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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-jets-lose-in-toews-debut>

Three things: Jets lose in Toews debut Toews plays 18:36 in first game in Jets preseason debut

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – Jonathan Toews made his Winnipeg Jet preseason debut that ended up a 3-2 loss to the Edmonton Oilers. Winnipeg (0-2) got goals from Colin Miller and Colby Barlow, Eric Comrie played the whole game making 14 saves on 17 shots. The Jets outshot the Oilers 23-17. Winnipeg will travel to Edmonton on Friday.

FIRST OF MANY

For the first time since April 13, 2023, Jonathan Toews played in an NHL game centering a line with Gustav Nyquist and Cole Perfetti. The 37-year-old had just over 18 and a half minutes, won 55% of his face-offs and was happy to be back on the ice.

“Some good, some not so good, it is what it is. I felt like I made some plays, but as the game when on I just relaxed a little bit,” said Toews.

“I think the conditioning is going to come and the jump is going to come. Just the timing is going to be there too. We just need to keep working at it, keep settling in your game.”

BARLOW FINDS THE NET

Barlow said the other day that he has come to camp leaner than he has been in previous years and because of that the Jets first round pick in 2023 said he feels quicker on the ice. After a couple great scoring chances in the first couple of periods and having some great chemistry with Parker Ford and Brad Lambert, Barlow found the back of the net with the Jets down two goals in the third period. He had a team high five shots on goal.

“Yeah, if you get all those chances, you obviously want to see one go in,” said Barlow.

“But they all started from a great place, from Lambo and Fordo and the d-men just advancing pucks and recovering pucks in the ozone.”

SOLID NIGHT FOR LAMBERT

After a fairly quiet night on Sunday in the Jets first preseason game, Brad Lambert looked a lot more comfortable this evening. Lambert finished the night with two assists playing on the wing with Ford and Barlow.

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/09/23/toews-impressive-in-hometown-debut>

Toews impressive in hometown debut Best yet to come as star acquisition shakes off rust in loss to Oilers

By: Mike McIntyre

There was no storybook ending Tuesday night. This was, after all, just the opening chapter in Jonathan Toews' comeback tale. If the Coles Notes version is any indication, the season ahead could be a real page-turner for the hometown hockey star.

Skating for the first time as a member of the Winnipeg Jets, Toews showed there's still fuel in the tank and fire in the belly after a two-year, health-related hiatus. While there were some expected signs of rust in his pre-season debut, the overall body of work was solid in a 3-2 loss to the Edmonton Oilers at Canada Life Centre.

Not surprisingly, the three-time Stanley Cup champion wasn't doing any kind of post-game victory lap.

"Some good. Some not-so-good. I felt like I made some plays and as the game went along relaxed a bit," said Toews. "I think the conditioning is going to come, the jump is going to come."

The 37-year-old received a huge cheer when introduced in the starting lineup, then another ovation after winning the opening faceoff. He would go on to win 10 more draws in 19 subsequent attempts — including two in the waning minutes as the Jets pressed for an equalizer — while logging 18:36 of ice time.

Nervous?

"Oh, for sure," he admitted. "It's been a while. Just being here in Winnipeg, being in a new locker room, there's a lot of things to get used to. But at the same time, those nerves feel good and I'm just excited to play hockey again."

Long known more for his smarts than his speed, Toews flashed both with a hustle backcheck that thwarted a partial breakaway by Edmonton forward Max Jones.

"It's nice to catch the guy. Good scoring chance there. I think it was on the power play though, so, obviously, we can make better plays there," said Toews.

He also set up new linemates Gustav Nyquist and Cole Perfetti for a pair of quality scoring chances that narrowly missed.

"You get frustrated sometimes because you want to go out there and find the back of the net right away, and if you don't you can beat yourself up for those mistakes here and there," said Toews.

"I'm out there with two good players. For me the reminder is to keep focusing on what we're doing well and trying to improve every game. It was fun to be out there at the end of the day, and obviously we didn't get the win but it's early. We've got a lot of work to do."

Jets head coach Scott Arniel felt Toews made a favourable first impression.

"There was some good stuff. I thought he picked up our systems," he said.

"There were other times where yeah, he could be a little better, and I think that's just from rust. I think that's just timing, getting to know his linemates. I think there was a little bit of both there. It was a good first game and I know for a fact that he'll be better in the next one."

High on Barlow

A poor 2024 training camp with the Jets followed by a sleepy start to his Ontario Hockey League season — he played himself right off Team Canada World Junior roster consideration — may have led some to sour on Colby Barlow.

The 18th-overall pick from 2023 has put that stretch behind him and looks like a different player. The 20-year-old shed weight this summer, added a noticeable step, and has been turning heads during training camp skates and last Saturday's scrimmage.

He carried that momentum into his first pre-season game, making the most of the opportunity. Barlow was a force early and often against the Oilers, generating several quality chances and registering a team-high five shots on goal.

He appeared to have opened the scoring late in the second period when Colin Miller's point shot was deflected in and initially credited to him, only to have it later changed to Miller.

No matter. Barlow found the net for real late in the third, re-directing a Ville Heinola shot to cut Winnipeg's deficit to one.

"Just go to the net. Good things happen, whether you get a piece of it or not," said Barlow.

He wasn't just shooting, either. Barlow threaded a perfect cross-ice pass to Parker Ford that nearly connected, then later made a strong defensive play with a backcheck and stick lift to snuff out an Edmonton chance.

"Definitely felt faster out there. Light on my feet, more agile," he said.

With a crowded depth chart up front, Barlow is likely to begin his pro career this fall with the Manitoba Moose. If he keeps this up, he may work himself into early call-up consideration.

Double duty

When a player finds himself in the lineup for the first two pre-season games, it usually means the coaching staff wants a long, hard look at what he might bring.

Forwards Brad Lambert, Nikita Chibrikov, Brayden Yager and Walker Duehr, along with defencemen Colin Miller and Elias Salomonsson, all drew double duty after suiting up in Sunday's 3-2 overtime loss to Minnesota that opened Winnipeg's six-game exhibition slate.

Lambert picked up the secondary assist on Miller's goal but didn't register a shot in just over 16 minutes of ice time.

Chibrikov (no shots in 15:55) and Yager (one shot in 14:29) were both quiet for a second straight outing, and likely will benefit from some seasoning in the AHL. Duehr, a veteran winger brought in for depth, went shotless in 12:40 and took a reckless high-sticking penalty that led to Isaac Howard's power-play goal midway through the game.

On the blue line, Salomonsson acquitted himself well alongside Dylan Samberg, firing four shots on goal while logging 22:37.

Masked men

It was a battle of the backups, at least for the first half of the game. Eric Comrie and Winnipegger Calvin Pickard were in the nets to start, with Pickard relieved midway through the second period by Matt Tomkins.

Comrie stopped 14 of 17 shots he faced, as rookie Quinn Hutson (the younger brother of Lane) opened the scoring for the visitors in the first period and veteran defenceman Ty Emberson scored the eventual game-winner midway through the third.

Pickard turned aside all eight shots that came his way, while Tomkins was beaten twice on 15 shots.

Not seeing stars

The Toews debut aside, there really wasn't a lot of star power in this one with both clubs dressing the bare minimum number of veterans as defined by the collective bargaining agreement.

That meant the likes of Connor Hellebuyck, Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor, Gabe Vilardi, Nino Niederreiter, Vlad Namestnikov, Alex Iafallo, Josh Morrissey, Neal Pionk and Dylan DeMelo were all healthy scratches for the home side. Edmonton left Connor McDavid, Leon Draisaitl, Evan Bouchard, Darnell Nurse, Mattias Ekholm and Stuart Skinner, among others, back in Alberta.

The Jets will likely start icing a more experienced lineup in the remaining four games, starting with Friday's clash in Edmonton. They'll close out the home portion of the pre-season on Saturday as the Calgary Flames come to town.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/09/23/jets-training-camp-a-fresh-start-for-heinola>

Jets training camp a fresh start for Heinola Defenceman finally healthy after injury setbacks

By: Ken Wiebe

Ville Heinola fully recognizes what is at stake for him.

The Winnipeg Jets defenceman has been around long enough to know that he's clearly at a crossroads as he works his way through training camp.

Although he's not that far removed from being a front-runner to becoming a third-pairing regular, a series of injuries opened the doors for others to leapfrog him on the organizational depth chart.

Now that he's back to full health, Heinola is aiming to get back to the player he was before a freak ankle injury in the final exhibition game of 2023 impeded his progress and has basically been a hindrance ever since.

"I'm trying to go into training camp without thinking about anything, I'm just trying to go out there and play," Heinola said before suiting up in Tuesday's exhibition game against the Edmonton Oilers. "Obviously, you guys know I've missed a lot of games in the last couple of years. My

main focus is that I just want to play hockey and enjoy it. It's been a tough couple of years. Now I'm 100 per cent healthy again, so I just want to enjoy it."

Heinola hasn't been able to feel a lot of enjoyment during the past several seasons.

When you feel you're on the verge of a major breakthrough in your career and that's suddenly taken away from you, it's difficult not to let negative thoughts creep in, even when you're on the road to recovery.

Heinola has done an excellent job of trying to stay positive and maintaining his belief.

"I'm not going to lie. There's times where you're going through some things in your head but, for me, I'm just waiting for my opportunity," said Heinola. "I haven't gotten a really good opportunity yet and I feel like if I can get the opportunity, I know I can play there. I know I can do well, so I'm not really stressed about it. Because I know, if I get the chance, if I just get to play, I will show these guys that I am ready."

In order to show that he's ready, Heinola is going to have to outplay a number of players who received regular playing time during the past several seasons.

With nine defencemen on one-way contracts, prospect Elias Salomonsson knocking on the door and Kale Clague bringing nearly 100 games of NHL experience into the fold after signing as a free agent, the competition on the back end is fierce.

"I mean there's not much you can do about it," said Heinola. "If you don't play well, there's always a guy that's going to come up, so it doesn't really matter how much (competition) there is. I'm just focused on my own thing."

Heinola arrived at training camp last fall and was considered a strong candidate to win a job alongside Colin Miller on the Jets' third pairing.

But an issue related to the ankle injury he suffered in October of 2023 resurfaced and the fact of the matter is that Heinola never found his footing, even after he received the green light to return to action.

Heinola got back into games in late November after a two-game conditioning stint with the Manitoba Moose of the American Hockey League but he couldn't make up for lost time and was limited to just two contests after Jan. 16 — including the regular-season finale.

"I mean, yeah, it's definitely tough to go back when you missed training camp and everything as a young guy," said Heinola, who has one goal and 12 points in 53 NHL games. "When you're out for half the year, it's tough to find your place after that in a team. Last year, it hit me hard when the injury happened. It was more tough for me mentally, going through it again and just knowing the rehab and knowing how long it takes.

"I was in a dark place for a couple of months there. Now this summer, everything went well. The body feels great. The ankle feels great. It's such a relief and I just want to enjoy hockey now."

Heinola — who also dealt with a shoulder injury late last season — may be in a precarious position, but there's another interesting element at play when it comes to his future.

Not only is he no longer exempt from waivers, but Heinola must appear in 27 NHL games this season or else he will become a Group 6 unrestricted free agent.

Given his status as a first round pick (20th overall) back in 2019, Heinola is someone who could attract attention on the waiver wire — both from teams closer to the bottom of the standings but also potentially from some cap-strapped contenders who could see value in the one-year deal at US\$800,000.

Heinola, 24, is eager for an opportunity, but he's not dreaming about that coming with another organization at this point and time.

"For me, I try not to think about those things at all," said Heinola, who was limited to 20 games last season, including 18 with the Jets. "I just want to play my game and be as good as I can and hopefully make very hard decisions for those guys who are making the calls there."

One of those guys with plenty of influence on the outcome is Jets head coach Scott Arniel, who once called himself Heinola's biggest fan.

"We talked about it a lot last year, but he missed all of training camp. In this one, he gets a fresh start," said Arniel. "At the end of the day, everybody is fighting for jobs. You can't control anything but to go out and do your best. That's what he needs to do."

Heinola missed out on a lot of on-ice reps during the past two seasons, but he wasn't just a casual observer during the time he was sidelined.

"When I was hurt, I watched a lot of hockey and I felt like that really helped me a lot, too," said Heinola. "I wasn't just hanging around there, I was trying to take everything in. There were a lot of good examples from guys like Josh (Morrissey), who kind of plays the game in a (similar) style as me. So, I was just trying to learn and watch those guys as much as I can and take little things out of it."

There are times when it feels like a lot of time has passed since he's been at his best, Heinola firmly believes his best hockey is ahead of him.

"I look back a couple of years when I played great at training camp," said Heinola. "Just kind of find that rhythm again and get my legs underneath me. Just use my skating and be strong in the D-zone and move the puck well. Those are probably the biggest parts of my game and I just want to do that well."

After the arrival of Gustav Nyquist in free agency this summer, Heinola gave up his No. 14 to the veteran forward and has since switched to No. 34.

What did Heinola get in return?

"I haven't gotten anything yet, but he said there will be something coming," said Heinola. "So hopefully, it's something nice."

Winnipeg Sun

https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/toews-and-the-jets-come-up-short-against-the-oilers?utm_source=winnipeg-jets

Toews and the Jets come up short against the Oilers

By Gordon Anderson

Prior to the second exhibition game for the Winnipeg Jets, head coach Scott Arniel was probably just like a casual fan in one way: curious to see how Jonathan Toews would perform after two seasons away from the game.

"It might not go great for him tonight," Arniel said prior to the game against the Edmonton Oilers. "It might go awesome for him."

And what was the final verdict from the man of the hour?

"Some good, some not so good. It is what it is" Toews said postgame. "I felt I made some plays as the game went on. I (was able) to relax a little bit. I think the conditioning is going to come, the jump is going to come, and the timing is going to be there too."

Toews missed two NHL seasons dealing with health struggles related to long COVID and chronic immune response syndrome.

The Jets dropped a 3-2 decision to the Oilers on Tuesday night at Canada Life Centre.

Toews received 12:06 of ice time after 40 minutes and 18:36 total for the game. He finished second in total ice time among the forwards. Cole Perfetti led the forwards with 18:56. Toews skated 2:14 of power-play time, centering Perfetti and Gustav Nyquist. He managed to earn 30 seconds at five-on-four. In total, Toews had 22 shifts with eight shifts coming in the third.

When he skated onto the ice for the pre-game warmup, Toews received a round of applause from those already in their seats.

After taking some shots on netminder Eric Comrie, he ripped off a few spirited laps around the Jets end of the ice. Eventually, he made his way to the corner and flipped pucks over the glass for a handful of fans who were congregating near the goal line. There were several welcome back Jonathan signs displayed on the video screen.

Toews took the opening faceoff, centering a line of Perfetti and Nyquist. Toews won the draw, his night starting the proper way.

Given that Toews was second in ice time among the forwards, the head coach ensured the hometown lad got all that he could handle and more as the season opener on Oct. 9 looms close on the horizon.

"It's all about getting ready for that opener against Dallas," Arniel said. "After all of these practices and the intrasquad game, now he gets to go out and do it in live situations. I need him to continue to build on our systems and how we play."

Arniel was asked what he wanted to see from No. 19 in his debut.

“(I want him to) do what he does best,” Arniel said. “That’s a lot of things. Then, just get himself comfortable. Hopefully he can just feel good out there and obviously, have some fun out there.”

I guess the verdict is still out on the ‘fun’ part.

The Jets are in Edmonton on Friday night for the return engagement. Puck drop is 8 p.m. In his first action of the preseason, Comrie went the distance turning aside 14 of 17 shots in 60 minutes of action.

Colin Miller and Colby Barlow scored for the Jets. The Jets were blanked on two man-advantage opportunities.

Edmonton netminder Calvin Pickard stopped eight shots in 33:10 of action. He gave way to Matt Tomkins. Tomkins turned aside 11 of 13 shots for the win.

Quinn Hutson, Isaac Howard and Ty Emberson scored for the Oilers. Edmonton went 1-2 on the powerplay.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/i-was-shocked-brad-lambert-talks-about-his-ot-collision-against-wild>

‘I was shocked’: Brad Lambert talks about his OT collision against Wild

By Gordon Anderson

Jets forward Brad Lambert was removed from the game against the Minnesota Wild on Sunday afternoon after crashing headfirst into Wild goaltender Jesper Wallstedt 34 seconds into overtime.

“I was shocked,” Lambert said on Tuesday morning about his removal from the 2-2 game.

The Jets prospect, likely ticketed for the Manitoba Moose of the AHL, ended right side up after colliding with Wallstedt. Seconds after the hit, he adjusted his bucket prior to getting up on his skates and preparing himself for the ensuing powerplay.

“I went into the goalie and got up and played the start of the powerplay, and then I sat on the bench and then I was ready to go back out there,” Lambert said. “...The spotters had seen my face hit the ice, I guess it did. I didn’t realize it at the time.”

The concussion spotters removed the 21-year-old Lahti, Finland native from the preseason opener before his next shift. Lambert earned 17:19 of ice time over 19 shifts.

“He stayed on his hands and knees a little bit too long, I guess,” Jets head coach Scott Arniel said after the game.

The head coach was asked who placed the call for Lambert’s removal.

“That came from New York,” Arniel said.

Prior to the collision, Lambert picked up the puck in his defensive zone and crossed the blue line at or near top speed. He tried to maneuver between defenceman David Jiricek and right winger Danil Yurov. Jiricek took him out and was whistled for tripping.

"I got some speed going in there and they had a forward playing defence, so I decided to take him on and try to split (between them) and then, obviously, got tripped up then ran into the goalie."

The Jets registered three shots on the ensuing powerplay but couldn't capitalize, losing 3-2 when Yakov Trenin scored the game-winner at 3:59.

Lambert was back at practice on Tuesday morning in preparation for the Jets and Edmonton Oilers preseason matchup on Tuesday evening.

"I was completely fine," Lambert said. "I think it was just a precautionary thing that they have to do for player safety."

<https://winnipegjournal.com/sports/hockey/no-more-junior-hockey-for-winnipeg-jets-prospect-jacob-julien>

No more junior hockey for Winnipeg Jets prospect Jacob Julien

By Gordon Anderson

Jets forward Jacob Julien has run out of proverbial runway when it comes to junior hockey.

"(I am) not getting sent back to junior," Julien said on Tuesday morning at the Hockey For All Centre. "I have to earn a spot (as I) don't really have a backup plan. I can't fall back on junior hockey. I am working as hard as I can to grab a spot."

The Ontario Hockey League's London Knights were Julien's wintertime-springtime default setting for three seasons after the Jets made him a fifth-round selection (146th overall) in the NHL entry draft back in June of 2023.

The 6-foot-4 centre hailing from London, Ont., scored 49 goals and added 99 helpers in 172 regular-season games with the Knights, spread over those three seasons. In 55 playoff games, he scored 17 goals, adding 27 assists. Julien and the Knights won the Memorial Cup back in May.

And with Julien's successful junior playing days now completed, the 21-year-old has no option but to hit or stick with the Jets or, more than likely for this season, the AHL's Manitoba Moose.

His summer strength and conditioning set up had to be on point, had to reflect the reality of his situation.

"I needed to have a good off season," Julien said. "It might have been short (due to winning the Memorial Cup), but I made the most of it. Being able to play against men here, and it's a whole different game than junior."

Last September Julien played in the team's first NHL preseason game prior to getting sent back to the Knights. Heading into the club's second preseason game—Tuesday night against the

Oilers—head coach Scott Arniel is excited to witness what the first-year pro can do under the bright lights of the downtown hanger and the pro game.

“He’s a late bloomer,” Arniel said. “It’s a little different game for him but he’s got to find and recognize that he’s going to have to do some things consistently every night. I’m excited to see him play.”

Well into his first extended training camp as a pro, he finds his teammates are valuable resources as he looks to make an indelible first impression with the organization that drafted him.

“It’s been so much fun just being around all the guys, all the pros, seeing what they’re doing, and kind of learning from what they’re doing, and bringing it into your own game,” Julien said. “And just like little things like stick checks or body positioning and being able to adapt and bring it into your own game.”

Speaking of his teammates, one of them was showing him a thing or two in the face-off dot on Tuesday.

“(Jonathan Toews) is definitely a veteran who’s been doing it for a while,” Julien said. “They’re saying he’s taking 21,000 draws in the NHL. So, losing to him was an honor, but I grabbed one. He’s really good. And, just learning from what he’s doing.”

Julien was listed on the active roster for Tuesday’s game against the Oilers.

Arniel says Julien is in a similar situation as other prospects like Colby Barlow, Brayden Yager and Fabian Wagner.

“I watched (Julien) in Montreal, all of these guys, when you get a second look, you want to see if they’ve improved, if they’ve built on certain areas (of their game), have they gotten stronger,” Arniel said. “Maybe their game has shown a maturity level to it. Julien is one of those guys that falls into that category.”

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6655241/2025/09/24/jets-toews-potential-lowry-perfetti-demelo/>

Jonathan Toews’ potential and 6 more burning questions that will define Winnipeg’s season

By Murat Ates

Jonathan Toews’ self-assessments are brutally honest.

It is something Winnipeg Jets fans are going to need to get used to. After playing an NHL game for the first time since April 13, 2023, Toews would have had every right to focus on how good it felt just to be back on the ice. Instead, he picked his game apart.

The long-distance backcheck he made to take away a rush chance from Max Jones?

"It's nice to catch the guy," Toews said. "I think it was on the power play though, so obviously we can make better plays there."

The scoring chance he set up for himself off a faceoff?

"I was trying to shoot the puck with my hand still turned the wrong way."

On building chemistry early in his Jets career?

"You want to go out there and find the back of the net right away, and if you don't you can beat yourself up for those mistakes."

But speaking after his first preseason game, Toews also took time to zoom out and show himself kindness. He spoke about the importance of incremental improvements and how he knows his timing and conditioning will improve with time.

But the time for kid gloves is over. Toews is trying to rebuild himself into a winner.

He's also the single biggest X-factor on a team with Stanley Cup ambitions, and depending on his performance, the Jets could be a Stanley Cup contender with unparalleled depth down the middle or just another good team in search of a second-line center at the deadline.

What should we expect from Toews this season? That's just one of seven burning questions facing the Jets heading into 2025-26.

What are the best, worst and most likely outcomes for Toews?

If Toews is a quality second-line centre, then the Jets are Stanley Cup contenders. Mark Scheifele, Toews and Adam Lowry all playing at their best would give Winnipeg a formidable trio of centres. You could even argue that the best version of Toews is the perfect complement to Scheifele and Lowry: tough to play against, good in all three zones and shaped by three Stanley Cup wins.

The best-case scenario is that Toews stays healthy, returns to something resembling his former self and becomes one of the best 2Cs in the NHL. Based on one preseason game against a visiting Oilers team that left almost all of its big guns at home, this Toews dream is alive and well. Toews won 11 of 20 faceoffs, took away a shorthanded breakaway from Jones and created scoring chances for himself and his linemates.

If Toews' body fails him or if proper NHL competition proves to be too much, the worst-case scenario involves another year with a gaping hole on the second line — and all of the trade deadline rumours and asset problems that come along with it.

It's early, but the earliest returns look good.

Are the Jets fast enough — and mean enough?

The St. Louis Blues could not beat Winnipeg but pummeled the Jets within a few minutes and a Manitoba Miracle of a first-round exit last spring. The Blues were physical to the point of violent, injuring Scheifele and then Josh Morrissey in Round 1, while controlling the front of the net and firing a barrage of pucks past Connor Hellebuyck as a result. Winnipeg was a better, deeper team, and yet it took the latest game-tying goal in Game 7 history to advance.

Arniel spent part of his summer watching how the Jets stacked up to other Cup contenders. It seems Arniel thinks the Jets could be more battle-ready come playoff time.

“When you watch the playoffs, it’s different hockey,” Arniel said on Tuesday. “It’s hard to turn on the switch and go into battle mode, compete mode at Game 83, 84, 85. You’re late to the party if you do. Again, it’s our resilience to get through things. We did a good job of that last year and I still think we have another level to go.”

Arniel does believe in the Cup-winning potential of Winnipeg’s overall game, though.

“We can play whatever game gets thrown at us,” he said. “We’ll obviously try to dictate the game, but if it’s a big, heavy game, we have the roster for that. If it’s a fast game, we’re still there. A skilled game, whatever it is, specialty teams. We have a group that can play all of those (styles), and have all of those different looks. If you look at champions, that’s what they have in their game.”

When (and where) does Connor sign, and for how much?

Kyle Connor is on track to become Winnipeg’s highest-paid player. He’s more likely to extend in Winnipeg than not, and he’s a 28-year-old star forward coming off of a 97-point season. There’s even a chance Connor becomes the highest-paid player at his position until Kirill Kaprizov signs his next deal, as Elliotte Friedman suggested on the “32 Thoughts” podcast. Could he earn \$12 million per season?

The salary cap is projected to increase to \$104 million when his contract kicks in next season — \$16 million higher than it was in the first year of Scheifele’s and Hellebuyck’s \$8.5 million AAV deals. Connor could receive the same percentage of the cap and make over \$10 million per year.

That’s a big raise in and of itself, but Connor is also younger than Scheifele and Hellebuyck were when they signed and he’s been even more productive than Scheifele was in the three seasons prior to signing in 2023-24. You can make the case for Connor getting an even higher percentage of the cap than Scheifele did.

Should he?

The knocks against Connor are about his two-way play. By eye, there are times when he loses D-zone coverage and flies the zone before the puck is safe. By the numbers, Connor has been outchanced and outscored at even strength more often than Winnipeg has won his minutes. When Connor set his first career high with 93 points in 2021-22, Winnipeg lost his even strength minutes and missed the playoffs. He was much better defensively last season, winning his minutes while setting a Jets 2.0 record with 97 points in 82 games.

It seems reasonable to wonder if a team can win a best-on-best competition with Connor as its top forward. Team USA left him off the ice in the 4 Nations Face-Off gold medal game. There is also a price at which any player becomes too expensive relative to how much he helps his team win; Connor’s offence might be so incredible that he’s earned a contract he can’t live up to in terms of two-way play.

Still, this Jets team can’t go all-in on the next few seasons as planned unless someone is filling the net — and a second straight season of improved defensive play would make Connor a vital player all over again.

Can Perfetti take a Samberg-sized leap forward?

Cole Perfetti split the defence against Edmonton and chased down a loose puck in the neutral zone, creating a breakaway chance he might not have earned just one year ago. He'd already taken a step in terms of performance last season, finishing the regular season strong and contributing in the playoffs with what looked like a faster, more tenacious game (with a hat tip to Scheifele for lessons learned.)

Perfetti is first in line for first-unit power-play minutes, and riding shotgun for Toews should increase his five-on-five usage too. Factor in the natural progression at 23 years old — which seems to include a substantial increase in speed — and there's substantial breakout potential here. Dylan Samberg and Gabriel Vilardi have taken their big leap; if Perfetti follows suit, it will help Winnipeg absorb the loss of Nikolaj Ehlers.

Morgan Barron is another candidate for major year-over-year progress but it's hard to imagine him playing the minutes to have the same impact.

What will Lowry be capable of when he comes back?

Adam Lowry is still skating on his own, lest the competitive nature of a group skate entice him to go a bit too hard before his body is ready for it, but it's clear that Lowry is making progress in his return from hip surgery. He's gone from skating gingerly, handling pucks without shooting them, to adding more power and dynamic movements while trusting himself to shift his weight and take shots. It's all part of a recovery plan that's meant to see Lowry return to game action in late October (his hope) or early November (Arniel suggested Nov. 1).

Several NHL players have returned from hip surgery to various levels of play, whether it's Brad Marchand winning a Stanley Cup, Sean Monahan revitalizing his career or John Klingberg struggling as a third-pairing defenceman. Lowry's recovery may not be smooth and it may not go in a straight line.

It's OK if Lowry doesn't dominate in his return. It's OK if the Jets reintegrate him slowly, limiting his minutes or sitting him out on occasion if that's what it takes to get him back up to speed

A return to form — or better, if his hip was holding him back — is possible, given enough time. That makes him yet another X-factor down the middle on a team that's already leaning heavily on Toews.

Is DeMelo still the ideal partner for Morrissey?

Dylan DeMelo struggled for substantial parts of last season. His exit passes weren't clockwork. He was getting beaten in transition and sometimes getting walked in the neutral zone. As we noted in October and then detailed in December, DeMelo's performance was not the "coach's porn" performance we've become accustomed to in Winnipeg.

The best version of DeMelo makes so many smart plays with and without the puck that he's an integral part of Josh Morrissey's offensive success. He has a multi-season track record of winning his minutes on the top pair: Winnipeg outscored its opponents 70-50 with him on the ice at five-on-five last season (which is down from an astounding 81-44 record in 2023-24).

Still, if you had to pick a Jets defenceman to upgrade, you'd look for someone with DeMelo's track record of top-pairing results — without last season's wobbles — who'd maintained those results in the playoffs, too. A revitalized, rejuvenated DeMelo playing at his peak would go a

long way towards elevating the Jets this season. If his down year is the beginning of a trend, the need for an upgrade is urgent.

What does Nyquist have left in the tank?

Gustav Nyquist is one of the slowest Jets forwards, with a top speed in 2024-25 that would have been third slowest in Winnipeg as measured by NHL Edge data.

The two Jets forwards whose top speeds were slower than Nyquist's have each arrived at camp with more quickness. Vilardi's straight-line speed looks much better than it was one year ago, by eye, and Perfetti's explosiveness showed on Tuesday when he created a breakaway for himself. Nyquist, 36, is not getting faster, but he's never been one of the NHL's top skaters. The degree to which he can stay shifty in the offensive zone — and make no mistake, he does have good vision and deception with the puck on his stick — will determine whether Nyquist scores enough to justify Winnipeg's top-six bet.

Nyquist could be subbed out for Alex Iafallo or Vladislav Namestnikov if he falters. Expect Arniel to stay patient, though, looking for the hockey IQ on his Perfetti-Toews-Nyquist line to make up for any deficiencies in speed.

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11447604/toews-makes-preseason-debut-as-winnipeg-jets-fall-to-oilers-3-2/>

Jonathan Toews makes preseason debut as Winnipeg Jets fall to Oilers 3-2

By Christian Aumell & Russ Hobson Global News

The Winnipeg Jets may not have won Tuesday night, but fans still got to see Jonathan Toews in a Jets jersey for the first time.

They roared when he was introduced in the starting lineup, cheered loudly when he won the opening faceoff, but he was held off the scoresheet in a 3-2 loss to the Edmonton Oilers. It was Winnipeg's second straight loss to begin the preseason.

Toews centred the Jets top line of Cole Perfetti and Gustav Nyquist, and the trio had several quality scoring chances, but couldn't find the back of the net.

"There was some good stuff," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. "I thought he picked up sort of our systems. There's some areas there. There's other times where, like he said, he felt he could be a little better. And I think that's just rust. I think that's just timing. That's getting to know his linemates. I think there was a little bit of both there. I think that's a good first game and I know for a fact he'll end up being better in the next one."

Toews took 22 shifts, playing 18:36, and won just over half his faceoffs, going 11 for 20 at the dot in his first game in close to two and a half years, but it will take some time for the Jets new-look second line to find their chemistry.

"It was nice to play some hockey, and get back in the groove of things, play with some new linemates," Perfetti said. "It was fun. Obviously, first pre-season game, first game as a line, so there's going to be some growing pains and figuring each other out and learning. But I thought

we had some good looks and had some shifts where we were working together, connecting well, and something to build on for sure.

"I think tonight was a good start and a good step in the right direction.

Colin Miller and Colby Barlow scored the goals for the Jets in a losing cause. Barlow was originally credited with their first goal, but it was later given to Miller. Barlow had a game-high five shots on goal.

"He shed a lot of pounds," said Arniel. "You can see the transition, the transformation in his body. And it's paying off. I think he's got a better understanding about how we play, how we defend.

"He finds a way whether getting the shot off or he had two great looks in the first period. Those tips, those are things that goal scorers do."

Lambert assisted on both goals as the Jets scored with the goalie pulled with 61 seconds left to get within a goal, but they couldn't muster the equalizer.

Neither team scored in a fairly uneventful first period where Winnipeg outshot the Oilers 6-3.

The Jets had the lone power play of the first but the biggest moment happened in Winnipeg's own end where Edmonton had the chance at an odd-man rush but Toews made a great backcheck to take the chance away.

Edmonton opened the scoring at the 7:39 mark of the second with a goal that felt like it happened in slow motion.

Noah Philp took the puck toward the corner in the Jets end and tried to slide the puck on goal. It glanced off the skate of Miller and careened toward the crease, where Quinn Hutson tipped it high over the glove of Eric Comrie.

Edmonton continued to be the better team in the second until a great shift from the Jets resulted in the equalizer.

The trio of Lambert, Barlow and Parker Ford put in the work to keep the puck alive in Edmonton's end. Lambert made a great play along the boards before slinging the puck around the boards to the left point where Kale Clague collected it before sending it to the middle of the ice for Miller. His shot found its way through Calvin Pickard.

The game did not stay tied for too long, however, as Winnipeg was called for a high-sticking penalty and the Oilers took full advantage.

Isaac Howard took a cross-ice feed from Ryan Nugent-Hopkins and wired it through Comrie from the faceoff dot to put the Oilers back in front just 2:05 after Winnipeg drew level.

Edmonton took the 2-1 lead to the third after a period in which they outshot the Jets 9-6.

Winnipeg had a couple decent looks to tie the game in the third, with both Barlow and Brayden Yager failing to convert in the slot before the Oilers picked up an insurance marker with 8:03 remaining.

The Jets were in control of the puck in their own end, with Miller sending it up the wall from behind the net but Perfetti lost the handle, sending it skittering back toward the corner. Philp picked it up and four Jets converged around him before he found a streaking Ty Emberson, who walked in and wired a wrister off the post and in to make it 3-1.

The Jets pulled Comrie with just under three minutes left and didn't put a ton of pressure on the Oilers until there was just over a minute to go, when Barlow this time for sure redirected a Ville Heinola point shot through Matt Tomkins to make it 3-2.

Comrie remained on the bench as Winnipeg pushed for the tying goal in the final minute, but they would get no closer.

The Jets continue their exhibition schedule with the rematch in Edmonton on Friday night.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11448071/winnipeg-jets-jonathan-toews-pre-season-anaylsis/>

ANALYSIS: Jonathan Toews resumes career with pre-season debut in Jets colours

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

By definition, it was Jonathan Toews' debut Tuesday night with the Winnipeg Jets — possibly an unofficial inauguration since it was only an NHL pre-season game, but his first game appearance in a Jets jersey nonetheless.

But what it really was was a starting point for Toews to resume his career, while at the same time doing so with his hometown team in what is both a dream come true for him and a long-held fantasy played out now as reality for hockey fans in this community.

And as far as first impressions are concerned, it was a decent beginning for the three-time Stanley Cup champion in a game that had moments of high-tempo NHL skill, but also respites of sloppiness that only exhibition hockey can provide.

What the nearly 13,000 witnessed at Canada Life Centre overall was a player that can drive pace — particularly as the game progressed — and commanded a presence with and without the puck that will only make the team better as its second-line centre.

Now, it certainly wasn't perfection, and Toews was the first to admit that post-game on Tuesday, but when he finished his address by saying, "it was great to play hockey again," you know he wasn't dissatisfied with the outing.

Overall, Toews played just under 19 minutes in the team's loss to Edmonton and won 55 per cent of his faceoffs, both 'another night at the office' type of numbers for the 37-year-old, who missed the last two full seasons for health reasons.

At this point, getting that first game out of the way can only be a relief for Toews, who would love nothing more this season than to guide his hometown Jets to the summit of Lord Stanley's mountain — a place he knows very well.

And if everything needs a starting point, perhaps Tuesday's debut was just that for Toews — with the real inauguration still to come next spring.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/2025/09/24/sawyer-toews-has-a-lot-of-fun-in-jets-debut/>

Sawyer: Toews had 'a lot of fun' in Jets' debut (VIDEO)

In his Jets' preseason debut, Jonathan Toews had 18:36 worth of ice-time, while going 55% on faceoffs. TSN's Dan Robertson and Kevin Sawyer have more on the greatly anticipated game, including how the former Chicago captain looked and felt on the ice.