



Looking for Holiday Hockey

By Evan Nielsen, Hockey Director

Most years our holiday break would include a whole lot of NHL action to follow, with our favorite teams jockeying for position and looking to gain momentum heading into the second half of the regular season. New Year's Day has usually meant we had a Winter Classic game to watch and get excited about. We've been particularly fortunate to see our hometown Blackhawks invited to take part in that game four times since the tradition began in 2008.

This holiday season is different for the hockey fan. Strange as it may seem, our NHL season hasn't started yet, so we don't have those divisional races to follow or the Winter Classic to tune into. It's encouraging to see that the NHL and its players have agreed to a plan for a shortened season beginning in mid-January, but what about those of us that miss watching games over the holidays?

The World Junior Championship has always (at least since its start in the late-70s) been an exciting way to watch the best U20 hockey players in the world compete against each other for an international championship. This year the tournament in Edmonton/Red Deer has the benefit of being the best live action taking place in the hockey world. The tournament is just in its preliminary round, but the early action has been impressive.

The skating ability and skill level demonstrated by these young players is awesome. We're being granted a look at the future of hockey and based on the first few days of preliminary games, that future is bright. It is inspiring to see the speed and creativity of these players on display. It might be a holiday season without the NHL, but we've got some great hockey to watch and some great young players to model our games after.

We're all looking forward to getting back on the ice with our teams. In the meantime, enjoy some of the [World Junior Championship action](#) yourself this holiday season. Be reminded anew that the fun of competition, teamwork, and the beauty of the game lives on. See you at the rink soon and in the meantime, Go Team USA!