	3	1	0	1	0.33	0	03:20	16:37	9	1	2
STRALMAN,A.	D	3	0	1	1	0.33	0	00:19	20:04	4	3	0
FEDOTENKO,R.	L	3	0	0	0	0.00	0	00:00	12:02	1	-1	0

Name	GP	Min	W	L	OTL	SO	GA	SA	SV	GAA	SV%
LUNDQVIST,H.	2	120	2	0	0	1	1	56	55	0.50	0.9821
BIRON,M.	1	60	0	1	0	0	4	23	19	4.01	0.8261

Flyers Dec 23-Dec 29

Name	Pos	GP	G	A	Pts	PPG	PPP	PPTOI	TOI	SOG	F/A	PIM
GIROUX,C.	R	3	0	3	3	1.00	1	04:48	22:42	7	0	0
MESZAROS,A.	D	3	1	1	2	0.67	1	01:04	20:18	6	-3	0
COUTURIER,S.	C	1	0	2	2	2.00	0	00:00	12:55	1	1	0
VORACEK,J.	R	3	0	2	2	0.67	0	04:39	19:08	5	1	0
HARTNELL,S.	L	3	1	1	2	0.67	1	02:27	18:30	7	1	12
READ,M.	R	3	1	1	2	0.67	0	02:16	16:18	9	0	0
JAGR,J.	R	3	1	1	2	0.67	0	04:58	20:28	7	1	0
CARLE,M.	D	3	0	2	2	0.67	1	02:52	23:16	2	1	0
SIMMONDS,W.	R	3	0	1	1	0.33	1	04:52	16:51	3	-2	9
VAN RIEMSDYK,J.	L	3	1	0	1	0.33	0	01:14	11:48	3	0	0

Name	GP	Min	W	L	OTL	SO	GA	SA	SV	GAA	SV%
BOBROVSKY,S.	1	60	1	0	0	0	2	26	24	2.00	0.9231
BRYZGALOV,J.	2	118	0	2	0	0	9	40	31	4.57	0.7750

As a final thought, I will leave you with some quotes heading up to the game. I will be watching the game from section 105 and will be happy to answer any questions you might have for me on twitter @tlucarelli.

“Let’s play. It’s time to play the game.” – John Tortorella

“When we wake up, all the fun is going to be over and it’s about two points on the ice.” – Claude Giroux

“It’s going to feel different out there. It’ll be, look around for a bit, but then you don’t want to get clocked, so you can’t look too much.” – Brad Richards

“I have great news and even better news. Great news, I’m not playing tomorrow night (today). Good news, we have a chance to win the game tomorrow night.” – Ilya Bryzgalov