



Philadelphia Flyers host first playoff game in two years



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By [Eric Goldstein/South Jersey Times](#)

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PHILADELPHIA – The sausage and peppers sizzled. The soda and beer flowed. And the music pulsated through the air.

Wearing the free orange t-shirts handed out with the words “Clutch Time” branded on the front, thousands of fans flooded XFINITY Live and milled about sampling the food and drink options, the various forms of entertainment and overall atmosphere all the while soaking up the 70 degree weather.

That was the scene outside the Wells Fargo Center.

Inside, it was raucous. Even deafening.

“Let’s Go Flyers” were repeated before the game and only interrupted by fans booing other fans wearing Rangers apparel. When the lights went off and the pump-up intro video started on the arena vision, the decibel level was ratcheted to a piercing level and climaxed when the Flyers hit the ice.

Yes, the Stanley Cup Playoffs returned to Philadelphia on Tuesday night for the first time in two years as the **Flyers** hosted the **New York Rangers** in Game of the first round with the series tied at 1-1.

NHL playoff video



HIGHLIGHTS: Wild Win Game 7 in OT



Scoreboard

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Not too long ago home playoff games in this city were a given, taken as much for granted as finding a soft pretzel vendor on nearly every corner. Each year, all Philadelphia teams were considered a near lock to at least make the postseason and host a handful of games – and parties inside and outside the venues.

However, the well has gone rather dry lately in these parts.

The Wells Fargo Center, Citizens Bank Park and Lincoln Financial Field have gone dark once their respective teams' regular seasons ended lately. For one full year encapsulating the Phillies, Eagles, Flyers and Sixers, no team qualified for the playoffs in a season that started in 2012.

The Phils streak of five straight postseason appearances ended in the fall of 2012, when they finished 81-81 and in third place behind the Nationals and Braves, and the Eagles won just four games and Andy Reid was fired after the season.

The Sixers finished ninth in the East and parted ways with coach Doug Collins, while the Flyers missed the playoffs for just the second time in the last 18 years.

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It was the first time Philly failed to have at least one of its big four pro teams make the playoffs since 1971. And it was just the third time it has happened since the Flyers debuted in the 1967-68 season.

Thankfully, the Eagles overachieved under Chip Kelly and broke the drought this past season, losing to the Saints in the first round of the playoffs at the Linc in January.

And though the Phillies continued going backward in 2013 and the Sixers successfully tanked this year for a chance at a high draft pick, the Flyers recovered from a club-worst 1-7 start to punch their playoff ticket.

Despite being longshots to even get out of the first round, the Flyers have provided fans with playoff anxiety and excitement.

They have given them and the entire region an excuse to dream about the chance to win a trophy at the end of the journey.

And after going a full calendar year without that chance, the fans were more than ready for the ride on Tuesday. And at worst, the Flyers will get to do it all over again once more on

Friday night for Game Four.

The Flyers hope the pre-game scene that played out on Tuesday is held over and over and over again.

They hope the party lasts well into June.

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