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FEATURE | Toews' on The Return

Hear from Jonathan Toews as he prepares to hit the ice in Chicago as a visitor for the first time in his career!

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/01/18/reverence-roars-toews-excited-for-chicago-return>

Reverence & roars: Toews excited for Chicago return Former Blackhawks captain looking forward to first game as Jet in Windy City

By: Ken Wiebe

CHICAGO — The farewell was equal parts appreciative and mystifying for Jonathan Toews.

As the longtime captain of the Chicago Blackhawks skated off the United Center ice for the final time as the face of the franchise in April 2023, he had an abundance of emotions flowing through his body and mind.

Toews was grateful for the chance to say goodbye to a place that meant so much to him, but was still coming to terms for the way that portion of the journey was ending.

Compounding matters, it was also unclear if he could continue his life as an NHLer.

"I had no idea. I wasn't sure if I was ever going to play again at that point," Toews said during a one-on-one interview. "It was definitely emotional. I was pretty blown away by that moment, especially when the other team was lined up and the fans were making me skate around the ice.

"I didn't really know how to handle that moment. It was almost too much. But like I've always said, it was the closing of the chapter where I was the last guy from that team and it was pretty cool to represent that."

It would require more than two years — and an excruciatingly long recovery process — for Toews to finally get his answer about his future as a professional hockey player.

On Monday, Toews will stroll back into the arena where he produced more than 15 seasons of memories for a fabled Original Six franchise.

Only this time he will be wearing the jersey of the visiting team, his hometown Winnipeg Jets.

One would imagine Toews will be welcomed back with reverence and roars, given the way he helped resuscitate the organization, shepherding them out from the wilderness and to a span of hockey that included three Stanley Cups and a lifetime of everlasting highlights for the Blackhawks and their faithful.

Make no mistake, the emotional bond is a two-way street and Toews' love for the city, the organization and the fans of the 'Hawks know no bounds.

It's the place he arrived as a teenager and blossomed into a bona fide Hockey Hall of Famer.

As a wide-eyed 17-year-old in Vancouver when Blackhawks general manager Dale Tallon stepped to the podium and announced the selection of Toews, he had no idea how his life was about to change.

"No. My dream was playing in the NHL. I didn't give anything after that too much thought," said Toews. "But after you get there, this is what we're here to do, to win a Stanley Cup. Once you get a chance to do it, it's pretty special. You recognize there are a lot of great players that never got the chance to do that. It was quite an honour and it was special to be part of teams that were good enough to go that far."

"I'm excited to go back to the United Center... It's an amazing sports city. When we won our first Cup, everything leading up to that, we were blown away by the support and how crazy the hockey fans are there."

From seeing roughly 5,000 fans in the stands for his NHL debut to watching the atmosphere inside the United Center grow into one of the most enjoyable environments in the league was something to behold.

"A trip down memory lane, for sure. I'm excited to go back to the United Center. I played a lot of games there," said Toews, who was planning to connect with several former teammates from the glory years on Sunday. "It's an amazing sports city. When we won our first Cup, everything leading up to that, we were blown away by the support and how crazy the hockey fans are there."

There were plenty of individual accomplishments and achievements along the way, including a Conn Smythe trophy as the Stanley Cup playoff MVP in 2010 when the Blackhawks claimed the first league championship since 1961 and a Selke Trophy as the top defensive forward in the NHL in 2012-13.

Yet, Toews has always put the team before himself, which is one of the many reasons he is revered in the Windy City and beyond.

Toews appeared in the first 1,067 NHL games (plus another 137 during the playoffs) with the Blackhawks and for the longest time the proud Winnipegger believed it would be the only organization he would play for.

But the circumstances changed for Toews when the Blackhawks decided their rebuilding process would move forward without the face of the franchise and Patrick Kane, who was dealt to the New York Rangers.

Toews saw the warm reception Kane received back in February of 2024 as a member of the Detroit Red Wings after he scored the overtime winner against the Blackhawks.

Even though he didn't suit up in the contest as an opponent, Toews has an idea of what is in store for him.

The tribute video and the ovations figure to be deafening.

Even for someone who has been known to be laser-focused on the task at hand throughout a career that is approaching two decades, Toews is in for a treat and you can bet he's going to take a moment to soak in the adulation before turning the page to the pursuit of two points.

Toews has always been known for having a sense of occasion and the ability to rise to the challenge.

In many ways, the arrival of this date comes at an opportune time, as the 37-year-old is playing some of the best hockey of this season.

Were it not for a cruel double-doink off the post and crossbar during a power play late in the third period of Saturday's 4-3 overtime loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs, Toews would be riding a five-game goal-scoring streak.

Even still, he's delivered four goals and nine points during the past 12 games while doing an excellent job on a revitalized second line with Gabe Vilardi and Cole Perfetti.

He's second in the NHL in faceoff percentage at 62.4 per cent and has been promoted to the Jets' top power play unit.

Although there were some tough patches he worked through during this comeback, this is the type of play Toews envisioned when he agreed to join his hometown team on a one-year deal that was made official on July 1.

"It's been a long time coming. I've been working hard and staying with it, even when there are times when it feels pretty discouraging when things don't go your way," said Toews, who is up to seven goals and 18 points in 47 games this season. "It's easy to let that frustration get to you a little bit, but you've got to keep working through."

"I've always believed in my game, knowing that if I get my feet going and find my timing on the ice, we have good players on this team and I can help them make plays. It's fun to have some offensive success and I want to keep building on my two-way game as well as we go deeper into the season."

Battling through adversity is what helps make you appreciate the good times all the more.

"I love playing in Winnipeg and I love playing for the Jets. This is a dream come true in its own right, to be able to do this at this stage of my career."

"I love playing in Winnipeg and I love playing for the Jets. This is a dream come true in its own right, to be able to do this at this stage of my career," said Toews. "Hopefully, I can go out there and contribute to a big win. That would feel really good."

To be clear, Toews' teammates understand the assignment as well.

When the subject was brought up to Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey, he referenced all the Blackhawks games he watched during those glory years before making it to the NHL himself.

And while he's been involved in plenty of fun matchups with the Blackhawks over the years in the Central Division, Morrissey recognizes this one is going to be one of a kind.

"I can only imagine for him, being the captain there for so long, and hoisting the three Cups and what he meant to that city and organization. It's going to be special," said Morrissey. "As a teammate, you're excited for him. And obviously, not just with where we're at in standings, but for him as well, we want to go in and find a way to get two points.

"He's a legend there. When you win three cups and captain three Stanley Cup teams, and play the way he has, I'm sure his number will be in those rafters one day."

Along with a statue outside the United Center, whenever Toews decides to close the book on this latest chapter of a storybook career.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/arts-and-life/diversions/2026/01/19/one-of-the-all-time-great-legends-of-the-chicago-blackhawks>

***'One of the all-time great legends of the Chicago Blackhawks'
Legacy of Jets' Toews lives on in the Windy City***

By: Ken Wiebe

CHICAGO — Given the location and environment, it would basically be the equivalent of Michael Jordan walking into this building in a Washington Wizards jersey.

It's the kind of sight that forces most witnesses to do a double take.

Jonathan Toews had done hundreds of interviews inside the United Center since being chosen third overall by the Chicago Blackhawks in 2006, but as he held court with reporters on Monday morning, this time he was wearing a hat and hoodie from his hometown team instead of the one with the distinct Original Six logo on it.

Sure, Toews has spent more than half a season suiting up for the Winnipeg Jets and had already faced the Blackhawks back in October, but this first trip inside the United Center in a visiting uniform will still take some getting used to for many observers.

"Well, it hasn't changed much," said Toews, when asked what it was like to be inside the visitors room instead of the home side he occupied for 15 seasons. "You're in there, sometimes for training camp and stuff. Yeah, it's definitely different."

Toews spoke for just over 10 minutes in what was the appetizer to the main course and his appreciation for his time in Chicago was heartfelt.

This is a place that means the world to him and it always will.

"I'm just super thankful, really grateful," said Toews, who appeared in 1,067 regular season games with the Blackhawks and another 137 during the Stanley Cup playoffs. "The beauty of our game is it's so team-oriented, and I'm always trying to be cognizant of the fact I was thrown into a really incredible opportunity. I'll give myself credit, I definitely had a lot of will, a lot of energy coming into my career as a young kid here in Chicago, but it was just a perfect storm.

“We had so many great players that were finding themselves and finding their careers — finding their careers at the same time. Even the trajectory of where the organization was at the time, there was no pressure really.”

That may be true, but the impact Toews had on the organization is everlasting.

While trying to define the legacy of a player that is still active can be hard to do, Toews will surely go down as one of the greatest Blackhawks to ever don the uniform.

“He’s one of the all-time great legends of the Chicago Blackhawks,” said Jets defenceman Luke Schenn. “He deserves this night.”

“He’s one of the all-time great legends of the Chicago Blackhawks... He deserves this night.”

Toews’ tenure includes three Stanley Cups, including one in 2010 that ended a drought stretching back to 1961.

Had it ended there, he would have been celebrated forever. By adding two more titles in 2013 and 2015, it cemented him as the best two-way centre in franchise history.

Whenever Toews’ career officially wraps up, his No. 19 will go up to the rafters, beside the likes of Stan Mikita, Tony Esposito and other franchise icons.

His ability to connect with the community was a big part of what allowed him to gain rockstar status around these parts.

“It’s funny. He’s the one teammate I’ve had where — when you go out with him in public — people won’t just say that they’re a big fan. They’ll almost give an emotional thank you to him,” said Blackhawks defenceman Connor Murphy. “They literally say, ‘thank you for making my life better.’ That’s what people will say to him because of the impact he made.

“Just representing (the Blackhawks) as a leader in the community and putting his heart on his sleeve, with how he played and always being team-first and community-first, that really resonated with people.”

Toews, who was named captain of the Blackhawks just after he turned 20, appreciated the opportunity to have a lasting impact on the great sports fans in this market.

“That’s one of the coolest things, and ultimately that’s a big reason why I wanted to play hockey when I was a young kid,” said Toews. “Going to an NHL game, you just feel that inspiration. It makes you feel some kind of emotion that inspires you to do your best and try to be great at what you do. It’s what we love about sports, too. You never know what’s going to happen.

“To put your heart and soul into something and be able to have that impact and inspire people in that way is what makes our sport special. When people would come up to you and talk about where they were when you won one of the Cups, or whatever it was, the story they want to share — it gives people memories. It’s something people in our city would bond over. It’s pretty special to have those memories.”

Toews has been gone from the Blackhawks for three seasons, but his impact on the organization is still being felt — and will be for quite some time.

"It's something people in our city would bond over. It's pretty special to have those memories."

"I don't think there's any doubt," said Blackhawks head coach Jeff Blashill. "When you do what that group did — and certainly him included — that's part of your foundation. That's part of the foundation of our organization that we're continuing to try to build upon. Certainly, we reference the players that have come before and built this great legacy and he's certainly one of those guys."

Schenn, who won back-to-back Stanley Cups with the Tampa Bay Lightning in 2020 and 2021, chuckled when asked about what it was like to go back and face an organization that you've won with.

"Whatever I've seen and come back to is nothing of this magnitude, so it's hard to even relate," said Schenn. "I remember Mats Sundin coming back to Toronto when he was playing for the Canucks. I was on the Leafs at that time and it was a similar sort of thing, but there weren't three (Stanley) Cups attached to the name or anything like that. So it's a little bit different.

"But there are certainly games that will stand out and that you remember."

This is one of those games — and receptions — you will remember, whether you were out on the ice, watching from inside the building or viewing it on your TV.

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/jets-toews-thankful-for-time-with-blackhawks-ahead-of-chicago-return/>

Jets' Toews 'thankful' for time with Blackhawks ahead of Chicago return

By Sportsnet Staff

Jonathan Toews is making his return to the United Center, and for the first time in his career, he will be on the visiting side.

Toews and the Winnipeg Jets will visit the Chicago Blackhawks in the Windy City on Monday, marking the 37-year-old forward's first visit to the United Center since returning to the NHL.

"I've been thinking about it, especially since (Patrick Kane) went back and scored the overtime winner," Toews said in an interview posted by the Jets. "I'm excited to go back. It's going to be strange. Happy and sad at the same time. Obviously, life goes on, but I'm happy to be right where I am right now and definitely very thankful for the years I got to spend there."

Selected third overall by the then-rebuilding Blackhawks in 2006, Toews spent 15 seasons with the organization, during which time he amassed three Stanley Cups (2010, 2013, 2015) alongside one Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP and one Selke Trophy as the league's best defensive forward.

He took a step back from professional hockey following the 2022-23 season after revealing he suffered from long COVID and chronic inflammatory response syndrome (CIRS), but returned this season to play with his hometown Jets.

"The send-off from the fans (after the final game in Chicago) was completely unexpected on my end," Toews recalled. "I'm so thankful to have played in a city like that with hockey fans like that, where we won championships and it just exceeded so many expectations. No one really knew how crazy it would be."

Toews was named captain in his sophomore year with the team — a title he would retain up until his last game with the franchise — and saw the Blackhawks go from a five-year playoff drought to a post-season mainstay for nearly a decade.

"To see it go from (the bottom) to just the whole hockey scene in Chicago just take off like a rocket ship," he continued. "You had some appreciation for how special it was, what you were experiencing, but as those years went along, it just became the norm to either go to the Conference Final or to go on a deep playoff run."

"You talk to guys who go their entire career without having a win in the playoffs and then they finally win the Stanley Cup at the end of their career. Obviously, there's some serious contrast there. I don't want to say we didn't appreciate it, but it was all happening so fast too, and we just made the best of it while we could."

He played his first-ever game against the Blackhawks on Oct. 30 in Winnipeg, where he recorded an assist in what was ultimately a Jets win, but Toews admits getting a win in the arena where he spent most of his NHL life will be different.

"I'll be excited to go play and just relive some of that this week," the Winnipeg native said. "At the end of the night, the old hockey interview answer is we're going in there to get two points and we're trending as a team right now. It'll be a fun one to go and get a win in that building."

In 47 games, Toews has seven goals and 18 points this season.

The Blackhawks and Jets sit seventh and eighth, respectively, in the Central Division, with just one point separating the two squads. The Jets have a game in hand.

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/jonathan-toews-says-chicago-return-will-be-weird-situation>

Toews return to Chicago with Jets will be 'weird situation' ***Former Blackhawks captain will play as visitor for 1st time at United Center***

By Tracey Myers

CHICAGO -- Jonathan Toews sat at a table in what's normally the postgame media room at United Center, the former Chicago Blackhawks captain now wearing the dark blue sweatshirt of the Winnipeg Jets.

"It's a weird situation. You don't get games like this all the time, obviously," Toews said.

Weird is certainly a good way to describe what will happen when the Jets play the Blackhawks on Monday (8:30 p.m. ET; CHSN, TSN3, TVAS), marking the first time Toews will play as a visitor in Chicago.

"Just trying to walk that line between, at the end of the day you want to go out there and play well and win the game, so you have to keep some level of focus and not get too distracted with all the things going around you," Toews said.

The Jets center is the latest core member of the Blackhawks' three Stanley Cup championship teams to face his former team here. The previous was forward Patrick Kane, now with the Detroit Red Wings, who returned here on Feb. 25, 2024, and scored in overtime against the Blackhawks.

Did Toews ask Kane for a little advice on handling the return?

"No, I thought about it and then I was like, 'What am I calling him for advice for?'" Toews said to laughs. "I'm kidding. Like I said, I'll just go out there and enjoy it tonight."

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The No. 3 pick by the Blackhawks in the 2006 NHL Draft, Toews had 883 points (372 goals, 511 assists) in 1,067 career games with Chicago. Named Blackhawks captain before the 2008-09 season, Toews helped them win the Stanley Cup in 2010, 2013 and 2015. He won the Conn Smythe Trophy, awarded to the most valuable player of the Stanley Cup Playoffs, in 2010 when he had 29 points (seven goals, 22 assists) in 22 postseason games.

At the end of the 2022-23 season, the Blackhawks chose not to re-sign Toews, who was limited to 124 games from the start of the 2020-21 season to the end of the 2022-23 season. He missed the entire 2020-21 season because of Chronic Inflammatory Response Syndrome, and was out from Feb. 21-April 1, 2023, when he was dealing with the effects of long COVID-19.

Named one of the 100 Greatest NHL Players in 2017 as part of the League's Centennial celebration, Toews became an unrestricted free agent July 1, 2023. He signed a one-year, \$2 million contract with his hometown Winnipeg Jets on June 20, 2025.

He has 18 points (seven goals, 11 assists) in 47 games this season for the Jets (19-22-6), who are second-to-last in the Western Conference.

During his final game with the Blackhawks, on April 13, 2023, Toews got a video tribute which he said "was totally unexpected and kind of blindsided me. I'm sure I'll get the same feeling tonight. Not really sure how to receive that, but like I said, it's felt good to come back here and see some old friends and just feel that reception once again."

The 37-year-old spent Sunday night in Chicago having dinner with his parents and former Blackhawks teammates Andrew Shaw, Kris Versteeg and Troy Brouwer.

"It was a fun night last night, and tonight I'll definitely be excited," Toews said. "A lot of energy to play the game and just try to go out there and play my best."

Chicago coach Jeff Blashill said he doesn't know Toews well but expressed admiration for his career.

"There are great point-getters and there are great winners, and for me he's a great winner," he said. "It's what we've talked about with our group from Day 1 here is we want our guys to become those winning-type championship-level players that understand you have to check for your offense, understand not every shift are you going to be able to make an amazing play. You pounce when you get the opportunity to pounce and you play smart when you don't.

"He was just a big-time winner during the time that I watched him here in Chicago. A good model for what we want to be as a group."

Toews will turn another page in his career after he plays his former team Monday. It'll be a reminder of the good times he had here and everything he was able to accomplish.

"I think the beauty of our game is it's so team-oriented, and I think I'm always trying to be cognizant of the fact that I was thrown into a really incredible opportunity," Toews said. "I give myself credit and definitely had a lot of will and energy coming into my career as a young kid here in Chicago, but it was just a perfect storm. We had so many great players that were finding themselves and finding their games at the same time, and just even the trajectory of the organization at the time.

"I played the (IIHF) World Championship after my last year in college (University of North Dakota), and all the guys there were always like, 'Chicago's such a great sports city, and once the team gets going it's going to be a great place to play.' Sure enough, that came through within a couple of years of being here. Just all the things lining up and being able to take advantage of those opportunities is pretty special."

Chicago Hockey Now

<https://chicagohockeynow.com/2026/01/19/jonathan-toews-talks-return-chicago-blackhawks-winnipeg-jets-united-center/>

Toews Talks 'Weird' Return To Chicago, Grateful For Blackhawks Tenure

By Jack Bushman

Jonathan Toews missed out on Saturday's celebration of "The Banner Years", where the Chicago Blackhawks welcomed back countless members of the 2010, 2013, and 2015 Stanley Cup championship teams to the United Center.

While the likes of Duncan Keith, Brent Seabrook, Marian Hossa, and many more franchise icons returned to their old stomping grounds, 'Captain Serious' was busy playing for his hometown team, the Winnipeg Jets, in a Canadian matchup with the Toronto Maple Leafs. Toews and his Jets had their four-game winning streak snapped with a 4-3 overtime loss at Canada Life Centre.

Considering Toews' legacy in Chicago, perhaps it's more fitting that he gets his own night of celebration on Monday, when Winnipeg squares off with the Blackhawks for the second of four meetings in 2025-26. It will be Toews' first time playing at the United Center as a visitor, where he's sure to receive a special video tribute and get showered with love from the fans in attendance.

"It's a weird situation," Toews said with a wry smile following Monday's morning skate. "You don't get games like this all the time, obviously. At the end of the day, you want to go out there and play well and win the game, so you've got to keep some level of focus and not get too distracted by all the things going on. But tonight, I'll definitely be excited. A lot of energy to play the game. I'll just try and go out there and play my best."

Toews now finds himself in the same "weird" scenario that another Blackhawks three-time Stanley Cup champion faced nearly two years ago. Patrick Kane, who also departed the organization in 2023, returned to Chicago in February 2024 as a member of the Detroit Red Wings. Kane, in vintage 'Showtime' fashion, recorded the game-winning goal in overtime, putting a stamp on an emphatic first trip back to the Madhouse.

Toews laughed when asked on Monday about Kane setting a high bar for their return games. The 37-year-old added that he stopped comparing himself to Kane "a long time ago" and joked about reaching out for some advice ahead of the game.

"I thought about it, and then I was like, 'What am I calling him for advice for?'" Toews said. "I'm kidding. Like I said, I'll just go out there and enjoy it tonight."

While Toews couldn't be in attendance for Saturday's festivities, he did arrive in Chicago early enough to catch up with several of his former teammates before the end of the weekend. He and his parents were joined by Andrew Shaw, Kris Versteeg, and Troy Brouwer for dinner on Sunday.

Toews took the time to speak about how fortunate he is for all of those life-long friendships he established during his 16 seasons with the Blackhawks.

"I'm just super thankful. Really, really grateful," he said. "I think the beauty of our game is it's so team-oriented, and I think I'm always trying to be cognizant of the fact that I was thrown into a really incredible opportunity. We had so many great players that were finding themselves, finding their careers, finding their games at the same time, and just even the trajectory of where the organization was at the time."

As for the city itself, Toews described the transition from the mid-2000s, when players like Keith and Seabrook were literally handing out tickets on the street, to becoming a modern-day dynasty in the 2010s, where the stadium was sold out every night. He couldn't have asked for better support from the Chicagoans over the years.

"I went and played the World Championship after my last year in college, and all the guys there were always like, you know, Chicago's such a great sports city, and once the team gets going, it's going to be a great place to play. And sure enough, that really came true within a couple of years of being here. So just all the things kind of lining up and being able to take advantage of those opportunities was all pretty special."

Indeed, Toews and the Blackhawks' run from 2007 to 2023 was something special. So, too, will be Monday's welcome home party, where Toews gets recognized for his remarkable achievements and historic career moments in Chicago.

Winnipeg Sun

https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/winnipeg_jets/the-toast-of-chi-town-jets-toews-back-where-it-started/article_61a1d8c4-5099-4a3e-bf46-3f09b0f498b6.html

The toast of Chi-town: Jets' Toews back where it started

By Paul Friesen

The last time Jonathan Toews played a game in Chicago he felt awkward and even a little blindsided.

The former Blackhawks star and now Winnipeg Jets centre was preparing for a little déjà vu on Monday night.

"I'm sure I'll get the same feeling," Toews told reporters in Chicago, as his Jets prepared to take on his old team. "Not really sure how to receive that. But it's felt really good to come back here and see some old friends and just feel that reception once again."

Back in 2023, fans knew the Winnipegger was playing his last game with their team, so they didn't hold back in expressing their appreciation for the three Stanley Cup titles he brought to the Windy City.

Nobody knew where he'd resurface, or if he'd even play again, not even Toews himself.

Health struggles forced him from the game for two years, a journey that ended when he signed with his hometown Jets last summer.

It's been an arduous journey back to where he's contributing again, four goals in his last five games the most obvious sign of him rediscovering his game.

"It's definitely been an adjustment," Toews said. "There's a lot of things that I've mentioned when I've been asked this question throughout the year, that I didn't really predict or foresee. Even acclimating to a new group, a new locker room, is something that I wasn't really quite expecting."

The NHL has changed, too. Younger and faster are two traits the 37-year-old can't claim as his own.

"As time went along I've been able to feel more comfortable and just find my game and settle in," he said. "And find a role on this team."

That role has been bumped up to the No. 2 centre on a line with Cole Perfetti and Gabe Vilardi, plus a spot on the No. 1 power play, where his domination as a faceoff specialist remains intact.

Jets head coach Scott Arniel says he can see Toews making quicker decisions, with better hands.

"Those three have shown some chemistry consistently and given us secondary scoring, which has been big," Arniel said of the line. "And JT has a lot to do with that. I see him talking to those

guys all the time, in practice and on the bench. That's the veteran guy, with the presence that you need."

Chicago's top pick, third overall, in the 2006 draft, Toews says he landed in "the perfect storm" as an 18-year-old, with young, talented teammates on a squad that had languished for a long time, allowing it a slew of top draft picks.

"There was no pressure, really," he recalled of his early years. "Given the situation right now with the young players, it's completely different than it was back then."

Toews fondly recalled a young Duncan Keith, also from Winnipeg, and Brent Seabrook, future stars on defence, handing out free game tickets at the train station, nobody knowing who they were even though the pair were wearing their jerseys.

It wasn't long before Toews couldn't go anywhere in that city anonymously, Stanley Cup championships in 2010, '13 and '15 ensuring his legacy and sure-fire status as a future Hockey Hall of Famer.

Blackhawks defenceman Connor Murphy joined the team two years after the last Cup, playing with Toews the next six seasons.

"He's the one teammate I've ever had where you go out with him in public and people won't just say they're a big fan," Murphy said. "They'll almost give an emotional thank you. They'll literally say, 'Thank you for making my life better.' It's amazing the organization and the city has had someone like that to look up to."

Toews calls that connection with fans "one of the coolest things" about sports.

"To put your heart and soul into something and be able to have that impact and inspire people in that way is what makes our sport special," he said. "When people would come up to you and talk about where they were when you won one of the Cups... the story they want to share, it gives people memories. It's something people in our city would bond over."

That Toews has made it back to the NHL strikes a chord with Murphy.

"Really shows his perseverance that he's always had," the 'Hawks defenceman said. "To be able to do what he loves and even to do it at home is really inspirational."

"There's great point-getters and there's great winners," first-year Chicago coach Jeff Blashill added. "And he's a great winner. A good model for what we want to be."

Whether or not Toews will ever be part of a winning team in Winnipeg is another story.

The Jets went into Monday's game in second-last spot in the NHL with 44 points, despite winning four of their last five games.

So it was just another in a line of must-wins for Toews's new team, but not just another night for No. 19.

Family came in for the special occasion, which would no doubt be marked by one of the more raucous video tributes a Chicago sports crowd has ever been part of.

"I definitely had the game marked on the calendar," Toews said. "But... it kind of sneaks up on you. So here we are."

https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/greasy-goals-lifting-jets-to-points-in-5-consecutive-games/article_e4a6a448-474e-4432-a884-b5cb6ec84239.html

'Greasy goals' lifting Jets to points in 5 consecutive games

By Gordon Anderson

When things aren't going well in the offensive zone, attack the net with purpose and a plan, and good things will happen.

"It's the second half of the year, and games progressively tighten up," Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey said. "No matter if it's the beginning of the year or playoffs, most of the goals are scored right in front of the net, but certainly in the second half, everyone is scoreboard watching and fighting for every point."

Speaking of points, Morrissey and the Jets let one point slip away in a 4-3 overtime loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs on Saturday night at Canada Life Centre.

Heading into league action on Sunday night, the Jets are slotted ninth in the Western Conference. They are seven points behind the San Jose Sharks for the second wildcard spot. The locals have nine games remaining until the Olympic break begins on Feb. 6.

Even with the loss, the Jets have collected nine of a possible 10 points since the 11-game winless streak was snapped with a 5-1 win over the Los Angeles Kings on Jan. 9. The recent surge in secondary scoring is certainly contributing to the turnaround, but so has the manner and method of scoring.

Nino Niederreiter's third-period goal against the Maple Leafs was a prime example of what the team has done in recent times to produce both wins and more offence.

Niederreiter was engaged with Morgan Reilly in front of the Leafs net as Luke Schenn moved towards the middle of the ice and got the puck through multiple bodies in front. Leafs netminder Dennis Hildeby bobbled the shot and the Swiss winger was there to slam home the rebound for his seventh goal of the season early in the third period.

"We've done a better job of attacking the net, attacking the slot, getting pucks in from the point," head coach Scott Arniel said. "In turn, you're going to get bounces that way. Obviously, you need a little bit of luck, you need some things to go your way, but I think our mentality has been right in regard to getting the puck there, pucks and bodies there. We're getting rewarded for it. Everybody says that's where you go to score goals. That's been true for a very long time."

Going back to the 6-2 win over the Minnesota Wild on Thursday night, equaling the largest output of goals in one game this season, the Jets scored three times with that philosophy in mind. The Jets scored six goals in a 6-3 home win over the Blackhawks on Oct. 30.

"We've scored a lot of goals in the paint," Dylan DeMelo said. "If a point shot is going in, it's because of a good screen. The defence are ready to shoot, not overthinking things and keeping

it simple. And guys are doing a great job of getting in front of the net. Screens, tips, rebounds, those are the greasy goals that I think count at any time of the year and are big goals for us. We're getting rewarded from it right now."

Jonathan Toews' power-play goal against the Wild happened because he was near the left post. The puck found the 37-year-old, and he batted it into the empty net. Tanner Pearson scored on a rebound after DeMelo's point shot got through traffic and hit Wild goaltender Jesper Wallstedt. The netminder couldn't handle the puck, and Pearson got two whacks before he sent it into the back of the net.

"We work on it every day, just trying to get pucks through and using our feet," Morrissey said. "Having a presence in front is how you score goals."

Gabe Vilardi's goal, even though it was a fortunate bounce off the end boards, was a product of getting multiple shots through, creating havoc and confusion in front of the cage.

"The TSN highlight goal of the night isn't always there in the second half, it is the grinding ones that have to happen, and we weren't getting any of those goals and now it has helped us get into games, get back into games or get leads in games," Arniel said. "When you force teams to protect that net front and it takes away a little bit of the rush game when they are dropping coverage back down a lot lower. We need to continue that."

The Jets are in Chicago on Monday night to play the Blackhawks. Toews will make his return to Chicago for the first time as a player. The Winnipeg native played 15 seasons in Chicago and won three Stanley Cups.