

## **Winnipeg Free Press**

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/10/14/jets-toews-already-making-an-impact>

### ***Jets' Toews already making an impact Club's centre showed glimpse of potential in Monday win***

By: Ken Wiebe

PHILADELPHIA — The signposts have been there for all to see.

With each passing day in this remarkable return to NHL action, Jonathan Toews is piling up small victories.

Although it's still very early in the process, Toews is already well past the point of wondering what he's gotten himself into — or if he's up to the task.

Any concerns about where two-and-a-half years away from the sport he loves for health reasons might leave him are being alleviated.

Does that mean the Winnipeg Jets centre is already up to full speed just three games into the NHL season?

Absolutely not, but the latest example of his value to his new team showed up in Monday's 5-2 victory over the New York Islanders.

The Jets took Tuesday off and will be back in action on Thursday night against the Philadelphia Flyers.

The secondary assist on Nino Niederreiter's power-play marker was merely a reward for the hard work Toews has been putting in on and off the ice.

On the play itself, Toews showed his veteran savvy, lifting the stick of Islanders defenceman Adam Pelech at the side of the net before getting the puck over to Gustav Nyquist.

By winning that individual battle, it allowed Nyquist the time required to find Niederreiter alone on the backdoor, leading to a shot that caromed in off Ilya Sorokin, giving the Jets a 2-0 advantage just past the midway point of the first period.

When Toews was reminded that it was his first NHL point since Apr. 14 of 2023, he smiled briefly and took some time to recognize the significance of the moment while not overstating it.

"I guess when you put it that way, it's nice to get the monkey off your back," said Toews. "Hopefully find a way to get that first goal here, too. Ultimately, you just concentrate on making plays, getting around the net, being more confident when the puck comes to you in those dangerous areas. It's a numbers game. Just got to keep creating and find ways to find the back of the net."

That creativity has been on display throughout the first three games of Toews' second act, especially on the power play, where his spatial awareness and vision has allowed him to put the puck in positions for his teammates to create lanes to attack.

For a team looking to be better in the face-off circle this season, Toews put on a clinic on Monday, winning 15 draws and losing only five for a 75 per cent efficiency rate.

That moved him to 33-for-53 on the season (62.3 per cent, which is even better than his 57.3 per cent career average).

Though the sample size is small, it's clear that Toews is going to have his number called to take important draws — just like he was on Monday, when the Jets were protecting a two-goal cushion before an empty-net goal from Mark Scheifele sealed things.

For all of those questions about whether or not Toews' body would allow him to handle the minutes and responsibilities of a second-line centre, the early returns have been solid.

In Monday's game, Toews actually played a season-high 19:51, which was nearly two minutes more than he played in the season opener.

He's averaging 17:45 of ice time and you get the sense that the Winnipegger is merely scratching the surface when it comes to all of the areas he can impact the game as he becomes more familiar with his new teammates.

Of course it's early and Toews has a long way to go to withstand the rigours of a full NHL season, but the challenge for Jets head coach Scott Arniel has been to not put too much on his plate too soon.

When you have a player like Toews at your disposal that has basically seen it all and done it all through the first 15 NHL seasons of his career, there's an undeniable pull for Arniel to tap the veteran centre on the shoulder and send him out for a big moment.

Whether that's protecting a lead, looking for the go-ahead marker or trying to get the tie game to overtime, Toews is going to be up for the challenge.

"He's recognizing just how to kind of play the game (again) with his hockey smarts. He's getting back up to speed," said Arniel. "He does veteran things. He does elite things, whether it's using his body or his stick or his positioning and you're just seeing him getting more and more comfortable: getting comfortable with our team and how we play but also his linemates and different people, as well."

With Cole Perfetti sidelined week-to-week with an ankle injury, there's probably some temptation for Arniel to promote Toews to the top power-play unit in the pop position in the high slot.

That job currently belongs to Alex Iafallo and he scored the first power-play goal of the season on Saturday against the Los Angeles Kings.

Toews has done that job in the past and could do it again, though it would likely mean raising his ice time a bit more.

For the time being, it's probably best to gradually ramp things up.

There are bound to be bumps in the road and Toews has admitted as much, but it's another part of the journey that is enjoyable for him.

Dealing with adversity and finding solutions is part of the job — and Toews' track record suggests he'll be ready to dissect things and make the necessary corrections.

"Still finding my way a little bit," said Toews, noting the adjustment to a new system has been progressing in. "It takes time to become second-nature. And then, you have to find your game, you've got to go out there and relax a little bit. The first couple games I felt like I was getting tired late in shifts, because you're just over-skating everything and over-working yourself. You'd rather be safe than sorry, and sometimes less is more."

The true measure of Toews' value will be even more evident when the stakes are higher and the games get tougher, though his play in the early going is already providing a glimpse of what is yet to come.

**Sportsnet.ca**

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/central-is-shaping-up-to-be-the-group-of-death/>

### ***Why Central Division is shaping up to be Group of Death***

By Ryan Dixon

Everybody knew entering the season the top end of the Central Division was loaded. A few games into the schedule, though, it's hard to spot a soft touch anywhere in the group.

Alternatively, it also feels like you can't swing a Sherwood without whacking one of the numerous superstars or burgeoning superstars in the division.

The Colorado Avalanche won 3-1 in Buffalo on a holiday Monday and don't have a 60-minute loss in four outings this season. The Winnipeg Jets do have one 'L,' but are also now 2-1-0 after a Monday victory on Long Island. The Dallas Stars, meanwhile, account for the only blemishes on both Winnipeg's and Colorado's records, as the Stars are 2-0-0 with road wins over their chief division rivals.

Minnesota and St. Louis — the fourth and fifth teams the Central sent to the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs last spring — both also got victories on Monday and have decent 2-1-0 starts going.

Those squads being good is nothing new. It's at the bottom of the division, though, where things might be tightening up. The Chicago Blackhawks and Nashville Predators not only finished in the Central's basement last season, they had the second- and third-worst goal differentials in the entire league (Chicago was No. 31 at minus-70 and Nashville was only slightly better, at minus-60).

Nashville spoiled Ottawa's home opener on Monday with a 4-1 win and the Preds, who certainly had some bounce-back potential after last season's miserable showing, are off to a 2-0-1 start. Meanwhile, in Monday's only all-Central affair, the young Blackhawks topped Utah 3-1. The victory marked Chicago's first 'W' of the season, but all three losses were by just a single goal. As for Utah, the Mammoth have played only Central rivals this year — all as the visitor — and

have a respectable 1-2-0 mark with a tight 2-1 loss in Colorado and a 3-2 OTW in Nashville in the mix.

Now glance at the top of the NHL scoring charts and ask yourself if anything but the Central could be called the league's "Group of Death." Colorado's Nathan MacKinnon and Martin Necas lead the way with eight points, followed closely by the seven both Kirill Kaprizov and Matt Boldy of the Wild have in one fewer contest. Right behind Minny's guys sits Mark Scheifele, who's just over here putting up 3-3-6 in three outings on his way to another boring point-per-game year as a six-foot-three centre. Scheifele's runningmate in Winnipeg, of course, is Kyle Connor, who has five points in three outings.

Truly, MacKinnon-Necas, Kaprizov-Boldy and Scheifele-Connor probably represent three of the best, what, half-dozen duos in the NHL? And we haven't even mentioned the reigning league MVP and back-to-back Vezina winner, Connor Hellebuyck, or last year's top defenceman, superfreak Cale Makar.

Last season, the best team after February's 4 Nations Face-Off was the Blues and their top centre, Robert Thomas, was the most productive player in the league to close out the year. On Monday, St. Louis freshman Jimmy Snuggerud popped his first two goals of the year to give himself three points on the season.

One of the biggest off-season trades involved Utah acquiring young sniper JJ Peterka from Buffalo and he's already on the board with a goal against the Blackhawks, the first of many he's going to net for the Mammoth. In Minnesota, Zeev Buium (more on him in a minute) is showing why he was such a heralded prospect, just as his fellow Wild defenceman Brock Faber was a very short time ago.

There may still be a long road back to contention in Chicago, but we're seeing early good signs from Connor Bedard, who has two goals, and a fantastic start for sophomore Frank Nazar, who has five points in as many outings with the Hawks.

With young studs and established megastars alike, the Central could be at the centre of NHL conversations for a long time to come.

#### *Long weekend takeaways*

- It's impossible not to be struck by the start Matthew Schaefer has had to his NHL career. The 2025 first-overall pick has picked up a point in each of his first three games, giving him a 1-2-3 line in his earliest days as an Islander. Perhaps more impressively, the defenceman who turned 18 barely a month ago is leading the team in ice time per game with an average of 23:18. In fact, Schaefer played over 26 minutes both on Saturday versus the Caps and Monday versus the Jets, and that's despite neither game going past three periods.

As it happens, Schaefer isn't the only rookie teenager looking like he belongs in the world's best league right now. Beckett Senneke, the third-overall selection in 2024, scored for the second time in as many games on Saturday during Anaheim's wild 7-6 overtime win in San Jose. The 19-year-old has been skating as a winger on the top line with Mason McTavish and Cutter Gauthier. A late bloomer in major junior, the six-foot-three Senneke has good size and loads of skill.

Meanwhile, Zeev Buium has been living up to the hype early on in Minnesota. The 19-year-old defenceman who dazzled in the NCAA the past couple years had three points in two weekend

games, netting his first NHL goal and assist in a 7-4 loss to Columbus on Saturday, before tacking on another helper in Monday's 4-3 shootout victory over the Kings.

- Though he had a career-best 31-goal season last season, Blue Jackets winger Kirill Marchenko closed the schedule by going nine games without a goal as Columbus made a push for the playoffs that ultimately came up short. Well, Marchenko isn't fooling around to start this season, netting a hat trick on Saturday in Minnesota, before chipping in another tally during Monday's 3-2 loss versus the Devils.

With four goals in the bank already, it's easy to wonder if this talented 25-year-old can push up toward 40 this year in Ohio.

#### *Red and white power rankings*

1. Edmonton Oilers (1-0-1) The Oilers get a tough test right out of the gate with seven of their next eight games on the road, beginning Tuesday night at Madison Square Garden versus the Rangers.

2. Winnipeg Jets (2-1-0) It was nice to see Jonathan Toews pick up his first point as a Jet — and first in the NHL since April 13, 2023 — with an assist on Nino Niederreiter's PPG on Long Island during a 5-2 triumph over the Isles.

3. Montreal Canadiens (2-1-0) The season began with an extension for Lane Hutson looking light a real long shot. Now, the Canadiens will play their home-opener Tuesday night knowing the dynamic, second-year defenceman will be in their midst — at a friendly \$8.85-million cap hit — for the next decade after he inked an eight-year contract on Monday.

4. Toronto Maple Leafs (1-2-0) Now that Easton Cowan has debuted in the NHL, it looks like the young man might get a good run beside Auston Matthews and Matthew Knies on the top line.

5. Ottawa Senators (1-2-0) There's obvious concern over the health of Brady Tkachuk after the Ottawa captain left Monday's home opener following a cross-check from behind at the hands of Preds captain Roman Josi.

6. Vancouver Canucks (1-2-0) Things only get tougher for the Canucks from here, with a five-game roadie beginning Thursday in Dallas.

7. Calgary Flames (1-2-0) It came in a loss, but Matt Coronato's two-goal game in Calgary's home opener on Saturday was a good sign the third-year NHLer is ready to build on last year's 24-goal showing.

#### *The week ahead*

- The NHL's Board of Governors meet Tuesday in New York.

On the ice, Nikita Kucherov could hit a lofty benchmark with a big night in D.C. The Bolts scoring whiz needs four points to hit 1,000 for his spectacular career. After that, he'll be only 137 behind Steven Stamkos for the all-time franchise lead.

Could you imagine if Alex Ovechkin potted goal No. 900 — he's three shy — on the same night his countryman hit 1,000 points?

- Two teams — the Sabres and Islanders — have played three games this season without earning a single point. Buffalo will try to change that on Wednesday when it hosts old friend Dylan Cozens and the Senators, while New York will try to get the better of the Oilers the next night on Long Island.

## **Global Winnipeg**

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11478841/analysis-winnipeg-jets-fourth-line-edmonds/>

### ***ANALYSIS: Extra consideration given to Jets' 4th line paying off so far***

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

When training camp began for the Winnipeg Jets about a month ago, the team was quite transparent about the reshaping of their fourth line and how they wanted it to play.

With a perpetual focus on defending first, head coach Scott Arniel also wanted more offence from that trio this season and the organization did its part in satisfying that desire by signing veterans Cole Koepke and Tanner Pearson to play alongside Morgan Barron.

Now — understanding we're only three games into the new NHL season and pumping the brakes on premature excitement would be prudent — the early returns from that line would indicate the Jets might have found an upgrade in their lineup.

Thus far, the fourth line has produced seven points in 180 minutes of hockey, with Barron pacing them with two goals and four points and Koepke leading the team in hits, despite missing the last two periods of Monday's win on Long Island.

For Winnipeg, the improved play and secondary scoring from Barron, Koepke and Pearson shouldn't be surprising. Early on, it's exactly what the team was after when it assembled the line in the summer and rolled it out at training camp.

It was especially important for the Jets to get better and deeper in that area because, frankly, the Florida Panthers revealed to the entire league that being four lines deep is a must in winning back-to-back Stanley Cups.

And it's clear the Jets have had their eye to that successful composition the last two years as well.

Now, of course, we're only three games into a new season and there is a winter of hockey still to play, but in reshaping their fourth line and witnessing the early results of that strategy, it's become quite transparent that Winnipeg's off-season plan might be coming together.