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<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/01/10/thats-one-now-keep-it-rolling>

That's one, now keep it rolling

First win after 11-game skid feels good, but Jets must 'build on what we just did,' says head coach

By: Mike McIntyre

It felt like a giant group therapy session, with both the Winnipeg Jets and their fans experiencing a cathartic release of pent-up angst Friday night as a 27-day, 11-game winless streak finally came to an end.

Folks were still basking in the afterglow a day later.

"Our crowd going crazy, singing and doing the wave. Everyone felt like, finally, this had ended," Jets head coach Scott Arniel said Saturday following his team's optional practice at Canada Life Centre.

"In a province, a community, a city like this there's a lot of blue-collar people and that's what they ask. I know that from being here for a long time. You work, you battle, you compete, you do those things and you'll get a good response from the fans here."

Now comes the next big test.

The Jets continue their five-game homestand Sunday afternoon, and they can't afford to get comfortable after one important — but ultimately meaningless — win if it isn't followed by more of the same. They remain last in the NHL standings at 16-22-5 and still have considerable ground to make up over the final 39 games.

"Let's just focus on the New Jersey Devils and build on what we just did," Arniel said of the message to his group.

"For me, it is just a big 200-pound weight that was on our shoulders that got lifted off. Now, let's go and be free. Let's be kids again and enjoy the moment. Do the same with structure, do the same things again with detail, go and compete and keep doing it that way and hopefully that win helped us a lot between the ears more than anywhere else."

The 22-20-2 Devils aren't exactly arriving on a high. They've dropped three straight games in regulation by a combined score of 16-2, with the lowlight a 9-0 pounding at the hands of the New York Islanders on Tuesday night.

There's also some off-ice intrigue, with top defenceman Dougie Hamilton expected to be a healthy scratch against the Jets. The veteran, who makes US\$9 million for two more seasons after this one, has been the subject of trade rumours that are sure to intensify.

As for the Jets, there was some potentially encouraging injury news Saturday. Defenceman Neal Pionk and forward Morgan Barron were among a handful of players to hit the ice after missing Friday's 5-1 win over the Los Angeles Kings with injuries suffered the night before against Edmonton.

Pionk (lower-body) was wearing a regular sweater, while Barron (upper-body) was in a yellow non-contact jersey.

"We'll see. We'll see how today went, for tomorrow," said Arniel. "Honestly, they'll wake up tomorrow and we'll have a better idea. Today I have no idea, we'll have to see how today plays into how they feel."

Defenceman Haydn Fleury, who suffered a broken nose and other upper-body injuries in Tuesday's loss to the Vegas Golden Knights, has not resumed skating at this point.

Connor Hellebuyck is expected to be back in net for the Jets after backup Eric Comrie stopped 23 of 24 shots against the Kings.

One player likely to remain in the lineup is rookie Danny Zhilkin, who has impressed in his first two NHL games. His line with Cole Koepke and Tanner Pearson has scored in both outings, and Arniel even trusted Zhilkin with penalty-kill duty Friday.

"He has got NHL speed. He can skate and he thinks the game real well," said Arniel.

"We talked about him when he first came up that was one of the things the coaches said, 'His hockey IQ is good,' and it's hard when kids jump in, especially their first game in the NHL, they jump in January and it is fast moving water and it can be (hard) for guys and I think he has handled it real well.

"I like that line. They have given us good minutes. To me it is what you hope you are going to get from that line and he is a young guy that has taken advantage of the opportunity that has been put in front of him."

Zhilkin was still all smiles as he met the media on Saturday afternoon.

"Being on the ice for that big win was, you know, unbelievable," he said. "And you know, to make my debut, I was working hard for this moment. It's pretty special, for sure."

The 22-year-old nearly scored his first NHL goal on his first shift against Edmonton, ringing a shot off the post early in the opening period.

"The puck got loose, in the circle area. I got it on my stick and was like 'Oh my God, I have the puck.' And then I tried to get it on net," said Zhilkin.

"It would have been nice (to score), but it's OK. I mean, hopefully chances keep coming."

He credited Pearson and Koepke for helping to make his transition from the AHL to the NHL as smooth as possible.

"Cole and Tanner, they play with a lot of speed and a lot of grit to their game. So they're a great linemates to play with," said Zhilkin.

His phone has been buzzing with messages from family and friends. His parents, who moved from Russia to Canada when he was nine, had been back home for the holidays. His father's flight landed in time to catch Friday's game, and his mother is expected back soon.

The Jets got scoring from all four lines on Friday, which is a terrific development for a team that had no shortage of slumping skaters.

"The win helps some of it mentally, obviously. But just for those guys to go out and have success as lines (and) not just our top guys doing it. They feel like they're contributing, they feel like they're a part of it, and that's what you want," said Arniel.

He likes what he's seen from a revamped second line of Jonathan Toews, Cole Perfetti and Gabe Vilardi. Toews scored, while Perfetti and Vilardi each had two assists.

"Chemistry is probably the biggest thing, first and foremost. It builds as they get to know each other," said Arniel.

"Gabe has helped that line in the sense of what he does well in games. (Perfetti), for me, his vision, Last night some of those plays he made, that's the Cole Perfetti that we've come to expect. And I think he's feeling good about himself. Like we talked about with JT, he's really started to move in the right direction as a second line centre."

Vlad Namestnikov returned after being a healthy scratch against the Oilers to score his first goal in 30 games against the Kings, playing on the third line with Adam Lowry and Nino Niederreiter. And the top line of Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor and Alex Lafallo kept rolling, with Scheifele scoring twice to grab the team lead with 22 (one more than Connor).

Winnipeg Sun

https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/jets-fans-want-to-see-us-have-success-says-scott-arniel/article_57c48c2c-f5c8-4021-a27e-412b08b2599c.html

Jets fans 'want to see us have success,' says Scott Arniel

By Gordon Anderson

Sometimes a symbiotic relationship doesn't work out as planned, but everyone involved wants the same thing.

"It's frustrating for all of us, not just the players and coaches, but the fans as well," Jets head coach Scott Arniel said after his club's 5-1 win over the Los Angeles Kings on Friday night. "They want to see us have success. And on the other side, our players don't want to let them down."

For one night, the Jets didn't let the home support down, breaking an 11-game losing streak and improving their record to 16-22-5.

The Jets are last in the Central Division, tied for 16th in the Western Conference and 32nd in the league heading into action on Saturday night. The Jets improved their home record to 9-9-3. The win also breaks a five-game winless streak (0-2-3) at home.

"We've been putting them through some tough times, and they've been sticking with us," goaltender Eric Comrie said. "It's unbelievable to see their support."

The Jets host the New Jersey Devils on Sunday afternoon.

During the losing streak, Arniel and the players presented a united front many times, saying there was and will be no quit regardless of the results. During the winless (0-7-4) streak, they lost a well-documented nine one-goal games and a pair of two goal games.

Naturally, fans want to be entertained with wins, but they also want to watch a team that represents the ethos of those paying the bills to keep the lights on and the pocketbooks flush with cash.

At the very least, Arniel feels that way.

"When (the fans) see us lose those one-goal games, and they see we're doing everything possible and not quitting, in a province, a community, a city like this there's a lot of blue-collar people and that's what they ask," Arniel said. "I know from being here for a long time: you work, you battle, you compete, you do those things, and you'll get a good response from the fans here."

With a four-goal lead entering the third period, those in attendance handled the entertainment for the final 20 minutes.

And handle it they did with multiple beer slammers on the video screen, several rounds of the wave, sing-alongs and chants of 'Comrie, Comrie' drew the focus away from the ice for one pleasant night downtown.

"It was awesome," rookie Danny Zhilkin said. "When the crowd started doing the wave, I got chills going up and down my body."

https://www.winnipegssun.com/sports/winning-and-losing-affects-everyone-involved-with-the-jets/article_e65d12b9-8d9c-4f0b-ac2a-b486a87c4e58.html

Winning and losing affects everyone involved with the Jets

By Gordon Anderson

When it comes to end result in team sports, everyone involved directly with the Jets is on the same flight.

The now vanquished 11-game losing streak, which mercifully ended with a 5-1 win over the Los Angeles Kings on Friday night, affected more than just the players and fans of the team.

"(Our family members have) been wearing this as much as the players have," head coach Scott Arniel said. "I know my wife, all the wives and girlfriends, have been trying to help their spouses get themselves out of this. I think they'll be just as relieved as we are."

Eric Comrie's wife, Hayley, went out of her way to brighten the goaltender's day prior to his start against the Kings.

You see, Comrie found himself in a bad head space following his last start, a 6-5 loss to the Maple Leafs on New Years Day. He allowed six goals on 30 shots. His puck handling miscue in Toronto led directly to the Auston Matthews game winning goal late in the third period.

Call her timely intervention a little perk me up, a fresh shot of perspective into what is more important than wins and losses.

"I wasn't in the best mental space," Comrie said. "My wife Haley helped me get out of it. It was unbelievable what she did. She put a couple pictures of my kids in my car, both playing hockey. It showed me why I play the game and why I love the game. It kind of got me back into the mindset of playing hockey again and being a kid and having fun out there."

Comrie was 'having fun out there' as he stopped 23 shots to earn the victory.

As much as Comrie's performance in Toronto had a lingering effect beyond the friendly confines of the dressing room, defenceman Dylan DeMelo tries to separate his life into halves, therefore making himself whole.

There is no right or wrong to any of these situations, just different.

"I don't bring the work home with me," DeMelo said. "I don't think it's fair to your family to use them as punching bags. I think my wife's always been my rock, and she's always been there for me, good or bad. I feel like when you have kids, it kind of changes a lot of perspective, just in life in general."

It is not every day your team enters the NHL hall of shame record books. In games that were decided by one goal, the Jets lost 13 consecutive one-goal games, dating back to a 4-3 loss to the Carolina Hurricanes on Nov. 21.

Perspective offers a fresh look when attempting to remain strong through the face of adversity.

"We are very fortunate to do what we do," DeMelo said. "Other people have it a lot harder than we do. As much as things aren't going well right now, mindset and perspective are everything in life. So that is the lens (in which how) I try to look at things."

Arniel's message to his team before heading onto the ice against the Kings was the same as Comrie's state of mind as he left for the downtown rink.

"We play this game, and we were all kids, there are lots of great memories when you're young, things you went through to get yourself here, and we put so much weight and pressure on ourselves that you can overwhelm yourself," Arniel said. "That was kind of the message to the group, let's go back to that feeling where we're thinking about why we play this game, the love of the game and just to be around the guys, just to be around the group, hopefully success comes from that."

Looking for consecutive wins for the first time since mid-November, the Jets host the New Jersey Devils on Sunday afternoon.

Decisions, decisions

Saturday afternoon was the optional skate for the Jets. Neal Pionk was in a regular sweater. Morgan Barron was wearing a non-contact yellow jersey. Both players were scratched on Friday night against the Los Angeles Kings due to health reasons.

Arniel says it's a matter of seeing how his injured players feel tomorrow as the Jets face the New Jersey Devils.

"They'll wake up on Sunday, and we'll have a better idea," he said.

Daily Faceoff

<https://www.dailyfaceoff.com/news/general-manager-kevin-cheveldayoff-blame-winnipeg-jets-poor-performance>

How much is Kevin Cheveldayoff to blame for Jets' poor performance?

By Ryan Cuneo

In Gary Bettman's NHL, anything can happen. Parity has allowed a team like the New York Islanders to go from having the first-overall pick in the draft to competing for first place in the Metropolitan Division. As the Winnipeg Jets are discovering, however, an equal and opposite change of fortunes is also possible. The Jets won the Presidents' Trophy last year with an 116-point season, but now find themselves last in the NHL.

Even in a fickle NHL, going from first to worst is tough to pull off. As Winnipeg continues to scuffle into the New Year (they've lost 10 games in a row dating back to December 15th), fingers have been pointing at who might be responsible for the mess in Manitoba. Some have even been pointing at Kevin Cheveldayoff, who has been the Jets' general manager since they relocated from Atlanta in 2011. Among Winnipeg's flaws this season, a lack of scoring depth or adequate backup goaltending have been apparent, both of which fall at the feet of the GM.

On Thursday's episode of Daily Faceoff LIVE, hosts Tyler Yaremchuk and former NHL goaltender Carter Hutton were joined by Winnipeg Sports Talk's Michael Remis and discussed the heat Cheveldayoff is under this season.

Tyler Yaremchuk: I want to talk a little bit about Kevin Cheveldayoff. Not being in the market, I don't have the best read on how the fanbase feels about him, but it felt like for a while, and I'm going back years now, it was like "he's got to do more," and then they made some big splashes at a few trade deadlines, as in the year they got (Sean) Monahan and (Tyler) Toffoli. Then you look, and you just mentioned it, you lock up (Gabriel) Vilardi, you lock up Kyle Connor this year. He got the core all signed on and it felt like maybe the heat was taken off him a little bit. But I guess, how much responsibility does he bear for this lack of scoring?

Michael Remis: I think the heat's gotten turned up a little bit this year. Look, he had a great run. He did the impossible. We thought Pierre-Luc Dubois, there's no way you can get a return on that, and he pulled a rabbit out of his hat with that deal which has been very beneficial for the Jets. (Mark) Scheifele and Connor, they're both entering their final year. How are you going to get both of those guys signed? It was Thanksgiving before the start of season, got the alert out of nowhere that they were both signed.

But you look at the last 12 months or so, and I think the trade deadline last year with the Jets in position for the Presidents' Trophy, their additions were not the most significant in Luke Schenn and Brandon Tanev. Nice players but you gave up a second-round pick this year, a second-round pick next year, and a later pick as well on both of them. Now you're in this position where you look at the last 10 years, and I know they've traded away some picks, but they haven't been

able to develop NHLers so they're in a real tough spot where you don't have a prospect pipe line.

The Hockey News

<https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/winnipeg-jets/latest-news/a-new-direction-winnipeg-jets-thn-writers-provide-different-outlooks-on-2025-26/>

A New Direction: Winnipeg Jets THN Writers Provide Different Outlooks On 2025-26

By THN Winnipeg

The Winnipeg Jets have a problem on their hands.

No, it's not the fact that they started the season so poorly that they currently sit 32nd in the 32-team league after finishing No. 1 overall last year.

It's the fact that the offseason gamble general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff took in signing aging, veteran forwards really has not seemed to fill the cup exactly as planned.

Jonathan Toews – the biggest splash, and gamble – has slowly found his way with the Jets, but is clearly not up to the task of full-time second line centreman duties.

Gustav Nyquist – the player who recorded 75 points just two seasons back – has yet to score a single goal for Winnipeg and has just eight points in his 31 games played. He's been a healthy scratch more often than not in recent weeks.

Tanner Pearson – now a veteran, Cup-winning forward who is on his fifth team in the past seven seasons – is not operating at the pace that most remember from his championship days with the Los Angeles Kings.

Cole Koepke – quite possibly the strongest and fastest player of the four offseason forward signings – has been a healthy scratch 15 times.

So, after all that, the Jets remain last in the league and just got themselves out of a nasty slide that saw 11-straight losses. Of course, with the timing of the slide co-existing with the annual World Junior Hockey Championship, fans from Winnipeg got a front row seat to some of the game's up and coming stars down in Minnesota.

Winnipeg's scouting staff and managerial team now have to make the decision on the minds of everyone within Manitoba: Is 2025-26 a wash, or do you attempt the 2019 St. Louis Blues' miraculous Stanley Cup run during the second half of the season to which the Blues went from last to the eventual champion during a six-month run.

For most, the answer is a resounding wash.

It's time to tank it out.

Cheveldayoff was all but committal during his mid-season press conference to 'doing what's best for the team'.

What that means is up for interpretation.

While some may argue the Jets' best bet is to get ahead and land trade or two in the coming weeks prior to the Olympic break to help get the team back in the hunt, the reality of the situation is this: Colorado, Dallas and Minnesota are the No. 1, 2 and 3 ranked teams in the league. They are all from the Central Division. If there ever was a year to dodge a postseason matchup with one of them, it would be this spring.

Winnipeg would at best be playing as the No. 1 or No. 2 wild card team in the Western Conference. Home ice advantage is critical in the playoffs, so a seven-game series in Colorado or Dallas would not be much fun.

It is time to encourage the tank job and hope the ping pong balls land in Winnipeg's favour at the draft lottery. A Top 3 pick in a relatively strong draft would go a long way for a franchise that has not had a high draft selection since taking Patrik Laine No. 2 overall in 2016.

Laine brought a lot of talent and excitement to the Jets back then, and someone of the stature of Gavin McKenna or Ivar Stenberg would be an immediate fix to the team's second line.

Forget going out and buying a rental – who in all likelihood wouldn't be interested in staying in Winnipeg long-term – but rather continue the draft and develop model, but for goodness sake, don't forget the second part.

Waive the veterans.

And possibly, the white flag.

Carter's Take: Play The Youth

A critical decision needs to be made on the long-term trajectory of the Jets' roster.

Players like Nino Niederreiter, Vlad Namestnikov, Gus Nyquist, Tanner Pearson and Jonathan Toews will likely not be around much longer.

If Luke Schenn wants out, let him go. Colin Miller can fill his place any day. And after that, Elias Salomonsson and Ville Heinola.

Trade Logan Stanley. His value is at an all-time high. Get something back before he becomes an unrestricted free agent this July.

Forget loading up on other pieces from other teams. Now is not the time to bring in other veteran forwards clinging to the lifelines of their careers.

Give Colby Barlow a chance. Let Brayden Yager cook.

A youthful team is a fun team.

There will be growing pains., ahem, San Jose... But it could be a lot of entertaining years ahead.

Imagine this youthful lineup:

Connor - Schiefefe - Vilardi
Stenberg - Perfetti - Barron
Iafallo - Chibrikov - Ford
Zhilkin - Lowry - Barlow

Morrissey - DeMelo
Samberg - Pionk
Salomonsson - Heinola

Hellebuyck
Comrie
Milic/DiVincentiis

Jake's Take: Big Swings, Build Now For Later

The core is locked up for years to come. While some are thinking the Jets may need to rebuild, what the team really needs is a mild retool.

They have impactful pieces in their lineup that simply aren't producing but could with the right players around them. That also goes for players coming in that people are worried about.

Some Jets fans are worried about the idea of Winnipeg trading real assets for players like Andrew Mangiapane and Jesperi Kotkaniemi, who some view as not significant upgrades.

Put in the right situation, both players could become producers like putting a former 55-point player in Mangiapane with the top line forwards in Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor could make him a 50-plus point player once again.

Kotkaniemi appears to be a draft bust after going third overall in the 2018 Draft and has showed little of the upside he was drafted for. However, many teams still believe he has an impact player within him and put in the right spot, he could produce 40 or more points like he has before.

You place the young 25-year-old center with lots of potential in a second line center spot where the Jets desperately need help and line him up with impact players like Gabe Vilardi and Cole Perfetti.

Winnipeg continues Carter's plan where they call up the rookies, send down or ship out veterans and this lineup in the back half of the season looks entirely different and one full of promise.

Potential lineup with Mangiapane, Kotkaniemi

Connor - Scheifele - Mangiapane
Perfetti - Kotkaniemi - Vilardi
Barron - Lowry - Yager
Iafallo - Lambert - Chibrikov
Extra: Toews, Zhilkin

Morrissey - DeMelo
Samberg - Pionk
Salomonsson - Miller
Extra: Heinola

Hellebuyck
Milic/DiVincentiis

Called Up: Yager, Lambert, Chibrikov
Traded/Sent Down: Niederreiter, Nyquist, Namestnikov, Pearson, Koepke, Schenn, Stanley

You go through the season with this squad and you see what you have from many of your top prospects outside of Yager and Barlow, who I had both remaining in Manitoba for the remainder of the season before earning a call-up next season.

This lineup will be able to give Chevy a look into the future and get an extended look at some of these guys facing NHL competition. He will then be able to decide if certain prospects can make the cut or if they don't have it and can go into free agency knowing what holes in the lineup to fill up.

The hope would also be that this sort of lineup would lead to a potential run at a top three pick in a loaded draft class where the Jets can earn a difference making player for the future.

2026-27 Projected lineup (Excluding Potential Free Agent Adds):

Connor - Scheifele - Mangiapane
Perfetti - Kotkaniemi - Vilardi
Stenberg - Lowry - Yager
Barron - Lambert - Chibrikov
Extra: Zhilkin, Lafallo

Morrissey - DeMelo
Samberg - Pionk
Salomonsson - Heinola
Extra: Miller

Hellebuyck
Milic/DiVincentiis