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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/comrie-sets-career-high-in-wins-jets-beat-blues>

***Comrie sets career high in wins, Jets beat Blues
Comrie made 29 saves for his 11th win of the season***

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG - Eric Comrie made 29 saves in his first start since February 25 as the Winnipeg Jets beat the St. Louis Blues 3-2 at Canada Life Centre. Haydn Fleury had a goal and an assist, Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor scored the other goals for the Jets who are 6-2-2 since the Olympic break and pulled to within four points of the final playoff spot in the west. The Jets will wrap up this eight-game homestand on Tuesday when they welcome the Nashville Predators.

COMMS CAREER BEST

In his last five starts, Comrie has stopped 122 of 129 shots and posted a .946 save percentage. Comrie's win was his 11th of the season, which set a new career-high, passing his previous best of 10 wins (2021-22 and 2025-26), Comrie also set a new career high for his most starts in a season (21). The Jets needed their goaltender Sunday afternoon as they were playing their third game in three and a half days, especially following up an impressive performance against Colorado the day before. Perhaps his biggest save came in the third period with the Jets holding onto a one goal lead, Comrie denied Jordan Kyrrou on a breakaway.

FLAWLESS FIRST

After another scoreless first period against the Blues, the Jets have only allowed 11 first period goals in 27 games played since the start of 2026. The Jets also provided some offence in the opening frame, starting at 2:31 when Haydn Fleury scored his first goal since December of 2023 when he was a member of Tampa Bay Lightning which also came against the Blues.

Yeah, it felt good. My son asks me every day, every time I plays like, 'you score?' And I always 'no'. So I get to tell him, I scored," said Fleury.

"He's here. So that's good."

Winnipeg would add another at the 7:51 mark, Mark Scheifele would poke the puck past Cam Fowler at the Jets blueline and skated in on a breakaway beating Jordan Binnington on the backhand for a 2-0 lead after 20.

KC FINISHING BLOW

As he tends to do, Kyle Connor's timing was perfect in the third period with the Blues pushing for the tying goal. St. Louis was about to be called for tripping Fleury, Morgan Barron spotted Conner behind the Blues defence with a perfect pass, Connor went in on the breakaway and scored his 31st of the season. It was the 62nd career game winning goal for Connor.

"I mean, just use my feet. I think they come pretty hard, but just use my skating to get to the net," said Fleury on the play leading up to the Connor goal.

"And, end up drawing the drawing the penalty. And, Bear made a great assist there. And, KC, did what he normally does, scores. So it was good."

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/st-louis-blues-winnipeg-jets-game-recap-march-15-2026>

Fleury has goal, assist, Jets hang on to end Blues' 7-game point streak Comrie makes 29 saves in 1st start since Feb. 25; St. Louis scores twice in 3rd

By Darrin Bauming

WINNIPEG -- Haydn Fleury had a goal and an assist, and the Winnipeg Jets held on for a 3-2 win against the St. Louis Blues at Canada Life Centre on Sunday.

It was Fleury's first goal with Winnipeg since signing as a free agent on July 3, 2024. He hadn't scored since Dec. 19, 2023, when he was a member of the Tampa Bay Lightning.

"It felt good," Fleury said. "My son asks me every day, every time I play, 'Did you score?'" Fleury said. "And I always say, 'No.' So, I get to tell him I scored. He's here, so it'll be, 'That's good.'"

Eric Comrie made 29 saves, and Morgan Barron had two assists for the Jets (28-28-10), who have points in eight of 10 games (6-2-2) since returning from the break for the 2026 Winter Olympics, including a 3-1 win here against the Colorado Avalanche on Saturday. It was Comrie's first game since Feb. 25; he is 5-0-0 in his past five starts with a 1.39 goals-against average and .946 save percentage.

"It can be tough sometimes because you go a long time without playing," Comrie said. ... "(Starting goalie Connor Hellebuyck) is pretty good; I was going to say, he won the Hart Trophy last year. (Five straight wins) feels good. Once again, I just try and do my job once my name gets called, just trying to be ready whenever I get my chance. And I feel good right now."

Dalibor Dvorsky and Dylan Holloway scored for the Blues (27-30-10), who were 6-0-1 in their previous seven. Jordan Binnington made 13 saves.

"I think Winnipeg was better than us at the net-fronts, which is an area where offensively we haven't gone," St. Louis coach Jim Montgomery said. "We don't consistently screen goalies, and it's a big reason why we haven't scored as much as we were expecting this year. And then defensively, you can't give up two breakaways to their two best players."

Fleury gave Winnipeg a 1-0 lead at 2:31 of the first period, finishing a quick passing play from the left face-off dot on the rush with Barron and Brad Lambert.

The Jets defenseman was limited to 39 games in 2024-25 due to injury, and Sunday was just his 25th game this season.

"With all the injuries that have happened to (Fleury), and all the injuries on our defense, we have needed him now," Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel said. "He has been playing really well. He is a great skater and he has great mobility, and he has filled in real well for us.

"And to see him score, especially early on ... that was a great shot and it looked like he'd been doing that his whole career."

Mark Scheifele made it 2-0 at 7:51, stealing the puck in his own zone and scoring on a breakaway with a backhand.

Dvorsky cut it to 2-1 at 5:17 of the third period on a redirection during a 4-on-1 rush when Jonatan Berggren hit the brakes and fed him a pass to the top of the crease.

"I think overall, we were the better team," Dvorsky said. "We had more time in the (offensive) zone. We've just got to get to the net more and have more net hunger. I think our play overall was pretty good today. This was the main part -- we've just got to get hungrier in front of the net and score some dirty goals."

Kyle Connor responded to make it 3-1 at 11:53. Barron's stretch pass from blue line to blue line sprung Connor on a breakaway, and he scored with a pump fake and quick shot along the ice.

Holloway scored at 19:09 for the 3-2 final.

"The chances we gave up, some of them were big ones," Blues forward Pius Suter said. "We almost came back, missed by one goal. (Binnington) definitely gave us a chance to win and we just couldn't do it."

St. Louis outshot Winnipeg 16-6 in the third.

"We had three (games) in four, and (then) three in three-and-a-half days," Comrie said. "The guys are joking that they thought Colorado left the altitude back out there tonight; we were gasping for air a little bit. That's hockey, though; sometimes you've got to grind one out. You've got to just get a win.

"I thought we did a really good job. I know they had a lot of zone time. They did a lot of stuff, but we did a really good job keeping them outside. Our defense played great, and our guys were awesome today. We did a great job."

NOTES: The Blues hadn't lost in regulation since Feb. 28 (3-1 to the New Jersey Devils). ... St. Louis center Robert Thomas had a personal nine-game point streak end (14 points; six goals, eight assists). ... It was Comrie's NHL career-high 11th win of the season. ... Barron set a career high for points in a season (22; 10 goals, 12 assists). ... Scheifele has 12 points (four goals, eight assists) in his past seven games. ... Connor has scored in three straight games.

Canadian Press

<https://ca.sports.yahoo.com/news/confident-comrie-rewarded-hard-jets-090007502.html>

Confident Comrie rewarded for hard work in Jets' net

By Judy Owen The Canadian Press

WINNIPEG — Eric Comrie is used to being in the shadow of starting star goalie Connor Hellebuyck, but the backup has achieved a season-best for the Winnipeg Jets' masked men.

Comrie made 29 saves in Sunday's 3-2 victory over the St. Louis Blues, giving him a five-game win streak this season. That's one more than Hellebuyck, the reigning Hart and Vezina Trophy winner and Olympic gold medallist.

"It feels good," Comrie said. "Once again, I just try and do my job once my name gets called. Just trying to be ready whenever I get my chance, and I feel good right now.

"Switching to the white cage has been good so far, so I like that."

The Edmonton native's last loss was Jan. 1, when he made 30 saves in a 6-5 Toronto Maple Leafs' win. Comrie mishandled the puck and Auston Matthews finished off a hat trick with the game-winner late in the third period.

It was Comrie's fourth consecutive loss.

He said Sunday he went to Jets goalie coach Wade Flaherty afterward and asked for advice.

"I told Flats, I said, 'I've got to do something different. Everything feels like it's going wrong right now,'" Comrie said.

"He goes, 'Try putting a white cage in the mask.' Sure enough, I put a white cage in the mask and it's been good so far."

The victory against the Blues was Comrie's career-high 21st start of the season and he registered a career-best 11th win of the season (11-9-1).

Hellebuyck, who had a four-game victory run in October, underwent arthroscopic knee surgery last November and missed 11 games. The team went 2-8-1 in his absence.

Having Comrie complement Hellebuyck as the Jets (28-28-10) try to secure an NHL playoff spot is key. They were sitting four points out of the second wild-card berth in the Western Conference after the win over St. Louis, pending other Sunday results.

Winnipeg defenceman Haydn Fleury, who scored his first goal as a Jet in his 64th game with the team, said it's important to have confidence in both goalies.

"It's huge," said the Carlyle, Sask., native. "The way Coms prepares gives everybody in this room confidence. I'm shooting on him most times when he goes out early (at practice).

"It's really a treat to see how committed to his craft he is and just really happy to see him get rewarded."

Fleury also had an assist. Kyle Connor and Mark Scheifele notched a goal apiece to share the team's scoring lead with 31 markers. Morgan Barron picked up a pair of helpers.

Dalibor Dvorsky and Dylan Holloway scored for the Blues (27-30-10), who suffered their first regulation loss in the month of March (6-1-1). Jordan Binnington stopped 13 shots.

Jets head coach Scott Arniel said Comrie knows his role behind Hellebuyck and praised his work ethic.

"That is one of the things about great No. 2 goaltenders, and Comrie is one of the best in the sense that every day he is the first guy out there and he stays out late and the guys love going against him in practice because he plays every puck right out," Arniel said.

"Just the mindset where you have to, especially following a guy like Hellebuyck, it could be longer stretches before between games. You have to come out with a strong mindset and he does a really good job of staying focused. He's become a veteran guy and learned how to handle that role and he was fantastic tonight."

Comrie is in his third stint with the Jets. He was drafted by Winnipeg in the second round (59th overall) in 2013. The 30-year-old also played for Detroit, New Jersey, Winnipeg again, Buffalo and rejoined the Jets last season.

Sunday was his 98th NHL game and 65th with the Jets.

"It's just trying to be my best every single day in practice and just be ready for when my name's called upon," Comrie said.

“It’s my job to be ready, my job to give this team a chance to win, and I take a lot of pride in that. I love this team. I want to be the best I can be for this team every single night.”

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11732525/analysis-winnipeg-jets-cole-perfetti-common-goal-of-avoiding-lost-season/>

ANALYSIS: Winnipeg Jets, Cole Perfetti share common goal of avoiding lost season

By Kelly Moore CJOB

ANALYSIS: Winnipeg Jets, Cole Perfetti share common goal of avoiding lost season -
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The Winnipeg Jets rescued their “make or break” homestand with a pair of huge wins over Colorado and St. Louis on the weekend.

It’s not unlike how Cole Perfetti has “resurrected” what was once looking like a lost season on an individual basis.

It did not look good for Winnipeg when they began the week by delivering consecutive “underwhelming” performances in the disappointing defeats to Anaheim and the Rangers.

With back-to-back visits from league-leading Colorado and red-hot St. Louis on the horizon, the homestand was beginning to look like a lost cause — until the Jets recovered for those impressive 3-1 and 3-2 decisions over the Avs and Blues, respectively.

You could write a similar script to outline how the season has gone to date for Perfetti. After struggling for most of November and December while coming back off a high ankle sprain, a critical season for the 24-year-old forward was taking on water and in danger of going under.

But a lifeboat arrived in the form of the Christmas Break and, ever since, Perfetti has steadily looked more and more like the player who produced the Manitoba Miracle.

Promotion to the No. 1 power-play unit, and while the Jets have struggled with the extra skater, the offensive production has returned for No. 91, with 10 points in the last 13 games in particular.

And so has the 200-foot game. Perfetti has been consistently playing on a shutdown line of sorts with Adam Lowry and has earned trust from the coaching staff to the point where, during this homestand, he was out on the ice for a huge late-game tying goal against Chicago, and that clutch empty net clincher versus the Avs Saturday afternoon after poke-checking the puck away from Nathan MacKinnon.

How discussions go on a 3rd pro contract fall into the “to be determined” category. But one thing is for sure — Perfetti has played himself into a much more favourable bargaining position when negotiations do eventually get underway.

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/03/16/will-they-or-wont-they>

Will they or won't they?

Inconsistency leaves Jets' playoff hopes up in the air

By: Mike McIntyre

Will the real Winnipeg Jets please stand up?

Are they the team that laid an egg last week against the Anaheim Ducks and followed it up with another clunker against the lowly New York Rangers? Or are they the one that just completed a weekend sweep of the Colorado Avalanche and St. Louis Blues — who just happen to be the NHL's best team and one of the league's hottest?

It's hard to keep track these days.

One thing is clear: with 16 regular-season games remaining, the Jets (28-28-10) have clawed to within five points of the final Western Conference wild-card spot as they get set to close out a season-long eight-game homestand Tuesday night against the Nashville Predators.

In honour of this Jekyll-and-Hyde hockey club, allow us to present a list of reasons why the Jets will make the playoffs — and why they won't.

Hey, if they can be all over the map, so can we.

They will

The Jets will make the playoffs because they've been performing at a playoff pace for quite a while now.

Winnipeg has gone 6-2-2 since the Olympic break, which would translate to a 115-point season over 82 games. (They set a franchise record last year with 116 points while capturing the Presidents' Trophy.)

Too small a sample size, you say? Fair enough.

How about 13-6-5 over the last 24 games, which equates to 106 points over a full campaign?

The Jets dug themselves an enormous hole with a disastrous 30-game span earlier this year in which they went just 6-19-5. But if you take the 12 games that preceded the nosedive and the 24 that have followed, the Jets are 22-9-5.

They won't

The Jets will not make the playoffs because their recent record is a bit of a mirage considering the quality of opponents.

Yes, you can only play the schedule in front of you. But the Jets have been racking up wins and points against plenty of struggling opponents.

For example, since the Olympic break, six of Winnipeg's 10 games have come against non-playoff teams. They've gone 4-1-1 in those games, and 2-1-1 against playoff clubs.

Looking at that solid 24-game stretch, 14 have been played against non-playoff teams. The Jets have gone 9-2-3 in those, and 4-4-2 against playoff clubs.

And if you go all the way back to the 9-3-0 start to the year, the Jets went 6-0 against non-playoff teams and 3-3-0 against playoff clubs.

But business is about to pick up. After facing Nashville on Tuesday, nine of Winnipeg's final 15 games are against current playoff teams. It's closer to 11 if you consider the Columbus Blue Jackets and San Jose Sharks who are right in the mix.

They're going to need to be a lot better than just .500 if they want to sneak in.

It's also worth noting the Jets have been making some hay at home (17-13-5), but they're about to get an extended taste of life in enemy territory. Winnipeg plays 10 of its final 15 games on the road, where they have just 11 wins in 31 games this year (11-15-5).

They will

The Jets will make the playoffs because they've seemingly re-discovered their defensive DNA.

The Jets surrendered just three goals in their two weekend wins against the Avalanche and Blues.

"Their defensive details are excellent," St. Louis head coach Jim Montgomery said following Sunday's game.

"Similar to why they had the great year last year was their defensive habits. Their five guys are connected. It's hard to penetrate the middle of the ice against them in their own end. That's the biggest thing. And then they play a smart hockey game."

The Jets won't be winning the William Jennings Trophy again this year as the stingiest team in the league. They currently sit tied for 14th overall in goals-against average at 3.03.

However, if they can keep opponents to one or two goals a night, it would help the cause.

They won't

The Jets will not make the playoffs because Connor Hellebuyck and Eric Comrie may be masking some major flaws.

Both goaltenders were terrific this past weekend, and the underlying numbers suggest the Jets may have actually gotten lucky.

Consider this: Colorado had 18 high-danger chances to Winnipeg's two on Saturday. Hellebuyck showed off his Vezina- and Hart-calibre form early and often and really stole the show.

It was a similar story Sunday, when St. Louis had 13 high-danger chances to Winnipeg's five. Comrie was dialled in, winning his fifth straight start in the process.

Yes, goalies are part of the team. But getting out-chanced 31-7 over two games and coming away with four points is some Houdini-like magic.

It's also not likely sustainable over the long run, so the Jets clearly still need to clean up their act.

They will

The Jets will make the playoffs because Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor are going to do everything they can to drag them in.

The dynamic duo have been terrific all season but seem to have found another gear down the stretch.

Scheifele, perhaps motivated by being an Olympic snub, has 12 points in his last seven games (4 goals, 8 assists) and is on track to shatter his career high of 87. He's already up to 82 (31 G, career-high 51 A) to sit sixth in NHL scoring behind only Connor McDavid, Nathan MacKinnon, Nikita Kucherov, Leon Draisaitl and Macklin Celebrini.

That is some elite company.

Connor, meanwhile, has scored in three straight games and is tied for the team lead with Scheifele at 31. His breakaway beauty against the Blues was the key play, and he's tied for 13th in NHL scoring with 75 points. He, too, seems eager to show his Olympic scratches were not deserved.

They won't

The Jets will not make the playoffs because they still aren't getting nearly enough secondary scoring.

Captain Adam Lowry has gone 21 games without a goal. Jonathan Toews' drought is at 20. Cole Koepke has none in 14 games. Gustav Nyquist still has just one goal all year.

Alex Lafallo has one goal in the past eight games and two in the last 19. Even Cole Perfetti — who has been playing much better lately — has only one goal on a netminder in the last nine games (his other being an empty net marker). Morgan Barron snapped his own 20-game slump with three in five games but has now gone three straight without one.

Gabe Vilardi has two in the past eight games. Vlad Namestnikov and Nino Niederreiter are both injured, and it's unclear if either will return this season.

This has been an ongoing storyline all season and continues to this day.

Another big part of the problem is the lack of power-play success. The Jets are clicking at just 17.7 per cent, which ranks 23rd in the NHL.

Add in a middle-of-the-pack penalty kill (79 per cent, 16th-overall), and it puts even more pressure on the club to dominate at even strength, which is tough to do when you don't have the offensive depth.

So how will the next 16 games play out for the Jets? Your guess is as good as ours.

At the moment, Winnipeg appears to be running in two races simultaneously: one toward the final Western Conference wild-card spot and a potential first-round date with the mighty Avalanche, and another toward the bottom of the NHL standings and a premium draft pick.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/03/15/cagey-backup-earns-big-win>

***Cagey backup earns big win
Comrie tweaks mask, lifts Jets over Blues***

By: Ken Wiebe

An extended stretch between starts didn't deter Eric Comrie.

After watching Connor Hellebuyck start the previous eight games, the Winnipeg Jets backup did what he's done with regularity: give his team a chance with his solid play.

Comrie was the best player on the ice and made 29 saves to propel the Jets to a 3-2 victory over the St. Louis Blues on Sunday afternoon before a crowd of 14,082 at Canada Life Centre.

Comrie has allowed only seven goals during his past five starts, all of them victories.

“I mean, I just try and prepare every single day. Just be ready for when my name’s called upon,” said Comrie, who made his 21st start of the season and picked up his 11th win, both of which are career-highs. “It’s my job to be ready, my job to give this team a chance to win, and I take a lot of pride in that. I love this team. I want to be the best I can be for this team every single night.”

The Jets, who improved to 28-28-10, close out an eight-game homestand on Tuesday against the Nashville Predators.

Comrie revealed that he made a subtle change after the Jan. 1 loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs after a discussion with goalie coach Wade Flaherty, swapping out the bars in his goalie mask.

“I said, ‘I’ve got to do something different. Everything feels like it’s going wrong right now,’” said Comrie. “He goes, ‘try putting a white cage in the mask.’ Sure enough, I put a white cage in the mask, and it’s been good so far.”

No matter what he’s done to his equipment, Comrie’s willingness to put in the work between starts is what’s allowed him to be successful.

“It starts with preparation. It starts with what he does every day to prepare himself to play and give himself the best chance to succeed,” said Jets defenceman Haydn Fleury. “And just the way he works and the way he comes to the rink. He’s a true pro, and that allows him to have (games) like this.”

Comrie’s best save was a third period breakaway stop off Blues winger Jordan Kyrou.

“It happened a little quick. I wasn’t quite ready to be fully honest with you,” said Comrie. “I made a good save and just kind of reacted to it. And then after that, I was like, whew, I wasn’t ready for that. Thank goodness it hit me.”

It was a productive weekend for the Jets, who also earned a 3-1 victory over the Colorado Avalanche on Saturday.

That moved them to 5-2 on the homestand and pulled them at least momentarily to within four points of the final playoff spot in the Western Conference standings.

“This team is not giving up,” said Fleury. “We still feel that we have a good chance to make the playoffs. And, whatever it takes every night. I know (Sunday) probably wasn’t the prettiest but we’ll take the two points.”

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

Slump buster

Fleury opened the scoring on Sunday, using his skating ability to jump up in the play to create an odd-man rush and fire a shot past Blues goalie Jordan Binnington.

For Fleury, it was his first goal since joining the Jets, snapping an 80-game drought that stretched back to his time with the Tampa Bay Lightning.

Since that time, he's come back from two freak injuries, one with the Lightning and another in January with the Jets.

"My son asks me every time I play, did you score? And I always say 'no'. So I get to tell him, I scored," said Fleury, who added an assist to give him two points. "I'm just happy my four-year-old is here. It was the first time he's seen me score in person. I know he's probably more excited than I am."

With the Jets dealing with injuries on the back end to Neal Pionk and Colin Miller and after dealing Logan Stanley and Luke Schenn to the Buffalo Sabres, Fleury is back logging regular minutes on the third pairing.

"With all the injuries that have happened to him and all the injuries on our defence, we have needed him now," said Arniel. "And now that he has come back healthy, it's great to see he recovered as we weren't sure how that was all going to play itself out. He has been playing really well. He is a great skater, and he has great mobility and he has filled in real well for us.

"To see him score, especially early on, that was a great shot and it looked like he'd been doing that his whole career."

Jets forward Brad Lambert drew the primary assist on the play, which allowed him to record his first NHL helper of the season and his third in 15 games with the Jets, spread out over three seasons.

Birthday goal

Jets centre Mark Scheifele chipped the puck out of the defensive zone past Blues blue-liner Cam Fowler and pulled away on a breakaway, scoring on a backhand deke to extend the lead to 2-0.

Scheifele, who turned 33 on Sunday, is up to 31 goals this season, which leaves tied for the team lead with Kyle Connor, who scored in the third period.

Scheifele has 12 points in the past seven games, moving him to 82 for the season (which is five shy of his career high, set last season).

Those pre-season projections of Scheifele being a candidate for regression have proven to be wildly inaccurate.

The key play

Kyle Connor's breakaway goal on a delayed penalty call restored a two-goal cushion at 11:53 of the third period and proved to be the game-winner.

The three stars

Eric Comrie, Jets, The battling backup finished with 29 saves.

Morgan Barron, Jets, Chipped in a pair of assists.

Haydn Fleury, Jets, Recorded his first goal and assist of the season.

Extra, extra

By drawing a pair of assists, Jets forward Morgan Barron set a career high for points (22) and he achieved the feat in 57 games (13 fewer than in 2022-23). He's currently one goal shy of equalling his career high in that category (11).

Defenceman Ville Heinola was the lone healthy scratch for the Jets.

The Jets primary affiliate, the Manitoba Moose, closed out a road trip with a 4-2 win over the Calgary Wranglers on Sunday. Defenceman Dylan Anhorn broke a 2-2 tie with 5:37 to go in the third period to help the Moose improve to 28-21-5-1. Jaret Anderson-Dolan, Isaak Phillips and David Gustafsson also scored for the Moose, who got 43 saves from Thomas Milic. The Moose open a four-game homestand on Wednesday with a 10:30 a.m. puck drop against the Milwaukee Admirals.

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/7123150/2026/03/17/winnipeg-jets-nhl-draft-top-10-fit-need/>

Judging top NHL draft prospects by Jets fit: Who should Winnipeg pick?

By Murat Ates

There is a segment of Winnipeg's fan base that would prefer a high draft pick to a playoff push, even with the Jets five points out of a wild-card spot.

Their argument is simple: The draft could be Winnipeg's best route to top-end talent. Given the Jets' traditional lack of UFA success — and this summer's relative lack of top-end free agents — a franchise-shifting signing is unlikely. With the difficulty of acquiring top-end talent by trade and Winnipeg's modest prospect cupboard in terms of trade assets, Kevin Cheveldayoff is unlikely to bring in the next Gabriel Vilardi in a summer blockbuster.

So it must be the draft. Winnipeg hasn't picked inside the top 10 since taking Cole Perfetti with the 10th pick in 2020. It hasn't been higher than that since winning a draft lottery and then taking Patrik Laine No. 2 in 2016. Winnipeg is projected to pick sixth at this year's draft, based on the

current standings, but there's plenty of time for fluctuations. The Jets could climb as high as the playoffs or win a draft lottery, moving as high as No. 1.

Who should the Jets pick?

Today's draft preview is all about fit. We're taking the top 10 draft-eligible prospects, according to experts Scott Wheeler and Corey Pronman, and discussing them solely in terms of Winnipeg. How would they fit into the Jets' prospect pool? What's a reasonable projection for them if Winnipeg takes them this summer — and are there any advantages or roadblocks to them reaching their maximum potential in Winnipeg?

Rankings are based on Wheeler's latest ranking, which you can find [here](#), and Pronman's latest ranking, which you can find [here](#).

1. *Gavin McKenna, LW, Penn State (NCAA)*

Wheeler's ranking: 1

Pronman's ranking: 2

Ates' angle: McKenna's status as the No. 1 pick has been disputed by some analysts, but we're sorting Winnipeg's potential future star players by Wheeler and Pronman's average ranking. No one scores higher than McKenna — just as no draft-eligible NCAA prospect scores more often than he does — and no forward in this draft projects to be as dynamic when he gets to the NHL.

As a 5-foot-11 left wing who's lauded for creativity, vision, and playmaking — but whose faults include being pushed easily to the perimeter — it's easy to wonder if there's redundancy between McKenna and Kyle Connor in Winnipeg's top six. In a "take the best player available" situation, there would be no fault in doubling up on supremely talented, average-sized left wings who don't win their board battles or drive the middle of the ice as often as you'd like. The good would outweigh the bad and McKenna's playmaking could set the table for Winnipeg to find another top-six goal scorer.

McKenna would instantly become Winnipeg's top prospect, a good bet to play on the second line, and a compelling option on the top power play. In the long run, he'd project as Winnipeg's first-line left wing once his contributions started to overtake Connor, who turns 30 in December.

What a dream fit he'd be for Winnipeg if he played centre.

2. *Chase Reid, RHD, Sault Ste. Marie (OHL)*

Wheeler's ranking: 3

Pronman's ranking: 1

Ates' angle: Pronman says this year's draft class reminds him of 2021, where Owen Power was taken No. 1 and three more brilliant offensive defencemen — Luke Hughes, Simon Edvinsson and Brandt Clarke — went inside the top 10. He's even gone as far as to put Reid, a 6-2 right-

shot defenceman, above McKenna in his latest ranking. The endorsement is based on Reid's offensive toolkit and the belief that Reid's high compete level will make him more than a point producer; Reid is projected to be able to defend well, make defensive stops and then look to contribute further up the ice. Wheeler raves about Reid's ability to feather passes directly to his teammates' sweet spots but suggests Reid's defending has more room to grow.

To me, Reid sounds like an ideal partner for Dylan Samberg in a blue-sky Jets future where the right performance (and contract extensions) give Winnipeg Morrissey-Salomonsson and Samberg-Reid options inside the top four. Note that Reid is committed to Michigan State for next season.

3. Ivar Stenberg, LW/RW, Frolunda (SHL)

Wheeler's ranking: 2

Pronman's ranking: 4

Ates' angle: Stenberg was ranked No. 1 by Wheeler earlier this season — a credit to Stenberg as well as more emphasis that this isn't a Connor McDavid or Matthew Schaefer type of draft with an obvious superstar beyond his peers. The 5-11 winger shoots left but dominates on either wing, with Wheeler giving Stenberg credit for scoring even more than current NHL stars like Lucas Raymond did at the same age.

Stenberg's offensive prowess is multifaceted. He's a playmaker, a shifty skater, and scores goals via brute force one-timer and by deception in tight spaces, too. Wheeler rates his two-way game, noting that Stenberg wins more board battles than he should and has hockey IQ that includes commitment to defence, too. My guess is that some Jets fans read "5-11" and tuned out the rest, given Winnipeg's smaller skill at the top end of the lineup. There's a world in which Stenberg plays comfortably enough on his off wing to help Connor and Mark Scheifele produce offence on Winnipeg's top line.

He'd have to match Raymond's quick but not instantaneous NHL ascension; Raymond made the NHL in 2021-22 after being drafted in 2020 and scored 57 points in 82 games as a rookie. Scheifele will be 34 years old to start 2027-28. Will Scheifele still produce like he does right now? Would Stenberg be ready soon enough? Those questions are more theoretical than realistic — good players are worth drafting whenever they're ready — but it's worth keeping timelines in mind.

4. Keaton Verhoeff, RHD, North Dakota (NCAA)

Wheeler's ranking: 5

Pronman's ranking: 3

Ates' angle: Have you ever watched the Jets' defence corps and wished that they had a big, skilled, right-shot defenceman? Have you wanted that defenceman to be able to play a heavy, physical brand of hockey in his own end, handling top competition defensively while also

possessing a booming shot and solid offensive instincts? Keaton Verhoeff may be the answer to your wishes.

The 6-foot-4 right shot plays on the top power play unit at UND, has worn the “C” for Team Canada internationally, and is rated highly for his hockey sense alongside his physical tools. Pronman projects Verhoeff to be a tough-minutes, top-pair defenceman who contributes in all three zones, likening him to Aaron Ekblad. Wheeler is more concerned with Verhoeff’s skating, hence the lower rating, but believes he’s “going to be a stud, and his status atop the draft is well-earned.”

Verhoeff would be unique in the Jets’ prospect pool, where smaller defencemen often are selected for their hockey IQ, puck retrievals and first pass. He’d also be a short drive to watch play, with the expectation he returns to UND in the fall.

5. Alberts Smits, LHD, Jukurit/München (Liiga)

Wheeler’s ranking: 4

Pronman’s ranking: 6

Ates’ angle: Smits is the first left-shot defenceman on this top-10 list after two top-end righties. That’s rare and it makes me think the Jets would prize Verhoeff if their pick gave them the opportunity to do so. Don’t take that as a detriment to the 6-3 Latvian, whose offensive instincts help him score more against men in Finland’s Liiga than many junior-aged forwards do. He’s a strong defender, too, with Pronman appreciating Smits’ use of his size and reach in the defensive zone and projecting him to play on a top pair in the NHL.

Smits’ size, reach and competitiveness would make him unique in Winnipeg’s prospect pool, where fellow left-shot defencemen like Alfons Freij and Sascha Boumedienne are renowned more for their skill than their brawn.

6. Carson Carels, LHD, Prince George (WHL)

Wheeler’s ranking: 7

Pronman’s ranking: 5

Ates’ angle: Could Winnipeg draft a WHL star defenceman from its own backyard this summer? Carels was born in Cypress River, Man., and developed his game at the Pilot Mound Hockey Academy two hours southwest of Canada Life Centre. Now the 6-2 left shot is one of the WHL’s top scorers and playing big minutes for the Prince George Cougars.

I know the desire to draft a Manitoban is growing among Jets fans, particularly as Olympian Seth Jarvis builds his resume in Carolina. In Jarvis’ case, Bob McKenzie’s scouting consensus rankings put him 18th heading into 2020, where Winnipeg picked Perfetti 10th. The homecoming story would have been a draft-day reach, based on scouting consensus at the time. (The Jets eventually took Oakbank, Man., product Owen Martin in the third round of 2025, but missed out on Manitoban cousins Denton Mateychuk and Owen Pickering in 2022.)

Both of our analysts rank Carels well inside the top 10, perfectly in line with Winnipeg's current draft position. Neither sees an elite, No. 1 power-play unit in Carels' future, but both project him to become a top-four defenceman with a mean streak and a powerful shot.

7. Tynan Lawrence, C, Boston University (NCAA)

Wheeler's ranking: 9

Pronman's ranking: 9

Ates' angle: The 6-foot-1 New Brunswicker is the top centre in this draft class, even if our analysts each rank him ninth overall.

Winnipeg would have plenty of opportunity to check in on Lawrence while watching Sascha Bouchard, his teammate at Boston University and the Jets' first-round pick in 2025. He's a great skater, which the Jets tend to like, and projects as a second-line centre who can be trusted in all three zones. Pronman appreciates Lawrence for his fast-twitch style, work ethic and ability to control the flow of play, while Wheeler says he "just plays the right way."

It kind of sounds like Lawrence is the 2C Winnipeg has been looking for since Scheifele was No. 2 to Bryan Little, no? The only knocks on his game appear to be good as opposed to great offensive ability. Pronman compares him to Matty Beniers.

8. Daxon Rudolph, RHD, Prince Albert (WHL)

Wheeler's ranking: 11

Pronman's ranking: 7

Ates' angle: Rudolph is the third right-shot defenceman inside the top-10 of this year's draft class. He could be the one with the highest hockey IQ, according to Pronman, who lauds Rudolph's decision-making on the power play and all over the ice at even strength. Rudolph's 28 goals and 46 assists give him one more point than fellow WHL star Carels — albeit in nine more games played — and he projects to be able to run an NHL power play.

Rudolph isn't as physical as Carels is, nor is he as Manitoban, but the 6-2 Albertan uses his size and reach to be a solid defender. Both of our analysts project him to be a top-four defenceman all the same.

And wouldn't it be fun if Winnipeg drafted another star defenceman out of Prince Albert?

9. Viggo Björck, C, Djurgården (SHL)

Wheeler's ranking: 8

Pronman's ranking: 12

Ates' angle: It takes a lot of intelligence and skill for a 5-foot-9 centre to be projected inside the top 10. Our analysts suggest Viggo Björck has top-six NHL potential, competing well against

men in the SHL despite his lack of size, and he excelled at the World Juniors, playing a key role on Sweden's gold medal-winning team.

Bjorck's scouting reports remind me of Marco Rossi, who the Wild took one spot ahead of Cole Perfetti in 2020; he's not big or fast and yet everyone is convinced he's smart, skilled and competitive enough to be a second-line centre in the NHL. Wheeler suggests a growth spurt is possible — Bjorck's brother Wilson is over six feet tall, while their dad is 6-2 — and you'd like to see some evidence of that before Bjorck sounds like an ideal Jets pick.

10. Caleb Malhotra, C, Brantford (OHL)

Wheeler's ranking: 10

Pronman's ranking: 10

Ates' angle: Malhotra is the son of Manny Malhotra, who played 991 NHL games for seven NHL teams between 1998 and 2015. Caleb follows in his dad's footsteps in that he plays a competitive, reliable 200-foot game, although this generation's Malhotra is meant to have more offensive skill; Caleb has scored 81 points in 64 games as a 17-year-old for Brantford this season.

He's seen as a true centre in a draft class with few of them. Our analysts love his work ethic, his willingness to make plays through traffic and his ability to win one-on-one battles. They question Malhotra's offensive ability, suggesting it's more middle-six than first-line in caliber, but believe he can become a 2C who plays against tough competition and beats it. That sounds like a player Winnipeg would love — and if he covers the bet and makes it all of the way to a second line, a player with a skill set the pro club sorely needs.

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https://www.winnipeg.sun.com/sports/did-you-score-fleury-nets-first-jets-goal-in-a-3-1-win/article_4ed785c5-83ee-4368-a1ac-d8c13bbaf38a.html

'Did you score?': Fleury nets first Jets goal in a 3-2 win

By Gordon Anderson

Haydn Fleury's biggest fan was at the game to see him score a goal.

The speedy Jets' defenceman scored his first goal in Winnipeg colours as the Jets beat the St. Louis Blues 3-2 on Sunday afternoon at the downtown rink.

"My son asks me every day, every time I play, did you score? And I always say 'no.' It was the first time he's seen me score in person," Fleury said. "I know he's probably more excited than I am, just excited to see him."

When Fleury leaves the rink, his hockey day is far from done.

“He's obsessed with hockey,” Fleury said. “It's mini sticks, it's the Jets, it's everything. I don't really get a break when I go home, I'm either mini-stick goalie or one-on-one. It's fun, and to share this with him is special.”

His goal, which came at 2:31 of the first period, opened the scoring. Using his ample foot speed, he joined the play entering the Blues zone, thereby creating a three-on-two advantage to the right of the net. His shot from the face-off circle beat Jordan Binnington high to the short side. The goal came in his 64th contest with the locals.

“With all the injuries that have happened to him and all the injuries on our defence, we have needed him,” Jets head coach Scott Arniel said. “And now that he has come back healthy it is great to see he has recovered as we weren't sure how that was all going to play itself out.”

Fleury's latest injury happened on Jan. 6 against the Vegas Golden Knights when he slid into the end boards behind the Jets net in the first period. He was taken to hospital and was released later that same night. He suffered a broken nose and bruised upper back and neck on the play.

“He has been playing really well,” Arniel said. “He is a great skater, and he has great mobility and he has filled in well for us and to see him score, especially early on, that was great shot and it looked like he'd been doing that his whole career.”

His previous goal was in a 6-1 victory over the Blues on Dec. 19 of 2023 as a member of the Tampa Bay Lightning. The Carlyle, Sask., logged 22:32 of ice time that night and also registered an assist. Fleury earned an assist in the win over the Blues on Sunday.

The Jets host the Nashville Predators on Tuesday night. The club is 5-2-0 in its eight-game homestand.