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Comrie's best coming when it's needed

Backup goalie giving Jets chance to stay in games, says head coach

By: Ken Wiebe

DALLAS – Eric Comrie is no stranger to deftly deflecting praise.

As he stood inside a mostly empty Winnipeg Jets locker room after outduelling Sergei Bobrovsky in a 2-1 victory on Saturday, Comrie was calmly talking about the poise his team played with in front of him.

And rather than lean into any of the 27 saves he made to win a third consecutive start, Comrie tipped his mask to the crease keeper of the past two Stanley Cup champions who stood at the opposite end of the rink.

"To be honest, I thought we had the majority of the chances all game long," said Comrie. "I thought Bob made some unbelievable saves. He's a great goalie. He made some great saves. I thought our team played really well all game long. I thought we really controlled a lot of the play."

Comrie's point is well taken.

The Jets did a great job of battling against the Panthers and they were able to generate some quality scoring chances, even if the volume wasn't overly high.

But after the Jets gave up a goal five seconds after a Panthers power play had expired, Winnipeg found itself in an an-all-too-familiar spot – trailing by a goal and chasing the game.

Their patience and will was about to be tested, this time by a team that has ample experience closing out games, even if their lineup is diminished by a number of key injuries.

Falling behind hasn't exactly been a good recipe for the Jets, who were 1-18-2 when trailing after two periods going into the third against the Panthers.

But thanks to the sound play of Comrie and third-period markers from Cole Perfetti and Mark Scheifele, the Jets were able to improve to 2-1 on this four-game road trip that wraps up on Monday with a Central Division battle against the Dallas Stars.

Comrie's ability to bounce back after a tough outing against the Toronto Maple Leafs on Jan. 1 has been something to behold.

In three games since allowing six goals in a game where the Jets had built a 4-1 cushion, Comrie has held opponents three total goals allowed in his past three starts, turning aside 72 of 75 shots in the process.

The only goal he allowed on Saturday came on a shot from Evan Rodrigues that caromed in off Eetu Luostarinen in front.

"He was amazing. And he's been like that for a while now."

"Their goal was a puck that was going three feet wide and banks off a guy. So other than that, he was flawless," said Perfetti. "He was amazing. And he's been like that for a while now. So it's, we have a lot of confidence when he's back there, and he's obviously a great guy to be around."

"When you see a guy get rewarded like that for how much hard work he puts in practice and off the ice, and he plays like that, it's awesome. He was a rock for us back there."

It's been an interesting season for Comrie, who got off to a strong start when spelling off workhorse starter Connor Hellebuyck.

But his level of play dipped when the Jets needed him to take the ball and run with it when Hellebuyck was sidelined with a knee injury that required arthroscopic surgery.

During those 10 starts with Hellebuyck on injured reserve, Comrie went 2-7-1 with a 3.71 goals-against average and .874 save percentage.

While the environment in front of him would fall on the category of suboptimal with the number of high-danger scoring chances he faced during that span, Comrie wasn't at his best either.

"Earlier on, I was pressing the issue a little bit, trying to do a little bit too much," said Comrie, who started 11 of 12 games between Nov. 18 and Dec. 11. "Trying too hard is a weird way to say it, but I feel like I was trying too hard. I was putting a lot of pressure on myself, trying to do too much instead of just letting things happen and playing my game."

Thanks to how sharp he's been during his past three starts, Comrie's numbers when used as a true backup with Hellebuyck on the roster are impressive: in nine starts, he's posted a 7-2-0 record, a 2.44 goals-against average and a 911 save percentage.

How has Comrie got things turned around?

"I don't know, trust in the work I put in in practice," said Comrie. "We have the best goalie coach in the world here in Wade Flaherty. He's unbelievable. He just keeps me ready for every single game."

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"We just have a good talking relationship. He's so good at getting me into the right mindset and just understanding the drills we do in practice that keep me sharp. I go out there with so much confidence because he gets me ready to go."

Comrie was originally chosen by the Jets in the second round (59th overall) of the 2013 NHL Draft and this is his third tour of duty with the organization, which could make the next several weeks even more interesting.

As one of eight Jets pending unrestricted free agents, Comrie is certainly a candidate for an extension, especially when you consider his relationship with Hellebuyck and Flaherty.

He could also attract interest from a contending team looking for additional goaltending depth, so watching how that plays out will be something to monitor.

Comrie, 30, has already made 19 starts this season, which means that his next start will tie his career-high for games played (set in 2024-25).

Saturday was the latest example of the old adage about the backup goaltender, whose No. 1 priority is a tale as old as time.

"He is giving us a chance to stay in games... He stops the ones he needs to and he can make some big saves as well."

"He is giving us a chance to stay in games," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. "He stops the ones he needs to and he can make some big saves as well. He gives us a chance to win games. And if he keeps us in games, he allows us to get out and play our game in front of him."

Moose tracks

By sweeping the Rockford IceHogs on the weekend, the Manitoba Moose have won five of the past six games to improve to 21-15-3-0 for the American Hockey League season. Goalie Dom DiVincenzi made 32 saves on Sunday to propel the primary affiliate of the Jets to a 2-1 victory. Offensively, David Gustafsson scored the game-winning goal, while Brayden Yager scored his fifth of the season to round out the scoring for the Moose, who are back in action on Friday at Canada Life Centre against the Texas Stars.

Winnipeg Sun

https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/jets-netminder-eric-comrie-king-of-the-recent-comebacks/article_8f7daeae-6dcc-4e46-b4ac-7e3665a0f778.html

Jets netminder Eric Comrie king of the recent comebacks

By Gordon Anderson

It seems like the hard work off the ice is leading to positive results for Eric Comrie.

"I trust in the work I put in during practice," The Winnipeg keeper told reporters in Florida after his 27-save performance backstopped the Jets to a 2-1 win over the Florida Panthers on Saturday afternoon. We have the best goalie coach in the world here in Wade Flaherty. I think he's unbelievable."

Cole Perfetti's fifth goal of the season at 8:34 of the third period evened the game at one each. Gabe Vilardi and Adam Lowry picked up the helpers. Perfetti was credited with three shots, logging 17:34 of ice time.

"Comrie was fantastic on Saturday," Perfetti said. 'Their goal was a puck that was going three feet wide and just banks off a guy. Other than that, he was flawless. He was amazing. And he's been like that for a while now."

Mark Scheifele then completed the comeback, scoring the game-winning goal at 15:46 when he redirected a Kyle Connor pass behind Sergei Bobrovsky for his 27th goal of the season. After missing four consecutive games as a healthy scratch, Gustav Nyquist also assisted on the game-winner.

The Jets entered the game with a 1-18-2 record when trailing after two periods of play. Their only win was a 2-1 victory over the Calgary Flames on Oct. 20. Consequently, the Panthers came into the game with a 17-0-1 record when entering the third with a lead.

As Perfetti briefly mentioned, Comrie has 'been like that for a while now.'

Since Comrie allowed six goals in a 6-5 loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs on New Years Day, he has responded with three consecutive victories. In those 180 minutes of game action, he has allowed three goals on 75 shots, good enough for a .960 save percentage.

"He is giving us a chance to stay in games," head coach Scott Arniel said. "He stops the ones he needs to, and he can make some big saves, as well. He did that on Saturday afternoon. He gives us a chance to win games ... and he allows us to get out and play our game in front of him."

The Edmonton native stopped 23 shots in a 5-1 win over the Los Angeles Kings on Jan. 9, snapping the team's 11-game winless streak. He also turned aside 22 of 23 shots in a 3-1 victory over the St. Louis Blues on Jan. 20, breaking the team's two-game winless streak.

Comrie admitted he was quite despondent after the loss to Toronto, as his turnover led directly to the game winning goal by Auston Matthews late in the third period.

But with the help of family and Flaherty, the 30-year-old second round pick in the 2013 NHL draft was able to regain his confidence, and that has produced positive results in his three starts since the calendar flipped to 2026.

"Flaherty just keeps me ready for every single game," Comrie said. "We have a good relationship. He's so good at getting me into the right mindset and just understanding the drills we do in practice that keep me sharp. I just go out there with so much confidence because he gets me ready to go."

"We have a lot of confidence when he's back there, and he's obviously a great guy to be around," Perfetti added. "When you see a guy get rewarded like that for how much hard work he puts in practice and off the ice, and he plays like that. It's awesome. I'm really happy for him. He was a rock for us back there."

The Jets finish their four-game road trip on Monday night in Dallas against the Stars. The Stars have won both games this season.

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11648486/analysis-winnipeg-jets-overcome-obstacles-florida Panthers/>

ANALYSIS: Jets overcome some season-long obstacles in Florida

By Kelly Moore CJOB

ANALYSIS: Jets overcome some season-long obstacles in Florida - imageView image in full screen

The Winnipeg Jets' last win after allowing the first goal of the game?

Oct. 24 in a 5-3 win over Calgary at Canada Life Centre.

Saturday's come-from-behind 2-1 win over the Panthers ended a stretch of 18 consecutive games that saw the Jets lose when falling behind 1-0.

Winnipeg's only victory this season when scoring fewer than three goals? Oct. 20 — also at the expense of the Flames — when Jonathan Toews scored on a third-period power-play to tie the score at 1-1, setting the stage for Mark Scheifele's game-winner with just under five minutes to play.

Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

And Saturday's win also ended a thoroughly frustrating run of 19 in a row where the Jets failed to overcome a deficit after 40 minutes.

So while every two points is a matter of great import for head coach Scott Arniel and his troops, some wins should have more meaning than others.

The Jets' 22nd victory of the season would certainly seem to tick off all the boxes.

When asked about how his team pulled off Saturday's win during a post-game interview, netminder Eric Comrie gave a simple explanation: "I think we're a pretty good team."

But unfortunately for Winnipeg this season, they just haven't displayed those characteristics with anywhere close to the consistency of the previous three years.

Making up the deficit the Jets are staring at Monday morning to qualify for the playoffs speaks for itself.

But Monday night in Dallas, Winnipeg does have the opportunity to be, in Comrie's words, "a pretty good team" for a second straight game.

If nothing else, at least there's a goal for the Jets of re-establishing some semblance of the team they think they are, and the team their fans and followers expected they would be.