



As the **Pittsburgh Penguins and Detroit Red Wings** are preparing for the **Stanley Cup Finals**, the other 28 NHL franchises are already preparing for the 2008-09 season with several teams currently looking to fill their Head Coaching positions. The interesting aspect of the search for three teams is that their GMs are looking to replace themselves as coach. Don Waddell in Atlanta, Jacques Martin in Florida, and Bryan Murray in Ottawa all have been behind the bench this season, but each looks set to relinquish this role for the upcoming season.

In addition, two other playoff teams are searching for a new coach, with Colorado and San Jose making moves after disappointing second round exits. Meanwhile, the drama in Toronto continues as the Maple Leafs not only search for a coach, but also a new GM.

The following is a look at the current openings and who may fill these positions:

Atlanta Thrashers

After the club's first playoff appearance during the 2006-07 season, a slow start to the past season led to the dismissal of Coach Bob Hartley. GM Don Waddell took the position on an interim basis but was unable to lead the team to the playoffs. For the upcoming season a new coach is a top priority. The recently fired trio of Ron Wilson, Paul Maurice, and Joel Quenneville have been suggested as possible replacements.

Ross McKeon of Yahoo! Sports suggests that Wilson may be the best choice as his experience in the Southeast Division with the Capitals and offseason home in Hilton Head, SC [may be factors which see him move to Atlanta](#).

Colorado Avalanche

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Written by Peter Morrison
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After three seasons in Denver, Head Coach Joel Quenneville was relieved of his duties following the team's defeat in the second round of the playoffs by Detroit. Quenneville reached the playoffs two times during his tenure with the Avalanche, reaching the second round both times.

Pat Burns has been one high profile name inked to the job, while the AHL's Portland Pirates coach Kevin Dineen and Avalanche Assistant Tony Granato are other possibilities. One other interesting name mentioned recently has been Patrick Roy.

Florida Panthers

Like Waddell in Atlanta, Jacques Martin is also looking for a new coach as he will step down from his role as coach and will focus on his duties as GM. Martin had been behind the bench since 2004 and became GM in 2006. He stated a few weeks ago that the coaching search has not yet been started in depth and said he was interested in looking at candidates from several playoff teams.

Several coaches with NHL experience have been mentioned in connection with the Panthers job, with Doug MacLean, Paul Maurice, Bob Hartley, Pat Burns, and Pat Quinn among them.

A number of NHL assistants have also been mentioned and Martin says that Florida assistants Guy Charron and Mike Kitchen will be interviewed.

Ottawa Senators

Bryan Murray is the third GM who will look to replace himself as a coach this offseason and with plenty of young talent in Ottawa, this would be a dream job for many candidates.

Pat Burns has been the recently mentioned following a stint on the Team Canada staff which saw [Senators forward Dany Heatly set record marks for scoring](#) .

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Other possibilities are Detroit's Mike Babcock, who is out of contract following the Stanley Cup Playoffs and is top of Murray's wish list. But with Babcock likely to stay with the Red Wings, another interested candidate is former Colorado and Atlanta coach Bob Hartley.

San Jose Sharks

Despite being the winningest coach in franchise history, as well as sitting in 9th on the all time wins list, Ron Wilson was let go following three consecutive exits in the second round of the playoffs, this year losing to the Dallas Stars in six games. Wilson's Sharks reached the playoffs four times during his time in San Jose, a stint that also included two Pacific Division Titles and a trip to the Conference Finals in 2002-03.

While Wilson looks certain to be picked up by another club quickly, the direction of the Sharks is more uncertain. According to Sharkspage.com on Wednesday at the 2008 State of the Sharks meeting, [GM Doug Wilson answered questions about the coaching position](#) and he reportedly:

"[M]entioned a list of 40 potential candidates that will be narrowed down, noting that many were still under contract. He said he wanted a head coach with a blue collar work ethic, one that will not shy away from being hard on players when needed. Wilson said that he could not go into specifics, and that the only time you will hear the new coach's name from him will be during the announcement of his hiring. Wilson also said that there are a lot of suggestions and speculation from fans and the media, but Anaheim Ducks head coach Randy Carlyle and Detroit Red Wings head coach Mike Babcock are similar to the type of coach he wants in San Jose."

Toronto Maple Leafs

Last but not least are the openings in Toronto, which have been by far the most intriguing with numerous high profile names linked with their jobs.

Brian Burke, Wayne Gretzky, and Steve Yzerman are just a few of the names that have turned down interest from the Leafs, while former Canucks GM Dave Nonis has met with Toronto officials about the GM position. Current Minnesota Wild GM Doug Risebrough is another name the Leafs may be interested in.

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John Ferguson was fired from his role as GM in January, being replaced on an interim basis by former Maple Leafs GM Cliff Fletcher. Head Coach Paul Maurice followed after missing the playoffs.

For the coaching position, [Quenneville has been one possible replacement mentioned](#), while Craig Hartsburg, a former head coach in Chicago and Anaheim, has also [expressed interest in the position](#).

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