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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/comrie-enjoying-watching-hellebuyck-at-olympics>

***Comrie enjoying watching Hellebuyck at Olympics
Comrie: "I think he's the best goalie in the world."***

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – Say what you want about the compressed schedule and the wear and tear on the players this season because of the Olympics. But Eric Comrie has enjoyed every last second of NHLers being back.

"It's been awesome. Big fan of it. Best on best hockey is so much fun to watch. I think it's just, I don't know, I'm a total fan again, it's just awesome to watch," said Comrie after the Jets finished their third practice of the week.

"Awesome to watch my friends play, and just the different countries, and how hard people play for their country and how much it means to them. It's been an awesome experience."

One of those friends that Comrie has been watching is fellow Jets goaltender Connor Hellebuyck who came within 1:31 of shutting out Sweden on Wednesday in the quarterfinals with the Americans winning in overtime 2-1. Hellebuyck leads the tournament with a .957 save percentage and 0.98 goals against average.

"He's a great goalie. I think he's the best goalie in the world, if not the best player in the world and he's playing his game," said Comrie.

"He looked fantastic and Sweden again yesterday. And every single game he's played just looks so sharp. I mean he just makes it look so easy. It's just fun to watch him play."

The Olympics now head into the final four on Friday. Hellebuyck and the Americans face Slovakia and Josh Morrissey and Canada get Finland.

"Well, I mean, I gotta cheer for Canada. And I gotta cheer for my guys in the US too, because I got KC and Helle on the team," said Comrie.

"I gotta cheer for Canada because I'm from Canada. So, I mean, my wives from the US, and I got one kid from the US, one kid from Canada. So, we've got kind of split in the house, so we'll see how it goes."

This is the second extended break of the season for Comrie and the Jets and for a position that relies on timing, the 30-year-old admitted it's tough to stay sharp.

"I mean, it's tough to get back into it. We have a bunch of practices and Flats (Jets goaltending coach Wade Flaherty), and I are doing a bunch of work to get back into it," said Comrie.

"So, it's once the games come around, you'd be ready to go, I think the first couple days (its) just ironing it out. But I think once the games come along, there's enough practice to get going."

Comrie said that he and Flaherty only chatted once during the break, but it wasn't about goaltending.

"We talked about one thing, he brought me some salmon back, and that's the only thing we talked about. So yeah, I got some salmon. Actually, I cooked it last night, he claimed it to be the best salmon in the world, the Nookta Sound salmon," laughed Comrie.

"He was bragging about it, bragging about it. I still will go on the fence that Copper River salmon is better than Nookta Sound salmon, but it's still really good. It's still really good. Close second."

When the Jets do get back into action next Wednesday in Vancouver, they have a big mountain to climb with 11 points separating them and the final wild card spot in the Western Conference. Head coach Scott Arniel said it's about taking care of your own business. Winnipeg will face San Jose and Anaheim on their three-game road trip and it's those two who the Jets are trying to catch.

"You're going to run into some of those teams, like we are going to see in the first couple of weeks when we get back. We're going to run into some of those teams that are above us. Beat those teams, just keep beating those teams and pick away," said Arniel.

"Can't worry about where we're going to be March 15, we've got to worry about what's coming here, or March 30, we've got to worry about what's coming on the (25th)."

As for the Jets four Olympians, only Nino Niederreiter's team Switzerland has been eliminated. Morrissey, Kyle Connor and Hellebuyck will all play for medals either Saturday or Sunday depending on the results of the semifinals. It will be interesting to see who will be available from the foursome for the game against the Canucks.

"Obviously, Monday's a travel day and then Tuesday we're leaving for Vancouver, so it'll be interesting to see how it kind of plays itself out. But Nino, I'll give him a call later today. I wanted to kind of let him kind of just decompress. I'll maybe call him tomorrow and see what his play is as well," said Arniel.

"I've got to see how the U.S., Canada games go and if they're playing Sunday and we'll take it from there. Last year (after 4 Nations Face-Off), KC wanted to play, Helle and JMo didn't, so it'll be something that we've just got to monitor as we go forward here."

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2026/02/19/jets-comrie-clutch-in-backup-role>

Jets' Comrie clutch in backup role Next start netminder makes will tie career mark for single-season appearances

By: Ken Wiebe

Eric Comrie has mastered the art of being ready to roll whenever he's called upon.

The theory seems simple enough, but in the world of backup goalies, it's a necessity that isn't nearly as easy as it sounds.

The Winnipeg Jets backup goalie is the guy that goes on the ice early, stays out late and regularly faces challenging scenarios that he embraces.

“He’s the hardest worker on this team — by a mile,” said Jets centre Mark Scheifele. “He’s a guy that gives it his all every single practice, every single morning skate. It’s good to see his continued hard work and dedication to the game pay off for him.”

With Connor Hellebuyck set to make his fourth start at the Olympic in Friday’s semifinal against Slovakia(2:10 p.m. CT) — and with the potential to make a fifth on the weekend in the medal round, plus the grueling travel back to North America early next week — Comrie is expected to be between the pipes when the Jets return to action against the Vancouver Canucks next Wednesday at Rogers Arena.

That will begin a stretch of 26 games in 51 days for the Jets, who will enter action 11 points out of the final playoff spot in the Western Conference standings.

The next start Comrie makes will tie his career mark for NHL appearances in a single season.

“I mean, it’s exciting, but once again, it’s just working every single day,” said Comrie. “It’s going to be an honour to play the most games I play. It’s the best league in the world, and I don’t take for granted how good this league is and how hard it is staying here.”

Comrie admits this campaign has been a bit of a roller-coaster.

“It’s been a strange season. I think it’s been a strange season for the whole group,” said Comrie. “It’s been filled with ups and downs, but I think the whole team has kind of been that way.

“In the last few, three games, I felt very, very good, I felt very sharp, and I’m just looking to continue that.”

Comrie has plenty of reasons to feel good. During those past three starts, he’s allowed a grand total of three goals: one in each of those games. That helped push his save percentage up to .892 and his goals-against average down to 3.07.

Those numbers aren’t in the same ballpark as last season, when Comrie was exceptional in posting career-bests in save percentage (.914) and goals-against average (2.39).

But this is a case where the numbers were skewed by several outings, several of which came during the Jets lengthy losing skid.

With Hellebuyck sidelined with a knee injury, Comrie was busier than he’s ever been at the NHL level — starting 11 of 12 games between Nov. 18 and Dec. 11 — and he conceded that he put some additional pressure on himself during that span.

“With the stress, the losing streak, and just a lot of games I played there in a short amount of time, I wasn’t fully used to that,” said Comrie. “So, I think I just put a little bit of pressure on myself. I was trying a little bit too hard, and I was maybe hindering myself. I was reacting slower, instead of just letting things happen and calming down and being relaxed and just letting the game happen.”

Since Hellebuyck has returned to the lineup, Comrie settled back into the groove, which is imperative given how compressed the schedule is going to be during the stretch run.

Jets head coach Scott Arniel was asked about the value of having someone with Comrie's personality on the roster.

"It is such an important position in this league," said Arniel. "I know there is a stretch in there where he stepped in when we weren't playing our best hockey and he didn't get rewarded with the wins but, at the end of the day, he has been strong for us."

"His work ethic in practice, he stays out, he is one of the last guys to come off the ice and you know when he's in the building because you can hear him coming from a mile away, (telling) his stories, but at the end of the day he is just a great teammate and the guys love him."

Although Comrie is one of eight pending unrestricted free agents on the Jets' roster, he's a prime candidate for an extension, especially when you consider his relationship with Hellebuyck and that the two top goalie prospects in the system (Dom DiVincentiis and Thomas Milic) will likely need another season of American Hockey League seasoning before they're ready to push for full-time NHL work.

As has been the case throughout his career, Comrie is going to focus on what is in front of him and let the future take care of itself.

"Just enjoy the moment when it comes," said Comrie. "The biggest thing for me would just be my mindset, mentally. That's the biggest thing I've had to work on is understanding and believing my game is good enough. Trust in my game and trust in my ability."

Speaking of Hellebuyck, Comrie has been keeping a close eye on his goalie partner as he's gotten into a groove during the Olympics for Team USA, sporting a 1.00 goals-against average and .958 save percentage.

"He's the best goalie in the world, if not the best player in the world and he's playing his game," said Comrie. "He looked fantastic against Sweden again (Wednesday). Every single game he's played, he just looks so sharp. I mean he just makes it look so easy. It's just fun to watch him play."

Comrie, 30, essentially finds himself in a can't lose situation if the dream matchup of Canada versus the United States transpires.

"Well, I mean, I've got to cheer for Canada. And I've got to cheer for my guys on the U.S. too, because I've got KC (Kyle Connor) and (Hellebuyck) on the team," said Comrie.

"I've got to cheer for Canada because I'm from Canada. My wife is from the U.S., and I've got one kid from the U.S., one kid from Canada. So, we've got kind of a split in the house, so we'll see how it goes. I can't lose, so we're excited to watch. I'm really excited to watch the games. I mean, I can't wait to see just great hockey."

Winnipeg Sun

https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/toews-takes-second-place-in-canadian-olympic-hockey-lore/article_405d1bbc-69ca-44f0-a82c-ffdd674ba527.html

Toews takes second place in Canadian Olympic hockey lore

By Gordon Anderson

A two-time Olympic gold medalist added an alternative viewpoint to the story lines surrounding an undefeated Team Canada at the Olympics.

"It the little things that you don't see (that make this team successful), like the guys who are probably at the bottom six of the forwards, and the d-men who aren't getting the ice time they are used to with their teams," Jets forward Jonathan Toews told The Winnipeg Sun after practice on Thursday.

The No. 19's take was quite salient considering it was Montreal forward Nick Suzuki and Vegas Golden Knights winger Mitch Marner, both players taking on lesser roles than they normally would in the NHL, who rescued the men's national team from a potentially seismic loss.

Suzuki tied the game at 16:33 of the third period, before Marner posted his first goal of the event at 1:22 of the overtime session, as Canada squeezed by Czechia 4-3 in overtime on Wednesday.

"It is always an adjustment for elite players to play in different roles, and they all done a pretty good job of it, especially when guys like Connor McDavid and Nathan MacKinnon are eating up a ton of ice time," Toews said.

Canada will face Finland on Friday morning in semi-final action at 9:30 a.m.

"Finland will be a good test in the semis, so we will just see how it goes," Toews said. "Obviously, it is going to be tight checking, and they must find a way to win."

Finland beat Nino Niederreiter and Switzerland 3-2 in overtime on Wednesday to advance.

Connor Hellebuyck, Kyle Connor and Team USA will play Slovakia in the other semi-final.

Speaking of McDavid, after his three-point performance in the final Group A game against France brought his point total to nine, the Richmond Hill, Ont., native vaulted passed Toews for the most points scored by a Canadian player at an Olympic tournament with NHL players participating.

Toews set the previous record by scoring once and adding seven assists at the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver. The Winnipeg lad accomplished his feat in seven games. McDavid did it in in the final game of round-robin action.

And McDavid's assault on the Olympic scoresheet record has further local connections.

Former Winnipeg Jets forward Teemu Selanne and McDavid are tied for the most points scored in one Olympic event by NHL players with 11.

Selanne scored six goals and added five assists in eight games at the 2006 Winter Olympics in Torino. Finnish teammate Saku Koivu also notched 11 points, scoring three goals while adding eight assists in eight games in Torino.

McDavid has equaled them in half the time.

“There is not much any team can do to stop McDavid,” Toews said. “Any time he steps on the ice, you just try to limit how and when he gets the scoring chances. He is going to create (offence). It is just a matter of time. I used to say this about Patrick Kane, these guys just find a way to score every night, and it becomes the expectation.”

Teenaged sensation Macklin Celebrini also surpassed Toews points record after scoring once and earning three assists in Canada’s victory over Czechia in the quarterfinals. Celebrini leads the tournament in goals with five. He also has four assists. Celebrini’s shooting percentage is 35.7 per cent.

And like Toews in 2010, Celebrini is playing in his first Olympic games. Toews was 21 years old in Vancouver.

“At 19 years old, you are not even physically mature, or mature in a lot of other ways either, but he seems to have that deep competitiveness and belief in himself,” Toews said. “He is a tremendous talent and to be able to do what he has done this season, and then to go out there and play with, I guess, the two top players in the world, and it looks like he belongs. He is not deferring to anyone. He is a special player.”

https://www.winnipeg sun.com/sports/winnipeg_jets/arniel-jets-to-keep-fighting-blues-providing-inspiration/article_e9039452-b89e-4e01-9fb9-e501321d036b.html

Arniel, Jets to keep fighting, Blues providing inspiration

By Gordon Anderson

The 10-day Olympic break afforded Scott Arniel a chance to re-evaluate his plan of attack for the final stretch run.

“(During the break) I watched some games that we were good at,” Arniel said after practice on Thursday. “I went back and looked at some structural things, like if there (were) some things that I wanted to change or maybe work at. There are a couple things that I’m looking to do, no I’m not going to tell you what they are, but there are some things that we’ve talked about, and we’ve had a chance to work on so far in the first three days.”

The question is: will the head coach be ready himself when the season resumes next week? Only time will tell that tale.

Head coach Scott Arniel during a Winnipeg Jets practice.

“Hopefully, I got myself ready to go here,” he said.

The Jets re-start the season next Wednesday night in Vancouver against the Canucks. The head coach hopes his team will be ready to mount a playoff challenge.

The chances of qualifying for the post season seem far-fetched as the Jets are seventh in the Western Conference with a 22-26-8 record. The locals are 11 points behind the Anaheim Ducks for the second wildcard. Four teams stand between the Jets and the coveted final playoff spot.

Believe it or not, the Jets do technically have a punchers chance at a post-season berth, and until the day when the numbers say otherwise, Arniel and the club plan to stay in the ring until the potential knock-out blow is delivered.

Arniel is using the St. Louis Blues as the proverbial prize fighter who stayed in the ring long enough to get rewarded at the final bell.

“We played the Blues in the first round of the playoffs last year and played seven games,” Arniel said. “Go look where they were at this exact time last year after the 4 Nations (Face-Off). We have a great example sitting right in our division, a team that did it last year. And you go back, there was a couple teams last year that made a run at it that got in, but St. Louis had a huge gap to close.”

The 4 Nations championship game occurred on Feb. 20 last season. At that time, the Blues were 56 games into the season and eight points behind the Vancouver Canucks for the second wildcard spot.

St. Louis went on a 19-4-3 run to grab the final playoff spot, beating out the Calgary Flames. The Blues also went on a 12-game win streak between March 12 and April 5.

Arniel figures, why not his team? Why not now?

“Every year there’s been a team that has done that, one or two teams, maybe even more,” Arniel said. “To me, it is take care of your business, just take care of your own business, (and) win hockey games. You’re going to run into some of those teams, like we are going to see in the first couple of weeks when we get back.”

Following the game against Vancouver the Jets will play Anaheim followed by the San Jose Sharks. The Sharks are fifth in the Western Conference, six points ahead of the Jets.

“We’re going to run into some of those teams that are above us,” he said. “Beat those teams, just keep beating those teams and pick away. (We) can’t worry about where we’re going to be March 15, we’ve got to worry about what’s coming (against the Canucks).”

Canadian Press

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/trying-to-climb-that-hill-jets-still-hopeful-to-make-post-season-in-final-stretch/>

‘Trying to climb that hill’: Jets still hopeful to make post-season in final stretch

By Canadian Press

Many Winnipeg Jets fans have counted the team out of making the playoffs this season, but not the players and their coach.

The Jets sit 11 points out of the second wild-card spot in the NHL Western Conference with 26 games to go, but remain positive they have a shot at competing in the post-season.

"I think our focus every day is just trying to get better as a team, trying to climb that hill," captain Adam Lowry said after Thursday's practice.

"We're all competitive people. You don't want to just lay down and forego the season, write off the season because of the spot we're in. We still believe.

"Yeah, it's going to be tough for us to get in (the playoffs), but until they say you're in or you're out, we're going to keep fighting every day to try and push towards that playoff line and try and sneak in."

The Jets have 52 points after 56 games (22-26-8). It's a drastic drop from last season, when they sat at 81 points (39-14-3) after 56 games and went on to win the Presidents' Trophy with a league-best 116 points.

Winnipeg's turnaround quest continues Wednesday with a game against the Vancouver Canucks to start a three-game road trip.

Jets head coach Scott Arniel said history shows teams can get out of a deep hole and make the playoffs.

"We played the St. Louis Blues in the first round of the playoffs last year and played seven games. Go look where they were at this exact time last year after the 4 Nations (Face-Off)," Arniel said.

The Blues had 55 points after 56 games last season (25-26-5) and finished with 96 points to grab the second wild-card berth.

"So we have a great example sitting right in our (Central) division, a team that did it last year," said Arniel, whose squad lost in the second round to the Dallas Stars.

"And you go back, there was a couple teams last year that made a run at it that got in, but St. Louis had a huge gap to close. And every year there's been a team that has done that, one or two teams, maybe even more.

"To me, it's take care of your business, just take care of your own business, win hockey games."

Jets centre Mark Scheifele is also in a why-not-us frame of mind.

"We're not mathematically eliminated yet," Scheifele said. "You can't focus on a month and a half from now, you've got to focus on the next game at hand, the next practice at hand and just keep pushing."

Among the talk surrounding the Jets has been calls for the team to make some trades by the March 6 deadline, mostly to gain assets if they deal some of their eight pending unrestricted free agents (UFAs).

Arniel said he's talked to general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff about the roster in the last week.

“Obviously, you don’t know what that picture is yet because with the Olympics here, everybody’s kind of in a little bit of a holding pattern, the GMs,” Arniel said.

“I think that everybody’s trying to figure out is it a go, is it a look to next year, is it a situation where a couple pieces maybe help you? That part of it, we’re still in sort of the talking stage on where we’re going to be two weeks from now.”

Winnipeg’s UFAs include forwards Cole Koepke, Gustav Nyquist, Tanner Pearson and Jonathan Toews. On defence, it’s Colin Miller, Luke Schenn and Logan Stanley. Goalie Eric Comrie is also on the list.

Toews signed with his hometown team last summer in a bid to return to action after missing the past two seasons because of health issues. The 37-year-old veteran has seven goals and 12 assists in 56 games.

The three-time Stanley Cup champion might be a target in trade talks with teams that value his leadership and faceoff skills.

Toews said Cheveldayoff hasn’t talked to his agent about a trade or a contract extension, and he hasn’t thought about whether he wants to play next season.

Would he be open to a trade?

“At the end of the day, I’m loyal to Chevy and to Arnie and (co-owner) Mark (Chipman),” Toews said. “They gave me a tremendous opportunity to play at this level again with this team this year.

“Obviously, there was an adjustment period for the first little while this season. I believe in this team that we’re a playoff-calibre team so that’s where my focus is now.”

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11675632/analysis-hockey-focus-return-nhl-olympics/>

ANALYSIS: Hockey focus, in our part of the world, soon to return to the NHL

By John Shannon CJOB

It will be just a matter of days before we are buried in the stretch drive of the NHL season. Games resume on the 25th of this month, and the trade deadline takes place on March 6th.

For many of us, the Olympic Games, and in particular, the hockey tournament, have been a welcome distraction. And while many feel the 12 years the NHL has been away from the world stage, these past 10 days are a reminder that the greatest players in the world play in the National Hockey League.

Almost 160 players from the NHL have made this year’s men’s tournament so special. Frankly, the intensity that has been projected in all these games is second to none

But that doesn’t mean the hockey has been perfect. It’s been good. It’s been dramatic. But it hasn’t been perfect.

On the Olympic stage, not every team was competitive. The host Italians and the French weren't as good as the Manitoba Moose, or even an ECHL team. But what we witnessed is how the NHL has made the game, on an international level, so much better.

Only one team, the Italians, didn't have some representation of NHLers or at least former players on their rosters. Slovakia, Denmark, Switzerland and Czechia all had competitive teams because they had players who work and live on this side of the Atlantic and can go home to represent their countries on the ice.

And do they ever represent them. It's amazing how some become that much better when they wear the nation's colours, as opposed to those of their NHL teams. They play bigger — and with a swagger that makes their countrymen swell with pride.

This is by far the deepest Olympic tournament since Canada returned to the Games in 1980. And that is even without the Russians able to put a team in the tourney. The fact is that there are more and better players throughout the world, and what we have watched in Milan was the beneficiary. And that is because the NHL, not the IIHF, has been the driving force creating the demand for more players, no matter what country they are from.

In some rather strange way, as many watch and think that the Olympic tournament is the pinnacle of the game, it really is the greatness of the NHL that has made that dream come true.