



CAN THE BLUES DO IT AGAIN?

Another Original & Exclusive Column From The Mind of DINO COSTA

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Tonight...is the night!

Let's see.

For starters, we've got Toronto hosting Ottawa.

In addition to that game, we've got St. Louis hosting Washington where a long-awaited banner-raising will commence.

Edmonton hosts Vancouver, and Vegas hosts San Jose.

DirecTV NHL Center Ice package all set for another year?

Check.

Bring it on, baby!

What's that?

Last year?

Well, last season my gift to the Gateway City came in the form of a Stanley Cup championship.

What can I say?

All it took was a little DINO In St. Louis for the Blues dream to finally materialize.

You think it was only coincidence that my show arrived in St. Louis at almost the exact time the Blues turned their season around?

My show came to The Lou and then we all watched as that franchise eventually won their first-ever Stanley Cup title.

I had a lot of fun talking about and detailing the Blues journey on my show last year.

But that was then and this is now – and now – no longer will The DINO COSTA Show be heard in St. Louis exclusively – instead – the new show will belong to America – if not the world.

Once my show exited the St. Louis stage the Blues chances for a repeat took a significant hit.

All kidding aside, while the Blues have the ingredients to enjoy a repeat, the chances are that someone else will emerge from the western conference next spring/summer and Blues fans will have to be content with the memories of Gloria in their minds – with their club winning in herculean fashion in Game-7 in Boston last June 12.

Speaking of the Blues, why in the hell are they bringing back a uniform this year (*pictured above*) that they never enjoyed any success in when they used to wear it back in the 1990s?

Didn't Mike Keenan introduce those threads when he blew into town desecrating the Blues gorgeous classic design in the process?

Doesn't it appear kind of odd to have your team named the "Blues" and incorporating so much red into the color scheme?

I say it's a good thing they'll only wear it a handful of times this season.

Speaking of uniforms, quite a few teams will be introducing either updated looks or new third jerseys this season.

For instance, the Carolina Hurricanes will wear road uniforms this season with the word "CANES" in a diagonal position on the front of their jersey. I can't say I hate this new look for the Hurricanes, but I would have much preferred if the diagonal look said "CAROLINA" instead.

My New Jersey Devils have remained status quo with their on-ice appearance, at least with their uniforms, that is.

On the ice itself, the Devils have one of the more intriguing rosters in the league.

I'll go so far as to say that if the Devils play better defense and if Cory Schneider can rebound and give them some solid goaltending along with MacKenzie Blackwood, that the Devils will be heading back to the postseason.

The media are already touting the Jack Hughes and Kappo Kakko rivalry as the best thing since the days of Mickey, Willie, and the Duke.

The Florida Panthers have my attention.

Owner Vinny Viola opened his checkbook and brought in a bunch of new players as well as the most pedigreed head coach available. Seeing how Joel Quenneville can merge all of the new additions in Sunrise should be fun.

The Panthers added some grit by luring forward Noel Acciari to leave Boston as a free agent, and they also added forward Brett Connolly (Washington), as well as veteran defenseman Anton Stralman.

Florida's biggest offseason coup was signing veteran goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky.

Adding these players to a nice nucleus of younger players like Aleksander Barkov and Jonathan Huberdeau will at the very least make Florida a more exciting and interesting team in Joel Quenneville's initial season behind the bench.

What else...

Well, as hard as it might be to believe, the Penguins "*Sid The Kid*" isn't such a kid anymore.

Crosby is now 32-years-old, and one wonders if the Penguins as presently constituted are still a legitimate contender in the east?

Phill Kessel left the scene and was traded to Arizona and in the process of that deal, the Penguins got back some youth in center Alex Galchenyuk who is 25.

Maybe the potential many have forecast for Galchenyuk ever since he was the 3rd overall pick by Montreal back in 2012 will finally flourish now that he's in Pittsburgh?

Pittsburgh will again go as far as their terrific tandem of Crosby and Evgeni Malkin take them.

"We're All Canucks"

I'm looking forward to seeing what Vancouver's Elias Pettersson can do for an encore.

Vancouver has an array of explosive young talent that started to show it's potential last year. Pettersson, along with Brock Boeser, and Bo Horvat, allow the Canucks to believe that things are well on the upswing in British Columbia.

The Canucks spent lavishly in the offseason by agreeing to terms with towering defenseman Tyler Myers (Winnipeg) to help anchor their blueline.

Is Myers worth the money he got from the Canucks? No. But hey, it's not your money, right?

But I did like some of the Canuck's other additions, namely, forwards Michael Ferland and J.T. Miller.

Canucks young defenseman Quinn Hughes should be a player you'll hear about when it comes to possibly winning the Calder trophy.

Vancouver is celebrating their 50th NHL season – and with it – they'll retire the numbers of Daniel and Henrik Sedin this year...and thankfully they updated their uniform by removing "VANCOUVER" off of the front of their jersey and it will now feature the Orca whale busting through the ice all alone.

Uniforms, man, you can't live with em' and you can't live without em', right?

Well, at least I can't.

"It's been such a long time..."

The Red Sox ended their long drought back in 2004, the Cubs did likewise in 2016, so is this the year that Toronto finally wins their first Stanley Cup since 1967?

The pressure in Toronto is always there – but this season the natives will get particularly grumpy if coach Mike Babcock can't get his team to take home all the bacon.

On the precipice of a new season, things got off to a whacky start for the Leafs.

Just as the ink was drying on Auston Matthews's new contract the club found out that he was involved in a situation where he was charged with disorderly conduct. Even better? They found out about all of this on Twitter.

Toronto has millions (\$33-million) tied up in 3-players, the aforementioned Matthews, John Tavares, and Mitch Marner.

Yes, Toronto GM John Dubas has a team headed for salary cap hell shortly which places an even further onus on this team to win and win now.

By the way, if you think I'm gonna go through each and every team in the league with this column – think again. They don't pay me enough (yet) for that kind of a story.

Steve Yzerman has returned to Detroit and he'll try to build a club that had the kinds of success Yzerman had when he was in Tampa all those years.

Speaking of the Lightning – boy – do they owe their fans one this year?

A record-setting regular season, an absolute juggernaut when they entered the playoffs last year only to have their electricity turned off in the first-round by Columbus?

John Davidson left Columbus and took the Presidency with the Rangers.

Davidson also brought one of his former players with him to The Garden when high-octane forward Artemi Panarin signed a big deal with New York. The Rangers also swung a deal for very good defenseman Jacob Trouba and then signed him to a long-term deal.

Man, do I hate the Rangers.

The Islanders finally broke ground on their new arena a few days ago.

Screw the Islanders too.

Vegas just might win the whole thing this year.

If the Golden Knights need any motivation in year III, all they need to do is to remember last year's first round of the playoffs, Game-7 against San Jose, a penalty that never should have been called, and a penalty that gave San Jose an opportunity to come back and win that game and thus eliminating Vegas from the post season party.

Back to Columbus...doesn't anyone want to play there anymore?

Tampa Bay had some company last year, eh?

Calgary, like the Lightning, finished number one overall in their conference before being blitzkrieged by Colorado in the first round and sent home for an early and disappointing summer.

I love me some Johnny Gaudreau, I love me some Sean Monahan, I love me some Matthew Tkachuk, for the Flames.

I don't particularly love their defense – and their goaltending continues to be their biggest issue – but the Flames will be fun to watch again at the very least.

Colorado?

Now we're talking, baby.

The Avalanche are ready to bust out in big ways.

Dontcha just love young talent, not just in hockey, but in all sports?

The Avs have young talent in abundance and they could be a sleeper this season in the west.

There are not many lines in the league with as much juice as Colorado's with Gabriel Landeskog, Nathan McKinnon, and Miko Rantanen.

Avalanche GM Joe Sakic also pried Nazem Kadri away from Toronto and I'll be one of the first to say that Kadri will have a great season in the Rockies this year.

The Avalanche have depth and they have great goaltending. They traded Semyon Varlamov to the Islanders and now the number one job belongs to Philipp Grubauer.

Defenseman Cole Maker is the favorite to be this year's best NHL rookie.

Watch out for the Avs.

The Bruins will once again be one of the better teams in the east.

The Canadiens might have actually made the playoffs last year if they had an average power-play.

That said, Montreal does have some exciting young talent on their club.

See, Max Domi, see, Tomas Tatar, see, Brendan Gallagher, see Jesperi Kotaniemi, see Joel Armia.

See that the Canadiens would look even more promising if they'd been able to snag Sebastian Aho on the big free-agent deal they gave him...only to see Carolina match and retain Aho.

The Canadiens did add defenseman Ben Chiarot (Winnipeg) to their blueline in a move that I like.

Cary Price gives them a chance to win each night he's in goal.

Montreal could be a surprise team in the east.

What else do you want from me?

The Flyers?

Screw them as well...and is Nolan Patrick made out of glass?

Carter Hart, are you ready to establish yourself as the undisputed number one in the Philadelphia net?

They overpaid for Kevin Hayes.

I do like Claude Giroux and I do like Sean Couturier and I do like Jakub Voracek...and James van Riemsdyk.

Alain Vigneault is their new coach.

Whatever, I don't hate the Flyers in the same ways I do the Rangers.

Thank goodness I don't need to talk about the Blues all the time when I get back on the air shortly.

Not to sound too fickle, but I'm kind of over the whole Blues thing, you know?

I did my part, they won all the bananas...but now it's time to move on and let Super Dave tell everyone about the Blues.

Speaking of Super Dave, you could have knocked me over with a feather when I found out that SD was no longer with 590 The FAN in St. Louis.

I not only love hockey and the NHL, but I also love the "sounds" of hockey.

Nothing like it, the puck off the stick, the sound of the boards being crashed, the sound of a slap-shot hitting a goaltender's pads, the sounds of skates gliding on ice.

Someone needs to write a poem about all of this as soon as possible.

Ottawa won't make the playoffs this year as they're in the midst of a rebuild – but there's something interesting I find about the Senators this year and I'll be keeping close tabs on them.

Connor McDavid is still the best player in the game.

Why the Kings continue to insist on wearing black when everyone (*including the Kings*) knows that purple is the color of royalty is beyond me.

With an emphasis on youth around the league, Los Angeles rolls out the equivalent of an old-timers day lineup most nights.

Anze Kopitar is already 32? Wasn't he only 25 the other day?

Dustin Brown is 34.

Jeff Carter is 34.

Ilya Kovalchuk is 36.

Drew Doughty is the baby of the bunch at only 29.

The Kings are a team transitioning out of players who will soon be out of the league while trying to introduce some of the younger players they feel will be a part of their next contending team and this will happen with some pain associated with the process.

The Kings will be a team to watch as the trade deadline approaches.

Joe Pavelski is now a Dallas Star and has been for a few months and it still feels weird to me.

The Stars are banking on Corey Perry regaining his health and helping this club to do more of what they didn't do last year enough: score goals.

But Jason Spezza no longer lives in Dallas and neither does Mats Zuccarello who signed on with Minnesota.

But Dallas still has Alexander Radulov.

The Stars also have Miro Heiskanen!

Speaking of the Wild...what a wild summer, eh?

They fired GM Paul Fenton after only one season on the job and then hired a neophyte to replace him in Bill Guerin.

Fenton lost his job only minutes after signing the previously mentioned Mats Zuccarello.

Zuccarello is 32 and got a 5-year deal.

Smart man, that Mats Zuccarello.

But wait now, Zach Parise is 34, and Ryan Suter is the same age as Parise.

Miko Koivu is 35.

Are the Wild the midwestern edition of the Los Angeles Kings?

Arizona, you ask?

I already covered them in another piece that you can find in the archive section of this website.

It's easy, just click on: "ALL DINO COLUMNS."

See, like cake, right?

Who will be the first coach fired?

Will Ken Holland find success in remaking the Oilers into his image in Edmonton?

Rasmus Dahlin will wear one of those gorgeous Buffalo Sabres 50th anniversary jerseys and continue to make his mark as one of the league's best blueliners in Buffalo.

OVECHKIN!

The west coast agreed with Erik Karlsson.

Matthew Barzal!

Ryan O'Reilly.

Talent everywhere.

The league has never been better.

Television coverage has never been as expansive.

More kids and people are playing hockey in America than ever before.

The NHL has more fans than ever before.

Seattle is set to join the league as the NHL's 32nd club in 2021-22 season – that is if the world is still here at that time and the battle of Armageddon hasn't yet begun.

Seattle?

Please, not the Kraken?

And by the way, it appears as though Seattle is going to choose a red and black color scheme for their franchise – why do that?

Let's see, New Jersey, Carolina, and Ottawa, all currently use a red-black color scheme.

Seattle NHL Hockey?

Think green and gold, baby!

Who is gonna win the Stanley Cup?

I don't know – and as you know – DINO...almost never does predictions.

It all starts tonight.

So sit back, turn on the TV, and watch as the 102nd year of the world's very best in hockey, the National Hockey League, thrills us all for another great season on the ice.