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<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/03/23/as-playoff-hopes-dwindle-should-there-be-a-jets-goalie-controversy>

As playoff hopes dwindle, should there be a Jets goalie controversy? Comrie's six-game winning streak makes a case for netminding changeup

By: Mike McIntyre

Let's make one thing clear: the Winnipeg Jets do not currently have a goaltending controversy.

Connor Hellebuyck is the undisputed starter. Eric Comrie is the backup. And that's likely not about to change.

But here's a meaty question worth chewing on: should they?

If these truly are do-or-die days, with the team trying to navigate a razor-thin playoff race where even the slightest misstep could prove fatal, how can they not at least consider riding the hottest hand?

And right now, without dispute, that's Comrie — not Hellebuyck.

"I thought that was going to be question No. 1," Jets head coach Scott Arniel told the Free Press with a laugh following his team's 3-2 shootout victory on Sunday afternoon over the New York Rangers inside Madison Square Garden.

Guilty as charged. We had actually saved it for near the end of his post-game, wondering if Comrie's recent surge, coupled with his latest outing, is forcing the organization to re-think its goaltending plans.

"We'll see. We're going to see how this plays," Arniel continued.

"We face two big teams at home here in Vegas and Colorado, so we'll play it out here. We'll look at it and see how we're lined up, making sure that both goaltenders are more than likely going to get an opportunity. We've just got to make sure that they're both rested and healthy for the game that they play in."

Translation: the door appears to be at least slightly open. That's not to say it will be Comrie in net on Tuesday night when the Jets open a quick two-game homestand against the Golden Knights. But, at the very least, it's being considered — as it should be.

Winnipeg (29-29-12) enters play five points back of the Nashville Predators for the final Western Conference wild-card spot. Both teams have 12 regular-season games remaining. The Jets must also overtake the Los Angeles Kings (three points ahead), Seattle Kraken (one point ahead with a game in hand) and San Jose Sharks (tied with two games in hand).

It's a difficult, borderline impossible task at this point, one that is going to require an incredible run. Think 11-1-0 or 10-2-0.

"The margin for error is slim," admitted captain Adam Lowry.

Fair or not, the goaltending position becomes magnified when the pressure ramps up. They are the last line of defence, after all.

This decision regarding who should start any given game at this point shouldn't be about contract status, salary, hockey history or ego. It should be about one thing: who gives us the best chance to win right here, right now?

The numbers don't lie.

Only one Winnipeg goaltender has put together a personal six-game winning streak this year. That would be Comrie, whose last loss came way back on Jan. 1. His numbers since that time are sizzling: a 6-0-0 record, 1.50 goals-against average and a .943 save percentage.

You can thank his wife, Haley, who tried to lift his spirits prior to his Jan. 9 game against the Kings by decorating his car with photos reminding him of what's important in life. Among the snapshots were his two children, along with one of a young Comrie dressed in his goalie equipment.

He hasn't lost since.

You can also thank Jets goalie coach Wade Flaherty, who suggested Comrie change up his mask and go with a plain white version following that New Year's Day outing in Toronto, where he gave up six goals, including a self-inflicted blunder late in the game that broke a tie.

He hasn't lost since.

Comrie's overall numbers might not jump off the page — 22 starts (a career-high), a 12-9-1 record, 2.90 GAA and an .897 SV%. But dig a little deeper and you'll find this really is a tale of two seasons.

Ten of his starts came without the safety net of Hellebuyck, who was sidelined with a knee injury that required arthroscopic surgery. Comrie went 2-7-1 with a 3.71 GAA and a .874 SV%. He definitely struggled at times in an unfamiliar role, buckling under the increased workload.

"The margin for error is slim."

But in his other 12 games, where he truly was in his usual role as a backup making spot starts, Comrie is 10-2-0 with a 2.33 GAA and a .915 SV%. Those numbers would have him among the very best No. 2 netminders in the NHL.

Hellebuyck, meanwhile, hasn't looked much like his Hart and Vezina Trophy-winning self lately. He started three straight games last week, giving up 13 goals in the process. Several were ones you'd normally expect him to stop. His save percentage in those outings was just .841.

The body language has been concerning, too. There have been times Hellebuyck has seemed slow to move, slow to react and slow to get up. There's also been more "swimming" in his crease, which you don't typically see from him. When Hellebuyck is at his best, he's big and boring.

Can it be fatigue? Unlike the majority of NHL goalies, the 32-year-old didn't get a three-week Olympic break to reset and recharge. He was in Milan last month, playing five pressure-cooker games for the United States — winning them all — and leading his team to a gold medal.

But since being back in Winnipeg's net, the results have been mixed.

Hellebuyck had started 11 of Winnipeg's previous 12 games prior to Comrie getting the call on Sunday afternoon. That has to take a toll, both physically and mentally.

Overall, Hellebuyck's numbers are far inferior to his career averages: a 2.85 GAA, his highest since the 2021-22 season — the last time the Jets missed the playoffs — and a .897 save percentage, by far the worst of his career.

Comrie has proven he's more than capable of pitching in, and the Jets at this point should be doing everything possible to make sure that happens.

Splitting the remaining 12 starts? That's not a bad idea.

Here's a better one: win and you stay in. At this point, it's not about roles or resumés, it's about survival. And if that creates a little goaltending controversy, so be it.

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<https://www.nhl.com/news/nashville-predators-winnipeg-jets-game-recap-march-17-2026>

Jets' sked looks hopeless, so there's a chance

By Paul Friesen

Over the weekend we were reminded once again of one of the strangest things about this Winnipeg Jets season.

It doesn't seem to matter who they play.

Whether it's the 84-point Pittsburgh Penguins or the 64-point New York Rangers, the Jets have the same challenge on their hands.

They went to a shootout against both on the weekend and came out with three of four points, as they continue to cling to a thread of a playoff hope.

This week it's the 76-point Vegas Golden Knights and 98-point Colorado Avalanche in town on Tuesday and Thursday, the latter being the NHL's top squad, overall.

Both have what the 70-point Jets want: a spot above the playoff line.

Trouble is they haven't narrowed that gap at all, as it remains five points and four teams ahead of them.

"It is a sprint to the finish," is how captain Adam Lowry put it to reporters in New York on Sunday. "The margin for error is slim for us and we know the position we are in and we know the teams

coming up. But we have got to take care of the one game in front of us and not look too far ahead, and hope you are getting help on the out-of-town scoreboard.”

Oh, they’ve had their share of that, or the gap would be larger.

But the streak this team needs to go on just hasn’t materialized: 5-3-2 in their last 10 is okay, but not exactly a frantic push.

Normally you’d look at their opponents and pick out the games that are all but surefire wins and those that are more of a 50-50 proposition.

Not with this team.

They’ll beat the Tampa Bay Lightning by three goals one week, lose to the Rangers by three the next.

Two days after that embarrassing, home-ice loss to New York back in early March, they beat the mighty Avs, only to lose to Nashville in a shootout three days later.

It hasn’t made sense most of the season, so why expect it to start now?

“There are a lot of really good teams coming up for us,” Lowry said. “And we are going to need to play our best hockey.” After hosting Colorado on Thursday, the Jets will visit the Avs two nights later. Sounds like a meat grinder of a back-to-back that could chew up and spit out their chances.

The weird thing is visiting lowly Chicago three days after that will present as big a challenge for this team.

After that it’s still on the road against 97-point Dallas and red-hot Columbus, the Blue Jackets with old friend Rick Bowness at the helm and pushing all the right buttons.

This mostly-dirty final dozen starts on Tuesday against Vegas, a team they’ve beat just once in the last 10 meetings.

Based on the strength of the Jets’ schedule, it appears all but hopeless.

So we’re saying there’s a chance.