

## **Winnipeg Free Press**

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2026/05/14/sign-on-the-dotted-laine>

### ***Sign on the dotted Laine? Former Jets forward could be good gamble for club***

By: Mike McIntyre

Who's ready for another hockey homecoming?

One year ago, all the focus around here was on whether the Winnipeg Jets could land St. Vital product Jonathan Toews as he returned to the sport following a two-year, health-related hiatus. History shows the man known as Captain Serious did indeed sign on the dotted line.

Now, another prominent player with major ties to this city and organization could soon be searching for a new place to lace up his skates once free agency opens on July 1. And it would make plenty of sense — both on and off the ice — to get a deal done.

We're talking about Patrik Laine.

To say his time in Montreal is coming to a messy end would be an understatement. Although the Canadiens are still alive and kicking in the playoffs, Laine is essentially out of sight and out of mind for the bleu, blanc et rouge. He hasn't played a game since Oct. 16 when he suffered a core muscle injury that required surgery.

The projected recovery timeline was three-to-four months. It has now been eight months and counting.

Laine was gearing up for a return in February when the team announced he had suffered a new lower-body ailment. And that's basically all they've said about him since. His situation remains shrouded in secrecy, but it certainly appears his time with the Habs is over.

The 28-year-old Finn is entering the final year of a contract that pays him US\$8.7 million. Obviously, a massive pay cut would be in store should he wish to continue playing in the NHL. Other options could include a return to Europe or even retirement.

Laine was limited to five games this season, recording just one assist, after appearing in only 52 games in the 2024-25 season with Montreal, where he put up 20 goals and 13 assists. Among the many questions surrounding him is whether he can still withstand the rigours of a full NHL schedule, which grows from 82 to 84 games next season.

There are also suggestions from some quarters that he has become a one-trick pony — a power-play specialist with a wicked one-timer who can no longer keep up with today's younger, faster game or be relied upon at even strength or in the defensive zone.

The small body of work in recent years due to injuries, a personal mental health leave while in Columbus and whatever exactly is happening now in Montreal only adds to the skepticism.

Which brings us to the Jets.

If anyone is going to roll the dice, why not the organization that drafted him second overall in 2016 — the place where he enjoyed the best years of his career and remains wildly popular judging by the number of Laine jerseys still seen around town and at games?

Much like the Toews signing, this would be a massive public-relations win.

There's no question Laine remains appointment viewing for many local fans, and a team that averaged 14,228 fans per game this season — 997 shy of a sellout — could use every possible boost at the box office, especially after watching them tumble from first overall in the NHL standings to 26th.

Still, the Jets have to be about more than feel-good stories if they truly want to compete for a Stanley Cup. And that's where lessons learned from the Toews experiment would need to come into play with any potential Laine reunion.

Salary, for example, should be tied strictly to performance, not games played.

The Jets ended up forking over five bonus cheques worth US\$550,000 apiece to Toews — a total of US\$2.75 million — simply for hitting the 20-, 30-, 40-, 50- and 60-game marks. That came on top of his US\$2-million base salary.

More problematic, however, was the belief he could still solve the team's second-line centre problem. That proved to be a bad bet for the then 37-year-old, who ultimately looked far more comfortable in a bottom-six role while still contributing on the power play and in the faceoff circle.

When it comes to Laine and expectations, the Jets should hope for the best but expect the worst.

Any contract should begin with a similarly low base salary, and any bonus structure should be linked to offensive production. If he were able to hit those targets, terrific. That would be good news for both player and a team that was starving for secondary scoring last season.

It would also give Laine an opportunity to rehabilitate his career in a familiar environment while giving Winnipeg a chance to uncover value in a market where elite free agents rarely choose to land.

At this point, the obvious question is why Laine would want to return to the organization that shipped him out in January 2021, along with Jack Roslovic, to the Columbus Blue Jackets in exchange for Pierre-Luc Dubois.

Obviously, much has changed in the nearly five-and-a-half years since then. Former captain Blake Wheeler — who famously clashed with Laine at times — is long gone and now retired. Head coach Paul Maurice is busy savouring the two Stanley Cups he has since won in Sunrise, Fla.

And Laine would not be expected to carry the team on his back this time around. The Jets are loaded with stars, including Connor Hellebuyck, Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor, Josh Morrissey and Gabe Vilardi — who was part of the Laine trade tree as one of the returns acquired from Los Angeles in the Dubois deal.

Laine wouldn't have to be the guy. He could just be a guy. And he could do it in a city he famously wrote a love letter to in a 2018 The Players' Tribune article.

"Other than destroying Nik Ehlers in Call of Duty, I think the best thing to happen to me last year was falling in love with Winnipeg," the piece began.

"I mean, I heard some guys talking bad about the city and that Winnipeg was not a good place. What do they know? I love Winnipeg. This is my home. These are my people now. I play for them. It's a great, great city. Everyone who lives here really cares about one another, that's what stands out to me. We are one group, all of us. Everybody is your neighbor. Winnipeg is bad? No. Winnipeg is good. And my Wi-Fi — it's sick."

Laine has never been able to fully recapture the magic he had in Winnipeg, which began with a 36-goal rookie campaign and continued with seasons of 44, 30 and 28 goals apiece, the latter coming in just 68 games.

Heck, even his final game with the Jets was memorable: two goals and an assist in a season-opening win over Calgary. He was traded the next day.

Laine's best season after that came in 2021-22 with Columbus, when he scored 26 goals and recorded 56 points in just 56 games. Since then, he has been chasing the version of himself Winnipeg once saw almost every night — and has yet to fully find it again.

The upside is obvious. So is the risk.

Which is exactly why this feels like the kind of gamble the Jets — and Laine himself — should seriously consider.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/05/12/how-do-you-solve-a-problem-like-the-jets-second-line-centre-position>

***How do you solve a problem like the Jets' second-line centre position?  
Seven candidates from around the league that could fill the club's void next season***

By: Ken Wiebe

It is the most glaring need — and one of the most difficult things to acquire.

That's why the Winnipeg Jets once again find themselves in a bit of a quandary when it comes to addressing the second-line centre position this off-season.

Even more pressing is that Jets management is operating on dual tracks — ramping up 2026 NHL Draft preparations, where they currently hold the eighth overall pick, while also doing a lot of due diligence as it pertains to the pro scouting side.

The Jets are just three years removed from a draft week deal that sent Pierre-Luc Dubois to the Los Angeles Kings for a package that included forwards Gabriel Vilardi, Alex Iafallo, Rasmus Kupari and a draft pick that turned into Swedish defence prospect Alfons Freij.

That deal stretched out the Jets depth, but created an issue at 2C that is still seeking an optimal solution.

Jets captain Adam Lowry took the bulk of those minutes during the stretch run, but off-season hip surgery inhibited him from reaching his A-game on a consistent basis and his production dipped from 16 goals to five.

Having said that, Lowry is a strong candidate for a bounce-back season and is just one year removed from anchoring one of the best checking lines in the NHL.

When you look at what Jordan Staal is doing for the Carolina Hurricanes in these playoffs at the age of 37 (he'll be 38 in September), there's ample reason to believe Lowry can get back to the level he's shown previously.

And while Morgan Barron has transitioned nicely to a fourth-line centre role, his speed, tenacity and offensive upside as a power forward make him a good candidate to skate alongside Lowry next season in an expanded role.

After competing in the Calder Cup playoffs with the Manitoba Moose, it's apparent Danny Zhilkin is hoping to compete for a roster spot and potentially the fourth-line centre job in the fall.

Zhilkin was held off the scoresheet in seven games during the playoffs, but his overall body of work provides plenty of hope for him to graduate to the NHL.

Brayden Yager — who got a late taste with the Jets and had the biggest offensive impact — chipped in four assists in seven games in the Calder Cup playoffs, but it would be a big ask for him to try and slide into the 2C role right now.

Yager projects to be the best internal option, but he needs some additional seasoning and the puck touches that come with playing substantial minutes in the AHL before he's ready for the responsibility at the next level.

Two centres project to be in the range the Jets are currently scheduled to select in Swedish forward Viggo Bjorck and Tynan Lawrence — who is going back to Boston University this fall for his sophomore season.

While it wouldn't be impossible for Bjorck to crack the NHL roster in the fall, sticking around as an 18-year-old — even as someone who played against men in the Swedish Hockey League last season — would be a big ask.

That's why the Jets most likely option for the 2C job is an external candidate.

But it won't be Charlie Coyle — a past target of the Jets. Coyle came off the board on Tuesday after signing a six-year extension that carries an annual average value of US\$6 million to remain with the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Let's take a look at some of the options the Jets might consider:

*Connor McMichael*

*Washington Capitals*

*Contract status: RFA on July 1*

*Age: 25*

*2025-26 stats: 78 GP, 14 G, 32 A, 46 P, 30 PIM*

The skinny: There were some whispers around the 2024 NHL Draft in Las Vegas that the Jets were trying to acquire McMichael when Rutger McGroarty made it known he didn't plan to sign with them. Given the previous interest, it would make sense that the Jets might circle back on a player that has scored 58 goals over the past three seasons, with only eight of those markers coming on the power play. McMichael is below average in the faceoff dot (43.0 per cent career percentage), but he's a middle-six forward who skates well and has strong hockey sense.

*Barrett Hayton*

*Utah Mammoth*

*Contract status: RFA on July 1*

*Age: 25 (26 in June)*

*2025-26 stats: 67 GP, 10 G, 15 A, 25 P, 54 PIM*

The skinny: The fifth overall pick of the 2018 NHL Draft hasn't proven to be as prolific as was projected, but he's just one year removed from posting a career-high 20 goals and 46 points. With a number of top prospects in the Mammoth system looking to push for roster spots in the fall, Hayton could be available and while he will be looking for a raise after carrying an AAV of US\$2.65 million during the past two seasons, he won't be breaking the bank either.

*Cody Glass*

*New Jersey Devils*

*Contract status: One season left at US\$2.5 million, then a UFA*

*Age: 27*

*2025-26 stats: 70 GP, 19 G, 7 A, 26 P, 39 PIM*

The skinny: The Winnipegger isn't just on this list because he's from this province. The sixth overall pick of the 2019 NHL Draft is finding his offensive rhythm and is rounding into form. His 19 goals this season was a career high and his 70 games played is just two games shy of his career high 72 played. Glass also posted his best faceoff percentage (54.0 per cent), and since the Jets don't have a lot of right-handed shooters among the forward group, he would fit that criteria as well.

*Kirby Dach*

*Montreal Canadiens*

*Contract status: RFA on July 1*

*Age: 25*

*2025-26 stats: 37 GP, 8 G, 7 A, 15 P, 31 PIM*

The skinny: After battling through injuries for the bulk of his time with the Canadiens during the past four seasons, the six-foot-four, 221-pound forward is making an impact in these playoffs, with four goals and five points in 10 games (going into Game 4 against the Buffalo Sabres). The skill and ability has never been a question and he has the potential to be an impact player if he can string together longer stretches of consistent play and earn an enhanced role.

*Tommy Novak*

*Pittsburgh Penguins*

*Contract status: One more season at US\$3.5 million, then a UFA*

*Age: 29*

*2025-26 stats: 82 GP, 16 G, 26 A, 42 P, 24 PIM*

The skinny: The Jets are familiar with the smooth skater from his previous time with the Nashville Predators and, while he might be hard-pressed to be a 50-point guy, he's involved in all three zones and skates very well. His 42 points this past season would have left him fifth on the Jets in scoring.

*Kent Johnson*  
*Columbus Blue Jackets*  
*Contract status: RFA on July 1*  
*Age: 23 (24 in October)*  
*2025-26 stats: 76 GP, 7 G, 15 A, 22 P, 20 PIM*

The skinny: The fifth overall pick in the 2021 NHL Draft is coming off the least productive season of his career and he was a healthy scratch when the Jets played in Ohio in April. He hasn't played much centre at the NHL level, but he brings plenty of creativity and he's one year removed from a career-best 24 goals and 57 points in 68 games.

*Jack Roslovic*  
*Edmonton Oilers*  
*Age: 29*  
*Contract status: UFA on July 1*  
*2025-26 stats: 69 GP, 21 G, 15 A, 36 P, 16 PIM*

The skinny: The 25th overall pick of the Jets back in 2015 has bounced around a lot since the Jets moved him to his hometown team, the Blue Jackets, in the blockbuster deal with Patrik Laine for Dubois. Although he had a quiet playoffs for the Oilers with one assist in six games, Roslovic has the speed and finishing ability the Jets were often lacking this past season. He's someone who can play centre or wing and he's going to be looking for some stability on a multi-year deal this summer. Although things didn't end well in Winnipeg when he was a restricted free agent, Roslovic would likely be open for a chance to re-write the narrative.

### **Winnipegjets.com**

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/jets-have-strong-options-at-eight>

### ***Jets have strong options at eight***

By Jamie Thomas WinnipegJets.com

A week ago, the Winnipeg Jets found out that they will be selecting eighth overall at the 2026 NHL Draft

I recently spoke with draft analyst Chris Peters from FLOHockey about the strengths of this year's class, who the Winnipeg Jets could target, and which prospects Jets fans should keep an eye on.

*Can you help put Jets fans at ease about the quality of player that should still be available at the eighth pick?*

Peters: The Jets are still in a range where you can get one of the higher impact pieces from this class. And I think there's a number of different ways that you can get that. I mean, like basically by being in the eighth spot, you're at worst, going to have one of the top tier defensemen

available. So that's one element of it. You're also in a range where you could potentially, dip in a little bit further down the board for maybe a center like a Tynan Lawrence or Viggo Björck, or maybe you could go for the high upside, big winger in Ethan Belchetz or something like that. So, I think the options that are available are still very strong. So, eight is like, right within the window still of landing what I think could be one of the better prospects in the class.

*There are some concerns about Björck's size at 5-foot-9 and 177 pounds. What makes him capable of overcoming that and becoming an effective NHL centre?*

Peters: I mean, I think part of it is through his own intelligence. I think he's an incredibly smart hockey player, and then obviously compete level. I think if you look at Zach Benson right now in the in the NHL playoffs, he's not a big guy. He's a highly competitive player. Now, I don't think that that Viggo has the same motor that Zach has and had in his draft year, but he has the willingness to go compete. He goes into corners. He fishes pucks out. He goes into the hard areas. He does not play the game with fear. I think he could continue to build strength, quicken his pace a little bit as well. That will help him be more impactful. There is concern about whether or not he could be a center at the NHL level, but the fact that he was playing center in the SHL at 17 years old is bananas. And not just playing it but playing it well. And I guess the only concern that you would necessarily have is as good as he is and as skilled as he is that offensive ceiling high enough where, if he's not producing, what do you do with him? Like that's what it becomes harder to be a smaller player.

*Lawrence seems like a player with a lot of tools and upside to work with. What stands out most about his game and long-term projection?*

Peters: He's a player that had a very trying draft season. He was injured at the beginning of the year in training camp, missed significant time, then he goes to Boston University at midseason, kind of trying maybe to push for first overall. Didn't really go well, I think some things got exposed, just his ability to process the game. I think we're going to probably be talking about Tynan Lawrence next season as a guy who really broke out in college and had a really successful sophomore year at Boston University, I do think that. For me, he's got the offense, he's competitive, he has enough two-way skills, he's a good skater. I like a lot about his game, and I just think he would definitely be a fit in terms of the style of play and the way that the Jets have traditionally drafted. I think he fits kind of their mold. And the question is, just like were some of the things that we saw with his hockey sense, if that's the reality is that something he's going to be able to overcome, and I think hockey sense is one of those things that's a little bit harder. So that's where I think the risk lies with Tynan, because on ability, I think he's right where he needs to be.

*Could Alberts Smits — viewed by some as one of the more NHL-ready defencemen in the class, played for Latvia at the Olympics — realistically still be available at eighth overall?*

Peters: I think there is a chance. Yeah, I definitely do. He's probably the most pro ready of any of the defensemen. He's the guy, say the Jets draft him. I think at worst, he's playing top pairing or top four minutes with Manitoba next season. Being the most NHL ready doesn't mean that they're going to be the best player, but we've seen a real rapid upward trajectory in his game. We've seen him do it against men. We've seen him play a very prominent role at big events. And so, to me, if he's the guy that's available at eight, that's such a great spot. It's a really great player to get in that range. Because I think he is a top four defenseman. I think he's a guy that does a little bit of everything, has the physicality. The question will be, how good is the offense? Does he have the offensive upside of, like, you know, and let's say, out of, you know, if Daxon

Rudolph and Alberts Smits are both there, then that creates a different kind of discussion for Winnipeg,

*Rudolph is currently playing in the WHL Final with Prince Albert. What do you like most about his game and NHL potential?*

Peters: Yeah, I think he's probably he's intriguing in a lot of ways. Just because he's got size (6'3", 206), he's got the mobility, he's a right shot. He was the leading scorer for one of the best teams in the WHL this year, he's been that way through the playoffs. The offensive upside seems pretty strong for him. I think defensively, there's still plenty to be worked on. There are still games where you can kind of come in and out a little bit. You want to see him be a little bit more consistent. But I didn't anticipate that he would have this level of production this season. I think if you were to draft him in terms of timeline, I think he seems like a really strong candidate to maybe do more of the hybrid style, where he goes to college next year and then comes in maybe a year or two later. I think he would probably benefit from that. He needs to build some more physical strength, because he has the frame to support more muscle. I think he's got the ability to bulk up a little bit. But, man, I like the player a lot. But again, it just comes down to, I don't think it's out of the realm of possibility that Keaton Verhoeff's there.

*What are your thoughts on Verhoeff (North Dakota) and where he fits among this year's top defencemen?*

Peters: I think there was a little bit too much this year where Keaton was kind of beating himself a little bit, where he was he was not making the right reads, not making the right decisions, and that has led to questions about his overall hockey sense, which I think is a fair criticism of him at this point. He's got a bomb of a shot. I think he'll probably be a much more impactful sophomore. He was one of the youngest players in college hockey this year, so that challenged him pretty significantly here in the last little while. But I think that there's still a lot of there's a lot of upside for him to reach like I think his ceiling is incredibly high as a player. It's just that that concern about the hockey sense is one that I think, especially in the fact that he didn't outright dominate at the World U-18's, was not exactly the best closing argument for him. But he's still 6'4", 200 plus pounds, right shot defenseman who can skate well enough and does a lot of the things. So, I got a lot of time for the player. But again, I think that because of the weirdness of the top of this class, anything is possible. And yeah, if he ends up there, he'd be easy to go watch the Ralph a couple times a year too. But here's the other thing, I think barring a significant jump, I think he needs two more years in school.

## **Global Winnipeg**

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11851096/mark-scheifele-chance-to-shine-team-canada-world-stage/>

### ***ANALYSIS: Mark Scheifele's chance to shine for Team Canada on world stage***

By John Shannon CJOB

As we are halfway through finding out who will be the Stanley Cup champion, the world hockey championships begin Friday in Switzerland. Included on Team Canada are three members of the Winnipeg Jets: Gabe Vilardi, Dylan Demelo and Mark Scheifele.

Yep, that Mark Scheifele. You remember him, the Jets' star that wasn't good enough to play on the 4 Nations Face-Off team, and wasn't good enough to play on the Olympic team. All of a sudden, this time, after Canada said no twice to No. 55, when Canada calls, Scheifele says yes. I must admit, after being rejected twice, had Hockey Canada come knocking on my front door, I would be tempted to slam it shut — and lock it, with a deadbolt.

It would be wrong to suggest that Scheifele would have been the difference in winning in Italy; that would be incorrect. I truly believe Canada didn't lose the gold-medal game, Connor Hellebuyck and Team USA won it. But Scheifele's versatility would have been a huge asset for Canada, just as it was for the Jets all season long, and he put up career numbers. Perhaps not being chosen to the national club inspired him, but you had to be impressed with the stats — a career-high 103 points — in the too little, too late run the Jets had to the post-season.

It will be fascinating to see how a successful world championships, alongside Sidney Crosby, would inspire Scheifele and change the minds of the Hockey Canada brain trust for the next cycle of international hockey. Now, by the Olympic Winter Games in France in 2030, Scheifele will be close to 37 years old and age could be a factor. But certainly, the next World Cup of Hockey in two years has to be in his sights. This tournament can be a stepping stone for him to establish a positive relationship with Hockey Canada.

Scheifele has now given them another chance to realize what he can deliver to the team, no matter what role. If anyone ever questioned Scheifele's love of this game, and this country, we learned a great lesson this week.

A very patriotic lesson.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11846761/winnipeg-jets-cole-koepke-off-season-re-signing-under-radar/>

### ***ANALYSIS: Winnipeg Jets' first off-season re-signing fell under the radar***

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

Without a lot of fanfare, the off-season moves have already started for the Winnipeg Jets. In fact, one key piece to their forward group is already locked in for another two years.

Lost in the shuffle to end the season – and amid some of the dissenting noise that emerged out of the Jets dressing room – was the announcement of a contract extension for forward Cole Koepke.

Not much was known about Koepke when he signed with Winnipeg last summer, other than that he scored 10 goals with Boston the year prior and that he was another addition to the growing group of Duluth, Minn.-area natives on the team's roster.

But as his first season progressed in Winnipeg – in particular, the latter half – Koepke became a tremendously valuable piece to the Jets' fourth line and their specialty teams.

He finished this season with eight goals in seven fewer games than the year before with the Bruins, led the Jets in hits by a significant margin and watched his ice time grow by over three minutes per game from January to April.

What was even more impressive was that he had to overcome an injury and being made a healthy scratch several times early on, only to conclude the season by playing in 33 consecutive games.

In short, Koepke was the one off-season signing last summer that the Jets hit on and his two-year extension last month is the first move in an important reshaping of the team into a slightly younger and vastly quicker squad next season.

Blessed with blazing speed, the soon-to-be 28-year-old was also an exceptional penalty killer for Winnipeg, a solid fit both on and off the ice and a player genuinely thrilled about making Winnipeg home for another two years.

Of course, Koepke won't ever lead the Jets in scoring or play in the top six, but every successful team requires a complement of grinders, checkers and hard-to-play-against players.

Cole Koepke is all of those.

He's also very quiet and unassuming by nature and it's probably fitting – at least for his personality – that his two-year contract extension got slightly lost in some of the other noise that emerged out of the Jets dressing room only a few short weeks ago.

### **The Athletic**

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/7270817/2026/05/13/winnipeg-jets-nhl-draft-trade/>

### ***Should the Winnipeg Jets trade the No. 8 pick in the NHL Draft?***

By Murat Ates

I experience an ugly, immediate gut reaction when NHL fans and media say the Winnipeg Jets should trade the No. 8 pick in this year's NHL Draft.

“You're saying the Jets should mortgage more of the future for a core that just missed the playoffs?”

It's unkind, given my understanding of the suggestion. The Jets are trying to make the playoffs and win rounds when they get there. They've clearly just failed to do so, falling behind in a division led by Stanley Cup contenders Colorado, Minnesota, and Dallas, but the Jets have Connor Hellebuyck, Mark Scheifele, Josh Morrissey, and Kyle Connor in place and no desire to move them. If the team is unwilling to accept mediocrity — and unwilling to rebuild — then it must try to get better.

What does Winnipeg have to work with to improve the existing roster, which needs at least one impact player up front, and ideally two, along with help on defence? It has a collection of decent, unspectacular prospects, which Scott Wheeler recently ranked 20th-best in the NHL. It has good young players one step outside the core — Gabriel Vilardi, Dylan Samberg, and Cole Perfetti, who would ideally be on the roster to help next year's team win games.

And it has the No. 8 draft pick.

If Winnipeg wants a legitimate second-line centre or a top right-shot defenceman to lock down its top pair, then it must trade that pick. This year's third-round pick or the Sabres' second-round pick in 2027 aren't going to be enough. Or next year's first-round pick. Or both. And that's where the acid reflux kicks in.

The Jets have traded first-round picks, whether packaged with other assets or not, for Sean Monahan in 2024, Kevin Hayes in 2019, and Paul Stastny in 2018. Stastny fit brilliantly; Hayes was a good bet with minimal impact; Monahan helped the power play. All three centres would have been long-term upgrades had Winnipeg retained them; all three signed elsewhere within months of acquisition.

Without player retention, every upgrade costs the Jets twice the price. If Stastny had stayed in 2018, there'd have been no need to send a first-round pick to New York for Hayes in 2019. If Monahan had stayed in 2024, Winnipeg may not have sent a second-round pick to Seattle for Brandon Tanev and may have been deep enough down the middle to beat Dallas in the 2025 playoffs. But free agency is unkind to Winnipeg, as are no-trade and no-movement clauses. Winnipeg must draft, develop, and retain its own impact players, especially when it's just finished poorly enough to draft inside the top-10. The No. 8 should be untouchable, shouldn't it? Especially on a team with multiple holes? And shouldn't the 2027 first-round pick be untouchable, too?

I view the No. 8 pick as "found money" — as an unusually high draft choice for a veteran team with a slightly below average roster — and I feel like Winnipeg should keep the pick, retain the player, and feel fortunate that it has a better chance to draft an impact player than it usually gets at the draft. But feelings are not a plan. Emotions must give way to problem-solving.

There are always criteria by which trades can be won or lost, regardless of asset quality. If the Jets traded the No. 8 pick but acquired a top-line centre or a top-pairing, right-shot defenceman with term left on his contract, I'd see that as a win, despite the continued erosion of Winnipeg's draft capital.

But where is the line for winning and losing such a trade? I think we should try to draw one.

#### *The value of a draft pick, via one analytical model*

In 2020, Dom Luszczyszyn studied several analytical approaches to estimating the value of a draft pick and then presented his own. His broad conclusions were the same as previous research:

There is a steep drop-off in talent over the course of the first round.

NHL teams are pretty good at identifying talent, particularly at the top end of the draft. Sleepers and steals exist, but they're rare and tend to happen later on.

The average No. 8 pick is part of the steep decline at the far left of the graph, worth far more than even a mid-to-late first-round pick, but not so much it's automatically expected to return a star player. Dom's conclusion in 2020 was that, in the seven seasons before a player earns UFA status, the average No. 8 pick was likely to provide value comparable to that of a low-end top six forward or second-pair defenceman.

The takeaway is a bit surprising: Would Winnipeg automatically "win" a trade that sent the No. 8 pick away for Calgary's Blake Coleman or New York's Alexis Lafrenière? That's the quality of player we're talking about, in terms of Dom's "Game Score."

Obviously, we need to consider more factors here. The Lafrenière, 24, is more likely to maintain or improve upon his current level of performance over the next seven years. Coleman, 34, will decline and likely retire.

The range of possibilities is just as wide. Mason McTavish, the 23-year-old Ducks centre taken No. 3 in 2021, would be great value. Peyton Krebs, who we discussed in this second-line centre piece, would arrive with less fanfare. Monahan, who turns 32 in October, would be seen as an utter failure.

One analytics expert working for an NHL team supports the broad takeaway that a quality roster player is usually worth more than a draft pick, even at No. 8. But specifics are harder to quantify.

Let's say the Jets did acquire Lafrenière or McTavish. They don't automatically get control of those players for seven years, as they would with their draft pick nor do they benefit from the artificial price limitations the CBA puts on players on their entry-level contracts. McTavish has five years remaining on a \$7.0 million AAV contract, while Lafrenière has six years left in a \$7.45 million AAV deal.

Do the Jets need to extract a superior player, given that their draft pick is expected to deliver similar results for much cheaper? Or do McTavish and Lafreniere carry added value because they were drafted at No. 3 and No. 1, respectively? We need to consult actual NHL history for a sense of how the market works.

#### *Consulting NHL market history*

With a hat tip to PuckPedia, here is a list of last summer's trades at or near the draft that involved a first-round pick on at least one side of the equation.

- Carolina traded the No. 29 pick at the 2025 draft to Chicago for the No. 34 pick, the No. 62 pick, and a fifth-round pick in 2027
- Los Angeles traded the No. 24 pick at the 2025 draft to Pittsburgh for the No. 31 pick and the No. 59 pick
- Ottawa traded the No. 21 pick at the 2025 draft to Nashville for the No. 23 pick and the No. 67 pick
- Pittsburgh traded the No. 12 at the 2025 draft to Philadelphia for the No. 22 pick and the No. 31 pick

Montreal traded left wing Emil Heineman, the No. 16 pick, and No. 17 pick at the 2025 draft to the Islanders for Noah Dobson

Carolina traded Dallas' 2026 first-round pick, a 2026 second-round pick, and defenceman Scott Morrow to the Rangers for K'Andre Miller.

Montreal's acquisition of Noah Dobson took two first-round picks and a solid prospect, but it's the most instructive of the bunch if you're looking to upgrade Winnipeg's existing roster. Dobson was a big, right-shooting, 25-year-old defenceman who had already put together massive point totals while playing a No. 1 role in New York, but the Islanders had the No. 1 pick and Matthew Schaefer in their sights. They signed Dobson to a maximum-term, eight-year contract worth \$9.5 million AAV, trading him to the Canadiens in a blockbuster deal.

In model terms, the No. 16 and No. 17 picks in an average draft class slightly exceed the value of the No. 8 pick. This is roughly equalized by the extra year on Dobson's deal, but the Canadiens added Heineman, the No. 43 pick in 2020, to make it work. In Jets terms, that's a prospect better than 2021 second-round pick, Nikita Chibrikov, but not as good as 2022 second-round pick, Elias Salomonsson.

Who could Winnipeg target with that kind of package?

Jason Robertson is the most Dobson-esque player of the group, a legitimate star player, ranked even higher than Dobson was in our player tiers project this year. I'd view it as a home run swing if Winnipeg acquired Robertson, signed by Dallas to an eight-year contract, for the No. 8 pick and Cole Perfetti. You can subtract from Perfetti, who I view as a superior player to Heineman, if you'd prefer to target Trevor Zegras or Brandt Clarke instead of Robertson.

The value would align with Montreal's trade and satisfy the analytical model, but trades like this one are exceedingly rare.

Carolina's July 1 acquisition of K'Andre Miller is also worth discussing. The Hurricanes added a big, left-shooting, 25-year-old defenceman who had been the Rangers' No. 2 behind Adam Fox. Miller's point totals were less spectacular than Dobson's, given Fox's role on the top power play, and Miller didn't get the top power play job in Carolina, either. Still, the Hurricanes got a prime-aged, No. 2 defenceman for eight years via a sign-and-trade for a late first-round pick, a second-round pick, and Morrow, who was taken at No. 40 in 2021.

Winnipeg's No. 8 pick has more value than the late first-round pick Carolina used, so subtract from the second-round pick or Morrow as you see fit. In Jets terms, I'd consider it a win if the Jets added Clarke (or Zegras) for the No. 8 pick and Alfons Freij. I just don't see L.A. or Philadelphia looking to move either player.

*What about trading down, but staying inside the first round?*

Five out of six trades listed above involve a team trading down from a high pick to acquire multiple, lower draft picks. I think it's a viable strategy for the Jets to consider.

To find Winnipeg's version of Pittsburgh's trade from No. 12 to No. 22 and No. 31 last summer, here are teams with multiple first-round picks in the upcoming draft.

- Calgary: No. 6 and No. 28 (and Nos. 35 and 36 in the second round)
- New York Rangers: No. 5 and No. 27
- San Jose: No. 2 and No. 20
- Seattle: No. 7 and No. 26 (and No. 38 in the second round)
- St. Louis: No. 11 and No. 15
- Vancouver: No. 3 and No. 24 (and Nos. 33 and 41 in the second round)
- Washington: No. 16 and No. 18

A straight swap of the No. 8 for both of St. Louis' or both of Washington's picks would be a clear win for the Jets (according to the values in Dom's study). Acquiring the No. 24 and No. 33 picks from Vancouver would be a slight win for Winnipeg, but within the range of the Penguins' win in their Flyers trade. Acquiring No. 28, No. 35, and No. 36 from Calgary would require the Jets to add their own third-round pick (No. 71) to the No. 8 to make it work.

As much as I might like those last two options, the Jets' goal isn't just to add draft capital. It's to add roster players. If Calgary or Vancouver are meant to be Winnipeg's trade partners, we might more realistically target Morgan Frost (or Marco Rossi) and an early second-round pick for Winnipeg's No. 8 and Winnipeg's third-round pick. The Jets would miss out on drafting a top defenceman like Daxon Rudolph or Alberts Smits. They'd miss out on centres Tynan Lawrence and Viggo Bjorck, too. But they'd still get to pick inside the Top-40, while adding a young second-line centre, if the Canucks or Flames jumped on board.

I don't know if those are moves Winnipeg can make, but I wouldn't be surprised if they're one type of move Winnipeg does try to make.

### *Closing thoughts*

1. Winnipeg pays a premium, often twice the price, for roster players when it fails to retain them. The No. 8 pick should be worth more to the Jets than teams that dominate the trade and UFA markets.
2. That said, any trade can be won depending on what comes back.
3. Public studies and NHL staff seem to agree that NHL roster players hold more value relative to draft picks than I expected.
4. There are rare but real precedents of blockbuster trades for star players like Dobson and Miller.
5. This whole exercise only works if you support the idea of retooling on the fly and probably requires supplementary, follow-up moves even in some of the best-case scenarios outlined here.

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/7276439/2026/05/15/winnipeg-jets-offer-sheets/>

### ***Why the Winnipeg Jets should explore offer sheet options — and who to target***

By Murat Ates

We've scoured the NHL for Winnipeg Jets upgrades through unrestricted free agency, the trade market, and the Jets' options at No. 8 in the draft. It was difficult.

But do not give up hope. There is another way. A dark way. A perfectly legal, though seldom used, often unsuccessful but sometimes brilliant way of signing top, young players.

We're talking about offer sheets.

There is an exciting crop of restricted free agents this summer, including but not limited to Jason Robertson, Leo Carlsson, and Connor Bedard. These players' rights are owned by their current teams, but they're eligible to sign contracts with anyone else in the NHL, including Winnipeg.

Look at the 2024 St. Louis Blues, who signed Dylan Holloway and Philip Broberg — two Edmonton Oilers RFAs — away from the cap-crunched Oilers. Holloway and Broberg have become key players for St. Louis, with Holloway scoring 51 points in 59 games and Broberg leading Blues defencemen in icetime and points, but the Blues paid Edmonton just a second and a third-round pick to get them. It's the same mechanism by which Carolina signed Jesperi

Kotkaniemi from Montreal in 2021 and Edmonton took Dustin Penner from Anaheim in 2007, but that's the entire list of successful offer sheets in the cap era.

Why discuss such rare transactions? Why mention Bedard, Carlsson, Gauthier, Pavel Dorofeyev, Adam Fantilli, Brandt Clarke, Trevor Zegras, Simon Edvinsson, Simon Nemec, Jamie Drysdale, or Jet Greaves at all when even the great summer of offer sheets didn't come to pass in 2025, with a lower salary cap?

- It would add talent to the Jets, without sending Winnipeg's own talent back via trade.
- That talent would be much further along in its development — with known, higher ceilings — than any draft picks sent back as compensation.
- It's fun.

#### *How offer sheets work*

Here's the PuckPedia explanation: An offer sheet is a contract offered to a restricted free agent (RFA) by a team other than the player's current team. If the player signs the offer sheet, their original team has the right to match the terms or receive compensation in the form of draft picks if they choose not to match.

The amount of compensation depends on the size of the contract:

- Above \$11,700,193
  - Four first-round picks
- \$9,360,154 - \$11,700,192
  - Two first-round picks, one second-round pick, one third-round pick
- \$7,020,114 - \$9,360,153
  - One first-round pick, second-round pick, one third-round pick
- \$4,680,077 - \$7,020,113
  - One first-round pick, one third-round pick
- \$2,340,038 - \$4,680,076
  - One second-round pick
- \$1,544,425 - \$2,340,037
  - One third-round pick
- Below \$1,544,424
  - None

Some tiers are shown in red because a team must have its own draft picks available as compensation. Winnipeg does not have its 2027 second-round pick, via its Brandon Tanev acquisition, and would need to re-acquire it from Seattle to make those tiers work. Finally, a technicality: The AAV, for offer sheet compensation purposes, is the total cost of the contract divided by its length to a maximum of five years.

How do we make this work for Winnipeg?

#### *How to make offer sheets successful*

One of the reasons successful offer sheets are so rare is that they need several factors to align.

First and foremost, they take a restricted free agent who's open to the idea of signing with another NHL team. Holloway and Broberg had to want to sign contracts with St. Louis for the whole thing to work — something made clear in the inside story of St. Louis' successful offer

sheets. There also needs to be incentive for teams to let players go. The reason St. Louis' offer sheets were successful was that the Oilers had worked themselves into an untenable cap position. They couldn't afford to match the contracts Holloway or Broberg had signed without roster surgery. Their GM, Stan Bowman, didn't see a way to perform that surgery.

Easy, right? Winnipeg needs to find a good, young player who has reasons to want a fresh start. It needs to offer that player money and opportunity, in some combination, such that they're willing to leave their current team and choose Winnipeg's offer sheet over any others that come their way. And Winnipeg needs their target's team to be in a cap crunch, lest that team match whatever contract the Jets offered.

Some of these players are well beyond reasonable discussion. Even if the Jets tried to give Connor Bedard or Leo Carlsson the richest contract in NHL history, Chicago or Anaheim wouldn't let them go. The maximum contract, \$20.8 million, would be easy for the Ducks and Blackhawks to match. (It would also use up all the rest of Winnipeg's cap space, though the Jets could presumably make follow-up moves if the world goes crazy and Carlsson jumps on board.)

Winnipeg's best play would be to target players whose teams are closer to the cap.

#### *Teams that could be facing a cap crunch*

The NHL's \$104 million cap ceiling drastically reduces the number of teams facing cap crises heading into next season, but some challenges do exist.

Colorado is projected to have \$3.0 million in cap space, prior to the \$2.2 million in overages it will pay via Brent Burns' performance bonuses. The Avalanche must use that limited space to sign RFA Jack Drury, one other forward, and three defencemen. Vegas is projected to have \$4.6 million in cap space and has several roster spots to fill, including a presumed UFA contract for Rasmus Andersson. Pavel Dorofeyev is the Golden Knights' most prominent RFA and has scored at least 35 goals in two straight seasons. Winnipeg would do well to force the issue.

Montreal is projected to have \$9.2 million in cap space and needs to sign Arber Xhekaj, Zack Bolduc, and Kirby Dach. The Canadiens have some flexibility, with several waivers-exempt contracts, but Xhekaj, Bolduc, and Dach should earn enough money between the three of them to put the Canadiens in a bind. If the Jets had their own second-round pick, dual offer sheets could force Montreal to make difficult decisions.

Dallas is projected to have \$11.0 million in cap space, but needs to sign Jason Robertson, Mavrik Bourque, and Arttu Hyry to fill out their roster. Robertson's contract alone will be a challenge. If the Jets had their own second-round pick such that they could offer Robertson and Bourque, it could create quite the problem.

Remember the genius of the Blues' move on Holloway and Broberg was partly that they signed two offer sheets at the same time, but in different compensation tiers, giving up a second-round pick for Broberg and a third-round pick for Holloway. That kind of move is unavailable to Winnipeg, unless it gets its own second-round pick from Seattle. Teams can't tie up the same draft pick in two different offer sheets either. For example, Winnipeg would not be allowed to sign Bolduc and Dach to matching \$7.0 million contracts, thereby owing a first- and a third-round pick for each.

The Jets' most viable play in this unlikely thought exercise? Finding a way to "overpay" one player. This brings us back to Robertson, Dorofeyev, and Drury.

### *What could actually work?*

Robertson scores points at a nearly identical rate to Kyle Connor and is eligible for UFA status as early as next summer. In a normal, non-offer sheet market, Robertson could easily earn above Connor's \$12 million on a long-term extension.

If the Jets signed Robertson to a \$12 million offer sheet, however, all it would accomplish is that Dallas would have cost certainty on a suddenly more tradeable asset. They'd have the choice of taking four first-round picks from Winnipeg by way of compensation or shopping Robertson, suddenly extended long term at fair value, for a Mikko Rantanen-type blockbuster. (A successful offer sheet might require Winnipeg to spend so much that it depreciates Robertson's value as a trade chip. Make it \$16 million and you've probably poached a star, but you've also traded four first-round picks for a star earning a \$16 million cap hit.)

Dorofeyev, 25, is still two seasons away from UFA eligibility. Whereas a short-term contract might typically cost close to \$7 million, a long-term deal that bought UFA years could reach closer to \$9 million. The Jets' second-round pick issue pops up here, too: Winnipeg can only pay as much as \$7,020,113 before reaching a compensation tier that requires that pick. Still, the Golden Knights appear to be in a bind. A two-year, \$10 million AAV contract that walked Dorofeyev to free agency might be enough money to make it worth it for the player and untenable for the team. That would cost Winnipeg the money, the cap hit, two first-round picks, a second-round pick, and a third-round pick.

Drury, 26, has appeal as a middle-six centre with room to grow. He scored 27 points in 82 games in Colorado without power play time, while playing great defence. His 1.41 points per minute at five-on-five would have fit right in with Cole Perfetti (1.46) on the Jets' second line, but Drury is stuck behind Nathan MacKinnon, Brock Nelson, and Nazem Kadri. Winnipeg could offer Drury its second-line centre job, with Perfetti on his left and Gabriel Vilardi on his right, on a well-above-market price of \$6.0 million AAV. Colorado would be in tough to match it and it would cost Winnipeg a first-round pick and a third-round pick if it worked.

Giving up a first-round pick might be a scary thought for a team that finished 2025-26 with the seventh-worst record in the NHL. Drury would also have to want to leave a city that loves him — and where his dad, Chris Drury, was a playoffs legend. There's also the matter of: Why not just trade for him? The acquisition cost could be similar, but Winnipeg could sign him to a contract closer to market value.

The league's relative abundance of cap space, with a \$104 million cap, makes the NHL's seldom-used offer sheet a challenge for any team. Winnipeg would also need to make sure it took care of its own RFAs now and in the future lest it become a target for retaliation. But the Jets do want to win while Connor Hellebuyck, Mark Scheifele, and Josh Morrissey still lead the way. It's worth considering every available option.

## **Yahoo Sports**

<https://ca.sports.yahoo.com/news/fast-enough-compete-not-dangerous-161917385.html>

### ***Fast Enough to Compete, Not Dangerous Enough to Win: What Jets' Edge Data Really Reveals***

By Jake Tye

The tension at the heart of the Winnipeg Jets disappointing finish is impossible to ignore. On one hand, the numbers suggest a team built on effort, pace, and raw physical tools. On the other, the deeper analytics reveal why those strengths never consistently translated into goals when the season mattered most.

According to NHL Edge tracking data, the Jets possessed many of the ingredients associated with dangerous offensive teams. Their hardest shot of the season reached 164.91 km/h, the sixth fastest mark in the NHL, while Winnipeg also ranked ninth overall in top skating speed with a peak of 38.98 km/h.

The club logged 53 shots above 90 mph, placing them in the middle of the league at 16th. But beneath those eye-catching figures sat an offense that struggled to generate threatening opportunities.

Winnipeg recorded 2,162 shots on goal this season, ranking 22nd in the NHL. More concerning was the quality of those attempts. Winnipeg finished 27th in high-danger chances with just 599 and produced the second-fewest mid-range scoring opportunities in the league at 588.

The club did rank seventh in long-range attempts with 506, but perimeter shooting alone rarely creates offensive success. Winnipeg scored only 229 goals this season, ranking 25th overall, while posting a shooting percentage of 10.6 percent, good for 22nd in the NHL.

Numbers also suggest a team capable of creating flashes of danger without consistently getting to the areas that matter most. While Winnipeg ranked 13th in total distance covered at 6,020.51 kilometers and 11th in average distance skated per 60 minutes at 14.80 km, the club struggled in the explosive acceleration categories that often separate dangerous transition teams from average ones.

The Jets ranked 23rd in bursts above 35 km/h, 28th in bursts between 32 and 35 km/h, and 27th in bursts between 29 and 32 km/h. In other words, Winnipeg could skate hard and sustain pace over long stretches, but lacked the repeated explosive bursts needed to consistently break defensive coverage or create odd-man opportunities.

There were still encouraging signs, particularly on the power play as despite receiving only 227 opportunities, the ninth fewest in the league, the Jets moved with remarkable urgency while on the man advantage, averaging 14.04 km per 60 minutes, the second-highest mark in the NHL. That figure speaks to a unit built around pace and quick puck movement rather than perimeter cycling.

The penalty kill told a different story with Winnipeg averaging just 12.11 km per 60 minutes while shorthanded, ranking 20th in the league, pointing to a more conservative and passive structure when defending with a man down.

Winnipeg possessed elite shot power, impressive straight-line speed, and a power play that operated at one of the fastest tempos in the league. What they lacked was the ability to consistently convert those attributes into dangerous offense. Too many shots came from the perimeter, too few plays threatened the middle of the ice, and too little acceleration at critical moments created the separation needed to manufacture high-quality chances.

As Kevin Cheveldayoff navigates what shapes up as one of the most consequential off-seasons of his tenure as general manager, resolving some of these major concerns will be at the center of his off-season to-do list.

<https://ca.sports.yahoo.com/news/rumblings-around-league-suggest-jets-212744223.html>

### ***Rumblings Around the League Suggest Jets Could Pull Off Blockbuster, Trade Up to 2nd Overall***

Jake Tye

A potential blockbuster is brewing ahead of this year's NHL Draft, and the Winnipeg Jets may find themselves at the center of it.

According to multiple reports from The Fourth Period's David Pagnotta over the past couple of days, the San Jose Sharks are seriously considering trading the second overall pick they recently acquired.

The reasoning, per those reports, stems from San Jose's belief that they are already well-stocked at forward, making the selection of another high-end offensive prospect at second overall less of a priority than addressing other areas of need. The pick is widely expected to land on either Swedish winger Ivar Stenberg or, should he slide one spot, consensus top prospect Gavin McKenna.

The news has apparently turned heads around the league and while no deals have materialized, unconfirmed reports suggest several teams have expressed interest in trading up to second overall, with the Jets among those in the mix alongside the Vancouver Canucks, Calgary Flames and New York Rangers.

The appeal for Winnipeg is obvious as both Stenberg and McKenna project as game-breaking talents at the NHL level, and either one could conceivably make an immediate impact, potentially slotting into the Jets' opening night lineup from day one. For a team navigating a pivotal stretch of its rebuild and looking to add star power, the opportunity to land a generational prospect is difficult to ignore.

The challenge, of course, is the price as the Jets currently hold the eighth overall pick, and moving up six spots to second overall for a player of this caliber would not come cheap. High picks are rarely moved in the NHL, and any deal with San Jose would almost certainly require a significant package of assets heading back to the Bay Area. What that package looks like, and whether Cheveldayoff is willing to pay it, remains to be seen.

For now it is a situation worth monitoring closely, and one that could dramatically reshape the direction of the Jets franchise depending on how the next few weeks unfold.