

# **Blues Open At Colorado January 13, Host San Jose In First Home Game As Team Reveals Abbreviated 2021 Schedule**

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ST. LOUIS - The St. Louis Blues will open the delayed National Hockey League season in Denver against the Colorado Avalanche on Jan.13, and open at Enterprise Center on Jan. 18 against the San Jose Sharks as the team released its 2020-21 schedule on Wednesday.

The start of the season was delayed due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which saw the NHL hold its playoffs throughout August and September, climaxing with the Tampa Bay Lightning winning the Stanley Cup in six games over the Dallas Stars. The then-defending champion Blues were eliminated in the first round in six games by the Vancouver Canucks in Edmonton, where the league held the Western Conference playoffs, in addition to the Conference Finals and Stanley Cup Final.

The 56-game slate will be entirely based in the realigned West Division, where the Blues will be with Colorado, the Minnesota Wild, Arizona Coyotes, Anaheim Ducks, Los Angeles Kings, San Jose and the Vegas Golden Knights. The entire league was realigned for the season, and all regular season games will take place within the four divisions and in two-game series, such as is played in college hockey.

The Blues will play each of their division rivals eight times, four home and four road. Currently, fans will not be allowed to attend home games at Enterprise Center due to the pandemic, but the team and the City of St. Louis are currently working on a plan to allow a limited number of fans to attend games in person.

The Blues will open at Colorado Jan. 13 and 15, then host the Sharks in games on Jan. 18 and 20, then play at home against Los Angeles Jan. 23-24. The regular season ends in May, with a home series May 3 and 5 against Anaheim, then the final series at Vegas May 7-8.

The 2021 Stanley Cup Playoffs are set to begin shortly after the end of the regular season, with the Stanley Cup Final set for July. The top four teams in each of the realigned divisions will qualify for the playoffs, with the first two rounds set within the divisions. The division champion will play the fourth-place finisher, while the second and third place finishers will play each other. The two winners will then play each other, with the four surviving teams being reseeded in the Stanley Cup Semifinals, based on regular season points.

Besides the realigned West Division, the North Division will be all seven Canadian teams --- the Montreal Canadiens, Ottawa Senators, Toronto Maple Leafs, Winnipeg Jets, Calgary Flames, Edmonton Oilers and Vancouver. The East Division will be the Boston Bruins, Buffalo Sabres, New Jersey Devils, New York Islanders, New York Rangers, Philadelphia Flyers, Pittsburgh Penguins and Washington Capitals. The Central Division will contain the Carolina Hurricanes, Chicago Blackhawks, Columbus Blue Jackets, Dallas Stars, Detroit Red Wings, Florida Panthers, Nashville Predators and Tampa Bay. An expansion team, the Seattle Kraken, is set to begin play in the 2021-22 season.

Due to the delayed start of the season, along with COVID concerns, the NHL postponed its annual Bridgestone Winter Classic outdoor game, set for New Year's Day between the Blues and Wild at Target Field in Minneapolis, along with the All-Star Weekend and Game, which was scheduled for BB&T Center in Sunrise, Fla., the Panthers' home arena on Jan. 29-30. A decision on another outdoor game, the annual Coors Light Stadium Series game hosted by the Hurricanes on Feb. 22 at Carter-Finley Stadium in Raleigh, the home football stadium of North Carolina State University, has not yet been made.

The home opener between the Blues and Sharks would mark the first sporting event at Enterprise Center since Mar. 11, when the Mid-States Club Hockey Association, the St. Louis high school league, held its championship finals. Duchesne Catholic of St. Charles won the Doug Wickenheiser Memorial Cup over Oakville 3-1, while St. John Vianney Catholic defeated CBC 3-2 to win the St. Louis Blues Challenge Cup.