

Is the drought about to end?

MIGHT WE BE ABOUT to see the end of one of the most renowned droughts in sporting history?

It has now been 52 years since the Toronto Maple Leafs last celebrated a Stanley Cup victory ? a lifetime for some.

For the first time in decades, the Leafs head into the penultimate weeks of the season as one of the favourites to win it all come spring. In fact, with some Las Vegas bookies, they're the favourites to win.

And it's easy to see why. A star-studded offence led by the likes of John Tavares, Auston Matthews and Mitch Marner ought to be good enough to lead a team into a deep playoff run. That the Leafs also boast elite-level goaltending from Frederik Andersen and one of this season's breakout stars in Morgan Rielly on the blueline makes them something of an outlier. From the outside looking in, they have it all. Or at least they do now.

This week's addition of two-time Stanley Cup winning defenceman Jake Muzzin from the Los Angeles Kings was a statement of intent from GM Kyle Dubas. The Leafs, at this point, are all in. Following years of disappointment, now might finally be the time for the Leafs to end their hoodoo. They certainly won't be better equipped to do so than they are this season. Some out-of-contract stars, notably Jake Gardiner, won't be retained in the off-season with the Leafs facing a very serious cap crunch.

They have the talent. They have the support. Do they have the fight to bring hockey's greatest prize home? We, like many of you readers, will be watching on with baited breath.