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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/scheifele-three-point-night-in-impressive-win-over-vegas>

***Scheifele three point night in impressive win over Vegas
Scheifele helped Jets stay five points back of Nashville for final wild card spot in west***

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG - Mark Scheifele had a goal and two assists to lead the Winnipeg Jets past the Vegas Golden Knights 4-1 at Canada Life Centre. The Jets (30-29-12, 72 points) captured a regulation win to leapfrog the Sharks (32-30-6, 70 points) in the Western Conference standings and now sit five points back of the Predators (34-28-9, 77 points) for Wild Card 2. Connor Hellebuyck made 26 saves for the Jets who will host the Colorado Avalanche on Thursday.

FORGET ABOUT THE START

After what happened later in the period, it's easy to forget how this game started. The Golden Knights actually jumped out to a 9-0 lead in shots before the first TV timeout. But from that point on, the Jets found their legs and took control.

They opened the scoring thanks to a great setup from Josh Morrissey who fed Kyle Connor and he buried his team-leading 32nd goal of the season and continues to be a force at home.

He's now recorded a point in each of his last five home games and in nine of his last 11. Even more impressive—Connor has picked up at least one point in 30 different home games this season, the most of any player in the NHL.

That solid play carried over to the second period, Winnipeg jumped on a bad clearing attempt by Shea Theodore. Mark Scheifele grabbed the puck at the Vegas blueline and send a cross-ice pass to Alex Iafallo, and he ripped a shot past Adin Hill for his ninth goal at 2:08.

Just under two minutes later, the Jets pushed their lead to three on a three on one, Gabriel Vilardi delivered a perfect pass to Cole Perfetti for the easy tap-in behind Adin Hill. Winnipeg scored three times on their first eight shots on goal.

"I thought, really after the first period, I thought we just closed down their rush game and their o-zone time. They're obviously a team that likes to make a lot of plays, and they're very talented in that area," said Perfetti.

"And I thought in the second and third period, we closed on them quick, didn't give them much, and they were still trying to make plays and I thought we found our offence from that, so we did a good job."

FOUR GORDIE HOWE HAT TRICKS

Who do you think would have four Gordie Howe hat tricks (at least one goal, assist and fight) on this Jets team? If you said Mark Scheifele, you would be right. Scheifele recorded his 81st career three-point game, and on top of that rushed to linemate Kyle Connor's defence after Brett Howden hit Connor which led to the fight. A huge moment that showed the Jets standing up for one another in an emotional and important game.

"It is just kind of the way you get taught when you come into the league and that is the way you take care of each other," said Scheifele.

"It is a brotherhood in here and especially KC, like I said, that is my boy and I don't like when he gets hit, plain and simple."

PK OK

The Jets have got some big kills in their last three games counting the two penalties they had to take care of in overtime in Pittsburgh and New York. Tonight, with the Jets holding onto a 3-1 third period lead, Winnipeg had to kill back-to-back penalties to Elias Salomonsson and Dylan Samberg. The Jets didn't give up a lot and held Vegas from scoring with the man advantage; the Golden Knights came into the night with the fourth best power play in the league.

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/vegas-golden-knights-winnipeg-jets-game-recap-march-24-2026>

Scheifele has 3 points, Jets defeat Golden Knights to keep pace in wild card Connor gets goal, assist for Winnipeg; Vegas unable to gain in Pacific

By Darrin Bauming

WINNIPEG -- Mark Scheifele had a goal and two assists for the Winnipeg Jets in a 4-1 win against the Vegas Golden Knights at Canada Life Centre on Tuesday.

"We have been pushing since the break, pushing our hardest every day," Scheifele said. "And all we can do is control what we can control and tonight we played a great game, and it showed throughout the entire game."

Kyle Connor had a goal and an assist, and Connor Hellebuyck made 26 saves for the Jets (30-29-12), who have points in six of seven (4-1-2).

"I just thought we did a real good job with the guts of the ice tonight," Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel said. "We didn't give up the quality through the middle. And that was everybody, that wasn't just our checkers or whatever it might be. That was everybody paying attention. When the puck turned over, we worked our tails off to make sure that we got back and helped."

The Jets remained five points behind the Nashville Predators for the second wild card into the Stanley Cup Playoffs from the Western Conference.

"Coming out of the Olympic break we've given ourselves a chance here to stay in this race, and the emotion is there," Arniel said. "Every shift matters. Obviously every point matters, but every shift matters, and you can see that the guys -- whether it's blocking a shot or getting a stick on a puck or making a great play offensively -- you can hear it on the bench, you can hear it in the room."

Rasmus Andersson scored, and Adin Hill made 17 saves for the Golden Knights (32-26-14), who have lost four of five (1-4-0), and 10 of their past 14 (4-10-0).

"Tonight wasn't a night about (our) goaltender, it was about our lack of execution offensively," Vegas coach Bruce Cassidy said. "Listen, if we're not scoring, he's going to have to help us put

out fires for us. ... I'm not putting it on him, but that's the hand he's been dealt lately. He hasn't got a lot of run support."

The Golden Knights fell one point behind the Edmonton Oilers for second place in the Pacific Division, and six behind the first-place Anaheim Ducks.

"They get one, they get two, they get three (goals) -- I think that's that's been kind of our issue -- we don't stop the bleeding soon enough," Vegas defenseman Rasmus Andersson said. "And it feels like almost every time we let the first one in, it's a 3-0 game and we got to chase the rest of the game. So, (it's) frustrating because I think we're the better team in the first period. We just got to stop the bleeding earlier."

Connor gave the Jets a 1-0 lead at 17:25 of the first period. Josh Morrissey skated up the side boards, and his cross-ice pass set up Connor for a one-timer from just below the right dot.

"I thought it was kind of an even first period, we each had a couple of chances," Cassidy said. "They buried theirs, made a good play there. Again, their top guys found open ice."

Alex Lafallo extended it to 2-0 at 2:08 of the second period. After a turnover by Vegas defenseman Shea Theodore, Scheifele found Lafallo with a cross-ice pass for the goal.

"Our 'D' was able to keep a good gap," Scheifele said. "We had good back pressure and the guys were in the right spots, and (Hellebuyck) made some great saves. It was a great team game, and we have to look at that one and understand how important it is to play like that."

Cole Perfetti pushed it to 3-0 at 4:06 with a tap-in on a 3-on-1 rush, finishing Gabriel Vilardi's saucer pass over a sliding Theodore.

"Tonight was more of a playoff style, it felt like," Perfetti said. "A little bit more heavy and tight checking in the neutral zone, and there wasn't much. And then I thought we did a really good job in transition, stopping them, slowing them down and going the other way."

Andersson cut it to 3-1 on the power play at 10:29 when his shot from the slot slid under Hellebuyck.

Scheifele scored into an empty net at 18:42 of the third period for the 4-1 final.

"Their top guys are all over the score sheet," Cassidy said. "You can get away with it for a while, but it's a number of games now, so that is going to change for us. It's going to need to change for us."

NOTES: Scheifele leads Winnipeg with 86 points (32 goals, 54 assists) in 71 games this season, one shy of matching his career high of 87 points in 2024-25. With at least one goal, one assist, and a fight, Scheifele recorded the fourth Gordie Howe Hat Trick of his career. ... Connor (32 goals, 49 assists; 81 points) became the third player in franchise history with at least four career 80-point seasons, alongside Scheifele (four) and Ilya Kovalchuk (four with the Atlanta Thrashers). ... Winnipeg can become the second team in NHL history to qualify for the Stanley Cup Playoffs after suffering an 11-game losing streak earlier in the season (Dec. 15 to Jan. 8), following the 1985-86 Flames (11 games from Dec. 14, 1985, to Jan. 7, 1986).

Canadian Press

<https://www.chrisd.ca/2026/03/25/winnipeg-jets-vegas-golden-knights-scheifele-game-story/>

Jets' Scheifele Leads by Example in Fight to Make Playoffs

By Jeff Hamilton, The Canadian Press

Mark Scheifele is the Winnipeg Jets' leading scorer, known for his elite offensive production rather than his toughness.

But when Vegas Golden Knights forward Brett Howden took a run at linemate Kyle Connor late in the second period of Tuesday's 4-1 victory at Canada Life Centre, Scheifele didn't hesitate to respond.

The veteran centre dropped the gloves for his first fight of the season, and just the 10th of his NHL career. Scheifele also registered a pair of assists and sealed the two points against Vegas with a late empty-net goal, completing the fourth Gordie Howe hat trick of his career.

"Just the thing to do. That is my boy," Scheifele said of sticking up for Connor. "It is a brotherhood in here and especially KC, like I said, that is my boy and I don't like when he gets hit, plain and simple."

The Jets are fighting for their playoff lives, and seeing their top offensive weapon put his body on the line provided a notable lift for a team that also snapped a five-game home losing streak to Vegas.

"Obviously, you don't want a guy like Scheif fighting very often," Jets forward Cole Perfetti said. "He's obviously not afraid to jump in and that shows a lot about him and our team and our culture."

Perfetti added: "We're a family in here. No matter the score, the outcome, where we are in the standings, whatever it is, we're going to be in this fight together. And I think when one of your best players does that, it really shows that."

Scheifele, for his part, was quick to poke fun at his lack of fighting experience.

"I'm a terrible fighter. I think I did catch him with a left, so I don't think anyone was expecting me to throw a left tonight," said Scheifele, who was then asked if he has someone to give him tips on scrapping. "If someone did show me, they would have done a terrible job because I am not a very good fighter and I don't have much technique at all."

For Jets head coach Scott Arniel, the sequence of events represented exactly the type of collective buy-in required to navigate the final stretch run as the Jets continue to battle for a post-season berth.

"Coming out of the Olympic break, we've given ourselves a chance here to stay in this race and the emotion is there — every shift matters," Arniel said. "They're feeling really good about what we have to do each night and when you do what we did tonight ... the growth and positive upbeat builds on the bench and in the room."

Arniel pointed out that securing a playoff berth requires contributions that often go beyond the score sheet, with players stepping outside their comfort zone when moments call for it.

“We knew that that’s what it was going to take,” Arniel said. “It’s going to be taking guys that are checkers to score goals, it was going to be goal scorers to check, it’s kind of emotional moments like that where it’s sticking up for each other. It takes all that stuff and that’s what gets you in.”

The victory improved Winnipeg’s record to 30-29-12, bringing the club to 72 points on the season. That’s five points back of the Nashville Predators (77 points), who occupy the second and final wild-card playoff spot in the Western Conference.

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11744717/winnipeg-jets-keep-faint-playoff-hopes-alive-with-4-1-win-over-golden-knights/>

Winnipeg Jets keep faint playoff hopes alive with 4-1 win over Golden Knights

By Christian Aumell & Russ Hobson Global News

They didn’t get the help they needed on the out-of-town scoreboard, but the Winnipeg Jets took care of their own business Tuesday night as they fight to stay alive in the playoff hunt.

For just the second time in their last 11 regular season meetings, the Jets were able to conquer the Vegas Golden Knights, beating them 4-1 at Canada Life Centre.

The Jets didn’t even muster a single shot on net for almost 10 minutes to start the game, but they completely flipped the script, scoring the first three goals en route to their second straight win to start the homestand.

“They hemmed us in early,” said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. “There was a lot more shots from the outside. I mean, what was it eight-nine-nothing or whatever, but there was a couple that were in front of Helly (Connor Hellebuyck). More of it was to the outside. I just think that then we kinda got ourselves going and got playing fast and we just kinda took over the game from that point.”

Vegas had won in their last five straight trips to the Manitoba capital.

The Jets now have at least a point in six of their last seven games.

Thanks to Nashville’s win over San Jose, however, Winnipeg remains five points out of a playoff spot with 11 games left to play.

Mark Scheifele had his fourth career Gordie Howe hat trick. After recording a pair of assists, Scheifele scored the empty netter and also had a fight with Oakbank’s Brett Howden in the second period after Howden levelled Kyle Connor.

“Just the thing to do,” said Scheifele. “That’s my boy. Just the game of hockey. That’s my guy. I didn’t like the hit, so, it happens.

"I'm a terrible fighter. I think I did catch him with a left though, so, I don't think anyone was expecting me to throw a left tonight. But, yeah, I don't know how I have as many Gordie Howe hat tricks as I do."

Connor, Cole Perfetti, and Alex Iafallo also scored for Winnipeg in the win.

"Really after the first period, I thought we just closed down their rush game and their O-zone time," Perfetti said. "They're obviously a team that likes to make a lot of plays and they're very talented in that area. And I thought in the second and third period we closed on them quick, didn't give them much, and they were still trying to make plays, and I thought we found our offence from that."

Vegas has scored just five goals in their last five games with four of them being losses.

The Golden Knights got off to the better start, registering nine shots on goal over the first nine plus minutes before Winnipeg managed to generate any.

The Jets got the game's first power play when Nic Dowd was called for a pretty weak interference penalty and did get one shot on goal but never really threatened to score.

Winnipeg broke the ice with 2:35 to go in the period thanks to several of their star players. Scheifele tracked down a loose puck in the corner in the Vegas end and took a hit to make a play, sending the puck back to Josh Morrissey at the left point.

Morrissey made a nice move to elude a Golden Knight before skating down the boards. He then spotted Connor open at the opposite faceoff dot, so he slung a perfect pass across the ice that Connor one-timed top-corner past Adin Hill for his 32nd of the season.

Winnipeg maintained that slim lead heading to the second, despite being outshot 13-5 in the opening 20 minutes.

The top line struck again just 2:08 into the second. Shea Theodore had the puck behind his own net and sent the puck to the point, but no Golden Knight was nearby, allowing Scheifele to intercept it. He sent a pass to Alex Iafallo at the opposite faceoff dot and Iafallo wristed a shot past Hill to make it 2-0 with his 12th of the season.

Less than two minutes later, the Jets made it 3-0.

Dylan DeMelo sent the puck up the boards from his own end as several members of the Golden Knights went for a line change. Brayden McNabb whiffed on the puck as he skated onto it, allowing Gabriel Vilardi to pick it up and carry it into the Vegas zone on a 2-on-1 with Perfetti.

Vilardi held it for as long as he could as he approached the net before saucing the puck over a sliding Theodore right to the stick of Perfetti, who steered it in for his 10th of the season.

The Golden Knights got their first power play of the night with 11:06 left in the second because Iafallo was called for roughing and Vegas took advantage. Rasmus Andersson got the puck near the faceoff dot and sent a pass to the crease that went off the skate of Colton Sissons and through the legs of Connor Hellebuyck.

Less than two minutes later, Neal Pionk was given a questionable tripping penalty but with 42 seconds left in the minor, Sissons was handed a penalty for hooking.

The teams would eventually get back to 5-on-5 but not for long before Noah Hanifin went to the box for tripping. Winnipeg would not convert on the power play.

In the final minute of the period, Howden caught Connor with a hard but legal hit, and Scheifele immediately took exception. He skated over to Howden and shoved him a few times before the two dropped the gloves.

The score would stay 3-1 in Winnipeg's favour heading to the third after the Jets outshot Vegas 9-8 in the middle frame.

Vegas was only able to generate one shot over the first 11 minutes of the third before putting Winnipeg on their fourth power play of the night but for the fourth time, the Jets failed to convert and to make matters worse, after Cole Smith came out of the box and skated down the ice for the puck, he was cross-checked into the boards by Elias Salomonsson to give Vegas a power play with 7:04 remaining.

Winnipeg got the kill but with 4:18 to go, Dylan Samberg was given a high-sticking penalty and Vegas decided to pull Hill to make it a 6-on-4. The Jets killed it off before Scheifele scored into the empty net with 1:18 left to seal the deal with his 32nd of the season.

Hellebuyck stopped 26 shots to earn the win, just his seventh in his last 21 starts.

The Jets will be back in action Thursday night against Colorado. Pregame coverage on 680 CJOB begins just after 5 p.m. with the puck dropping shortly after 7 p.m.

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/7143875/2026/03/25/winnipeg-jets-opening-night-lineup-salomonsson-draft-offseason/>

Projecting the Winnipeg Jets' 2026-27 opening night lineup: How do they bounce back?

By Murat Ates

Last season's top regular-season team absorbed offseason losses of Nikolaj Ehlers and Brandon Tanev, made free-agent bets on Jonathan Toews and Gustav Nyquist, and are on track to miss the playoffs entirely in 2026.

It took substandard seasons from several core players, special-teams regression, surgery to Connor Hellebuyck, and injuries to secondary options like Cole Perfetti and Dylan Samberg and depth like Nino Niederreiter and Vladislav Namestnikov. It took coaching stubbornness — 71 games into the season, we still don't know if star scorers Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor are good enough to drive two separate scoring lines — and more minutes than ideal to players like Toews, Nyquist and Luke Schenn for much of the season.

It also took uniquely horrible moments, with points set on fire via leads given up late in multiple games plus a record of six wins and 12 losses in shootouts and overtime. But Winnipeg's

players are still in the fight — and in Scheifele’s case, still picking up Gordie Howe hat tricks — and management is making plans to go at it again next season.

How will Winnipeg try to bounce back? Which players will the Jets hold on to, and which may have to set sail? Will top prospects play a role, now that 21-year-old Elias Salomonsson is playing a key role and Brad Lambert and Isak Rosén are getting NHL minutes down the stretch?

Today, we sort through Winnipeg’s contracts for next season, its next wave of players and its established veterans — while keeping one eye on the 2026 draft — to project next season’s Jets roster. Will it be good enough to get back to the Stanley Cup playoffs?

Forwards

Kyle Connor

\$12 million

2034

Mark Scheifele

\$8.5 million

2031

Gabriel Vilardi

\$7.5 million

2031

Adam Lowry

\$5 million

2031

Cole Perfetti

RFA

2028

Nino Niederreiter

\$4 million

2027

Alex Lafallo

\$3.67 million

2028

Vladislav Namestnikov

\$3 million

2027

Morgan Barron

\$1.85 million

2027

Isak Rosen

RFA

2030

Brad Lambert

\$1.1 million

2031

Jonathan Toews

UFA

2026

Cole Koepke

UFA

2026

Roster locks: Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor, Gabriel Vilardi, Adam Lowry, Cole Perfetti (RFA), Morgan Barron, Nino Niederreiter, Alex Iafallo, Vladislav Namestnikov, Isak Rosén (RFA)
Vying for spots: Brad Lambert, Brayden Yager, Nikita Chibrikov, Danny Zhilkin, Colby Barlow, David Gustafsson, Parker Ford, Jaret Anderson-Dolan
Plausible UFA signings: Jonathan Toews, Cole Koepke

Brad Lambert's late-season performance has catapulted him back into NHL relevancy. He's scored four points in 10 Jets games in 2026, exceeding his point-per-game rate in 34 AHL games this season, and for that reason I'm certain that some observers will want more than "vying for a spot" from me here.

I'm going to need to see Lambert produce at this level for an extended period of time before adding him to the surefire NHL list heading into next year. His goal was a great shot and he picked up primary assists on Barron's net-driving bounce against the Pittsburgh Penguins and Haydn Fleury's goal against the Boston Bruins. He's making progress, using his speed to contribute to rush attacks with Barron and Rosén.

But Lambert won't need waivers next season. I continue to worry about his ability to get to the middle of the ice against NHL defenders, and Winnipeg has a habit of leaving waivers-exempt players in the AHL as long as possible. I want to see him get to centre slot with regularity, whether that means going to the net during in-zone offence or using his speed to go outside-in on the rush. Too often, Lambert takes on a defender by going outside and staying there — without threatening an inside cut — and it's costing him offence. I'm staying patient, even if I think he can — and likely will — win his NHL job at camp. If his courage to drive the middle and crash the net against Jeremy Lauzon on Tuesday is the starting point, then Lambert could be back on track.

There are few other controversies here.

Lambert would be the 11th forward if he makes it. Nikita Chibrikov is losing momentum for me as a prospect, but he loses his waivers exemption next season; he could be an option as a 12th forward. There remains the possibility, though, of signing a veteran UFA. Jonathan Toews is in a category of his own in that if he wants to come back, you can be sure Winnipeg will make room. It makes little sense to pitch Gustav Nyquist on a reunion, but Cole Koepke's speed and grit could make him the ideal fourth-line wing — especially if Winnipeg decides Chibrikov still isn't ready.

Winnipeg will hope Scheifele and Connor maintain their level, Lowry uses a healthy offseason to find his best form, and Perfetti makes a big step while Vilardi continues to find ways to score on or off the top line. It will also be an important season for Rosén to seize a middle-six job and prove he can score in the NHL when given the opportunity. I think he's a step ahead of Lambert in that regard, although Lambert has outscored him in the NHL thus far in their careers.

It is good news for Winnipeg that we can debate the progress of 2003-born players at all; Perfetti, a 2002-born player, was Winnipeg's youngest for too long. And speaking of youth, I think 2026-27 would be a great year for 2005-born players Yager and Barlow to make star turns in the AHL; Zhilkin (2003) is threatening to steal their status as "next man up" among Winnipeg's prospects.

Unless, of course, the draft lottery works out such that Winnipeg drafts Gavin McKenna.

The NHL draft might be the Jets' best shot at acquiring a truly high-end player this offseason. But which one?

Defence

Neal Pionk

\$7 million

2031

Josh Morrissey

\$6.25 million

2028

Dylan Samberg

\$5.75 million

2028

Dylan DeMelo

\$4.9 million

2028

Haydn Fleury

\$950K

2027

Elias Salomonsson

\$895K

2032

Colin Miller

UFA

2026

Jacob Bryson

UFA

2026

Ville Heinola

UFA

2026

Roster locks: Josh Morrissey, Neal Pionk, Dylan Samberg, Dylan DeMelo, Elias Salomonsson

Vying for spots: Haydn Fleury, Alfons Freij, Isaak Phillips, Tyrel Bauer

Plausible UFA signings: Logan Stanley, Colin Miller, Jacob Bryson

Plausible ELC signings: Keaton Verhoeff, Carson Carels, Chase Reid or Alberts Smits

Notice that Pionk's return to health has not meant a third-pairing demotion for Salomonsson, who continues to take on tough competition with Samberg on Winnipeg's second pair — and the results have been excellent.

Salomonsson has made a smooth transition to the NHL, making fast decisions with the puck and playing a fast, aggressive game in all three zones. He's on his toes at the offensive blue line, looking for opportunities to attack. He's aggressive with his defensive gap and it works because he skates well and turns quickly. There are mistakes, too, like when Salomonsson makes a puck retrieval and turns into traffic as opposed to towards soft ice — and he'll need to keep getting stronger to excel in the shutdown role he'll play for a long time if all goes well.

But Winnipeg is counting on Salomonsson to play a vital role during the most important stretch of its season. He's a 2026-27 lock. There's even a world in which the Jets run him with Morrissey on the top pair, reuniting Minnesotans Samberg and Pionk on their second pairing, and letting the chips fall where they may with DeMelo playing a depth role.

DeMelo was a smart addition back in 2020 and the Jets eventually learned that he was a massive upgrade over Tucker Poolman and other, lesser options on their top pair with Morrissey. He's spent several seasons since that time delivering exceptional results, with Morrissey crediting DeMelo for being smart, consistent and reliable, such that Morrissey can attack up ice. That consistency has flagged in recent seasons, though, and back-to-back rush plays wherein DeMelo got beaten in open ice against Pittsburgh led to his benching for part of that game. He's a virtual lock to excel playing easier minutes on Winnipeg's third pair but his top-pair days appear to be over.

So who plays with him?

Fleury is the easiest answer, given he is the only other veteran under contract. He may not be the best one — or the one Winnipeg ultimately decides upon, given Kevin Cheveldayoff going out of his way on trade deadline day to share he's open to signing Logan Stanley as a UFA. Either way, it appears the Jets have four top-four defencemen, but that requires Pionk to maintain good health and peak performance.

If you believe in Salomonsson to continue delivering results, as I do, there's a lot to like about the Jets' top five — even acknowledging that Winnipeg gives up star power on D to previous Cup champions.

Please take the ELC note about top draft-eligible defencemen semi-seriously. It would not be Winnipeg's style to sign and promote someone so quickly, nor is there a Matthew Schaefer-quality defenceman in this draft. Choosing, say, Carson Carels and playing him with DeMelo on Winnipeg's third pair would not automatically be the best thing for his long-term development. The Jets project to have a great draft pick and there are several excellent defencemen available, so it's worth talking about. That said, it might be worth holding off on adding Keaton Verhoeff to your fantasy version of the team until 2027-28.

Expect Heinola to try his luck elsewhere, while Miller has re-signed in Winnipeg once before and could do it again. I'm not yet sure what the future holds for newcomer Bryson.

Goaltending

Connor Hellebuyck

\$8.5 million

2031

Eric Comrie

UFA

2026

Roster locks: Connor Hellebuyck

Vying for spots: Thomas Milic, Dom DiVincentiis

Plausible UFA signings: Eric Comrie

None of this works without Hellebuyck at his best. You've seen what happens without that (consider: Hellebuyck is a sub-.900 goaltender this season) and you've seen what happens without him at all (Comrie struggled badly during Hellebuyck's month-long absence for knee surgery).

There are several reasons to anticipate Hellebuyck returning to form. Winnipeg has given up a lot defensively this season, to the point he still grades out as an above-average goaltender if

you look at goals saved above expected (GSAX). You saw Hellebuyck (and his post) steal a gold medal from Canada's outstretched hands, playing behind an American defence that is superior to what he enjoys in Winnipeg. But there is just enough wobble in the defending Hart Trophy winner's season to warrant pause. He turns 33 this May and even if you rate him as the world's best or close to it, it probably doesn't make sense to assume he'll play over 60 Hart Trophy-caliber games every season from here on out.

Winnipeg must therefore sign a backup it trusts. I believe that backup is named Eric Comrie, while top prospects Thomas Milic and Dom DiVincenzi continue their AHL timeshare. The signing will warrant extra scrutiny this season, even if you believe (as I do) that Salomonsson's presence (and Luke Schenn's absence) will help the Jets defend better next season than what we've seen this year.

Projected opening-night roster

The following Jets roster would carry a cap hit of \$81.4 million.

This doesn't include Perfetti and Rosen's RFA contracts, nor does it include a 13th forward, seventh defenceman or backup goaltender. Cap space won't be an issue, though. Winnipeg would have \$22.5 million to work with to complete the roster.

Re-signing Toews, Koepke, Stanley, Bryson, or whomever won't be a matter of cap space so much as a matter of budget, priorities and Winnipeg's best guess at winning hockey. Not all of its UFA bets paid off last summer. That's part of why we're talking about 2026-27 in March, but the Jets will likely need to go back to free agency in search of next year's solutions.

If you're a young player in the Jets organization today, it's time for you to stand out.

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/vilardi-lifts-jets-past-rangers-in-shootout-spoil-garands-nhl-debut/>

Howe do you like that?

Scheifele leads Jets to victory over Golden Knights with one goal, two assists — and a fight

By: Ken Wiebe

It turns out Kyle Connor was right: the Winnipeg Jets were due for a rare victory over the Vegas Golden Knights.

When the Jets sniper was informed after the morning skate that the Jets had one win in the past 10 meetings with the Golden Knights, Connor was caught by surprise.

"That is a tough record," Connor said. "I didn't know that. It sounds like we are due for (a win)."

He also noted it wasn't something the Jets were concerning themselves with or putting much stock into.

Connor did his part to ensure the Jets turned the tables, supplying his 32nd goal of the season on a blistering one-timer after a perfect cross-ice feed from Josh Morrissey and adding an assist.

The Jets' top line of Mark Scheifele (one goal, two assists), Alex Lafallo (one goal) and Connor (one goal, one assist) combined for three goals and six points in the 4-1 win, in a game they had to have to keep their slim playoff hopes alive.

"We've been pushing our hardest since the (Olympic) break," said Scheifele, who secured a Gordie Howe hat trick after dropping the gloves with Oakbank product Brett Howden late in the second period and added an empty-net goal with 78 seconds left. "That was a great team game. We've got to look at that one and understand how important it is to play like that."

Howden caught Connor with a hard hit that Scheifele took exception to.

It was the 10th fight of Scheifele's career according to hockeyfights.com and his fourth Gordie Howe hat trick.

Jets captain Adam Lowry led the parade of players banging their sticks on the boards in appreciation when Scheifele came out of the penalty box after a stoppage in play.

"Just the thing to do," said Scheifele, whose three-point outing moved him to 86 points for the season, one shy of his 2024-25 career-high. "Just the game of hockey. That's my guy. I didn't like the hit, so it happens.

"It's kind of the way you get taught coming into the league. That's the way you take care of each other. It's a brotherhood in here. I don't like when (Connor) gets hit. Plain and simple."

How did Scheifele feel like he fared in the fight?

"I'm a terrible fighter," he said. "I think I did catch him with a left though. I don't think anyone was expecting me to throw a left. I don't know how I have as many Gordie Howe hat tricks as I do."

The selfless act by Scheifele was recognized by teammates and the coaching staff.

"Obviously, you don't want a guy like Scheif fighting very often. But when the opportunity presents itself like that, I mean, he's obviously not afraid to jump in and that shows a lot about him and our team and our culture," said Jets forward Cole Perfetti. "And we're all in this together. We're sticking with it. We're a team. We're a family in here. No matter the score, the outcome, where we are in the standings, whatever it is, we're going to be in this fight together. And I think when one of your best players does that, it really shows that."

The Jets, who improved to 30-29-12, are back in action Thursday against the league-leading Colorado Avalanche.

Although the Jets were able to leapfrog the San Jose Sharks in the Western Conference standings, they remain five points behind the Nashville Predators in the chase for the second wild card berth with 11 games left in the regular season.

"You don't ever really want to get off to slow starts. We've had a few this year," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. "We just kept playing our game. It's hard to explain why and how. We just

got on our toes and got going. All of a sudden, it tilted and we had all of the momentum going our way.”

Let’s take a closer look at what transpired in this one:

The start

After Eric Comrie won his sixth consecutive start on Sunday, Arniel left the door open for the Jets backup to get some additional work during the final 12 games of the regular season.

But he didn’t waver in his decision to go right back to clear-cut No. 1 Connor Hellebuyck on Tuesday night.

“How did I land on Helly? He’s a pretty good goalie,” Arniel said after the morning skate. “We’re going against Vegas, a pretty good team. (Comrie) will have an opportunity down the road here.”

With the Jets preparing for a pair of games against the Colorado Avalanche, the expectation is Hellebuyck will be between the pipes for both of those contests, which would move him to 50 starts for the season — an impressive number when you consider he missed a month after undergoing arthroscopic knee surgery.

With 26 saves on Tuesday, Hellebuyck raised his save percentage to .898 and lower his goals-against average to 2.81 through 48 starts.

The dish

The Jets extended their lead to 3-0 by scoring in transition on an odd-man rush.

Gabe Vilardi supplied a slippery saucer pass over a sliding Shea Theodore to Perfetti.

It was Perfetti’s 10th goal of the season, giving him double digits for a third consecutive season.

Although things started slowly for Perfetti, he’s found a way to get things turned around and has been rolling since the start of the calendar year, chipping in seven goals, 13 assists and 20 points in 32 games.

That’s much closer to the expected level of production before he suffered a high ankle sprain late in the exhibition season.

The key play

Scheifele took advantage of a turnover by Shea Theodore and find a seam to hit lafallo with a pass for the game-winning goal at 2:08 of the second period.

THE THREE STARS

Mark Scheifele: One goal, two assists and a fight for the Gordie Howe hat trick.

Connor Hellebuyck: 26 saves for his 18th win of the season.

Kyle Connor: One goal, one assist.

Extra, extra

The Jets killed off three of four minor penalties, including two late in the third period, to preserve the victory. They were zero-for-four with the man-advantage.

Colton Sissons scored the lone goal for the Golden Knights, who remain in the thick of the chase for top spot in the Pacific Division.

The Jets healthy scratches were defencemen Jacob Bryson and Ville Heinola.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/03/24/the-kids-are-alright-4>

***The kids are all right
Jets' Lambert, Rosen, Salomonsson making strides***

By: Ken Wiebe

The youngsters on the Winnipeg Jets lineup continue to impress.

Although he was held off the scoresheet in Sunday's shootout win over the New York Rangers, Jets forward Brad Lambert has increased his production of late (four points in five games heading into Tuesday's clash with the Vegas Golden Knights).

As important, he's beginning to take on more responsibility away from the puck on a line with Morgan Barron and Isak Rosen.

"He's been playing a more direct game," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel.

"When he gets the puck, he's heading north. Even if he doesn't have the puck, he's using his speed. We saw it in all three (road) games, where he either split the D and somebody advanced the puck to him that way. There were times where he got the puck and he drove down the walls and got it down deep and made the next play from there, compared to going east-west and holding onto it and getting inside the blue line and turning it over there.

"He's playing a faster game and then, on the other side of it, lots of responsibility when he doesn't have the puck. I think he's really recognizing that he has a role to play to get the puck back. His defending has certainly been a lot better."

Tuesday's game will be Lambert's 14th this season and there's plenty of runway remaining for the speedy forward to show that he's ready for a middle-six role next season.

For a team that wants to play faster and find some complementary scoring, Lambert is someone in the organization with the potential to supply both of those things.

The same can be said for Rosen, who has one goal in nine games going into Tuesday's action since the Jets acquired him in a trade from the Buffalo Sabres.

"It seems like this time around (Lambert) has just got a different feel about him," said Jets left-winger Kyle Connor, when asked for what he's seen from Lambert and Rosen.

"He is playing with a lot of speed and that is his best asset and it is great to see him use it, making plays. Obviously, I am more familiar with his game than Rosen, but Rosen has fit in seamlessly. (He's the) type of player that can play anywhere in the lineup and do whatever is asked of him. He can make plays and he is really smart in the offensive zone."

DeMelo not bitter over benching

Dylan DeMelo either wasn't ready to peel back the onion — or perhaps the memory of being benched for nearly a full period on the weekend was something he didn't care to review in great detail on a game day in the heat of a playoff race.

The defenceman gave a direct and straightforward response when asked about riding the pine for roughly 18 minutes to start Saturday's shootout loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins.

"Just trying to bury it, move on and just try to get back and play my game," DeMelo said after the morning skate and before the Jets faced the Vegas on Tuesday. "The focus was just bury it, move on."

That's good advice and — to DeMelo's credit — he did an excellent job of stabilizing his game after being limited to 37 seconds in the first frame, including watching the puck go into the back of the Jets' net twice during those two shifts.

It's not easy to come back after an extended absence to take a regular shift, but DeMelo responded by getting back to playing efficient hockey after he was moved to the third pairing with Haydn Fleury for most of his remaining shifts at even strength.

DeMelo was also on the ice to kill off an important minor penalty in overtime.

What was the conversation after the first period between Arniel and DeMelo like?

"He knew. I just talked to him briefly. I just told him that I need more," said Arniel. "I thought that for the next five periods — actually (add) a couple of overtimes in there — I thought he was one of our best defencemen. He responded the way that I hoped he would respond."

DeMelo has provided a lot of important minutes for the Jets since his arrival in a trade with the Ottawa Senators back in 2020, so this drastic measure wasn't something Arniel did with a cavalier attitude.

With Neal Pionk just back from injury, he knew he was going to need to lean on DeMelo in the second period and beyond and the message sent was clearly received.

DeMelo is set to start Tuesday's game on the third pairing with Fleury, though that has more to do with providing some additional balance to the defence corps on the whole and is a testament to the strong play rookie blue-liner Elias Salomonsson has provided while skating alongside Dylan Samberg.

"He's (Salomonsson) been playing great no doubt about it. Each game he's getting more comfortable, kind of thrown into the fire in a top four role," said DeMelo. "He thinks the game very well. He moves very well. He's got good instincts. He stepped in, has done a fantastic job, and he's got a very, very bright future.

"He's going to be a player in this league for a long time, and it's been great to see him do that and continue to grow. Like I said, I think each game he's getting more confident, making plays with the puck, offence, things like that."

Injury updates

Forwards Nino Niederreiter and Vladislav Namestnikov, both of whom are dealing with lower body injuries, joined their teammates on the ice in yellow non-contact jerseys for the morning skate on Tuesday, but there is still no timetable for a potential return.

Niederreiter has been out since the Olympic break after undergoing surgery, while Namestnikov was injured against the Anaheim Ducks on Feb. 27.

“That’s the first time I saw them (lately). So, I just introduced myself,” Arniel joked. “I don’t even know where it’s at. They’re in conditioning (mode) now. Obviously, to have them out there is great. I have no idea if that’s a week or two weeks or where we’re at.”

As for Colin Miller, Arniel said the veteran defenceman suffered a setback as he recovers from a knee injury. Miller hasn’t played since getting tangled up along the boards in a game against the New Jersey Devils on Jan. 11.

Winnipeg Sun

https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/scheifele-s-gordie-howe-hat-trick-propels-jets-over-vegas/article_ba89925e-4a9c-4588-ab8a-67c40b006d66.html

Scheifele’s Gordie Howe hat-trick propels Jets over Vegas

By Gordon Anderson

The Jets top centreman let the puck do the walking and his fists do the talking.

“I am a terrible fighter,” Mark Scheifele said. “I did catch him with a left, so I don’t think anyone was expecting me to throw a left tonight. I don’t even know what to say.”

Scheifele posted a Gordie Howe hat-trick with a goal, an assist and a fight as the Jets beat the Vegas Golden Knights 4-1 on Tuesday night.

The Kitchener, Ont., native dropped the mitts with Golden Knights centreman and Oakbank native Brett Howden at 19:01 of the second period because he didn’t care for Howden’s hit on Connor.

“(Connor) is my boy and I don’t like it when he gets hit, plain and simple,” he said

Cole Perfetti termed the hit a ‘run’ at Connor.

“Scheifele is not afraid to jump in, and that shows a lot about him and our team and our culture,” Perfetti said.

Scheifele earned an assist on Alex Iafallo’s second-period goal and finished the scoring with an empty-net goal at 18:42 of the third period. Scheifele was last involved in a fight with Aaron Ekblad of the Florida Panthers on Nov. 16, 2024.

“They care for each other (and) they stick up for each other,” head coach Scott Arniel said. “So, good for him. I’m glad he didn’t get hurt, but at the end of the day, (that’s) really what those guys expect from each other.”

The #55 wearing blue and white was voted the game's first star for his performance.

Scheifele says he has now been involved in four or these Mr. Howe hijinks. Fighting isn't part of his lexicon and for good reason.

"I don't have much technique at all, but it is the fire in you and usually it is about four seconds and (then) falling over," Scheifele said. "It lasted a little longer than I would have liked."

All light-hearted banter aside, the victory also allowed the Jets to remain viable in the post-season race as the Nashville Predators won their fifth in a row, with a 6-3 win over the San Jose Sharks on Tuesday night.

The locals will remain five points behind the Predators for the second wildcard in the Western Conference. Both the Seattle Kraken and the Los Angeles Kings lost in a shootout.

Winnipeg is 5-3-2 in its last 10 games.

"We have been pushing since the break, pushing our hardest every day and all we can do is control what we can control and tonight we played a great game, and it showed throughout," Scheifele said.

Perfetti also scored for the Jets (30-29-12). Connor Hellebuyck (18-19-11) stopped 26 of 27 shots to earn the victory.

Colton Scissons scored for Vegas (32-26-14). Adin Hill (9-9-3) stopped 17 of 20 shots in defeat.

The Jets entertain the Colorado Avalanche Thursday night before they head out on a four-game road trip. The trip starts Saturday night in Denver against the Avalanche.

Ice Chips

Vlad Namestnikov, Jacob Bryson and Ville Heinola were scratched.

A winner?

Morgan Barron hit the 300-games mark in a Jets uniform on Tuesday night.

Barron has 40 goals and 41 assists in his time with the Jets. Perhaps the numbers alone aren't interesting enough, but the trade for Barron seems to have worked out better for Winnipeg than it did for the New York Rangers when the deal was announced on March 22, 2022.

The Jets acquired Barron, two conditional second-round picks and a fifth-round pick in the 2023 NHL draft in exchange for Andrew Copp and a sixth-round pick in the 2023 draft. Copp scored 10 goals and added eight assists in 16 regular-season games and six goals and eight assists in 20 playoff games before signing a five-year contract with the Detroit Red Wings in July of 2022.

Finally

With the victory over the Golden Knights, the Jets pushed themselves above .500.

A loss to the St. Louis Blues on Dec. 17 dropped their record to 15-16-2. On March 7, the Jets finally reached the .500 mark at 26-26-10 after a win over the Vancouver Canucks. Before Tuesday's win, they had failed in three previous occasions to jump over .500, but lost to the

Anaheim Ducks on March 10, lost in a shootout to the Nashville Predators on March 17 and lost to the Boston Bruins on March 19.

Double digit club adds one

Scheifele, Connor, Gabe Vilardi, Josh Morrissey, Barron and Lafallo in the double-digit goal club. Johnathan Toews is next on the list with nine goals. Among players currently on the active roster with an outside chance to reach 10 goals are Cole Koepke (6) and Adam Lowry (5).

https://www.winnipegssun.com/sports/pionk-s-presence-is-helping-the-jets-in-a-playoff-push/article_1fe58801-9784-473a-8ccc-aa5257efacaa.html

Pionk's presence is helping the Jets in a playoff push

By Gordon Anderson

Perhaps he returned in time, maybe it's just a little bit too late as the Jets push for the playoffs, finally with Neal Pionk in the fold.

"We need all hands-on deck coming through the stretch run, especially on our back end," Jets head coach Scott Arniel said on Tuesday morning. "Having Pionk back certainly solidifies our top 4. It helps with our power play, it helps with our penalty kill and those are the minutes that he kind of eats up."

The Jets defender made his regular return to the lineup over the weekend as the Jets picked up three of four points in an shootout loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins on Saturday and a shootout win over the New York Rangers on Sunday.

Pionk scored a third-period goal, his third of the season at 4:04 of the third period in the 5-4 loss to the Penguins.

"He has that offensive ability that can create so much, and it is great to have him back that right shot there, and he elevates everybody's game to the next level," Jets winger Kyle Connor said. Pionk has chipped in with six assists in 42 games played.

Pionk logged 25:27 of ice time against the Rangers. He skated for 2:49 on the powerplay and 1:25 on the penalty kill. He was a plus-1 and credited with five shots.

On Saturday against the Pens, he was on the ice for 22:30 in all situations. He skated for 50 seconds on the powerplay and 1:59 on the penalty kill. He was a plus-one and credited with two shots.

"You saw that immediate impact when he was thrown into the Pittsburgh game, and that is tough to do, thrown into a back-to-back coming back from injury," Connor said. "The pace was there and he was impactful physically, throwing his body around."

The Omaha, Neb., native missed 23 games with a non-specified lower-body injury. His last game was Jan. 13 against the New York Islanders. He was later placed on injured reserve retroactive to Jan. 13. The 30-year-old was listed week-to-week at the time.

"I (originally) thought that maybe it was going to be the Sunday game against the Rangers (for Pionk's return), but he was pretty adamant that he wanted to be in the Pittsburgh game and was

hoping that he was going to hold up,” Arniel said. “He really helped us. He stepped in and played like Neal Pionk can play for us. It was big to have him, and it helped us get three of four points.”

Pionk returned to action in a non-contact jersey when the Jets began practicing on Feb. 17. He was on track to make his return for the three-game road trip out of the Olympic break but reinjured himself in a practice before the team departed for the Vancouver game on Feb. 24.

“I lost count which injury it was,” Pionk said in a previous interview. “It’s been a wild year in that sense. But, yeah, it was a completely different injury. I just injured in practice before the Vancouver game. It was frustrating, for sure, but glad I’m back now.”

Injury updates

Nino Niederreiter and Vlad Namestnikov returned to practice on Tuesday, albeit both players in the non-contact yellow jersey.

Niederreiter hasn’t played an NHL game since the Feb. 4 contest against the Montreal Canadiens. The Swiss winger had arthroscopic knee surgery when he returned from the Olympics. The expected timeline was four to six weeks. Arniel confirmed the knee procedure on March 1. Namestnikov left the game against the Anaheim Ducks on March 10 after colliding with Adam Lowry.

“That’s the first time I saw them (since the injuries),” Arniel said. “So, I just introduced myself this morning. I don’t even know where it’s at. They’re in conditioning (mode) now. Obviously, having them out there is great. I have no idea if that’s a week or two weeks or where we’re at (for their potential return).”

According to PuckPedia, Namestnikov is in the first year of a two-year deal he signed on Feb. 22 of last year. Niederreiter is in year two of a three-year deal he signed in December of 2023. Both players will be UFAs when their current contracts expire.

Colin Miller’s status for the remainder of the season is also in doubt. Miller’s last game was Jan. 11 against the New Jersey Devils.

“Miller is still rehabbing,” the coach said. “He had a setback. He’s not on the ice.”

The 33-year-old Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., native is in the final year of a two-year deal he signed on July 1, 2024. He will be a UFA at the end of his deal.