Detroit was the first to clinch a first-round victory, sweeping the Phoenix Coyotes in four games. Nashville won their first ever playoff series, beating the Anaheim Ducks in six games. Chicago came roaring back from a 3-0 series deficit against Vancouver and forced a game seven, only to lose in overtime. And don't forget Columbus, who finished last in the division and 16 points out of a playoff spot. Where does that leave the Blues?

With all of the success of the Central Division, the Blues and Blue Jackets have to feel out of the picture. The Blues, who finished ten points out of a playoff spot, still battled against these surging teams in the regular season.

The Blues have proven that they can beat winners. The Blues had a winning record against their Central Division foes this season, going 12-8-4 (the Blues received 28 out of a possible 48 points). They had three Central Division games in a row spanning from December 23 – 28 against the Red Wings, Predators and Blackhawks. The Blues won all three games, outscoring their opponents 9-4 and recording one shutout.

The best performances probably came in the six games played against the Nashville Predators. The Blues went 4-1-1 against the Predators, scoring 14 total goals and allowing just eight goals. Jaroslav Halak shut-out the Predators on three different occasions, which is quite the accomplishment when considering that Nashville finished the first round in six games, yet still are tied for the lead in playoff goals-scored (22 goals for). Simply put: Nashville will score goals when the game counts.

The most impressive aspect of the Blues taking on the central is the play of David Backes. Playing in every matchup against the Central, Backes scored six points on the Blackhawks (2G-4A—6PTS), six points on the Red Wings (3G-3A—6PTS), six points on the Blue Jackets (1G-5A—6PTS) and five points on the Predators (3G-2A—5PTS). Scoring an amazing 23 points in 24 games against the Central Division, Backes proved this season that he knows how to beat the most important of opponents.

Patrik Berglund was also impressive against the Central, scoring 13 goals and 8 assists for 21 total points. His two goals against the Red Wings on December 23 are ones that Blues fans won't soon forget.

Before the injury to David Perron in November, the Blues were getting great production out of the young phenom against the Central Division. He was single-handedly taking down the Chicago Blackhawks, scoring four goals in his only two games against them. He will be key to the Blues winning big Central Division matchups down the road.

If the Blues can build on their pace against one of the toughest divisions in hockey next season, a playoff berth may not be too far off. After all, just six more wins this season would have made them a playoff team.

Discuss this article in the LetsGoBlues.com Forums!