

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/01/02/time-running-out-for-chevy-to-salvage-jets-season>

Time running out for Chevy to salvage Jets' season Changes must be made if underachieving club is going to climb out of league basement

By: Ken Wiebe

OTTAWA — Kevin Cheveldayoff finds himself squarely between a rock and a hard place in his quest for a life preserver.

The general manager of the Winnipeg Jets isn't necessarily on borrowed time, but he fully understands time is of the essence for the team he assembled for the 2025-26 season.

As the Jets prepare to face the Ottawa Senators on Saturday to close out a three-game road trip, they've dropped eight consecutive games (0-5-3) and reside in the basement of the NHL in points and points percentage.

In one calendar year, the Jets have gone from the cream of the crop to dead last among the 32 teams.

This isn't about pointing the finger at one person in the search for someone to blame for this confusing development, but as the chief architect of the franchise, Cheveldayoff recognizes his role and responsibilities in the rapid decline for a hockey team that entered the current season as a legitimate Western Conference contender.

That's why action must be taken.

After capturing the first Presidents' Trophy in franchise history and putting together the best record in 14 seasons, expectations were sky high and when training camp opened in September, players openly discussed the importance of taking the next step as an organization and finding a way to push forward after dealing with the disappointment of a second-round exit at the hands of the Dallas Stars.

Lessons were supposed to be learned and progress was expected to be made, but after coming out of the gate with a 9-3 record, the Jets have dropped precipitously, winning six of the past 27 games (and one of the past 11).

Instead of competing for another Central Division title, the Jets aren't even in the same area code as the Colorado Avalanche, Dallas Stars or Minnesota Wild.

Entering Friday's action, the Jets were seven points out of a playoff spot and would need to leapfrog seven teams to sneak into the second wild-card spot.

Considering how the Jets have found new ways to lose in tight games during a stretch where they've lost eight games by a total of nine goals, it's hard to envision a scenario in which

Winnipeg can morph into the Buffalo Sabres and rattle off 10 consecutive victories to get themselves back into the race.

As the Jets quickly approach the midway point of the season, Cheveldayoff is left to ponder his next move — or more likely, series of moves.

Reversing course and punting on the season would be an unexpected U-turn for the Jets, but being the oldest team in the league hasn't brought the desired results.

That doesn't mean a fire sale is on the horizon, but efforts must be made to change the mix of this group during the coming days and weeks.

We're not just talking about waiving an underperforming veteran or trading someone on the periphery of the roster either.

Something bolder is required.

No, this doesn't mean moving one of the core 4 of Connor Hellebuyck, Mark Scheifele, Josh Morrissey or Kyle Connor.

That's not going to make the Jets a better team in either the short or long term.

Jets captain Adam Lowry is also in the no-fly zone after signing his extension recently.

Cheveldayoff has a long history of being patient and he's used that quality to make deals that often worked out well, such as the one for Gabe Vilardi, who scored his 18th goal in Thursday's 6-5 loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Vilardi has blossomed into a top-line right-winger after being used mostly in a middle-six role with the Los Angeles Kings and now it's up to Cheveldayoff and his pro scouts to find another player or two like him.

Someone who may be languishing with another team, but simply needs a different set of eyes to shift him into a role where he could excel under a head coach that shows faith in him.

Making a deal like that is easier said than done with most NHL teams believing they are still in the race, but the Jets can't afford to wait until free agency in the summer of 2026 to address their needs.

After seeing Jake DeBrusk sit out as a healthy scratch for the Vancouver Canucks earlier this week, you could easily see him as a fit in Winnipeg, given his size, skating ability and track record of delivering as a secondary scorer.

DeBrusk, who has trade protection, is under contract at US\$5.5 million for five more seasons after this one, so acquiring him would be beneficial on many fronts.

There are currently too many veterans in the Jets' lineup who aren't performing at the level that was expected of them.

A quick fix isn't likely in the offing, not with the Jets lacking draft capital for 2026 and 2027 after shipping out second- and fourth-round picks last season in deadline deals for Luke Schenn and Brandon Tanev.

Recouping some of those draft picks is likely going to be part of the plan of attack, as it should be.

Despite the urge to add an impact player immediately, there is no possible way the Jets can afford to move their 2026 first-rounder at this stage of the proceedings.

That pick — provided it is in the top three — could be franchise altering and the key to pressing fast forward on this retooling process.

The injection of someone such as Gavin McKenna, Ivar Stenberg or Keaton Verhoeff would provide an immediate jolt next fall, just like it did when the Jets moved up to second overall in the 2016 NHL Draft and chose Patrik Laine.

Even that wouldn't be a cure all.

Other players still need to be brought in to augment the current roster.

While there were some expected growing pains during his first taste of NHL action, he exhibited some important qualities and the sooner the Jets find room for him in the regular rotation, the better off they will be.

Getting him somewhere in the neighbourhood of 30-to-35 NHL games of experience would be beneficial for next season.

As for the forward group, finding a new home for Brad Lambert in a trade is an immediate option, though the Jets would likely be getting back someone in a similar situation who is looking to benefit from a change of scenery.

Calling up someone such as Walker Duehr also makes sense when you consider that he's a strong skater who could help the Jets' forecheck, which is one of the areas they've struggled with this season.

It's true Duehr had issues with inconsistency in his two previous NHL stops (Calgary Flames, San Jose Sharks), but he's already delivered nine goals and 18 points for the Manitoba Moose going into Friday's action.

For a Jets team looking for secondary scoring, giving Duehr a look — even if it's a cameo — makes a whole lot of sense.

Just how deep the moves go will ultimately be up to the players and how they perform during this sprint to the Olympic break.

The current season is already going to be difficult to salvage, but for several players on the roster, how they perform during this five-week block could ultimately determine whether they will be viewed as part of the solution or part of the problem.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/01/02/a-second-shot-at-international-glory>

A second shot at international glory Hellebuyck, Connor named to U.S. Olympic team

By: Ken Wiebe Mike McIntyre

OTTAWA – Connor Hellebuyck will get another opportunity to flip the script in international hockey.

The same goes for Kyle Connor, who joins his Winnipeg Jets' teammate on the United States men's hockey team after Friday's announcement on The Today Show.

Hellebuyck and Connor looked like obvious choices for Bill Guerin and the Team USA management team.

Hellebuyck has dealt with arthroscopic knee surgery and seen his numbers (2.51 goals-against average, .908 save percentage in 22 starts) dip a bit after winning the Hart Trophy and Vezina Trophy last season, but he's put himself in a strong position to be the starter for the Americans once again after holding that job at the 4 Nations Face-Off.

There's been plenty of chatter about how Jordan Binnington outduelled Hellebuyck in the gold medal game last February, but nobody was blaming Hellebuyck for the OT winner scored by Connor McDavid.

Regardless, you can be sure the Jets' pillar will be highly motivated to take his team to the top of the podium next month in Italy.

In previous conversations, Hellebuyck has referenced what it would mean to him to have his Ryan Miller moment — referring to the brilliant play of the Team USA netminder in the Vancouver Olympics in 2010 — while noting he wanted to change the heartbreaking ending authored by Sidney Crosby when he scored the Golden Goal.

Hellebuyck joins Jake Oettinger and Jeremy Swayman in the crease, as the U.S. returns the same three masked men from the 4 Nations Face-Off roster.

Things didn't go nearly as smoothly at the best-on-best tournament for Connor, who began the event on the top line with Jack Eichel, but eventually slid down the depth chart and was a healthy scratch in the gold medal game.

That decision to leave a sniper like Connor out of the lineup has been second-guessed for months and while he said all the right things when asked about it, you can be sure the Michigan product will be looking to make a much bigger impact this time around.

Connor is off to another strong start to the season, sitting second in team scoring with 18 goals and 46 points in 39 games going into Saturday's game against the Ottawa Senators.

“Oh hell yeah, Billy, that’s awesome,” Connor told Guerin during Wednesday’s phone call which brought about the good news. A video of the conversation was shared to social media on Friday.

“You got it buddy. We’re super excited. We all feel like we’ve got some unfinished business,” said Guerin. “We feel like we’ve got a group that can get it done and you’re going to be a big part of that.”

“I’m through the moon right now,” replied Connor.

Guerin then joked that the “tryout is over and you can stop scoring goals against the Minnesota Wild now. Save it for the Olympics.”

The Americans have a deep forward group, but it won’t be a surprise if Connor excels on a line with Auston Matthews, Jack Hughes or Dylan Larkin.

Playing on the opposite wing of Matt Boldy could also be a dynamic combination.

“Helly is one of the best goalies in the world and Kyle is elite as well,” Matthews said Thursday after the morning skate. “(Connor) is a difficult player to handle and he can make you pay on the power play and at five-on-five.”

KEN SAYS: Team Canada has unveiled a roster that looks like it will be tough to beat, but that hasn’t prevented several choices from being placed under the microscope.

While acknowledging how difficult a task Canadian GM Doug Armstrong and the management team had in trimming the team down to 25 players, if a gold medal is not the final result, further questions are going to be asked.

That’s the nature of the job, something Armstrong himself spoke to during the press conference and Zoom call on New Year’s Eve.

Mike and I picked our final projected rosters a couple weeks back and I only had 19 of the 25 correct.

That’s because I had Mark Scheifele, Seth Jarvis and Sam Bennett up front, Matthew Schaefer and Jakob Chychrun on defence and MacKenzie Blackwood between the pipes as the third goalie — while conceding in advance it was likely Brandon Hagel, Anthony Cirelli and Jordan Binnington would all be on the team.

There’s a case to be made that Canada’s second team could be in the mix for a medal at the Olympics, so it was always going to be easy to second-guess.

You have to applaud how Scheifele handled the questions about the tough news he received when he spoke to reporters in Toronto after Thursday’s game.

As someone in the room and asking the questions, you could see the disappointment on his face and hear it in his voice but Scheifele gave a series of thoughtful answers that described what he was going through.

He didn't try to deny how crushing a blow it was to not be named to the team and he also shared his pride in how he's played during the past 12 months, noting it's probably the best he's played in his NHL career.

When you consider the personal loss Scheifele endured after the passing of his father Brad prior to Game 6 against the Dallas Stars last spring, combined with being passed over by Team Canada twice in the past 13 months, the resolve and maturity he showed in his responses were impressive to witness in person.

As for Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey, he figures to play a prominent role on Canada's second pairing with either Colton Parayko or Shea Theodore.

Winnipegger Mark Stone is having another strong season and his reliable two-way game, smarts and leadership allow him to move around the lineup and play whatever role is asked of him.

Elkhorn product Travis Sanheim is in the mix for third-pairing duty with Thomas Harley and Drew Doughty.

Shifting gears to the Americans, the biggest head scratcher for me was leaving Jason Robertson of the Dallas Stars off the roster. Robertson produced 50 goals and 100 points during the 2025 calendar year and has been to the Western Conference final in each of the past three seasons. He's also shown well in the post-season, with 18 goals and 44 points in 56 games, and isn't afraid to go to the hard areas. I understand the value of role players, but this is another omission that could come with side order of regret.

MIKE SAYS: In terms of my predictions, I ended up with 21 of 25. I had the three goaltenders right and only whiffed on one forward — selecting Jarvis instead of Bo Horvat. I really took a beating on the back-end by picking Schaefer, Chychrun and Evan Bouchard to all get the call over Sanheim, Harley and Colton Parayko.

It sure speaks to the depth of talent here in the Great White North that you could put together a powerhouse "B" team that would have a legitimate shot at getting to the podium.

Imagine the likes of Scheifele, Jarvis, Sam Bennett, Connor Bedard, Wyatt Johnston, John Tavares and Zach Hyman up front and players like Chychrun, Schaefer, Bouchard and Brandon Montour on the blue-line. No doubt that group would have a Maple Leaf-sized chip on its shoulders.

Speaking of Jarvis, I loved the way the Winnipegger reacted to his snub, creating a soundbite for the ages when he cited a quote from former teammate Justin Williams and said "Sometimes you gotta eat a s—t sandwich and chew on it for a little bit. It doesn't taste good, but you move on."

On paper, Canada appears to have a distinct advantage over all teams, including the Americans, when it comes to forwards and defencemen.

Guerin's exclusion of forwards such as Robertson and Cole Caufield and defencemen such as Adam Fox and Lane Hutson — over slowing, aging stars like J.T. Miller, Vincent Trocheck, Seth Jones and Noah Hanifin — all had me a bit puzzled.

However, the U.S. could have a notable edge in goal. Binnington isn't even the best Canadian 'tender on his own team, with Winnipegger Joel Hofer passing him in that department, but I understand Armstrong's logic in including him. But I suspect it will be as the No. 3 or, at most, No. 2 guy.

The Jets will also be represented in Italy by Nino Niederreiter, who will be a major piece of an underdog Switzerland team. Niederreiter, who recently celebrated his 1,000th NHL game, is struggling mightily these days. He played 13 games in December, recording no goals, no assists and no points while going minus-seven.

Niederreiter was a healthy scratch for Thursday's game in Toronto, although I expect he'll be back in the lineup on Saturday as Winnipeg wraps up its three-game road trip in Ottawa.

My excitement for the Olympics is ramping up with each passing day, and I'm looking forward to being in Milan to cover the event for the Free Press.

Winnipeg Sun

https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/the-winnipeg-jets-are-first-in-the-nhl-at-one-specific-stat/article_5f277221-9dc8-4958-a684-da667082a429.html

The Winnipeg Jets are first in the NHL at one specific stat

By Gordon Anderson

The Winnipeg Jets are first in the league at something, but that 'something' is the wrong thing.

In their latest loss, perhaps qualifying as the most disheartening thus far, the Jets squandered a three-goal lead in an eventual 6-5 loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs on Thursday evening in Toronto.

The club now leads the NHL in one goal losses with 10. The Jets are the only team with double digit one-goal setbacks.

Things never used to be this way, says head coach Scott Arniel.

"Man, oh man, in the last three years, we were one of the best teams in the league in one-goal games, and a lot of the same guys are here," Arniel told reporters in Toronto. "To me, that's a mindset. That means you're doing the right things to get yourselves there and now all of a sudden, now you've really got to dig in."

According to the NHL website, the Jets posted a 19-4-4 in one-goal games last season. The previous season, the club was 15-5-6 in games decided by the slimmest of margins.

The 19 wins during the 2024-25 season tied them for fifth overall. The 15 wins from '23-24 tied them for 16th.

But 'dig in' isn't what happened in Toronto as the Jets allowed two leads to evaporate in the third period. Never mind the 4-1 lead halfway through the game.

Going into the matchup, the locals were surefooted with the lead, posting an 11-1-2 record when leading after two. The Leafs were 2-11-3 when trailing after 40 minutes.

Toronto tied the game at four when Matias Maccelli scored at 6:30, but the Jets restored their lead when Mark Scheifele scored at 8:50.

The Leafs tied the game when Troy Stecher scored at 13:13, setting up Auston Matthews to grab the winner at 15:38 as Eric Comrie mishandled the puck, eventually leading to an empty-net goal for the Toronto captain.

The final stanza slip-up extended the team's losing streak to eight consecutive games (0-5-3) dating back to a Dec. 15 overtime loss to the Ottawa Senators.

Fresh off his two-goal performance against Toronto, his 19th and 20th goals of the season, Scheifele was asked how the team can reverse this annoying trend as seven of the eight losses are of the one-goal variety.

The 3-1 loss to the Edmonton Oilers last Monday was a one-goal game late in the third until Zach Hyman scored into the empty net at 18:37.

"Yeah, it's a good question," Scheifele said. "We're right there, we're right in there in games. We just gotta keep the faith, keep the faith that we are a strong team, close teams out, do the right things over and over and that will get us a win."

Gabe Vilardi spoke in vague terms, too. The bulky winger gave the Jets a 1-0 lead, scoring his 17th of the season at 14:09 of the first period. Scheifele earned the primary assist.

"How do we turn it around? I don't have a single answer," Vilardi said. "It doesn't involve me talking here for five minutes. There's a lot of things we can clean up and continue to talk about and work on, and it's got to translate to the game, though."

Arniel was much more granular with his explanation.

"It's got to be the shot blocking, the wall plays, the net-front battles, having the responsibility of making sure the puck gets out of our zone into their zone," Arniel said. "Those are all things that, when you're on your game, they become habits and it is continuous habits. Right now, we're trying to get guys to be consistent with it."

Winnipeg is 4-10-4 in one-goal games through 39 games played, heading into Ottawa on Saturday night. Incidentally, the Senators are third in one-goal losses with a 10-7-5 record.

https://www.winnipegssun.com/sports/dark-day-mark-scheifele-overlooked-by-team-canada-brass/article_6954ac48-2a28-4ed8-969f-71b606c15570.html

'Dark day': Mark Scheifele overlooked by Team Canada brass

By Gordon Anderson

Mark Scheifele is used to executing crisp and accurate passes on the tape, not getting passed over.

On Wednesday morning, the Jets leading scorer found out he was not part of the Team Canada 25-man roster participating in the Winter Olympics next month.

"Yeah, it sucked," Scheifele told reporters after a 6-5 loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs on Thursday evening. "It is a pretty dark day. It's hard to think about now after kind of turning the page to (Thursday morning)."

Scheifele never talked publicly about his desire to play for Team Canada. But his reaction to the bad news delivered by GM Doug Armstrong on Wednesday morning was more than enough to peel back the layers about his non-inclusion.

"It is news that you don't want. It just shows the amount of talent in Canada," he said. "There are so many great hockey players, so many great guys. It's an honour to be a part of this country, just because there are so many great hockey players. I obviously wish I was picked. But God's got a plan, and I've just got to trust it."

During his introductory press conference, Armstrong was asked specifically about Scheifele's omission. He did not answer the question.

"I will hold my answers to questions of players that are on the team, not off the team," Armstrong said.

The GM said there is a stand-by list of players ready to play should injuries occur between now and the Olympic break that starts on Feb. 6.

Armstrong didn't say how many players were on the stand-by list, nor did he identify any of the players by name.

When asked about the stand-by list, Scheifele said this, when asked if he plans to stay in the Olympic protocol.

"Yes," he said.

One part of the protocol is adherence to Olympic drug testing rules and regulations.

Scheifele has the most points of any Canadian not to make the roster. Scheifele has 20 goals and 28 assists in 39 games this season. He scored twice in the one-goal loss to the Leafs. Scheifele also wasn't selected for Canada's 4 Nations Face-Off team last February.

"I don't know what else I could have done," Scheifele said. "I'm proud of the way I played all season to now. I think I'm probably playing the best hockey I have (in) my career. You know, that's all you've got to do is trust in God's plan and know there's a reason for everything."

The men's tournament begins on Feb. 11 when Slovakia takes on Finland. The gold medal game is scheduled for Feb. 22. Canada's first game is Feb. 12 against Czechia.

https://www.winnipegssun.com/sports/nhl/connor-hellebuyck-make-u-s-team-for-olympic-hockey-tourney/article_efd2a92c-8364-41e1-b612-d0bd9fc39739.html

Connor, Hellebuyck make U.S. team for Olympic hockey tourney

By Gordon Anderson

On Friday morning, Jets forward Kyle Connor and goaltender Connor Hellebuyck were among the 25 players chosen to represent the U.S. at the upcoming Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026.

"We're excited about our team and congratulate everyone named on Friday," Team USA general manager Bill Guerin said. "It was incredibly difficult for our management group to get to the final roster and that's a credit to so many in our country, including all those at the grassroots level who help make our sport so strong."

Twenty-one of the players on the Olympic roster represented the U.S. at the 4 Nations Face-Off last February as the U.S. lost to Canada when Connor McDavid shot the puck past Hellebuyck at 8:18 of overtime.

Connor tallied one assist in three games at the 4 Nations. Hellebuyck posted a 3-2-1 record with a 1.59 goals against average and a .932 save percentage

Guerin said the team chemistry of the 4 Nations group was an important factor in the selection of the Olympic team.

The GM seems more concerned about building a team, rather than a collection of offensively gifted players.

"The biggest thing for me was chemistry," Guerin said. "The chemistry allowed the guys to play the way that they did. The willingness to accept their role, willingness to do things that, maybe on their NHL team they are not asked to do like take a little bit less ice time or play a different role, all those things went into it but the chemistry thing was one of the biggest things."

Offensively gifted players like Jason Robertson, Cole Caufield and Matthew Knies were left off the roster.

Robertson is eight in the league in scoring with 48 points. He is also the top point getter among American skaters. Only five American skaters have more goals than Caufield, as the Montreal Canadiens forward is on pace for a career high of 40 markers.

"Those guys are all great players, but we have to make a team," Guerin said. "Like I said before, if we are doing it like that then you don't need a general manager or a coach, just (pick the team) by stats. We have to build a team, we have to fill roles and we have certain responsibilities that go up and down the lineup. Those decisions don't come lightly. Take my word, those are not fun phone calls to make but we have a job to do by putting together a team not just a group of individuals."

The U.S. will open the competition against Latvia on Feb. 12 at 2:10 p.m. in preliminary round action at Milano Santagiulia Ice Hockey Arena.

Connor and Hellebuyck are among 23 players who will make their Olympic debut.

The Team USA men's program last won gold at the 1980 Olympics in Lake Placid. The last Olympic medal for the men's program came in 2010 in Vancouver, a silver medal, as the squad lost 3-2 to Canada on Sidney Crosby's golden goal against Buffalo Sabres netminder Ryan Miller.

"There's nothing like the Olympics and I know our players and staff will represent our country well and work hard to achieve our ultimate goal," Guerin said.

Guerin is also the general manager and president of hockey operations for the Minnesota Wild. Mike Sullivan is the head coach of Team USA with John Hynes, John Tortorella and David Quinn assuming assistant coaching duties.

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6932495/2026/01/03/winnipeg-jets-records/>

The Winnipeg Jets records debate: Gary Bettman says it's complicated. It shouldn't be

By Murat Ates and Sean McIndoe

Mark Scheifele spent 2025 etching his name into Winnipeg Jets and Atlanta Thrashers franchise record books.

On Feb. 24, Scheifele's overtime goal against San Jose made him the franchise's record-holder for goals, surpassing Ilya Kovalchuk. On Oct. 18, Scheifele's goal against the Predators made him the franchise record-holder for points, surpassing Blake Wheeler. Scheifele passed Wheeler for the franchise record in games played on Nov. 18 against Columbus, earning him his third Jets/Thrashers record of the calendar year.

But Scheifele has said and repeated — for several years at this point — that he's focused more on chasing Dale Hawerchuk for the Winnipeg goals record. Whatever the franchise delineation might say, Scheifele and the overwhelming majority of fans treat both sets of Jets history as the same.

The first edition of Jets history moved to Phoenix with Winnipeg's first NHL franchise in 1996, but that franchise now lies dormant.

As the statue of Hawerchuk outside the Canada Life Centre would indicate, the original Jets team's history is still celebrated not just by fans, but also by the Jets organization, which bought the struggling Thrashers from Atlanta.

So The Athletic asked Gary Bettman in December if the NHL had a process in place to amalgamate Jets 1.0 and 2.0 NHL records under the umbrella of the current franchise, as would be the wishes of most Jets fans.

Bettman indicated that the league had been working on the concept for years, saying, "It's not as simple as just doing it."

Shouldn't it be, though?

In this discussion, I asked our local history expert Sean McIndoe to weigh in. Sean's been banging the drum on this issue for a while now. But we decided to give Bettman's argument a stress test, and see if it is really as complicated as some make it out to be.

Murat: Let me start with the question everyone asks when it comes to the Jets records. If the NHL finds some way to consolidate Jets 1.0 and Jets 2.0 records, what should it do with Atlanta?

Sean: The Jets are the Jets. Let's start there. That's the foundation we should be building on. And even if we run into problems along the way, we should remember that the Jets are the Jets.

Why? Because, and this is crucial, it's how fans think. That's what should matter. The NHL is an entertainment product, one that's built for fans and only survives because of those fans. Whenever they have a major decision to make, their first question should be "What would a fan want us to do here?" You don't have to look very hard to find cases where they obviously haven't done that, and the results generally speak for themselves. (Hello, loser point, animated board ads, and gambling spam.)

And my argument is that there isn't a Winnipeg Jets fan out there who would agree with a sentence like, "The Jets' all-time single-season goals record is held by Ilya Kovalchuk with 52, not by Teemu Selanne, who never played for the team." I mean, all of that is technically correct based on how the league does its record-keeping. But the league does it wrong, which is why you get weird statements like that, that are supposed to make sense but don't.

So what do we do with Atlanta? Ask the fans. And my guess is they'd say, "We're not really too concerned about that because Atlanta isn't a team anymore." That's not to say you get rid of them. Kovalchuk still had his 52-goal seasons. Those records all still exist. But you don't try to cram them into Jets history, any more than we'd insist that Cleveland Barons stats should still be floating around some current team's record book.

And then if and when Atlanta gets a new team, they can have the records if they want them.

Murat: Have you been to Winnipeg in recent years? I'm trying to think of what fans might think, and this one strikes me as a standout: There's a statue of Hawerchuk at True North Square, across the street from Canada Life Centre. According to NHL records as we have them today, Hawerchuk didn't play for the current Jets franchise. Doesn't this strike you as weird?

Sean: It's super weird!

And I'll give the Coyotes some credit here because they at least made a half-hearted attempt to carry over some of that original Jets history, back when we assumed that the NHL would never make its way back to Winnipeg. They honored Hawerchuk's number, which was a nice gesture. Then they let Anthony Duclair wear it, because why not, because none of this makes sense.

If you're going to tell me that there's also a Marc Savard statue outside the Jets arena, then I'll reconsider. But my guess is there isn't, and never would be, because he was never a Jet, and the Jets are the Jets.

Murat: One thing I like about you is your consistency. And the NHL has over a hundred years of precedents to go by, which we can look to for consistent interpretations of how to handle situations like this.

There are several cases where teams' records move from one city to the next when a franchise relocates. New Jersey honours Colorado Rockies records, doesn't it? (Does it?) Colorado, Carolina, and Dallas incorporate Quebec, Hartford, and Minnesota, don't they?

But then you've got Jets 1.0 records ... Which moved to Phoenix and then expanded to Arizona by the transitive power of bankruptcy, and are now languishing in the desert because the NHL didn't move them to Utah. The defunct Arizona team is the second most common "what about?" to sort out when Bettman talks about difficult decisions.

I'll start simple and then try to stump you. What about Arizona, where popular 1.0 Jets like Shane Doan, Teppo Numminen, and Nikolai Khabibulin continued their careers? Shouldn't the NHL try to do right by the ghost of the franchise that it still seems to want to resuscitate someday?

Sean: First, those franchises you mention all kind of recognize the former records. For example, Carolina and Colorado mostly unretired the Hartford and Quebec numbers, even Gordie Howe's No. 9 (which hasn't been used in Carolina but is officially unretired). And that's fine! Remember, it's about the fans. Presumably, those organizations were thinking about their own fan base when they made those decisions. And if those fan bases said things like, "We have no idea who Marc Tardif is and don't really care," then that's a fair reason to not worry too much about someone else's history.

As for Arizona, yes, the NHL should do right by them, absolutely. In this case, that means keeping their records in safekeeping, not handing them to some other team that doesn't care about them. Hold on to the history, and then when Arizona inevitably gets an expansion team, they can decide what they want to do with them. If they want to maintain that history, great. If they prefer a truly fresh start, that's fine too.

Again, nobody is saying that the records disappear and we pretend Shane Doan never happened. They'll still be team records, part of NHL history forever. They just won't be part of the history of any of the existing teams, just like "Phantom" Joe Malone's stats from the Hamilton Tigers don't show up in any of the 32 current team record books.

Murat: Let's talk about Shane Doan then. He's the Arizona franchise leader in goals (402) and points (972) after scoring seven times and adding 10 assists for the 1995-96 Jets. In your scenario, do they slash his Coyotes records to 395 goals and 955 points?

I ask not to prove I can do basic arithmetic but to point in a different direction. Fans can want what they want and clubs can do their best to honour those wishes. At some point, the NHL has to get involved and make some decisions. I'm not aware of them ret-conning their history prior to this moment, and the Arizona teams' records go well beyond Doan. Numminen played 547 games for Winnipeg and 551 for Phoenix. Do the Coyotes records suddenly get chopped, in a retroactive sense?

Maybe that's too easy and you can just say yes. Our old friend Craig Morgan once pitched the idea of Arizona and Winnipeg sharing those records. Everyone gets their own way. Does that feel too much like everyone on the team getting a participation trophy to you?

Sean: That's a fair question. I think my answer would be that the records get chopped, because again, that feels like it's the most in line with how a fan would think. If you were a fan in Arizona who watched every game the Coyotes ever played, you saw Shane Doan score 395 goals for your team, not 402.

I feel like that works. But maybe not. Maybe Craig's option works, too. Any change always brings a risk of unintended consequences, so we should think through the weird stuff just in case. But also, these are hockey records from a few years ago, not holy tablets from centuries past. The existence of some edge cases shouldn't be a reason to just give up and ignore the obvious fix that gets 98 percent of it right.

Murat: Let's talk about one more edge case that Jets fans have expressed to me: The WHA.

I tend to sort Jets stats into WHA era, 1.0 era, and 2.0 era, wherein the Jets "franchise" is 2.0 and Thrashers. That sentence probably bored you to death and proved that you're right to "The Jets are the Jets" everything. But maybe you'd stop here?

If you get your way, do Morris Lukowich's 65 goals and 34 assists for the 1979 Avco Cup champions get added to Winnipeg's new record book?

Sean: I wouldn't count the WHA. It's a separate league. It's the same team, in a sense, because the NHL did "absorb" the WHA Jets back in 1979, but even then, they treated them largely like an expansion team. I think the Jets should be free to honor the WHA team as a key part of the city's pro hockey history, and even fly the Avco Cup banners if they want to.

But I don't think we need to carry over records from a separate league, and I don't think that contradicts my "The Jets are the Jets" pillar.

Murat: I've had the epiphany and all of this is easy, now. It's the league that counts! So, clearly the NHL Senators are the NHL Senators, right? They've won four Stanley Cups?

Sean: You son of a ... OK, yes, the Senators are a weird one. By my own logic, I should be saying, "The Senators are the Senators."

But also, that would mean that the Senators would have 11 Stanley Cups in total, many of them pre-dating the NHL itself. "The Senators have won more Stanley Cups than the Penguins and Oilers combined" is not a sentence that makes sense to me, or anyone else.

So, did I just get tripped up by my own logic? Did we just prove that I've been wrong all along? I don't think so. I think there's a very valid counterpoint that goes something like, "The old Senators were from almost six decades before the new version arrived, and that's too long to consider them part of the same history." I'm not sure where you draw the line, but it feels like it's somewhere in there, right?

Or I could take the coward's way out, and say something like: Sure, the Senators can be the Senators if they want, but they've already made their choice – they honour their history and hang the old banners, but they don't count the old records. So it's a moot point, because we said this was about teams having the choice, and in this case, the choice has already been made. Not as satisfying, maybe, but it still works.

Murat: This is Winnipeg Victorias erasure and I think you're playing with fire by giving the Senators self-determination. Or by establishing a statute of limitations on self-determination. Either way, I'm confused.

All I know is that Jets fans want their records back. The NFL gave the Cleveland Browns their official history, back, didn't it? Same with the NBA and New Orleans? On one hand, forget about everyone other than the fans of the team I cover. On the other, don't those stories help Jets fans' case — and prove that a league can do whatever it darn well pleases, so the NHL is wrong and it's easy after all?

Sean: Absolutely. I'll occasionally run into a hockey fan who doesn't follow other sports and seems to think that this Jets stuff is some sort of radical new idea. But it's not, we're just asking the NHL to follow the precedent that's already in place.

In 1996, the city of Cleveland lost the NFL's Browns, who moved to Baltimore and changed their name to the Ravens. The Ravens took all the players and coaches, but crucially, not the Browns' old record book. That was held in reserve for a future return of the league to Cleveland, which happened a few years later via expansion. That new version of the Browns, which arrived in 1999, immediately inherited their old records and history and holds it to this day.

Now, that wasn't a perfect comparison for the Jets' situation because Cleveland basically already knew they were getting an expansion team as part of the Baltimore deal. But it was the right move, and it makes sense. Nobody would try to pretend that legendary back Jim Brown is the Baltimore Ravens' all-time leading rusher because he only ever played for one team, and that was the Browns. But is that any more ridiculous than saying Kovalchuk's 52 goals beat Selanne's 76 in Winnipeg? I don't think it is.

Look, this stuff can get confusing, especially when you're dealing with a longer time gap than the three years in the Ravens/Browns case. The NBA's handling of the Charlotte Hornets is probably a better comparison here, and that one was a bit messier. But it's OK if things get a little messy around the edges because we still end up in a better place. And fans end up getting to talk about their team like fans, not custodians of some dusty historical archive nobody wants to visit.