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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-jets-drop-another-close-one>

THREE THINGS: Jets drop another close one Jets fire 42 shots at Calvin Pickard but lose 3-1 to the Oilers

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – Calvin Pickard made 41 saves to help the Edmonton Oilers beat the Winnipeg Jets 3-1 at Canada Life Centre. Adam Lowry scored the only goal for the Jets who outshot the Oilers 42-21 and are now 15-18-4. Connor Hellebuyck made 18 saves. Winnipeg will head out on the road for three games beginning with the Red Wings in Detroit on Wednesday.

GETTING CLOSER

Since the Jets came out of the Christmas break, they were hoping to look more like the team that finished first overall last season. Looking back at the six periods (minus overtime on Saturday night) they have defended well and played some of their best hockey of the season. Winnipeg held Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl off the scoresheet for the majority of the night until McDavid recorded an assist on Zach Hyman's empty netter at 18:37.

"Well, I mean, when you put up 40 shots in a game, you're looking to get more than one goal," said Dylan Samberg.

"And obviously their goalie played a heck of a game, but I thought we had another great start to the first period there, and that's kind of the goal that we're trying to get to."

POWER PLAY DID EVERYTHING BUT SCORE

Coming into tonight's game the Jets wanted to make sure to stay out of the penalty box and keep the NHL's best power play off the ice. They did that in the opening frame and had a couple power plays of their own and had three quality chances that Calvin Pickard stopped, and the first period ended 0-0. Max Jones scored at the eight-minute mark to give the Oilers the lead, 35 seconds after that the Jets got their third power play of the night, fired four shots at Pickard with no luck. Scott Arniel felt the Jets had eight great scoring chances with the man advantage. Former Jet Jack Roslovic made it 2-0 on the first Oiler power play of the night at 12:49 and that turned out to be the game winning goal.

"Again, it's us finishing. The finishing aspect. Our power play spent almost the whole time in their end of the rink on our three power plays," said Scott Arniel.

"We had eight quality scoring chances on our power play. All these things have to... When they all seem to... When everything seems to be working, we're scoring three, four, five goals a game and you're not talking about this stuff."

800 GAMES FOR THE CAPTAIN

Adam Lowry became the fourth player to play 800 games for the Jets/Thrashers, joining Mark Scheifele (915), Blake Wheeler (897), and Bryan Little (843). All three of the other players recorded at least one point in their 800th game for the franchise and with the Jets by two goals in the third, Lowry made it 4-for-4 with this goal to pull Winnipeg within one.

"You know what, it was just nice to pull us back in the game. It had been a while," said Lowry.

"It's no secret secondary scoring has really been an issue for us. So I felt like it helped bring the building to life. But I would trade that for a win."

Lowry has been working his way back to form after a long recovery following hip surgery in the off-season. While the organization and fans know the value of Lowry to the Jets, Sportsnet's Gene Principe also had some kind words to say about the 32-year-old.

"This guy is a prototypical leader. Comes from great hockey stock with his father Dave, wears the "C" because he can say and capture the room. Which often isn't the case if you're not quote unquote a super star or star player and when I say that I'm talking about points and literally just production," said Principe on "The Check In" Monday afternoon.

"He's a star to the Winnipeg Jets. So much so that when the season began (Oilers head coach) Kris Knoblauch envisioned having a third line like Winnipeg has with an Adam Lowry-like player being the centre of that line, they have not found that player yet."

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/edmonton-oilers-winnipeg-jets-game-recap-december-29-2025>

Pickard makes 41 saves, Oilers hand Jets 6th straight loss McDavid extends point streak to 13 for Edmonton; Winnipeg is 0-3-3 during skid

By Darrin Bauming

WINNIPEG -- Calvin Pickard made 41 saves for the Edmonton Oilers, who held on for a 3-1 win against the Winnipeg Jets at Canada Life Centre on Monday.

"Calvin was outstanding, obviously the first star tonight," Edmonton coach Kris Knoblauch said. "The amount of saves he made, especially early in the game on the penalty kill, and then throughout the game. ... Later in the game the team did a pretty good job of blocking some shots for him, but absolutely, Calvin was our best player."

Max Jones, Jack Roslovic, and Zach Hyman scored for the Oilers (20-14-6), who have won three of their past four games. Connor McDavid had an assist to extend his point streak to 13 games (13 goals, 20 assists).

"[Winnipeg] played well," Pickard said. "They threw a lot of pucks at the net, they had some good tips. Their 'D' threw a lot of pucks there, but we did a pretty good job. ... If we're giving up shots from the outside that's fine, and take the sticks away. So, it was good."

Adam Lowry scored for the Jets (15-18-4), who have lost six straight (0-3-3) and nine of their past 10 (1-6-3). Connor Hellebuyck made 18 saves.

"I can't criticize the effort, I can't criticize the battle," Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel said. "The opportunities, the game plan that we threw at them against their elite players, all of those things I asked them to do, they did it. At the end of the day, we're not getting points and that's the most important thing."

Jones gave the Oilers a 1-0 lead at 8:00 of the second period, jamming in a loose puck at the right post after Curtis Lazar created a turnover by Jets defenseman Logan Stanley behind the net.

"I'm just trying to play hard and simple," said Jones, whose goal was his first of the season. "My game is physical, fast, and obviously, with low minutes you got to play a certain way, and I think I can do a pretty good job at it and help the team in that way. So, just finding my game piece by piece."

Roslovic made it 2-0 with a power-play goal at 12:49. Adam Henrique's initial shot was kicked out to Roslovic, who scored under Hellebuyck's glove with a wrist shot from the left circle.

Lowry cut it to 2-1 at 5:46 of the third period, collecting the rebound of Morgan Barron's shot and scoring with a backhand in front.

"I thought we played really well," Lowry said. "Obviously, there are no moral victories, but I think if we play that style of hockey, if we play that consistent effort for 60 minutes we are going to get more positive results than we got here tonight. That's what you can take from this game. ... Our two games coming out of Christmas, obviously we didn't get the result (also a 4-3 overtime loss to the Minnesota Wild on Saturday), but I think as a whole the process and the way it looks is a lot closer to what we envisioned our team to look like."

Hyman scored into an empty net at 18:37 for the 3-1 final.

"[Pickard], he played a heck of a game," Jones said. "Guys laying their body on the line there, strong plays, Hyman at the end there, [checking Kyle] Connor from behind there. It was just a group effort. It was fun to watch down the stretch."

NOTES: McDavid's 13-game point streak is the longest in the NHL this season. ... Lowry played in his 800th NHL game. He is fourth player in Jets/Atlanta Thrashers history to reach the mark, joining Mark Scheifele (916), Blake Wheeler (897) and Bryan Little (843).

Canadian Press

<https://www.chrisd.ca/2025/12/29/winnipeg-jets-edmonton-oilers-game-story-recap/>

Pickard's 41 Saves Lifts Edmonton Oilers to 3-1 Win Over Winnipeg Jets

By Judy Owen, The Canadian Press

WINNIPEG – A special meal with family set Calvin Pickard up for a big night in the Edmonton Oilers' net.

His quick reflexes and 41 saves helped the Oilers to a 3-1 victory Monday over the host Winnipeg Jets.

Pickard was born in Moncton, N.B., but his family moved to Winnipeg when he was eight years old and his parents still live in the Manitoba capital.

So the 33-year-old stopped in for Sunday dinner.

"Steak, ham, perogies, rice, Caesar salad. It was a Pickard special. It was good," Pickard said after his fourth win this season (4-5-2).

With the Oilers trading Stuart Skinner to Pittsburgh for Tristan Jarry (currently injured) in December, and Connor Ingram going 2-1 in three straight starts before Pickard got the nod Monday, Pickard was stellar as the Jets put a season-high 42 shots on net.

"They threw a lot of pucks at the net, they had some good tips," Pickard said. "Their (defence) threw a lot of pucks there, but we did a pretty good job."

"Probably my two best games of the year, I've had the most shots out of any of the games. So if we're giving up shots from the outside that's fine and take the sticks away, so it was good."

Max Jones, Jack Roslovic and Zach Hyman with an empty-net goal scored for the Oilers (20-14-6), who improved to 4-2-0 in their last six games.

Connor McDavid's assist on Hyman's goal extended his point streak to 13 games with 13 goals and 20 assists.

The Jets went 0-for-3 on the power play. Winnipeg had two power plays in the first period and Pickard turned aside four shots.

"Calvin was outstanding," Edmonton's head coach Kris Knoblauch said. "The amount of saves he made, especially early in the game on the penalty kill, and then throughout the game, you know, 40-some shots and some really nice ones."

"And then later in the game the team did a pretty good job blocking some shots for him. But absolutely, Calvin was our best player."

Pickard's previous start was a Dec. 20 loss to Minnesota.

"There's some time between starts here," Pickard acknowledged. ""You want to get into it, but I felt good."

"I felt good in practice. I'm confident. This is my third year here. I'm confident behind the group and just try to do my job."

He said some luck was on his side against the Jets.

"It's hard to get much traction. I thought I played pretty decent in Montreal, pretty decent in Minnesota, just not getting rewarded for it," Pickard said.

"I got some bounces tonight and I got rewarded for it. I like where my game's at, just want to keep that going."

Captain Adam Lowry, in his 800th career NHL game, scored for the Jets (15-18-4) in front of the team's second consecutive sellout of 15,225 at Canada Life Centre, and fourth of the season.

Connor Hellebuyck made 18 saves for Winnipeg, which fell to 0-4-3 in its last seven games.

"I thought we played really well," said Lowry, who ended a 17-game scoring drought.

"There are no moral victories, but I think we play that style of hockey, we play that consistent effort for 60 minutes, we are going to get more positive results than we got here tonight."

Jets head coach Scott Arniel said he couldn't criticize his team's effort.

"That's tough. Again, that's six periods for me that we've been (playing) how we have to play," he said.

"The only difference is we need points. We need the points. We have to find a way to score more goals than the opposition and we have to get points."

Jets defenceman Dylan Sandberg tipped his helmet to Pickard.

"When you put up 40 shots in a game, you're looking to get more than one goal," he said. "Their goalie played a heck of a game, but I thought we had another great start to the first period there, and that's kind of the goal that we're trying to get to."

Edmonton got on the board eight minutes into the second period when Jets defenceman Logan Stanley turned the puck over behind the net and Jones tapped it in from the side for his first goal of the season. The Oilers cashed in Winnipeg's first penalty of the game with Roslovic's power-play goal at 12:49 for his 11th of the season.

Lowry beat Pickard with a backhand off a rebound to make it 2-1 at 5:46 of the third, but Hyman put in his empty-netter with 1:23 remaining.

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/12/29/satus-quo-clearly-not-enough>

Status quo clearly not enough

Changes long overdue as Jets' tailspin continues with loss to Oilers

By: Mike McIntyre

With each passing game — and each mounting loss — the biggest question surrounding the Winnipeg Jets grows louder:

At what point will enough be enough?

Look, Monday's 3-1 setback to the Edmonton Oilers before a sold-out crowd at Canada Life Centre would be perfectly acceptable in its own little bubble. The Jets played a strong overall game, outshooting the visitors by a whopping 42-21 margin and doing many of the things that will land you on the right side of the final score more nights than not.

A legitimate argument can be made Winnipeg deserved better.

Some big-picture context is required here. The Jets are long past the point of moral victories, a reality underscored by the fact this group has now dropped 19 of its last 25 games overall (6-15-4).

“I can’t criticize the effort. I can’t criticize the battle,” said an obviously frustrated Jets head coach Scott Arniel.

“The opportunities, the game plan that we threw at them against their elite players. All of those things I asked them to do, they did it. At the end of the day, we’re not getting points and that’s the most important thing.”

All of which begs another burning question: What, if any, changes will be made to pull this team out of what has become an embarrassing tailspin? The need for help is obvious. The status quo is not nearly good enough to compete, certainly not in a results-oriented “what have you done for me lately” business.

Winnipeg is now 15-18-4 on the year, leaving them one point removed from dead last in the NHL standings at press time. Edmonton, seeking a third consecutive trip to the Stanley Cup Final, improves to 20-14-6.

“Sooner or later, this has to fall. These goals have to come,” Arniel said of his team’s offensive woes, including the fact numerous forwards are in lengthy slumps.

“For me, the process, I can keep saying that, but at the end of the day, just keep doing what we’re doing. Hopefully we can score some goals and we can get some points.”

PLUCKY PICKARD: Tip your hat to Winnipeg’s Calvin Pickard, who served notice Monday night he’s not ready to give up his NHL job just yet.

With trade addition Tristan Jarry now with the Oilers (albeit currently dealing with an injury) and reclamation project Connor Ingram up with the big club, there’s been plenty of speculation Pickard’s days in Edmonton could be numbered. A potential demotion to the American Hockey League might be looming.

The 33-year-old, who began the night with three wins in 13 games, a bloated 3.93 goals-against-average and an ugly .861 save-percentage, was sensational in this outing. Pickard made 41 stops and, if nothing else, certainly increased the odds another team would claim him on waivers or perhaps even give up an asset and trade for him.

“Played a heck of a game,” said Jets defenceman Dylan Samberg. “You know, it is what it is. You’re gonna run into a hot goalie at one point. We wish we could have found the back of the net more than once.”

According to Natural Stat Trick, the Jets had 18 high-danger chances and 4.46 expected goals in the game, yet only managed to sneak one puck by him.

“Had a couple of early ones, got into it. It was consistent. There was no, like, lulls in the game. They kept shooting, they kept coming,” said Pickard.

“We did a pretty good job keeping them to the outside. Their power play got some looks, had to make some saves there, but it was just one of those games. They were great and you’ve got to give them credit and they played well. I needed to be good and we defended well, as well.”

He was asked post-game what was in his Christmas turkey to inspire such a performance.

"No turkey. Steak, ham, perogies, rice, Caesar salad. It was a Pickard special," he replied.

SEASON'S BEATINGS: Raise your hand if you had a fight between Jets defenceman Neal Pionk and Oilers forward Ryan Nugent-Hopkins on your personal Bingo card.

Yeah, we didn't think so.

Sure enough, the two veterans dropped the gloves midway through the first period, causing plenty of observers to do a double-take at what they were witnessing.

It appears Nugent-Hopkins was angered by a hit Pionk had just thrown on him and decided to take matters into his own hands, quite literally. It was a spirited scrap that helped set the stage for a fairly physical affair, with Winnipeg ultimately outhitting Edmonton by a 32-22 margin.

COSTLY MISTAKES: When things aren't going well, even the smallest mistakes can quickly become magnified. That was certainly the case in this one.

The Jets had largely dominated the first half of the game, yet found themselves in a 1-0 deficit when Logan Stanley passed the puck from behind his own net directly onto the stick of Oilers forward Max Jones, who no doubt appreciated the belated Christmas gift as he buried his first of the year behind a surprised Connor Hellebuyck.

A few minutes later, with the Jets having already failed on three man-advantage chances of their own, Samberg tripped up Leon Draisaitl and gave the league's top power play a chance to go to work.

Sure enough, Winnipeg's only minor penalty of the night proved costly as old friend Jack Roslovic ripped a shot past Hellebuyck to make it 2-0.

CAPTAIN'S LAMENT: It was a big night for Adam Lowry, who became the fourth player in Jets 2.0 history to play 800 games for the franchise. Just like Mark Scheifele, Blake Wheeler and Bryan Little did before him, Lowry marked the occasion by hitting the scoresheet.

His rebound goal at 5:46 of the third period cut Winnipeg's deficit in half and inspired hope a comeback might be in the cards.

"It's no secret secondary scoring has really been an issue for us. So I felt like it helped bring the building to life," said Lowry, who has struggled to produce offence since returning from off-season hip surgery with just two goals and four assists in 26 games.

"But I would trade that for a win."

Zach Hyman sealed the Edmonton victory when he scored into an empty net with 83 seconds left in the game. Connor McDavid assisted in the goal, which extended his point streak to 13 games (13 goals, 20 assists)

To put that in perspective, the Jets have scored a total of 31 goals so far in December. McDavid has been involved in 33 Edmonton goals this month.

"The results are going to follow if we can continue with efforts like those," said Lowry, who believes outside help isn't necessarily required at this point.

"I think it's in here. We look at the contributions of certain guys in this room and what they've done in the past, they have long track records of producing offensively, good secondary rates. I think the chances, the posts, the looks we have, eventually the dam's going to break and you're going to get them, and then it seems like scoring comes in bunches."

KEY PLAY: The Roslovic goal — his 11th in just 27 games this season — proved to be the difference.

THREE STARS:

1. Oilers G Calvin Pickard: 41 saves
2. Oilers C Jack Roslovic: Game-winning goal
3. Jets C Morgan Barron: 1 assist

EXTRA EXTRA: Veteran forward Andrew Mangiapane was a surprising late scratch for the Oilers, who signed him to a two-year free agent contract on July 1. Reports are now circulating a trade could be imminent.

Mangiapane has 11 points (5G, 6A) in 39 games this year and is a team-worst minus-16. He is someone the Jets showed interest in this past summer before he ended up in Edmonton, so perhaps a team looking for some secondary scoring of their own could circle back and see if there could be a deal to be made at some point.

Winnipeg's healthy scratches were defencemen Colin Miller and Haydn Fleury and forward Cole Koepke.

The Jets have now sold out two home games in a row, and four on the season. They haven't given fans a ton to cheer for, going just 8-8-2 through 18 games at the downtown barn.

Next up is a three-game road trip which begins Wednesday in Detroit. Winnipeg is just 7-10-2 in enemy territory.

Winnipeg Sun

https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/winnipeg_jets/fine-effort-failed-result-for-jets-against-oilers/article_d48b9902-e8d3-4416-88f3-b47649431c27.html

Fine effort, failed result, for Jets against Oilers

By Paul Friesen

Such is the state of the Winnipeg Jets right now that they can keep the NHL's best and hottest player in check, dominate the play and shot clock – and still lose.

Connor McDavid left Winnipeg with just a single, empty-net assist on Monday, but his Edmonton Oilers took the two points the Jets desperately needed, skipping town with a 3-1 win.

It marked the second straight game the Jets felt they deserved a better fate.

They doubled the Oilers in shots on net, 42-21. But when you're cold, you can't even beat a second-string goalie with a goals-against-average near four who stops just 86 percent of his shots.

That's where Winnipeg native Calvin Pickard stood going into this one.

Then he stood on his head against his hometown team.

"The chances, the posts, the looks we have – eventually the dam's going to break," Jets captain Adam Lowry said. "And then it seems like scoring comes in bunches. We've just got to stick with it. I liked the effort. We've squandered a lot of points. We know the predicament we're in. So we have to start making up ground."

Their predicament: a step from the NHL cellar, after just six wins in their last 25 games.

Lowry was the only one to score for the Jets, breaking a 17-game slump. Teammates all around him are in similar droughts.

When the top line gets blanked, the results are predictable.

"When you put up 40 shots in a game, you're looking to get more than one goal," defenceman Dylan Samberg said. "Played a heck of a game. It is what it is. You're going to run into a hot goalie at one point."

"It's not fun. Nope, not fun."

Head coach Scott Arniel found himself with a similar post-game message than the one he delivered to his team after Saturday's overtime loss to Minnesota.

"That's six periods for me that we've been (playing) how we have to play," Arniel said. "I can't criticize the effort. I can't criticize the battle. The opportunities, the game plan that we threw at them against their elite players, all of those things I asked them to do, they did it. We're not getting points, and that's the most important thing."

Watch full game NHL highlights from the matchup between the Edmonton Oilers and the Winnipeg Jets on December 29, 2025, condensing all the action to get you up to speed in a flash, where Adam Lowry found the twine for the Jets and Connor McDavid extended his point streak for the Oilers

A second straight sellout crowd, the fourth of the season, saw the Jets fall to 15-18-4, wallowing with Chicago and Vancouver in the league basement.

The Oilers, third in their division, improved to 20-14-6.

The Jets were stronger out of the gate, looking crisper, quicker, more determined – and firing seven of the game's first eight shots on goal.

In a spicy opening period that had more hits, even more fights, than goals, the first punch was thrown by the Oilers' Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, with his glove on, to the face of Neal Pionk.

The Jets defenceman didn't like it one bit, challenging Nugent-Hopkins to a scrap and getting his wish.

Winnipeg's power play didn't get what it wanted, then fired blanks in another chance with Leon Draisaitl in the box.

It was scoreless through 20 minutes, even though the Jets had a 15-9 edge in shots.

"There were no lulls in the game," Pickard said. "They kept shooting, they kept coming."

But it was the Oilers who struck eight minutes into the second, benefiting from a Logan Stanley giveaway from behind his own net, right to Max Jones, who tucked it behind Connor Hellebuyck for his first goal of the season.

The Jets quickly got their third power play of the night, but Pickard turned them aside.

When Samberg took a tripping penalty seconds later, the second unit of the NHL's most lethal power play made him pay, former Jet Jack Roslovic beating Hellebuyck for his 11th of the year.

The Jets had chances, but Pickard foiled them all and it remained 2-zip through two.

Some six minutes into the third, Lowry, playing his 800th career game, finally got his team on the board, shovelling a rebound past Pickard for his second of the year.

"It was just nice to pull us back in the game," he said. "It had been a while. It's no secret secondary scoring has really been an issue for us. It helped bring the building to life. But I would trade that for a win."

The Jets out-shot Edmonton 16-8 in the third, but Zach Hyman's empty-netter was the only other goal.

Despite holding stars McDavid and Draisaitl to one shot each, the Jets dropped their sixth straight, three of them in overtime, and have now lost nine of their last 10 games.

"Obviously there are no moral victories," Lowry said. "But we play that style of hockey, we play that consistent effort for 60 minutes, we are going to get more positive results than we got here. That's what you can take from this game."

"But we've got to take it on the road."

The Jets hit the road for their next three, starting in Detroit on New Year's Eve.

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6926340/2025/12/30/winnipeg-jets-how-to-save-season/>

How the Winnipeg Jets can save their season (and when you'll know if they've failed)

By Murat Ates

The Winnipeg Jets are losing games — so many games — even when they're playing well. They're seven points out of the playoffs, with six teams to pass, and tied with Chicago for last in the league. Every desperate moment of success seems to be met with bad fortune, whether it's Kyle Connor's diving empty net goal cancelled out by Dylan DeMelo's cross-checking penalty or a 40-shot night against Edmonton cancelled out by an utter lack of finishing and a giveaway to Max Jones.

It seems that this is simply not Winnipeg's year.

If you're looking for signs that the players or coaches have given up, though, you won't find them.

Connor Hellebuyck just played his seventh game in a row. Connor and Mark Scheifele are averaging over 21 minutes per game, while the entire top line played over 24 minutes against Edmonton on Monday night. Coach Scott Arniel is getting aggressive with in-game management, riding Jonathan Toews' hot hand in the faceoff circle (until the last faceoff of the third period of Saturday's game, at least) while limiting other players' minutes (mostly Cole Perfetti.) Whether or not each individual decision is working, it's clear Arniel is leaning hard on his real and perceived aces.

His solutions sometimes evoke Will Ferrell's famous "More Cowbell" sketch on "Saturday Night Live," where Christopher Walken keeps repeating the same suggested remedy for the recording of "Don't Fear The Reaper." But Arniel believes Winnipeg is playing its best hockey in a long time.

"I can't criticize the effort. I can't criticize the battle. The opportunities, the game plan that we threw at them against their elite players, all of those things I asked them to do, they did it," Arniel said after Monday's 3-1 loss to Edmonton. "We're not getting points and that's the most important thing."

The players' effort level is evident, too. You can see it in the team's structure at five-on-five, in Adam Lowry's line's forechecking, diving plays by Dylan Samberg to knock the puck away from Connor McDavid, and the top line's frenetic attempts to drive the team's offence almost every single night.

Effort is unlikely to be the problem — at least until Winnipeg runs out of runway. The Jets are on pace to become just the fifth team in NHL history to miss the playoffs the season after winning the President's Trophy. There may come a time when they quit on each other, start tuning out their coach or start cheating the game. Until that day comes, the problem is simple: Winnipeg isn't good enough.

How does it get good enough?

If this is meant to be a serious playoff season, here's what needs to happen — and when GM Kevin Cheveldayoff should act if none of them come to pass.

Adam Lowry, Cole Perfetti, and improvement from within

Winnipeg has played two strong games since the NHL's holiday break, but that's the exception for the Jets this season — not the rule.

The Jets aren't in position to miss the playoffs because of bad luck, they've earned their struggles in real time. It's easy to find lowlight reels that cost Winnipeg points, whether it was Lowry's performance against Utah in OT or DeMelo's penalty combined with his struggles with Kirill Kaprizov against Minnesota. They deserve credit for outshooting Edmonton 42-20 but would have more than one win in their last 10 games played if that kind of shot clock was their norm.

Zoom in and Winnipeg is not among the worst few teams in the NHL in terms of talent.

Even in this dismal season, the Jets are 21st in five-on-five shot attempts. They're in the bottom 10 in expected goals, regardless of which public model you use, but they're backstopped by Hellebuyck. This stops some of those extra scoring chances from turning into real goals: Winnipeg has the 16th-best share of real goals at five-on-five. Its special teams are mid-tier, too: Winnipeg's power play is ranked 13th and its penalty kill is ranked 18th. These are the signs of a team more likely to claw upwards to a mediocre finish than draft Gavin McKenna this June.

A big part of the problem is that good players are playing poorly.

A list of players on pace for less than half of their scoring rate from last season includes Lowry, Vladislav Namestnikov, and Perfetti. That's half of Winnipeg's middle-six forwards, and doesn't include Toews or Gustav Nyquist, who are each on pace to produce the worst offensive totals of their careers. Nikolaj Ehlers' absence sucks a lot of offence out of the roster — and may be responsible for most of Namestnikov and Perfetti's steps backward — but it's not enough to explain the desolation by itself.

Lowry's struggles since his return from hip surgery were predictable. Credit to him for owning his overtime mistake against Utah, but Lowry is meant to be a shutdown centre capable of winning his minutes against top players. He's also meant to be able to chip in 30-40 points this season, but has not made it to the most dangerous areas of the ice with any consistency. NHL Edge data shows Lowry got nearly twice as many shots from the low slot last season compared to what he's on pace for right now.

Perfetti's struggles are more of a surprise. Losing a play-driver like Ehlers hurts; as confusing as Ehlers can be to play with, he's a top point producer at even strength because he's so good at getting the puck from one end of the ice to the other and breaking coverage with his speed. Perfetti misses that now — he's not a puck transporter in the same sense — and he's finishing only 5.6 percent of his shots, which is almost exactly half of his career average. Winnipeg desperately needs Perfetti's missing offence.

Why pick on those two players? They've got better recent track records than the other forwards who are struggling.

Help in the middle six

Toews' best-case scenario was a second-line centre whose hockey IQ helped Perfetti in ways that Ehlers didn't. Instead, his faceoff assist on Scheifele's goal against Minnesota was his first point since November. He's on pace for 22 points: the worst offensive season of his career and the worst season by a Jets second-line centre in the 2.0 era. Winnipeg has recently reduced Toews' minutes, but he's still fourth among Jets forwards in ice time and ice time per game while playing on the second power play unit. Toews' best-case scenario has not come to fruition; Arniel's summertime joke about Toews not being a fourth-line centre has aged poorly.

The only way to improve Winnipeg's middle-six — dominant last season, dominated now — is for play-drivers and scorers to re-emerge. Lowry and Perfetti have shown the ability before but are well off their previous production rates now. They need Lowry, Tanner Pearson, and Morgan Barron's flow-of-play dominance against Edmonton to be their new normal. If Arniel goes back to the Perfetti, Toews, and Alex Iafallo combination that ended that game, their flow-of-play dominance (in the smallest available sample) needs to be their new normal, too.

Realistically, Winnipeg needs more help than that. Namestnikov doesn't have a point in December and isn't creating many scoring chances. Nyquist has yet to score a goal for Winnipeg and has averaged one assist a month since November. Nino Niederreiter's hot start dried up, but he's still one of only four forwards to have scored more than DeMelo's 13 points so far this season.

If Winnipeg routinely outshot teams 42-20, you'd believe the dam was about to break. Lowry says he can see it coming, even on a team that's won four times in its last 20 tries.

"We look at the contributions of certain guys in this room and what they've done in the past, they have long track records of producing offensively, good secondary rates. I think the chances, the posts, the looks we have, eventually the dam's going to break and you're going to get them, and then it seems like scoring comes in bunches."

Less cowbell

Winnipeg is tied for the fewest points in the NHL and its solutions are mostly "do more of the same." The Jets have won four times in their last 20 games and the two pillars of its top line — the only line that's scoring, mind you — are intact. It's hard to believe that Scheifele and Connor will earn over \$20 million between them next season and aren't good enough to drive two separate lines.

There is also a growing sentiment among Jets fans that Winnipeg should call somebody up from Manitoba, but Winnipeg has traded away too much draft capital and hit too few draft day home runs for the Moose to be well-stocked with NHL scorers. Walker Duehr and David Gustafsson are unlikely to hurt — and fans would be placated that the Jets were trying something — but Winnipeg's top offensive prospects, Brayden Yager, Brad Lambert, Nikita Chibrikov, and Colby Barlow, are scoring less at the AHL level than most Jets whose jobs they'd be taking at the NHL level.

So when's the sell-off?

When Cheveldayoff spoke to media at Toews' unveiling in July, he talked about opportunity — for Toews, Nyquist, Pearson, and more. He responded to a question about the loss in team speed by citing Brad Lambert's NHL potential. Half a season later and it seems as though none of Cheveldayoff's offseason bets have worked.

Cheveldayoff has typically done a good job of reading the room, so to speak, when it comes to the NHL trade deadline. He adds when the team is competitive; often, this has meant sending first-round picks away for second-line centre help. Last season, he traded two second-round picks and a fourth-round pick for Luke Schenn and Brandon Tanev. Based on the standings, it seems probable that Winnipeg will hope for similar prices when it sells later this season.

The biggest reason to sell early would be to try to stay in last place, with top pick McKenna in mind, but Cheveldayoff will wait. His Jets face long odds to make the playoffs, but he's committed to the 15-18-4 team he's built and will almost certainly want to make it to the Olympic break before trying to recoup assets for his pending free agents.

If Winnipeg gets out of the Olympic break without realistic playoff hopes, then Cheveldayoff needs to commit to the lost season. His players aren't cheating him, despite the total lack of firepower on the roster — nor are they cheating his coach — but there's still time for both of those things to change.

He needs to be able to sell winning or a plan towards it. Nearly halfway through the season, his team is peddling hope.

"Just keep doing what we're doing. Hopefully we can score some goals and we can get some points," Arniel said.