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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/hellebuyck-solid-americans-lock-up-2nd-seed>

### ***Hellebuyck solid, Americans lock up 2nd seed***

By Jamie Thomas

Two Winnipeg Jets Olympians were in action on the final day of the preliminary round, Connor Hellebuyck and Nino Niederreiter. Josh Morrissey remained out of Canada's lineup in their win over France but has not been ruled out for the Canadians quarterfinal matchup on Wednesday. Canada beat France 10-2 to lock up the number one seed and will play the winner of Czechia/Denmark.

#### ***USA 5, GERMANY 1***

Connor Hellebuyck made 23 saves and improved to 2-0 at the 2026 Winter Olympics and helped the Americans finish as the second seed with a 5-1 over Germany.

Hellebuyck lost his shutout bid at 11:22 of the third period when Tim Stutzle beat the Jets goaltender over his glove. The 32-year-old allowed just two goals in his two starts and looks to be the front runner to start in the quarterfinals. Since the Americans are the number two seed, they will face the winner of Sweden/Latvia.

Jets forward Kyle Connor did not play as he was replaced in the lineup by Clayton Keller.

#### ***SWITZERLAND 4, CZECHIA 3 (OT)***

Dean Kukan scored the overtime winner for Switzerland as they beat Czechia 4-3 and that means the Swiss will face the Olympic hosts Italy in the qualification round on Tuesday. The winner of that game will go on to face Finland in the quarterfinals on Wednesday.

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/canada-locks-up-group-a-with-win-over-swiss>

### ***Canada locks up Group A with win over Swiss***

By Jamie Thomas

Just one of the Winnipeg Jets Olympians was in action on Day 3 of the men's tournament in Milan. Canada faced Switzerland with both teams looking to push their record to 2-0.

#### ***CANADA 5, SWITZERLAND 1***

The big question for Jets fans on Friday would Josh Morrissey play against his Winnipeg teammate Nino Niederreiter after Morrissey left Canada's game against Czechia in the second period with an unknown injury. That answer came about an hour before puck drop.

Travis Sanheim stepped into the lineup as Morrissey's replacement; the Jets defenceman was seen in the stand with Canadian teammates Brad Marchand and Jordan Binnington during the game. Shea Theodore did take Morrissey's spot beside Colton Parayko.

As for the game itself, Connor McDavid registered his second straight three-point game (1G, 2A) giving Canada a 5-1 victory over the Swiss and thus locking up top spot in Group A. The Canadians will close out the preliminary round with a game against France.

After the game, Canada's head coach Jon Cooper was asked about Morrissey's status going into Sunday's game.

Nino Niederreiter had a couple quality scoring chances in the game; in the first period he was denied by Logan Thompson on a Swiss 3-on-1. Niederreiter had another opportunity in the third but rang his shot off the crossbar. The 33-year-old finished the game playing just over 18 minutes and had one shot on goal.

Switzerland will face Czechia on Sunday.

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/canada-wins-opener-morrissey-leaves-game-with-injury>

### ***Canada wins opener, Morrissey leaves game with injury***

By Jamie Thomas

#### ***CANADA 5, CZECHIA 0***

Connor McDavid registered three assists and Jordan Binnington picked up where he left off from the 4 Nations Face-Off making 26 saves as Canada blanked Czechia 5-0 in their Olympic opener.

Josh Morrissey's Olympic debut did not last long as the Jets defenceman left early in the second period with an unspecified injury. The 30-year-old played with 4 Nations defence partner Colton Parayko and finished with only 7:10 of ice time. Canada head coach Jon Cooper did not have an update on Morrissey after the game so it is unknown at this time if he will play on Friday against Switzerland.

#### ***SWITZERLAND 4, FRANCE 0***

Damian Riat and J.J. Moser scored goals 2:11 apart in the first period and 2025 World Championship MVP Leonardo Genoni made 27 saves for his first Olympic shutout helping Switzerland to a 4-0 win over France.

Jets forward Nino Niederreiter who played on a line with Denis Malgin and Sven Andrighetto, did not get on the scoresheet but did record two shots on goal and almost made it 5-0 in the third but his rebound attempt went off the post behind French goaltender Antoine Keller. On Wednesday, Niederreiter was named one of the Swiss assistant captains for the tournament.

#### ***USA 5, LATVIA 1***

Brock Nelson scored twice including the game winner in the second period, Jack Hughes, Quinn Hughes, Jack Eichel and Matthew Tkachuk all had two assists in the United States 5-1 win over Latvia.

Jets goaltender Connor Hellebuyck recorded his first Olympic win making 17 saves. Kyle Connor played on a line with Tage Thompson and Dylan Larkin and finished the game with just over 11 minutes of ice time.

The United States will have Friday off before facing former Jet Nikolaj Ehlers and Denmark on Saturday.

## **Winnipeg Free Press**

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/02/15/winnipeg-jets-u-s-teammates-having-dramatically-different-oly-experiences>

### ***Winnipeg Jets' U.S. teammates having drastically different Olympics experiences***

By: Mike McIntyre

MILAN – In Connor Hellebuyck they trust. Kyle Connor? Not so much.

It's safe to say these Winter Olympics have taken drastically different turns for a pair of Winnipeg Jets.

Hellebuyck, the reigning Hart and Vezina Trophy winner, has stamped his claim on the No. 1 job with the United States team following a pair of solid starts, the most recent coming Sunday night in a 5-1 victory over Germany that secured top spot in the Americans' group.

"I just think he was tracking pucks extremely well. He was composed," said American coach Mike Sullivan.

"A lot of pucks just hit him, and he makes it look easy the way he squares up to pucks. His rebound control, he swallowed everything. There was no rebounds for Germany to have an opportunity to create a next play. I thought this was his very best. You could feel his confidence from the bench just watching him make the saves."

Hellebuyck made a strong first impression Thursday night, stopping 17 of 18 shots in a 5-1 win over Latvia. He got a rest Saturday when Jeremy Swayman drew the start against Denmark, struggling mightily in what turned into a tougher-than-it-should-have-been 6-3 victory that included two particularly ugly goals.

Back in the crease Sunday, Hellebuyck was much busier against a German lineup featuring several stars, including Leon Draisaitl, J.J. Peterka and Tim Stützle, who was the only player to beat him on the night. Hellebuyck turned aside 23 shots, giving him a .952 save percentage through round-robin play to go along with a 1.00 goals-against average.

"He's so steady. He has so much fun out there, and I think for us seeing that, it just kind of gives us a boost of confidence," said U.S. captain Auston Matthews, who led the way offensively with two goals and an assist.

"Never really seems like he's in a panic or anything. He's just in such good position and that's why he's one of the best in the world. Obviously that's a guy that we've got a lot of faith in back there."

Defenceman Zach Werenski spoke Sunday night about working out with Hellebuyck during the summer in Michigan and getting an up-close look at what makes him tick.

"I know how hard it is to score on him consistently," said Werenski, who plays for the Columbus Blue Jackets.

“He’s just super solid back there. He’s steady, doesn’t give up much, doesn’t give up any rebounds and it makes us have a calming presence in front of him.”

It hasn’t been the easiest season in Winnipeg for Hellebuyck, who arrived at training camp dealing with lingering knee pain before eventually opting for arthroscopic surgery that sidelined him for nearly a month.

He hasn’t been nearly as sharp since returning in late November, and the Jets are languishing near the bottom of the National Hockey League standings after winning the Presidents’ Trophy last year.

Hellebuyck has spoken often about his hunger to win a Stanley Cup one day — and an Olympic gold medal sits high on that wish list, too.

“Keep building the game every day. Don’t worry about what the other team brings. Just bring your game,” said Hellebuyck.

“Everyone in front of me is so skilled and does their job so to a T that you can really rely and trust everyone around you. I think everyone on the team has their own unique skill set and they bring it. It’s a complete team, so everyone, everyone’s needed.”

Well, maybe not quite everyone.

Kyle Connor, who has scored 26 goals this season for the Jets while playing on the top line with Mark Scheifele and Gabe Vilardi, was largely invisible through his first two Olympic games. He didn’t record a single shot on goal and saw his ice time reduced to just over nine minutes in Saturday’s contest.

By Sunday, that number was down to zero.

Connor was a healthy scratch, with forward Clayton Keller — who also happens to be his roommate in the athletes’ village — drawing into the lineup in his place.

It’s fair to wonder if Connor’s Olympics are effectively over. The Americans now head into the elimination round, beginning with Wednesday’s quarterfinal against either Sweden or Latvia.

Assuming Sullivan sticks with Sunday’s lineup, there’s little reason to change course. Either the U.S. keeps winning — and why alter a winning formula — or the tournament ends in heartbreak.

For Connor, it’s a case of *déjà-vu*.

He struggled during last year’s 4 Nations Face-Off and was a healthy scratch by the time his team reached the gold-medal game against Canada. He told the Free Press last week he had learned from that experience and used it as motivation.

Unfortunately, it didn’t translate to his play on the ice.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/02/14/americans-dominate-denmark-despite-shaky-goaltending>

***Americans dominate Denmark despite shaky goaltending  
Hellebuyck's stock rises as Swayman lets in pair of soft goals***

By: Mike McIntyre

MILAN — Connor Hellebuyck's stock soared despite spending all of Saturday night on the sidelines. Kyle Connor's plummeted to the point where he may be skating himself out of the lineup.

And former Winnipeg Jets winger Nikolaj Ehlers was simply happy to see some old friends — sort of— while living out a lifelong dream by leading Denmark into battle at the Winter Olympics.

"I just wish Bucky was playing," a smiling Ehlers told the Free Press following his country's 6-3 loss to the United States.

"It's always fun to play against former teammates and current teammates. There's no friends out there but you obviously want them to do well at these kind of tournaments. Not against your team, obviously. But it's always good to see them."

This game was far closer than the final score suggests, and that was largely because Jeremy Swayman got the start in the U.S. net and endured a night he'll want to forget.

While it's hard to pin the first goal on him — accidentally kicked in by a teammate just 1:40 into the game — Swayman wore the goat horns on the other two. One came from around centre ice, a harmless dump-in he somehow never saw. The other was an unscreened slap shot from just inside the blue line that he flat-out whiffed on.

"I truly lost it," Swayman explained.

"And definitely one I want back, but at the same time, especially at this level, you've got to stay even keeled. It's one shot at a time and no matter how they go in, you've got to step up and stop the next one. So just really proud of this group for supporting me and getting the job done tonight."

Indeed, his U.S. teammates came to the rescue, generating plenty of offence against an overmatched Danish side with only a handful of NHLers. Matt Boldy, Brady Tkachuk, Jack Eichel, Noah Hanifin, Jake Guentzel and Jack Hughes scored as the Americans improved to 2-0.

Denmark fell to 0-2 after opening the tournament with a tough 3-1 loss to Germany.

"Obviously it wasn't meant to be tonight but I'm extremely proud of the way that we worked our asses off out there and fought for each other and gave ourselves a chance against a top team," said Ehlers, who registered an assist for a second straight game.

"We knew they were going to have the puck the most. We wanted to try and keep them on the outside and hope that our goalie played a great game. And he did. But against a team like the

U.S, you can't make the small mistakes. At least not too many of them. They got some easy goals tonight off faceoffs and that part, that's the stuff we need to clean up."

Ehlers was a major reason Denmark even qualified for the Olympics, doing so while still a member of the Jets before departing for the Carolina Hurricanes in free agency last summer.

"Obviously the two losses here are not what we were looking for. We would have been OK with the one tonight, but the one against Germany, we're going for a win, of course," said Ehlers.

"But overall this experience has been incredible. It's something that I've waited for for quite a while. To finally be here and represent Denmark is pretty special."

Denmark will close out group play on Sunday against Latvia (1-1).

"At the end of the day we do have a chance to get a good result. We know Latvia is a tough team to play against, so we need to bring our A game," said Ehlers.

Based on his rough outing, it's fair to say Swayman's Olympics are likely over barring something completely unexpected.

Hellebuyck will almost certainly get the start Sunday as the United States closes out round-robin play against Germany (1-1) in a battle for first place and a bye straight to the quarterfinals. The Jets workhorse — who stopped 17 of 18 shots in Thursday's 5-1 win over Latvia — figures to be leaned on for the remainder of the tournament.

The same can't necessarily be said for Connor, who has been mostly invisible through two Olympic appearances and has yet to register a shot on goal. He played 16 shifts for 11:20 on Thursday, then just 14 shifts for 9:50 on Saturday — third-fewest among all forwards.

Might recent hockey history repeat itself? Connor was a healthy scratch last February by head coach Mike Sullivan in the 4 Nations Face-Off final against Canada. It's not unreasonable to wonder if he could once again find himself watching from the press box as the stakes rise.

Clayton Keller has been patiently waiting as a healthy scratch, and it wouldn't be a shock to see Sullivan swap him in for Connor, who also happens to be his roommate in the athletes' village.

Sunday marks a pivotal day for men's hockey, as round-robin play concludes and the 12 teams are seeded — first by record, then by goal differential.

The top four teams — the three group winners and the best second-place finisher — earn byes straight to Wednesday's quarterfinals. The remaining eight must survive a qualification game Tuesday (5 vs. 12, 6 vs. 11, 7 vs. 10, 8 vs. 9).

Canada (2-0) has already wrapped up its group, as has Slovakia (2-1). At this point, only the undefeated Americans could stand in the way of Canada earning the No. 1 seed, which would mean the weakest possible quarterfinal opponent once the remaining eight teams are re-seeded.

Canada owns a plus-nine goal differential through two games and faces France (0-2) in what should be a lopsided affair. Still, it would be in Canada's best interest to pour it on, especially

with the United States sitting at plus-seven and capable of running up the score against Germany.

“They’re a good team. So are we. We’re excited to compete against them,” said Sullivan.

“We know that they have some game breakers on that side. We have a lot of respect for how good they are, and it will be a competitive game. That is what we will expect.

Finishing first overall matters because powerful Sweden (2-1) is likely to face whoever ends up with the No. 2 seed. Sweden finished third in its group after losing a three-way tiebreaker with Slovakia (2-1) and Finland (2-1) — a matchup no contender is eager to draw this early.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/02/09/ready-to-do-anything-i-can-to-help>

***Nelson following in family’s decorated Team USA footsteps  
One-that-got-away potential Jets forward has storybook Olympic start***

By: Mike McIntyre

MILAN — Hindsight, of course, is 20/20. But when it comes to professional sports, it’s always fun to play the what-if game.

For example, what if the Winnipeg Jets had opted to select hometown product Seth Jarvis — who made his Winter Olympics debut Friday night against Switzerland — with the 10th overall pick in 2020?

Winnipeg instead took Cole Perfetti at that spot, and Jarvis had to wait two more turns before the Carolina Hurricanes called his name. Perfetti has shown plenty of promise, but he’s not at the level of Jarvis, who brings both a big game and a huge personality to the table.

Well, here’s another what-if scenario that dawned Thursday night while watching Connor Hellebuyck, Kyle Connor and Team USA skate to a 5-1 victory over Latvia.

What would have happened to the Jets during their playoff run last year — and again this regular season — if their attempt to land star centre Brock Nelson had not fallen through at the last minute?

You’ll recall Winnipeg was very much in the hunt for Nelson at the trade deadline, believing he would solidify their second-line centre position behind Mark Scheifele. Although he was a pending unrestricted free agent, there were rumblings Nelson, who hails from nearby Warroad, Minn., would have been interested in signing a long-term extension in Winnipeg.

Then along came the Colorado Avalanche with a package that, according to pundits and insiders, blew the doors off what the Jets were willing to offer: a conditional first-round pick in the 2026 draft, prized forward prospect Calum Ritchie, defenceman Oliver Kylington and a conditional third-round pick in the 2028 NHL draft.

It was an offer the New York Islanders couldn’t refuse.

Nelson later signed a three-year contract extension with the Avalanche at a very reasonable average annual value of US\$7.5 million, and the rest is history. At age 34, he's on pace for a career year, piling up 49 points (29 goals, 20 assists) in 55 games for the NHL's top regular-season team.

The Jets, meanwhile, saw their Presidents' Trophy campaign come to a crushing end last spring with a second-round elimination at the hands of the Dallas Stars. Could Nelson have been the piece that pushed them over the top? It says here he would have had a far bigger impact than the two players they did add in Brandon Tanev and Luke Schenn.

And the search for a second-line centre continues this season, with a rotating cast of characters auditioning for the role on a Winnipeg team languishing near the bottom of the standings. Jonathan Toews — who drew interest from Colorado last summer before ultimately signing with the Jets — has been the most frequent occupant.

No offence to Toews, but Nelson brings considerably more to the table at this stage of his career.

Just listen to what Hellebuyck had to say Thursday night after watching Nelson deliver the game of his life — scoring twice, having another goal wiped out for goaltender interference and ringing a shot off the post.

"He's got a big, long stick. He's got poise with the puck. He plays his system very well. He plays two ways with the puck. I just think he's a full-on, complete player, with the vision of scoring. I just think he's a dangerous guy," said Hellebuyck.

There's also a Winnipeg connection with Nelson that would have been fun to explore had he landed here. His uncle is Dave Christian, a second-round pick of the 1.0 Jets in 1979 who spent four seasons with the organization before moving on to the Washington Capitals, Boston Bruins, St. Louis Blues and Chicago Blackhawks and appearing in 1,009 career NHL games.

"He's just such a good hockey player. I just think he's got a mature game. He plays on both sides of the puck. He can score goals. He's a cerebral player," said Team USA head coach Mike Sullivan.

"He's conscientious defensively. You can use him on the penalty kill. If we needed him on a power play, we could use him on a power play. There's a lot of options on this team, so we're trying to cast guys in roles where they know they can hang their hat on what their contribution is to try to help our team win. But Brock's a guy that just brings a complete game."

Sure sounds like someone the Jets could have used, eh?

Nelson is now enjoying his first Olympics and looking to follow in the footsteps of four family members. Uncle Dave was a member of the legendary "Miracle on Ice" team that won gold at the 1980 Lake Placid Games. His great-uncle Gordon Christian aptly won Olympic silver with Team USA at the 1956 Winter Games in Cortina d'Ampezzo, while his great-uncle Roger Christian and grandfather Bill Christian helped Team USA win its first men's hockey Olympic gold at the 1960 Squaw Valley Games.

"It's an incredible story. First of all, I'm thrilled for him. He had a terrific start to the tournament here, so I'm thrilled for him," said Sullivan.

“But his family story is a great hockey story. We couldn’t be more proud of him. I’m sure his family is thrilled that he’s had the impact on this team the way he has immediately in this tournament so far, but what a great story.”

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2026/02/13/canada-off-to-hot-start-in-round-robin-play>

***Canada off to hot start in round-robin play  
Celebrini, McDavid, MacKinnon team’s line of the game***

By: Mike McIntyre

MILAN — Just imagine being Macklin Celebrini right now.

You’re 19 years old, as wide-eyed and fresh-faced as they come, suddenly rubbing shoulders with the very elite of the hockey world. And while wearing the Maple Leaf on your chest at the Winter Olympics for the very first time, you’re dropped onto a top line that reads like fantasy.

Connor McDavid, the best player on the planet. Nathan MacKinnon, who may well be the second-best skater alive. And you.

Instead of looking like a deer in the headlights under the weight of that assignment, Celebrini makes it look effortless — calmly scoring another goal, his second in as many games, while adding an assist for good measure.

“He’s a dog on a bone, that kid,” McDavid said Friday night after Canada downed Switzerland to improve to 2-0 in group play and clinch top spot in Group A.

All three players are natural centres, and they began the tournament on Thursday against Czechia playing on different lines. But head coach Jon Cooper couldn’t resist a little experimentation one night later, and he may have just created a monster.

“Here’s the thing, they’re three phenomenal players — generational, these kids. But in saying that, you don’t know how that chemistry is going to go all the time,” said Cooper.

“Three centres, now some guys have to play a little bit out of position. And, ultimately, they’re three guys that want the puck, need the puck, and there’s only one puck. So now sacrifices have to be made, but ultimately they did it.”

Celebrini is something else, the first-overall pick from 2024 now in his second year with the San Jose Sharks making it look all too simple.

This game wasn’t as easy as the final score might suggest. Goaltender Logan Thompson was terrific, stopping 24 of 25 shots, as a stubborn Swiss squad pushed hard.

McDavid, who had three assists in Thursday’s 5-0 win over Czechia, had another three-point outing. He opened the scoring, then chipped in with helpers on goals by defenceman Thomas Harley and his new linemate, MacKinnon. Sidney Crosby had Canada’s other goal.

For the second straight night, an injury to an NHL star became a big storyline.

Winnipeg Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey left Thursday's game with an apparent lower-body injury and did not dress against Switzerland.

"You will not see him next game (on Sunday against France), but by no means is he out for the tournament," Cooper said.

That's a relief, as the issue is believed to be more day-to-day rather than long term.

However, Swiss forward Kevin Fiala — who plays for the Los Angeles Kings — likely didn't dodge disaster. He had to be stretchered off the ice late in the third period on Friday after attempting a reverse hit on Canadian forward Tom Wilson.

"It's a nothing play. It happens a lot every night... just unlucky," said Wilson.

"At this point, it's the Olympic Games, and I feel terrible that he may not be able to keep playing and just sending his family and him my best. You never want to see a guy go down in a tournament like this, especially. It sucks for the country, for their team, and just wishing him a quick recovery."

Wilson didn't initially realize how serious it was.

"He's a tough kid. He didn't say anything, he didn't scream, he didn't really show any emotion at all," he said. "I didn't know how serious it was. And then when we watched the replay, you could see his foot kind of got caught in the ice."

Canadian defenceman Drew Doughty, who plays with Fiala in Los Angeles, was clearly shaken up after the game.

"It was tough to see. I wish Kevin the best. We need that guy on my team back home," said Doughty, who was planning to leave the mixed zone to go try and find Fiala for an update.

Canada made three changes to its lineup for their second game. Thompson replaced Jordan Binnington in net, Elkhorn's Travis Sanheim started in place of Morrissey and Winnipegger Seth Jarvis drew in for Brad Marchand up front.

Sanheim had a solid night, going plus-two while logging 10:17 of ice time. Jarvis was also effective, bringing plenty of energy and registering two shots in 9:19 of action.

Jets forward Nino Niederreiter, who was the Swiss flag bearer at the opening ceremonies, had told the Free Press earlier this week his team wanted to "poke the bear" that is Canada. They gave it their best shot — at times, literally as even Niederreiter was penalized for elbowing Sanheim at one point. The veteran forward was minus-two with one shot over 18:03.

Switzerland now falls to 1-1 and will finish group play on Sunday in a big game against Czechia, who are also 1-1 after beating France (0-2) by a 6-3 score.

Canada is now guaranteed a spot in the quarterfinals which begin Feb. 18, but there is still the matter of overall seeding as the top three pool winners are ranked in order of record and then goal differential. So, Canada may want to try and pour it on against France.

"The job is to keep getting better. To come in here and play the back to back, we passed that test," Cooper said of beating two solid teams by a combined score of 10-1.

"We got to pass one more. And then we get a little bit of a break. And you think about the travel, the practices, the games, it adds up. It's tiring, not only on the body, but on the mind."

In other tournament action on Friday, Finland downed Sweden 4-1 in a testy match that leaves them with identical records of 1-1 in Group B. Slovakia is on top of that group with a 2-0 record after squeezing by host Italy (0-2) by a score of 3-2.

Looking at Saturday, Sweden and Slovakia face off against each other, while Finland battles Italy. There are all sorts of tantalizing tiebreaker scenarios in that pool depending on the results.

And over in Group C, Connor Hellebuyck and Kyle Connor will be back in action as the United States (1-0) takes on old friend Nikolaj Ehlers and Denmark (0-1). Germany (1-0) plays Latvia in the other game.

Puck drops on Canada's final round-robin game Sunday at 9:40 a.m. CT.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/02/12/canadian-mens-team-opens-tournament-with-5-0-win>

***Canadian men's team opens tournament with 5-0 win  
Jets' Morrissey status up in the air as defenceman leaves game in second***

By: Mike McIntyre

MILAN — A dream start for Team Canada. Another international hockey nightmare for Josh Morrissey?

Thursday's dominant 5-0 win over Czechia to open the Winter Olympics came with a major price tag, as the star Winnipeg Jets defenceman left the game early in the second period and didn't return, putting his availability for the rest of the best-on-best tournament in potential peril.

Morrissey's left leg appeared to clip the right leg of Czechia forward Martin Necas on his final shift of the opening frame, causing him to labour as he made his way back to the bench. Morrissey came out with his teammates to start the second and took one shift, which once again ended with him grimacing as he left the ice, this time for good.

"I feel for Josh. Hopefully he's OK," said his blue-line partner, Colton Parayko.

Canadian head coach Jon Cooper didn't have an immediate update following the game, saying he had not yet spoken with Morrissey or team doctors.

This must feel painfully familiar to Morrissey, who was a member of last year's 4 Nations Face-Off team but ultimately missed the gold medal final — which his team won 3-2 in overtime over the United States — due to severe illness.

"I didn't see what happened, I just hope he's all right," said Canadian captain Sidney Crosby. "Obviously, given (the 4 Nations), that's difficult. We all want to be out there on the ice, with him it's the same thing. Just hoping he's all right."

Morrissey spoke about that heartache on Wednesday with the Free Press, saying he was looking forward to this golden opportunity at his first-ever Olympics. Approximately 20 family members and friends came to Italy to cheer him on.

Now, his status is very much up in the air after playing just 13 shifts for 7:10 of ice time. Canada returns to action on Friday against Switzerland (2:10 p.m. CT), then closes out pool play on Sunday against France (9:40 a.m. CT). Puck drops on the quarterfinal round Feb. 18.

Morrissey's injury was the only dark cloud on an otherwise terrific day which began with a bang — literally — as Connor McDavid threw a huge bodycheck on his first shift, flattening one of his opponents.

"When guys pull their country's jersey on, it's a bolt of energy that goes through you," said McDavid. "So just trying to contribute any way I can. And we want to be a hard forechecking team, and it's my chance to contribute to that."

Canada took it to Czechia early and often, with 19-year-old Macklin Celebrini opening the scoring in the waning seconds of the first period, tipping a perfect Cale Makar shot past goaltender Lukas Dostal.

"Nerves, excitement, all of the above," Celebrini said of his Olympic debut. "My heart was racing, I wanted to kind of get out on the ice and start playing. This is kind of what we've been waiting for ever since the team was selected, so it was good to get out there and start the process."

Winnipeg's Mark Stone made it 2-0 early in the second period, followed by a Bo Horvat breakaway beauty later in the middle frame. A tick-tack-toe power-play goal featuring Canada's three biggest stars — Crosby to McDavid to Nathan MacKinnon — early in the third really put this one to bed. Nick Suzuki closed out the scoring.

"Two of the best players ever to play passing it to me is cool, you know?" said MacKinnon. "I didn't do much for that one. Just blessed to be on the back side. Anyone would have put that in."

McDavid led the way with three assists, while Crosby and defenceman Thomas Harley each had two helpers.

"A pretty wild environment. Very, very cool to be a part of," said McDavid of the NHL's long-awaited return to the Olympics, which included plenty of dueling chants between Canadian and Czechia fans.

Goaltender Jordan Binnington, the 4 Nations hero, at least temporarily silenced critics of his selection to the Olympic team by stopping all 26 shots he faced.

"He's a big-moment guy. That's the best compliment," said McDavid. "He's been in the big moments and really flourished and succeeded. No different tonight. We had all the confidence in the world."

A pair of Manitobans were the two healthy scratches for Canada: forward Seth Jarvis and defenceman Travis Sanheim, who would draw in for Morrissey.

Hellebuyck backstops Team USA to first win

Jets goaltender Connor Hellebuyck arrived in Italy this past weekend not knowing where he stood on the depth chart. But the reigning Hart and Vezina Trophy winner answered the call on Thursday night, stopping 17 of 18 shots he faced to pace his star-studded team to a 5-1 victory over Latvia.

"It was awesome," he said. "I was going to be ready no matter what, if my name was called or not. I think the guys played great in front of me. Just to be part of this team is fun, it's really fun."

Jets teammate Kyle Connor had a quiet night, registering no shots on goal in 11:20 of ice time.

Hellebuyck, who is a creature of habit, said he was battling some butterflies before the puck dropped.

"Yeah, a little bit. There's a lot going on, it's not your every day NHL life over here," he said.

"You just try to adjust to essentially dorm life, late games, time zone. So yeah, there's a lot going on, but that's what's exciting about it. It's a new challenge and a new way to adapt, and that's what I love the most."

Niederreiter's Swiss team blanks France

This felt like a home game for Jets forward Nino Niederreiter. There was no shortage of Swiss support on hand as a team many puck pundits think could be a dark horse medal contender made relatively easy work of an overmatched French club.

"The atmosphere was so fantastic. There were so many Swiss fans coming down from Switzerland to watch us play," said Switzerland's opening-ceremony flagbearer Niederreiter.

"That's kind of what it's like for us (in Europe). Which is great. We love our fans from Switzerland coming down here and supporting us. It's a great feeling."

Leonardo Genoni, a 38-year-old who has spent his whole career playing pro in Switzerland, stopped all 27 shots he faced for the 4-0 shutout.

"It's great to start off the tournament with a win, that's what we came here to do," said Niederreiter.

"I wish we could have played 60 minutes the way we started off the first 10, it's human nature you let it up a little bit. But at same time, we got the job done and that's all that matters."

Now, a much stiffer test with Canada up next.

"Obviously a big team coming up," said Niederreiter. "We're going to try our best to poke the bear a little bit and see if we can go from there."

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/02/11/we-want-to-get-started-on-the-right-foot>

## ***Jets' Morrissey enjoying Olympic life, feeling inspired to go for gold***

By: Mike McIntyre

MILAN — Josh Morrissey has caught a serious case of Olympic fever.

The Winnipeg Jets defenceman admits there have been plenty of “pinch-me” moments since touching down in Milan last Sunday.

The first skates with Team Canada, glancing around and fully appreciating the skill level surrounding him. Life around the athletes’ village, including mingling with competitors from different sports and countries. And the highlight so far: an up-close look at Canada’s silver-medal performance in short-track mixed relay speedskating during a Tuesday team outing.

“It’s inspiring. It inspires you to want to get a medal,” Morrissey told the Free Press on Wednesday.

“Just cool to see, especially in that short-track race, there’s so much that goes on. It’s pretty chaotic. I had never watched speedskating live before. It was just incredible to see the athletes on the biggest stage compete and perform and, at the end, the medal ceremony was pretty inspiring.”

Being part of something bigger has resonated with him.

“When you come over here to the Olympics and you get to experience being part of the broader Team Canada and broader Olympic games and sports, to be able to go there and support the other athletes, the other Canadians, is really cool,” he said.

In fact, Morrissey is already scheming with fellow Canadian defenceman Cale Makar — a frequent off-season training partner in Calgary — about a possible visit to that city’s Olympic Oval next summer and a test run around the track.

“A bunch of us were kind of mentioning it would be fun to try it some time,” he said.

“I think it’s very different. We were talking to a few of the athletes and they had said they made the switch from hockey when they were very young. If you start skating in hockey skates, they were saying, it would be hard to make that transition. But yeah, I would like to try it sometime.”

“It inspires you to want to get a medal.”

For now, though, the focus is firmly on his own blades.

Morrissey and the rest of Team Canada open tournament play Thursday afternoon in Milan (9:40 a.m. CT) against Czechia, the first of three round-robin games. And much like the skaters he watched a night earlier, speed figures to be Canada’s calling card.

“Connected and fast,” is how Morrissey described Canada’s keys to success. “Being able to play as a group of five all over the ice. Whether that’s breaking the puck out, obviously

offensively. And defending. I think we want to be tough to play against. Aggressive and not give up any space on the ice. I think just connected and aggressive all over the ice.”

There was a noticeable uptick in tempo at Wednesday’s practice, particularly compared to Sunday night’s jet-lagged session, which came just hours after the team stepped off the plane.

“I thought the pace was good, the execution is good and everyone is getting ready to go,” said Morrissey.

It helps when the ice is packed with 25 of the country’s elite players.

“It’s pretty surreal,” said Morrissey.

“You obviously try to take it in and see how much talent there is. But of course, when you’re out there, you’re just playing and kind of in the moment. But to kind of see some of the things guys do out there, you pinch yourself sometimes.”

Morrissey looks to be on Canada’s second pairing along with St. Louis Blues defenceman Colton Parayko, which should mean drawing plenty of tough assignments especially once the playoffs begin. The duo didn’t need any introduction — they were together last February at the 4 Nations Face-Off.

“It’s great. I think obviously as partners, the more time you can play with anybody it helps,” said Morrissey. “It seems like we kind of had an instant connection last year. I think we suit each other’s games really well. It’s nice to have that familiarity.”

He doesn’t need to be reminded how that tournament ended for him personally. Morrissey was sidelined by illness and missed the gold-medal game — a 3-2 overtime victory over the United States.

This time, he hopes to be in the middle of it.

“I think there’s always that anticipation and excitement to get going.”

After Thursday’s opener, Canada faces Jets teammate Nino Niederreiter and Switzerland on Friday (2:10 p.m. CT), then wraps up pool play Sunday against France (9:40 a.m. CT). Puck drops on the quarterfinals on Feb. 18.

“We want to get started on the right foot,” said Morrissey.

Any extra nerves, considering this officially marks the return of NHL players to the Olympics for the first time since the 2014 Sochi Games?

“I think there’s always that anticipation and excitement to get going,” he said.

“Playing in other events, whether it’s during the NHL season, playoffs, lots of guys have experienced preparing for big events. I’m sure there will be that excitement level. But I think you lean on other experiences in the past, and your preparation, and go about your day.”

Morrissey is going to have approximately 20 family members and friends here in Milan cheering him on, which he says means the world to him.

“It’s not a tough sell getting people to Italy for the Olympics,” he joked.

He’s also enjoying crossing paths in the village with Jets teammates Niederreiter, Connor Hellebuyck and Kyle Connor — the latter two representing the United States.

For the next 10 days, are they frenemies?

“Obviously we cross paths and you say ‘hi’ to the guys, ask how things are going. But everyone is kind of on their own schedule as well. Practice times and game schedules, meetings, all other things,” said Morrissey.

“Of course, you want to compete and it’s fun to compete against them. And it’s fun to just see them in the village and ask how their experience is going.”

Morrissey’s is going great, so far. And a golden ending would really make this a trip of a lifetime.

### **Global Winnipeg**

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11666383/analysis-olympic-mens-hockey-team-canada-start-josh-morrissey/>

### ***ANALYSIS: Near perfect start for Team Canada, not so much for Josh Morrissey***

By John Shannon CJOB

The 5-0 win was, in a single word, surgical. Every member of the Canadian men’s Olympic hockey team contributed in one way or another. Like a well-oiled machine, the forwards were fast and physical. The defence was smothering. And the goaltending was calm and consistent.

The only concern any of us would have was the one raised when it was obvious that defenceman Josh Morrissey’s day ended after just seven minutes of ice time. While Team Canada is saying little about the injury — shades of some sort of national security breach — it would appear that the Winnipeg Jets defenceman was hurt late in the first period, and tried to come back for the second, to no avail.

Morrissey might be the first casualty of the tournament, but he certainly won’t be the last. Who can forget how John Tavares’ Olympics ended in 2014, and with it any playoff hopes of his then-team, the New York Islanders?

Now, at this point, we don’t know the severity of the injury, but everyone who is in Milan, and everyone who works in and around the NHL, knows the inevitability of players possibly getting hurt. It is, after all, part of the game.

Now, if we are to be honest, I’m not sure it scuttled the Jets’ playoff chances, simply because those chances are slim to none. But it certainly didn’t help.

And it might just change the team’s attitude as the trade deadline approaches less than two weeks after the Olympics end. The domino effect of a Morrissey injury could have a long-lasting effect, even well after he returns from injury.

It's a heavy price to pay to be in the Olympics, but the players insisted — no, demanded — it be part of the collective bargaining agreement. In theory, we all understand their desires. In practice, potential injuries like Morrissey's are a steep price to pay.

### **Canadian Press**

<https://www.tsn.ca/olympics/article/hellebuyck-shows-why-hes-the-us-starting-goalie-i-feel-good-out-there/>

### ***Hellebuyck shows why he's the U.S. starting goalie: 'I feel good out there'***

By The Canadian Press

MILAN (AP) — Connor Hellebuyck could not be doing much better midway through the Olympics.

"Is there more than 100%?" he asked with a laugh after backstopping the U.S. past Germany in the round-robin finale. "I feel good. It's pretty hot out there. I'm sweating a lot now I have to stand around and do a bunch of (interviews), so I'm going to chill now. I guess I'm at 99% right now as we speak. But, yeah, I feel good out there."

The Americans feel good about him. Hellebuyck showed in the preliminary round why he's the U.S. starting goaltender in Milan, leading the tournament with a .952 save percentage and matching Canada's Jordan Binnington for the best goals-against average at 1.00.

"He's one of the best goalies in the world," U.S. forward Matt Boldy said. "He's confident. He wants to be in the net. He wants to make the saves and to make a big difference. He has the skills to back it up, but I think that attitude and how confident he is in himself and in his game is I think what makes him so great."

Hellebuyck started two of the three group-play games and stopped 40 of the 42 shots he faced against Latvia and Germany. Jeremy Swayman was shaky against Denmark, but bounced back from allowing a goal from nearly center ice to get the win.

Jake Oettinger dressed once as the No. 3 netminder, with coach Mike Sullivan repeatedly saying how tough a decision he and his staff had at the position with three options just about any country would love to have.

It was always Hellebuyck. He was the guy at the 4 Nations Face-Off last year and is the reigning NHL MVP and Vezina Trophy winner as the league's best goalie

"He's won a lot of trophies," winger Jake Guentzel said. "We feel good with him back there."

Not tested a whole lot by Latvia, Hellebuyck was there when Leon Draisaitl, Moritz Seider, Tim Stützle and Germany had quality scoring chances. He allowed just one goal to Stützle, and Sullivan called it Hellebuyck's best game yet.

"You could feel his confidence from the bench just watching him make the saves," Sullivan said. "When he's at his best, my observation of him is he has economy of motion, and a lot of pucks just hit him, and he makes it look easy the way he squares up to pucks, but his rebound control,

he swallowed everything. There was no rebounds for Germany to have an opportunity to create a next play.”

Hellebuyck figures to be in the crease in the quarterfinals Wednesday night when the U.S. faces the winner of the qualification playoff between Sweden and Latvia. He feels in a good rhythm after playing twice in four days, with a little bit of rest before the next start.

“There was a conversation about how we wanted to go about things, and this just made the most sense,” Hellebuyck said.

It never made sense for anyone but Hellebuyck to be the U.S. starter, even if his season with the Winnipeg Jets was not going all that well. He has a 2.79 goals-against average and a .900 save percentage after a league-best 2.00 and a .925 in 2024-25.

None of that matters at the Olympics, where his teammates are counting on Hellebuyck being the backbone of what they hope is a deep run.

“I expect just him being him,” defenseman Zach Werenski said. “We have full trust in him. I train with him in the summers. I know how hard it is to score on him consistently. He’s just super solid back there. He’s steady, doesn’t give up much, doesn’t give up any rebounds and it makes us have a calming presence in front of him.”

The U.S. is rolling into the quarterfinals after outscoring opponents 16-5. For all the scoring talent up front, the team needs Hellebuyck to be at his best the rest of the way given the difficulty level ratcheting up.

That should not faze Hellebuyck.

“He has so much fun out there, and I think for us seeing that, it just kind of gives us a boost of confidence because he’s just so steady in the net,” captain Auston Matthews said. “Never really seems like he’s in a panic or anything. He’s just in such good position and that’s why he’s one of the best in the world. That’s a guy that we’ve got a lot of faith in back there.”

### **Daily Faceoff**

<https://www.dailyfaceoff.com/news/josh-morrissey-playoffs-injury-good-idea-canada-mens-hockey-olympics-injury-defenseman>

### ***Is dropping Josh Morrissey into the playoffs off of injury a good idea for Canada?***

By Ryan Cuneo

Now that the Canadian men’s Olympic hockey team has finished up group play with their 10-2 drubbing of France on Sunday, the only games that lie ahead of them are of the “must-win” variety. By winning Group A, Canada has reserved their spot in the quarterfinals on Wednesday, awaiting their draw out of Tuesday’s qualifying games.

Canada should have a big name returning for them as well, as defenseman Josh Morrissey is expected back at some point after suffering an injury in Canada’s opener against Czechia. At his best, Morrissey is a great puck-moving defenseman Canada would love to have in their lineup,

but with Canada entering the elimination stage of the tournament, there could be some danger in letting Morrissey shake off any rust or play at less than 100 percent.

On Daily Faceoff's Canada vs France Post-Game show, hosts Tyler Yaremchuk and Jeff Marek discussed the risk of dropping Morrissey back onto Canada's blueline.

Tyler Yaremchuk: I'm curious about Josh Morrissey, if he's going to be available and ready to go.

Jeff Marek: He skated this morning, so that's good news. Even though it's only been three games, to just air-drop someone into an environment now where it's going to be up even higher of a level, that's a risky move at this point. Even with someone as elite as Josh Morrissey, coming off the injury. I'm glad that he's skating for the Winnipeg Jets, that's what I'm really happy about here for Josh Morrissey. Even though he's amongst the elite in the NHL, and one of the best defenders on Canada, I don't know that air-dropping him in, even after these three games and the level this tournament has already gotten to, would be the sanest move.

### **The Athletic**

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/7052783/2026/02/17/canada-olympic-hockey-mens-injury-lineup/>

### ***What we saw at Canada men's Olympic hockey practice: Lineup hints, injuries and more***

By Arpon Basu and Pierre LeBrun

MILAN — Team Canada went the full hour at practice Tuesday on the eve of the medal round.

In fact, head coach Jon Cooper was seen chatting with the Zamboni driver, negotiating a couple more minutes past the hour as Team Canada wrapped up its last drill.

They were all business on this day. Notable by their absences were Nathan MacKinnon and Sam Bennett, both taking maintenance days and both deemed available to play in Wednesday's quarterfinal.

One thing no one ever does is question MacKinnon's toughness. He plays through a lot.

"I don't think I've ever questioned it once," Sidney Crosby said Tuesday of his fellow Nova Scotian. "I know how much he loves the game. He'll play through anything. That's never really in question."

In MacKinnon's absence, Nick Suzuki skated on that line between Brandon Hagel and Sam Reinhart at practice. It sure seemed like Suzuki was MacKinnon's placeholder and that perhaps Reinhart would be getting elevated in the lineup for Wednesday. That might result in dropping Suzuki to the fourth line or the 13th forward. During special teams drills, Suzuki was on the penalty kill with Hagel, while Bo Horvat and Seth Jarvis were paired up on the PK as well.

Whatever the case, based on Tuesday's practice, Connor McDavid was back between Macklin Celebrini and Tom Wilson. So that appears to be how Team Canada will start the game Wednesday. Whether or not Cooper reunites the Mach3 line at some point during the game remains to be seen.

*Morrissey back at practice but still no confirmation*

Josh Morrissey was a full participant at practice, skating alongside his normal Team Canada defense partner, Colton Parayko. After leaving the Olympic opener with an undisclosed injury, Morrissey appears to be on the mend based on watching him in practice Tuesday. There was no hesitation in anything he did on the ice, and he did not appear limited in any way.

Neither Cooper nor Morrissey himself was ready to commit 100 percent to him playing Wednesday. That requires one last conversation between both of them.

“Just taking it day by day,” Morrissey said after practice. “Had a good practice here. Just trying to get ready for the rest of the tournament the best I can.”

Said Cooper: “That was a big thing for him to get out here today. In my opinion, he looked great. But (no confirmation) until after I talk to him.”

Thomas Harley was back with Drew Doughty at practice Tuesday, while Travis Sanheim skated alongside Shea Theodore. If Morrissey is back, we would venture to guess Sanheim is the scratch.

*Wilson doing what comes naturally*

It was a calculated Tom Wilson who lined up for an offensive zone faceoff with a little more than seven minutes left in regulation time against France on Sunday night.

He knew who was on the ice for France. He knew what that player had done to Nathan MacKinnon a few minutes earlier. He knew how much time was left. He knew the rules.

He saw Pierre Crinon lining up for that faceoff and waited for an opportunity, and once one presented itself, he took it, drilling Crinon into the boards and triggering the fight that got Wilson kicked out of the game, and Crinon kicked out of the Olympics by his own national hockey federation.

“It was kind of a dirty hit, and it’s a little bit different in the Olympics, how you have to go about it,” Wilson said. “I obviously ended up with the same guy who had done it. And hockey is an emotional game. It’s a competitive game, and when you come together with a big guy, you kind of have to make the decision quickly, and the gloves came off and got thrown down to the ice.”

While much was made of zero-tolerance policy on fighting in the Olympics, Wilson knew he wasn’t risking anything more than the automatic game misconduct that is applied in this tournament to both combatants, as long as both are willing.

“I was aware of the rules; if you fight, you get thrown out,” Wilson said. “But generally speaking, that’s it. There’s five minutes left in a 10-2 game, and I was aware of the rules. I was aware that as long as I didn’t take it too far, or he took it too far, that you should be good to play in the next game.

“So, obviously, when it started to get a little crazy there, he wasn’t stopping. There’s a certain level of having to defend yourself. And then once I kind of got around on top, I was like, OK, time to stop. It’s gone on far enough, and the linesmen were trying to do their job, and you just don’t want to get carried away. So, I decided to stop at that point. I think it was a good decision.”

So, in other words, this was not a heat-of-the-moment situation for Wilson. It was the exact opposite. He knew what he was doing, he knew the situation allowed for it, and he did it within reasonable limits.

"I just wanted to stick up for our team," he said.

In so doing, Wilson further ingrained himself in the fabric of Team Canada. His teammates and coach have raved about his presence in the room and just how good a teammate and player he has been. This only added to what they already thought of him.

"It's amazing," Celebrini said. "Getting to know him, being his linemate; I'm definitely happier that he's on my line and not someone I'm playing against. We've got along really well, and it's been really cool to get to know him."

#### *Marchand is ready and available*

Brad Marchand missed the last two games healing up a little something that's been nagging him. But he's ready to go for Wednesday if called upon.

"Yeah, yeah. It was just a little maintenance. We talked about it as a group and made a decision. Feeling good here now," Marchand said after practice.

We asked him if his issue was related to what kept him out for some games last month in Florida.

"Um, yeah, part of that, but part of it is old age," he said with a smile. "Sometimes you've got to just take care of the body. Big picture, make sure you're ready for the important times."

Somewhat revealing and perhaps simply his humility showing through, Marchand claims he wasn't sure before the Olympics if he'd play at all in this tournament.

"I mean, you always want to be in to play," said Marchand. "But the goal is to be here and be part of this team. It's an incredible group. You know, to be honest, coming in I didn't think I would be in the lineup. I thought I would be an extra guy and be a voice and try to be loud and obnoxious in the room. So I mean, I'm just so proud and honored to be part of this group. It doesn't matter if you get in the lineup or not. Everybody is just as important and has a role to play."

Marchand sounded somewhat nostalgic as he talked about soaking in every moment of his first Olympic experience.

"It's what you want to make of it," he said. "Obviously when you're at the rink and on the ice, there's a job to do. But it's an incredible opportunity to be here. Especially in this environment in Milan, it's a beautiful place. A place you want to take in, a lot of different athletes you want to meet and speak to and hear their story."

As far as the dressing room dynamic, the two loudest voices by far are Marchand and Drew Doughty. As was the case at 4 Nations.

Which begs the question, who gets the last word between the two of them? They were seen laughing together at practice Tuesday.

"It depends on the conversation, but typically he likes to have (the last word)," said Marchand, again with a smile. "But I'll just say something under my breath as he skates away."

#### *Details matter at Team Canada practices*

The first time Team Canada took to the ice for practice in Milan back on Feb. 8, Cooper ran the team through a forecheck drill where he very deliberately, and slowly, had players move to spots on the ice where he wanted them to be. Assistant coaches Bruce Cassidy and Rick Tocchet played the role of an opposing defenseman with the puck in the corner, and forwards skated to their instructed spots and stopped.

There was no detail spared, and no room for confusion.

This is a quick tournament, and at practice Tuesday, with Canada's next game having the potential to be their last, there was a lot more detail and a lot more situational instructions in the drills Cooper and his staff decided to run.

One drill was a breakout from a won puck battle along the boards at the hashmarks in the defensive zone. Another was a box out and breakout drill off a point shot. They worked on six-on-five situations in case they trail late in a game (it looks like it will be Mark Stone who will be used alongside the top power-play unit if Canada ever needs this). They worked on four-on-three situations in case they get a power play in overtime.

But the system stuff Canada worked on comes from issues the coaching staff had identified and seen as issues in three games they won by a combined score of 20-3.

"I think it's great," Celebrini said. "I mean, it's all stuff that we've given up in games, or (the coaching staff) is not really happy with our structure in games. Especially going into this next game, it's do-or-die now, so we have to make sure everything's perfect."

Cooper was asked after the game against France that if he had to nitpick, what would be an area he would like to see improvement in Canada's game. He refused to answer.

"Honestly, you guys are the ones that nitpick," Cooper said. "I try to defend our guys. You guys are the ones making this stuff up."

As it turns out, Cooper does have the ability to nitpick. He showed it in practice Tuesday.

#### *Tocchet flashback to '87 Canada Cup*

We wrote Sunday about Team Canada's nuclear option when they move MacKinnon up with McDavid and Celebrini.

There's some interesting Canadian hockey lineage to it all when you consider that assistant coach Rick Tocchet played in the 1987 Canada Cup when Mario Lemieux and Wayne Gretzky were put together rather famously in the final.

"I've talked to the coaches about it," the Philadelphia Flyers head coach said Tuesday after practice. "It kind of gave me a little flashback. When those guys go out together, it gives the whole team a bit of a jolt. And you see the play pick up. Same thing happened with Mario and Wayne."

It is rather amazing to think about, 39 years later, that Tocchet has a tie-in as a player on that '87 Canadian team watching No. 66 and No. 99 work their magic and now seeing MacKinnon and McDavid, and don't forget Celebrini, providing a spark when needed.

"I had a front-row seat to it in '87," smiled Tocchet. "It was unbelievable. It's funny how it was almost like Wayne and Mario had been playing all the time together, but they never had until that tournament. It's just the way they saw the game. Wayne had the puck and Mario would find the lanes; their instincts took over."

And now, when the world's two top players, McDavid and MacKinnon, play on the same line, it's mesmerizing.

"At the end of the day, if you look at McDavid, he attacks as good as anybody, but he's looking for Mack especially in the one-time slot, he knows he's a shooter. I can feel that," Tocchet said. "There's a couple of times he could have probably shot it but he waited to give it to MacKinnon. So I think he knows there's certain points where he wants to give it to him in a shooting position."

Kind of like 99 looking to feed 66 ...

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/7042198/2026/02/12/josh-morrissey-canadas-olympics-injury/>

### ***Josh Morrissey leaves Canada's Olympic hockey opener, won't return: Sources***

By Arpon Basu

MILAN — Canada defenseman Josh Morrissey, who missed the 4 Nations Face-Off championship game with an illness, was unable to finish the team's opening game of the Olympics against the Czech Republic on Thursday.

It was unclear what exactly happened to Morrissey, but with just over a minute left in the first period, he appeared to inadvertently clip his left leg on the leg of Czech forward Martin Nečas while exiting the Canada zone. Morrissey returned for the second period but played only one shift before heading back to the Canadian dressing room and not returning.

Team Canada sources confirmed to The Athletic's Pierre LeBrun that Morrissey was ruled out.

With Olympic lineups allowing teams to dress seven defensemen, Morrissey was replaced on Canada's second pair with Colton Parayko by Shea Theodore, who had been rotating in on the third pair with Drew Doughty and Thomas Harley in the first period. Canada has Travis Sanheim on the roster, and he would draw into the lineup if Morrissey is unable to play Friday night against Switzerland.

Canada coach Jon Cooper did not provide an update on Morrissey's status postgame.

## **Winnipeg Sun**

[https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/moose-forward-brayden-yager-learning-every-day-in-the-ahl/article\\_8fdb6687-a14e-41f3-b5a6-e49ebdac8d76.html](https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/moose-forward-brayden-yager-learning-every-day-in-the-ahl/article_8fdb6687-a14e-41f3-b5a6-e49ebdac8d76.html)

### ***Moose forward Brayden Yager learning every day in the AHL***

By Gordon Anderson

Moose forward Brayden Yager was smiling ear-to-ear the other day when asked about his first season as a pro.

"It has been great (rookie season so far), and I love it," Yager told the Winnipeg Sun. "It has been easy to show up every day and fit in, and that is a compliment to the guys in the room."

Midway through the month of February, Yager leads the Manitoba contingent of rookies in points with six goals and 11 assists heading into Monday afternoon's matchup against the Calgary Wranglers.

Against the backdrop of rookies in the American Hockey League, the Saskatoon native is tied for 42nd in scoring among forwards. Drilling down a wee bit further, he is 50th in the goal-scoring department.

The 6-foot and 170-pound centreman was originally a first-round pick of the Pittsburgh Penguins in the 2023 NHL draft. He was traded to Winnipeg in August of 2024 in exchange for Rutger McGroarty.

As with all things brand new, there is always a level of adjustment, even for one of the best junior players in Canada prior to his draft year. The 21-year-old was the captain of the World Juniors squad for the 2025 IIHF World Junior Championship in Ottawa.

"He has improved, for sure," Moose head coach Mark Morrison said. "When he is skating, which is probably his best asset, when he is moving his feet, he is a good hockey player. His decisions are coming quicker, and he has been on the scoreboard a couple of times in the last three or four games."

Morrison went a bit further in discussing exactly where the centre has improved, as there are many areas of the game that rookies must master to take the next step.

"You can tell he is gaining more confidence," the coach said. "It is about playing, and about experience. He is improving in all the reads, at five-on-five, and on the power play. He makes superb outlet passes, and he has a high IQ on the powerplay. There are a lot of good things about him."

Yager says it is a joy coming to the rink every day and learning how to be a pro, saying veterans like Walker Duehr have helped him many times over this season.

"Duehr is such a key part of the offence and our team, in general," Yager said. "He is a great guy in the room and off the he is a guy that lightens things up. He is an easy guy to talk to."

Through either curiosity or necessity, the Jets have promoted Moose regulars such as Elias Salomonsson, Danny Zhilkin and Nikita Chibrikov at some points this season.

Perhaps Yager will get his shot with the big club in the next couple of months, maybe after the NHL trade deadline, depending on what the Jets do between now and March 6.

"When he gets his opportunity, the fans will see somebody who is offensive-minded, makes good plays, can carry the puck through the neutral zone, along with some pace to his game," Morrison said.

Either way, his arrival day is a floating target at this point.

"I want to get to the NHL, and I will do whatever I can to achieve that," Yager added. "The guys in the room have done a great job of showing me the way, while pushing me (hard every day)."

[https://www.winnipegssun.com/sports/full-speed-ahead-for-manitoba-moose-forward-jacob-julien/article\\_f572d6b4-39ca-4e77-8ab2-22ac98101459.html](https://www.winnipegssun.com/sports/full-speed-ahead-for-manitoba-moose-forward-jacob-julien/article_f572d6b4-39ca-4e77-8ab2-22ac98101459.html)

### ***Full speed ahead for Manitoba Moose forward Jacob Julien***

By Gordon Anderson

Some months ago, Moose forward Jacob Julien was ready to springboard into his first season as a pro, and then it didn't happen.

"I am not going to say it was easy, it is difficult but the support of the (organization) and the family back home was tremendous, and I couldn't be more thankful," Julien told the Winnipeg Sun. "I was trying to keep a positive mindset and (tried to be ready when the chance became available) and I think I have done a good job (of taking advantage of the opportunity).

The 6-foot-4 centreman from London, Ont., was having a strong training camp before he was reassigned to Manitoba on Sept. 28. He suffered a lower-body injury during an intersquad game in early October.

At the time, the team said he was out for six to eight weeks. Julien then suffered a setback in early December, extending his pro debut timeline into January.

The ex-London Knight played two games in the ECHL for the Norfolk Admirals, before Manitoba called him back to Winnipeg. He made his Moose debut on Jan. 16 against the Laval Rocket.

"It is unfortunate, for sure, that he had to start (his first pro season) that way, but all these things end up being, depending on how you take it, a positive," Manitoba head coach Mark Morrison said. "For sure, it is hard for him, his first pro experience, injured for two months and then trying to get into the lineup when hockey is full swing, and the teams are playing their best hockey."

Heading into AHL action on Monday afternoon, Julien has two assists in six games played.

"He is trying to catch up, but our staff and Julien have done a great job in getting him there," Morrison said. "He has stepped into our lineup at this time of the season, and he has played well, played like he hasn't missed the first two and a half months of the season. It is a credit to

him as he has put the hard work in. Hopefully, he stays healthy here and he gets the next 30 games in."

Besides the mind-body connection, first and foremost trusting the ailment has properly healed, Julien must ramp everything up just a notch.

"It is all about pace," Morrison said. "Things happen quickly. The passes and the decisions you make have to come a lot quicker. All of that is experience and some guys pick it up quicker than other guys, but he just has to play."

"I am getting more comfortable and getting up to the pace," Julien added. "I am finding my way, and I can't be thankful enough to the guys around me, supporting me and telling me the little things I need to work on."

Provided there are no more physical setbacks, Morrison doesn't expect any hiccups for the remainder of the season.

It is full speed ahead for the 21-year-old Ontario lad.

"He wants to be coached, and he is a listener," Morrison said. "He wants to learn and at this level the mentors and veteran players are the biggest source for him, and he pays attention to everyone. I give a lot of credit to the veteran players who have handled the young kids. That is who they really learn from and listen to, more than the coaches."

Julien heartily concurred.

"They push us every day to get better because they know what it takes to win and play in this league," he said. "I am listening to them and doing what they say and working as hard as I can."

[https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/coming-to-the-defence-of-the-ahl-s-manitoba-moose/article\\_c6ea46d0-0723-49fe-8c3c-28ea939afdb0.html](https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/coming-to-the-defence-of-the-ahl-s-manitoba-moose/article_c6ea46d0-0723-49fe-8c3c-28ea939afdb0.html)

### ***Coming to the defence of the AHL's Manitoba Moose***

By Gordon Anderson

If a team struggles at one aspect of the game, there need to be strong countermeasures in place to even things out.

"If we put our finger on one thing, it is going to be defending," Moose head coach Mark Morisson said after practice on Sunday morning.

The Moose defeated the Wranglers 5-1 on Saturday afternoon, improving their record to 6-4-0 in their last 10, by far their best stretch of hockey this season. Manitoba hosts the Wranglers on Monday afternoon at the downtown rink.

"A lot of (our success has come from) our defending," Morrison said. "We have defended a whole lot better in the last month than we did in the previous couple of months. Individually, we are defending better with the one-on-one battles and as units as our defensive coverage has been better. And that helps everybody. It helps you defence, it helps you goalies, and when you

are defending well, you aren't in your zone as long and you are playing in the offensive zone. It helps all aspects of your game."

The team has allowed 20 goals in this 10-game sample size, dating back to a 6-2 loss to Rockford on Jan. 13. The club has allowed eight in four games this month.

Rookie forward Brayden Yager says the attention to detail in the defensive zone has been a priority since their mid-January series against the Laval Rocket. The Moose took both games from the third best team, record wise, in the Eastern Conference. The club won 2-0 and 3-1.

And the club must defend like champs as scoring is an issue so far this season. The club is 19th in the 32-team league with 115 in 43 games. They have a goal differential of minus-3 and are third in the Central Division heading into league action on Sunday with a 23-17-3-0 record, one point ahead of the Texas Stars with three games in-hand.

Mason Shaw leads the way with 15 goals and 16 assists. Courtesy of a two-goal game against the Wranglers, Samuel Fegamo is second with 13 goals, and Walker Duehr, who scored a short-handed goal on Saturday, the team's seventh, his third with a dozen goals in 38 games.

"In the Laval series our coaches really started harping on playing defence first and that is the way we want to play," Yager said. "With our depth and what we have as a group, we can be patient and defend, defend, and defend and once we get our opportunities, we have got the skill to bury our chances. That is winning hockey, and you see that is how it is going to be (in the playoffs). It is going to be tight-checking and if we can defend first and get out of our zone and our skill can take over."

Yager leads the team's rookies in scoring with six goals in 43 games. He also scored on Saturday. The 21-year-old has two goals and one assist in his last 16 games.

The penalty kill has also been a big contributor on this recent stretch of .600 hockey. The PK has turned away 31 of 34 opportunities in the 10-game segment. Heading into league action on Sunday, the Moose is tied for fourth in the league with an 88.7 per cent conversion rate. Overall, they have allowed 23 goals on 153 chances.

"It is the continuity as we have six or seven forwards that we use, and they stay in the same pairs and same with the back end," Morrisons said about how the success has been maintained. "They (PK units) stay in the same pairs. They block shots, they are physical, and they are a good PK and proving that they are consistent at it."

One thing stopping the squad from a better place in the standings is just an extension of the lack of five-on-five scoring. The team is 32nd in the league with 17 goals in 132 powerplay chances, a 12.9 per cent conversion rate.

Manitoba is 1-11 in four games this month and 3-for-27 since the four-goal loss to Rockford. They have scored in three different games, winning two of them.

"(The powerplay) is a concern," Morrison said. "We have addressed it quite a few times. We need to score different ways and that is something we are working on. We need to get more of a shooting mentality and a man at the net mentality, simplify it a little bit. On Saturday (against Calgary) we had some good looks, and we had two or three grade A chances we could have scored on, but we didn't. The finish (around the net) has to be better."

[https://www.winnipegssun.com/sports/moose-lose-3-2-in-a-shootout-to-the-wranglers-in-ahl-action/article\\_958bb91e-7915-458c-ba27-cb1d4ef744f0.html](https://www.winnipegssun.com/sports/moose-lose-3-2-in-a-shootout-to-the-wranglers-in-ahl-action/article_958bb91e-7915-458c-ba27-cb1d4ef744f0.html)

## ***Moose lose 3-2 in a shootout to the Wranglers in AHL action***

By Gordon Anderson

As the saying goes, the worst lead in hockey is a two-goal lead.

The Manitoba Moose surrendered a two-goal lead in a 3-2 shootout loss to the Calgary Wranglers on Monday afternoon.

"Honestly, I didn't think we were playing too good even before we got the two-goal lead," Moose forward David Gustafsson said. "Getting that two-goal lead was kind of lucky, and they were the better team and deserved to win."

Matvei Gridin scored the only goal in the shootout. Moose netminder Domenic Divincentiis stopped William Stromgren and Justin Kirkland before Gridin found the net in the third round of the shootout.

Calgary netminder Arsenii Sergeev turned aside attempts by Nikita Chibrikov, Danny Zhilkin and Ville Heinola. Sergeev stopped 23 shots in regulation and two in overtime.

Gustafsson ninth goal of the season at 13:09 of the second period, pushed the Moose lead to 2-0 lead at the time. The Wranglers outshot the locals 8-1 after the Gustafsson marker, with Rory Kerins trimming the lead to 2-1 with a power-play goal at 16:55.

"I thought our first period was good," Moose captain Mason Shaw said. "In the second period, the game got away from us, and we weren't able to respond as they kept coming and coming. Domenic Divincentiis did everything he could to keep us in that game and, unfortunately, it just wasn't good enough from everyone in the locker room."

Divincentiis stopped 38 shots.

Calgary tied the game on their 13th shot of the third, Kerins with his second of the game at 15:41. Final shots favoured the visitors 40-25 in regulation and 40-27 overall.

The one statistical advantage Manitoba held after its second goal, and not the kind of advantage any team wishes to own, was a 3-0 penalty count in their favour.

Since the turn of the calendar, the Moose have played in nine one-goal games. Ville Heinola also scored for the Moose (23-17-3-1).

The Wranglers (17-20-10-2) snapped a six-game losing streak.

The Moose host the Iowa Wild on Saturday afternoon.

[https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/winnipeg\\_jets/manitoba-moose-stampede-wranglers-5-1-in-ahl-action/article\\_94c58bf1-ac4e-4eb4-a716-7dc6b46c8035.html](https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/winnipeg_jets/manitoba-moose-stampede-wranglers-5-1-in-ahl-action/article_94c58bf1-ac4e-4eb4-a716-7dc6b46c8035.html)

## ***Manitoba Moose stampede Wranglers 5-1 in AHL action***

By Gordon Anderson

No matter how bad it gets, the best way to beat a slump is to be consistent.

Samuel Fagemo scored for the first time in eight games as the Manitoba Moose beat the Calgary Wranglers 5-1 in AHL action on Saturday afternoon at Canada Life Centre.

"It been frustrating that the goals haven't come so much lately but at the same time you have to keep shooting the puck and staying patient and it was nice to score a couple of goal today," Fagemo said.

He opened the scoring at 4:14 of the first period, and added another goal at 9:49 of the second, increasing the lead to 4-0 for the home side.

Moose head coach Mark Morisson says the chances haven't been there for the sharpshooter.

"He has played on different lines, and I am not sure the opportunities have been there," Morrison said. "We have tried to share ice time as we have a lot of guys."

Compared to other seasons, Fagemo has had a bit of a down year. He put up large offensive numbers with the Ontario Reign—29 last year and 43 the year before—but he has struggled to find his offensive form so far this season with 13 in 43 games played.

"We all know Fagemo can do it," Walker Duehr added. "I have played against him a good chunk in the Pacific Division, and I have seen him do year after year. He's been around it, but sometimes you don't get the puck luck. If he gets going that is going to be huge."

Duehr made his return to the lineup for the first time since Jan 23. He scored a short-handed goal in the third period. Prior to his injury, Duehr had at least one point in eight of 10 games.

"Duehr was missed a lot," Fagemo said. "He is such a big part of our team and our group. He is such a good player and a great skater. It is super nice to have him back."

Danny Zhilkin and Braden Yager also scored for Manitoba (31-22-17-3). The Moose have won four of their last six. The victory snaps a mini two-game losing streak as the Moose lost a pair of one-goal games to the Texas Stars last weekend in Texas. With the win, the club vaults over the Stars for third in the Central Division heading into league action on Saturday night.

Thomas Milic (11-6-2-1) turned aside 23 shots in the win.

Martin Frk scored for the Wranglers (16-20-10-2). Ivan Prosvetov (8-8-2-1) stopped 23 of 2 shots in the loss.

The Moose host the Wranglers on Monday afternoon at the rink downtown. Puck drop is scheduled for 2 p.m.

### Two-point night

With one goal and one assist, Zhilkin recorded his first multi-point game since Dec. 31. The ex-Guelph Storm standout is tied with Braden Yager for the team lead in rookie points, both players with 17, but Zhilkin has more three more goals than Yager at nine.

"He does a lot of great things in the defensive zone, in the neutral zone, and system wise he is great," Moose head coach Morrison said. "He makes plays. He is a solid centreman and a number one centreman in this league."

The Jets promoted the rookie to the NHL back on Jan. 7. He played five games with the Jets before getting loaned back to the Moose on Jan. 23.

"He needs to keep working at (his game)," Morrison said. "He needs to get a little bit better at everything, but he is a good hockey player."

Zhilkin was a plus-2. He averaged 8:14 of ice time with the Jets.

### Short-handed surprise

The Moose are tied for first in the AHL with eight short-handed goals, Duehr doing the honours at 6:05 of the third period when he went in alone and beat Prosvetov to glove side for his 12th goal of the season.

"We have a lot of good penalty killers, and we pick the right spots when we can go and have a good idea when we can be a bit more offensive," Duehr said. "We have done a good job of making those reads."

"They can skate well and as soon as they get a chance, the puck goes in the net" Fagemo added. "That is a positive thing."

The Duehr goal also came against his former club, but he wasn't celebrating that fact too hard.

"I don't want to think about it too much," Duehr said. "It is cool anytime you score (your former team), I guess."