Now that the dust of the NHL Trade Deadline has settled, the playoff chase is officially on. Only two or three teams are more or less eliminated from playoff contention and it will make for plenty of exciting, close games down the NHL's stretch run. With Columbus being 26 points out of a playoff spot entering Tuesday's action, the team will be attempting to play the role of spoiler again this March and April. The offseason will bring a whole new set of challenges, including the Rick Nash saga, hoping to win the draft lottery, and possibly re-arranging the front office.

March is one of the best months for sports. Both the NHL and NBA are in the midst of playoff chases and of course, everybody's favorite tournament, March Madness takes place. Spring Training is in full swing, so baseball season is right around the corner. But, there is a lot left to be decided in the NHL. With 15-18 games left for every team, it's a good time to do another TCF 30 for 30 looking at all 30 NHL teams in 30 words or less.

Unlike the last two installments of this, which I organized by division standing, I'll do today's by conference standing as of March 6. These standings are subject to more change over the next five weeks than the weather in Northeast Ohio.

Eastern Conference

1. New York Rangers (42-15-7, 91 pts): Still look like the team to beat in the East. One of two NHL teams with 20 road wins. Will passing on final Rick Nash offer hurt them?

2. Boston Bruins (38-23-3, 79 pts.): Tuukka Rask 4-6 week injury could be costly. Strong contender in East and defending champs. Starting to separate from rest of division and guarantee two rounds of home ice.

3. Florida Panthers (31-22-12, 74 pts.): Revolving door atop Southeast Division. Worst goal differential (-21) by far of current playoff team. Under .500 at home and on road. Need lady luck to get in playoffs.

4. Pittsburgh Penguins (39-21-5, 83 pts.): Quiet sleeper in East overshadowed by NYR and Boston. Crosby cleared for contact could be huge lift. Three games left with Philly in battle for 4/5 series home ice.

5. Philadelphia Flyers (36-21-7, 79 pts.): Still having goaltending troubles and consistency issues. Three Sat/Sun back-to-back games left. Withstood rough stretch of play and could enter playoffs on high note.

6. New Jersey Devils (36-24-5, 77 pts.): One last run for Marty Brodeur? Atlantic Division dominating Eastern Conference. Might be wise to stay in sixth and face SE Division champ rather than play division rival or Boston.

7. Ottawa Senators (34-25-8, 74 pts.): Cooled off after strong run in midseason that put them in serious contention. Goalie Anderson cut self in kitchen and team desperately hanging on without him.

8. Winnipeg Jets (32-27-8, 72 pts.): One of top home ice advantages in hockey with small building and highly passionate fans. Terrible road record losing 21 of 32 and nine of final 15 games on road.

9. Washington Capitals (32-28-5, 69 pts.): Lack of leadership has plagued team all year. Another bad road record in SE Division. Scoring issues due to Nicklas Backstrom long-term injury. Ovechkin very affected by Backstrom injury.

10. Tampa Bay Lightning (31-28-6, 68 pts.): Digging themselves out of early hole. Sharp home/road split (20-11 home, 11-23 road). Stamkos developing into superstar. Most goals allowed in entire NHL.

11. Buffalo Sabres (30-28-8, 68 pts.): Like Lightning, digging themselves out of hole. Ryan Miller incredible since All-Star Break. Possible momentum from strong 3-1-1 road trip. Best goaltender of all bubble teams could be huge factor.

12. Toronto Maple Leafs (30-28-7, 67 pts.): Goaltending issues all over the place. Lost eight of last 10, fired coach and trying desperately to stay in playoff picture. Next four games very difficult, could end playoff hopes.

13. New York Islanders (28-29-9, 65 pts.): Holding onto slimmest of playoff chances. Second-worst goal differential in NHL (-40). Will probably wind up as draft lottery team as end of season. Not enough offense.

14. Carolina Hurricanes (24-27-14, 62 pts.): Only saving grace has been the point for losing in OT. Sad that NHL team still has playoff chance 17 games under .500. Dangerous spoiler team in SE Division.

15. Montreal Canadiens (25-31-10, 60 pts.): Surprisingly bad in front of home fans. Could be in line for wholesale coaching and front office changes in offseason. Fading fast losing eight of 10.

Western Conference

1. Vancouver Canucks (41-17-8, 90 pts.): Have had division locked up for a couple months, now playing for home ice. Chip on shoulder from last postseason is big motivating factor.

2. St. Louis Blues (41-18-7, 89 pts.): Hold tiebreaker over Detroit. Allowing incredible 1.98 goals per game. Dominant at home, mediocre on road so major incentive to win division. Ability to use both goaltenders is big asset.

3. Dallas Stars (35-26-5, 75 pts.): Like SE Division, Pacific is revolving door at top. Division leader one day, out of top eight the next. Only current playoff team with negative goal differential (-4).

4. Detroit Red Wings (43-20-3, 89 pts.): Insane home record still marching along. Another injury to goaltender Jimmy Howard could hurt home ice chances. Only .500 road team. Older team needs less travel.

5. Nashville Predators (38-20-7, 83 pts.): The team that nobody wants to play in the playoffs. World-class goaltender, strong defensively, physical in series. Addition of Gaustad makes them one of best faceoff teams in West.

6. Chicago Blackhawks (36-24-7, 79 pts.): Like Eastern Conference Atlantic Division, Central Division dominating standings. Shaky goaltending is hard to overcome. Snapped out of recent cold streak. Need healthy Jonathan Toews back.

7. Phoenix Coyotes (33-24-9, 75 pts.): Up and down team capable of first round upset. Could easily wind up on outside looking in. Probably least talented of the West's top 10 teams.

8. San Jose Sharks (33-24-7, 73 pts.): Major depth concerns due to injury and inexperience. Goaltending is inconsistent. However, one of best first lines in NHL. Have lost eight of 10 and

need wakeup call.

9. Los Angeles Kings (30-23-12, 72 pts.): Still underachieving despite very talented roster. Another team helped by overtime loss point. Three more road games than home games remaining.

10. Colorado Avalanche (34-29-4, 72 pts.): Lots of young talent on roster trying to learn how to win together. May have too many goaltending questions to make playoffs but a team to watch in the future.

11. Calgary Flames (29-25-12, 70 pts.): Too many goals allowed and not enough goals scored. Roster just isn't talented enough. Lost seven of 10 and are falling out of contention rapidly.

12. Anaheim Ducks (29-28-10, 68 pts.): Hole dug early in the season proving to be too much to overcome. Team may have spent too much energy playing catch up to keep the roll going.

13. Minnesota Wild (28-28-10, 66 pts.): Key injuries to different players all season and just not enough talent to overcome. Team playing with minor league callups all over lineup. Trade deadline decisions shook up locker room.

14. Edmonton Oilers (25-34-6, 56 pts.): Talented team to watch for future that needs help on defense and in net. Horrible road team that has dealt with several injuries this season. Going in right direction.

15. Columbus Blue Jackets (20-38-7, 47 pts.): Pretty much locked into the first or second pick of the NHL Draft. Have spurts of playing well but different team every night. Playing out the string.

It should be an exciting final few weeks to the season with four of the six division titles up for

grabs and the fight to sneak into those final couple of playoff spots. An increase in televised games always enhances the atmosphere for the fans and the players so be sure to tune into whatever games you get with your cable provider and enjoy the high energy action.