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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/blog-jets-hope-veterans-help-fill-lowry-s-absence-on-pk>

BLOG: Jets hope veterans help fill Lowry's absence on PK
Chynoweth: "We can try some different things and see who can fill in while he's out."

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – After over two years of being away from the NHL, it sounds like Jonathan Toews will be carrying a heavy load of responsibilities for the Winnipeg Jets.

To start, he will be centering the second line with Cole Perfetti and Gustav Nyquist. Wednesday afternoon, assistant coach Davis Payne touched on Toews being on the second power play unit and capitalizing on the 37-year-old's gift in the faceoff circle.

This afternoon, assistant coach Dean Chynoweth discussed the opportunity to add the three-time Stanley Cup winner to his options on the penalty kill especially with Adam Lowry missing at least until early November.

"I mean, with Low being out, gives Toews the opportunity, obviously, he's extremely strong face-off circle, and has killed penalties in the past," said Chynoweth.

"You got (Gustav) Nyquist, you got (Tanner) Pearson also, who has killed as well. And then you bring in a guy like (Cole) Koepke, who also has killed in Boston. So, there's experience there. We got numbers like I said that we can try some different things and see who can fill in while he's out, and see what step they take with it."

Winnipeg finished 13th in the NHL in penalty killing (79.4%) and clearly would like to get better especially with all the veteran faces they have added in the offseason. Discussions were had with coaches and the players about what they liked and didn't like about the system they ran last season.

"When we are aggressive and everybody's on the same page, it looks fairly effective when one guy's off or two guys are off, it doesn't," said Chynoweth.

"So, it's getting the pairs trying to be a little consistent with the pairs that we're sending out, whether it's forward pairs or the D pairs. And guys have to take on certain roles to be able to make the team and also increase their ice time."

One of Chynoweth's key penalty killers is Dylan Samberg who took a huge leap last season and just signed a three-year, 17.25-million-dollar contract in the summer.

"He is a big-bodied guy that moves well, and he applies himself to his trade. Every day he is looking to get better," said Chynoweth.

"From the start of last year to the end of last year there was questions on was he going to be in the top four spot and he sealed that pretty quickly for us with how he played coming off the broken foot. So, a lot of good qualities there."

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2025/09/25/defenceman-dogfight-for-spot-on-jets-roster>

***Defenceman dogfight for spot on Jets roster
Saturation of blue-liners ratchets up intensity of looming cuts***

By: Ken Wiebe

Dean Chynoweth wasn't about to try and sugar coat things.

The Winnipeg Jets assistant coach runs the defence corps and he isn't about to provide any false hope when it comes to what will be at stake during the final eight days of training camp.

When you boil it all down, there are more capable players than jobs available, which should only ratchet up the intensity with the next round of cuts looming.

"We have numbers. We have lots of D right now, it is extremely competitive back there," said Chynoweth, who is back for his second season on Scott Arniel's coaching staff. "All the guys came to camp in really good shape and they can count. So, they know the numbers and they know the situation. We have got to get through the exhibition season and see where everybody is at."

The Jets have a clearly established top-2 pairings, with Josh Morrissey and Dylan DeMelo, and Dylan Samberg and Neal Pionk handling the most minutes.

After that, a quartet of veterans look like the front-runners for the third pair, but it's too early to tell if a platoon could be in place for the likes of Haydn Fleury, Luke Schenn, Colin Miller and Logan Stanley.

Ville Heinola is healthy and back in the mix, Kale Clague is new to the organization but showing well and Elias Salomonsson is the top prospect in the Jets' system and is hoping to force his way into the discussion.

Seeing how guys fit together is an important part of the evaluation process, as is the versatility to play on your off side if the situation calls for it.

"You look at chemistry among pairs at times, especially (because) the top four have been very consistent," said Chynoweth. "We ran into it last year where we were short on the right side at times, so we had to have guys play their off side, same with on the left side, having to play on the right."

"So that is an adjustment for guys, but we didn't have to do it in long stretches — but the ability to play both sides as a defenceman is a huge bonus for us as a coaching staff and the team."

MIXING AND MATCHING: Chynoweth also oversees the Jets' penalty killing units and while he was proud to see the steps taken as the team jumped from the bottom third into the middle of the pack in terms of efficiency, he recognizes there's another level for the group to reach.

Chynoweth noted there were conversations both with the coaching staff and players about how to proceed.

“One of the focuses was trying to be more aggressive when we can,” said Chynoweth. “When we are aggressive and everybody’s on the same page, it looks fairly effective. When one guy’s off or two guys are off, it doesn’t. Guys have to take on certain roles to be able to make the team and also increase their ice time. So we got lots of options there (for) guys.

“Some of it is new to some of the new guys, the system we’re playing. So it’s a matter of working through it.”

The Jets will be without captain Adam Lowry for several weeks to start the season, which means they’ll be missing one of their best penalty killers.

That also presents an opportunity for others to work themselves into the mix during his absence.

The good news is that newcomers like Jonathan Toews, Gustav Nyquist, Cole Koepke and Tanner Pearson have all been used on the PK in the past.

“Well, that’s — that’s just it,” said Chynoweth. “There’s experience there. We can try some different things and see who can fill in while he’s out, and see what step they take with it.”

A LOOK AHEAD: The Jets have two exhibition games in the rearview mirror and have two more on the horizon this weekend.

Based on the groupings from Thursday, it looks like the trio of Vladislav Namestnikov, Alex Iafallo and Nino Niederreiter will get their first look together on Friday night against the Edmonton Oilers.

On Saturday, when the Jets host the Calgary Flames, you can expect Connor Hellebuyck to be between the pipes and for the top two lines to see action, including the first game for Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor and Gabe Vilardi.

Toews is expected to get into his second game with linemates Cole Perfetti and Nyquist as well.

The Jets wrap up the exhibition portion of the schedule with road games against the Minnesota Wild next Tuesday in St. Paul and next Friday in Calgary against the Flames before opening up the regular season on Oct. 9 against the Dallas Stars.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/09/25/demelo-determined-to-up-the-ante>

***DeMelo determined to up the ante
Jets defenceman unsatisfied with last season’s personal performance***

By: Ken Wiebe

Dylan DeMelo expects more of himself.

The Winnipeg Jets defenceman provided a critical self-assessment on Thursday when asked for his overarching feelings about last season.

To be clear, DeMelo didn't think he took a massive step backwards but — given the high standard he sets for himself — he wasn't trying to convince himself that there wasn't room for improvement either.

"Personally, my game was up and down," DeMelo said matter-of-factly. "Everybody in here individually had the highest expectations for themselves. I had two, back-to-back career years — and it wasn't even just the points that was the biggest thing. It was my steadiness.

"At times, I just wasn't as consistent as I have been in the past with that, for the standard that I want to be at. Not that I had a terrible year where I was awful. But for my standard and how I wanted to up the ante and do better than the year before, I kind of didn't hit what I wanted to do."

DeMelo's level of honesty comes as little surprise, given the level of accountability he's shown since his arrival in a trade with the Ottawa Senators on Feb. 18 of 2020.

Yet his viewpoint remains refreshing, as it represents the importance of upholding a high standard both individually and for the Jets as a team if they want to take the next steps as an organization.

DeMelo, who signed a four-year extension with the Jets during the summer of 2024, used the off-season for reflection and he came to some important conclusions.

He conceded there was an adjustment period last season both on and off the ice.

"Last year, there was a lot going on for myself and our family. I had a new son in the fold and a family of four instead of a family of three and trying to figure out that dynamic," said DeMelo. "Last year was a lot of learning on the go and you don't have a playbook or the magic book on how to deal with that. You deal with it the best you can. The schedule was different with 4 Nations and the volume (of games). Just learning what I need to be the best that I can be. Having the right system at home and taking care of my body and things like that.

"It was a really good learning lesson last year on what you need to do for another crazy year with the Olympics. I took the positives and the negatives out of last year and really tried to put in a good off-season. The biggest thing was to clear the brain and clear the mind."

DeMelo, 32, had a strong summer of training but didn't narrow his focus to what he was working on.

"I try to improve everything," he said. "For me, it's the steadiness, the consistency. Where I'm really good on breakouts, defending hard, separating the man from the puck, just having that tenacity and bringing that on a daily basis."

DeMelo conceded that he occasionally got in his own way.

"Trusting my instincts and trusting my skill level. There were some times last year when I was getting in my head a little bit, where I knew that my game wasn't in the right spot," he said. "So, you put a little bit more pressure on yourself because you want to play well for the team, you want to play well for the guys and play well for yourself, because you have the highest expectations."

Jets assistant coach Dean Chynoweth agreed with DeMelo's view of his season.

"Dylan had some highs and some lows last year, but what I do like is his professionalism about it (as) he doesn't get too down on himself," said Chynoweth, who runs the defence. When he is playing well, he is moving pucks, and he is physical in his own end and in front of our net, keeping the game simple for him. He needs to move his feet and when he moves his feet, he is an efficient player."

DeMelo has worked extremely hard on his craft since breaking into the league with the San Jose Sharks, who chose him in the sixth round (179th overall) of the 2011 NHL draft.

Over the course of his career, he's gone from a part-time player to a third-pairing guy to someone who is on the top pair with a Norris Trophy candidate in Josh Morrissey.

They've grown into a pairing that is routinely facing the toughest matchups and going up against the most skilled players on the opposition.

It's a role DeMelo and Morrissey relish, but it also means that there's nowhere to hide when you're up against that quality of competition and that mistakes are magnified.

"That's the beauty of it," said DeMelo. "It drives us. We know that if we do win our matchup more times than not, we put ourselves in a good position to win."

"We've done that for large, large stretches of time together, where we've been a fantastic D pair. Guys in the D-zone that can shut things down but also contribute offensively. I think we've shown that every year we've been together. We continue to try and take our individual games and our collective pair to the next level. We want to be the best pair in the league, that's our goal when we talk to each other."

DeMelo has been impressed with what he's seen through the first week and change of training camp.

He sees a hungry group that is motivated to take the next step after capturing the Presidents' Trophy last season but suffering a heartbreaking Game 6 defeat in the second round to the Dallas Stars.

"It's just about not resting on our laurels," said DeMelo. "We're going to have to put on our work boots every night. We're going to have a target on our back."

"We're going to have to be really dialled in with our details and make sure our structure is sound. Focus on the guts of the game, the stuff that really keeps us in every night and gives us a chance to win. The teams that are usually more detailed and really good in their own system are the ones that come out on top."

DeMelo knows there have been some changes to the group, but also believes that the continuity within the core players can help the Jets get off to another strong start.

"The new guys have been great. I think we do expect them to be big contributors to this group. But a lot of the same guys are back," said DeMelo. "It's about everybody having a good year and pushing everybody every day. Training camp has been great so far, with the pace and the intensity. You can just feel that guys are ready to go."

Part of that fuel comes from the playoff disappointment and from the evaluation process that followed.

“You’re bitter right after it happens, with the season ending the way that it did,” said DeMelo. “When you don’t win the Stanley Cup, you’re always thinking of situations where you could have done better as an individual and as a team. That’s just natural. The end goal is to win the Cup, so when you don’t get there, you analyze and sometimes overanalyze.

“You want to know what happened. I loved our team last year and I think, to this day, that we were the better team through a lot of that series (with the Stars). Just not as clinical as they were. We felt that we were right there.”

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/jets-prospect-brayden-yager-striding-alongside-nerve-excitement-as-a-new-pro>

Jets prospect Brayden Yager striding alongside nerves, excitement as a new pro

By Gordon Anderson

Jets prospect Brayden Yager is a highly regarded prospect, but he is also a raw, inexperienced rookie, navigating an entirely new landscape as a paid player.

“There are nerves as you get into preseason games and playing with new players and figuring out linemates,” the Jets up-and-comer told The Winnipeg Sun. “There are nerves as you want to make the NHL and fight for a spot. There are nerves just because I care and I have worked hard to get to this point. I want to work as hard as I can to make the NHL.”

Yager was a first-round pick of the Pittsburgh Penguins in the 2023 NHL draft. He was traded to Winnipeg last August in exchange for Rutger McGroarty.

Heading into Friday night’s game against the Edmonton Oilers, Yager does wonder, at times, where he fits within the organization, what his role will be, a reality that pushes hard against his now-completed stint in the WHL.

Yager often got a tap on the shoulder when his team desired a goal late in a game or needed someone to win an offensive or defensive zone draw late in a period or game.

For now, he is just another piece to a large puzzle. Is he a corner piece or an end piece? Perhaps, a middle piece? Only time will tell.

And the overall feeling of uncertainty, as much as the unknown is also ‘exciting’ for him, is a by-product of all that is fresh and new.

“You try as hard as you can to keep it one day at a time and not try to think too far in the future,” he said. “It is hard to not get too far ahead of yourself and think about where you are going to be. And the best way to go about it is to show up to the rink every day with a smile on my face, having fun and working as hard as I can to earn a spot on the roster.”

Prior to his current adventures as a pro, junior hockey was comforting and something he excelled at. The list of accolades and accomplishments proves that point.

Some of Yager's junior accomplishments include 332 points (129 goals, 203 assists) in 265 regular-season games; as a 16-year-old he scored 34 goals with the Moose Jaw Warriors, breaking the previous record of 29, set by Theoren Fleury during the 1984-85 season; he played twice for Team Canada at the IIHF U20 World Junior Championship and matched up against teammate Jacob Julien in the CHL championship game, his Medicine Hat Tigers losing 4-1 to Julien and the London Knights.

"Junior hockey was great," Yager. "I had a lot of fun and made a lot of memories, but turning to pro I get to chase my childhood dream of playing in the NHL. It is an exciting time, for sure."

His new reality certainly informed his summer workouts. Yager says he always works hard in the off-season, but knowing junior hockey was over was reflected in the intensity of his workouts.

"There is almost a little bit of extra juice behind (the training) as I want to get bigger and stronger so that I can battle and feel comfortable against stronger guys," the 6-foot 170-pound centreman said. "There is a different approach in your head, but it is exciting to play in the city of Winnipeg."

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/video/jets-leaning-into-veteran-core-as-they-pursue-unfinished-business/>

Jets leaning into veteran core as they pursue unfinished business (VIDEO)

Sportsnet's Sean Reynolds takes an inside look at the Winnipeg Jets as they head into training camp without Nikolaj Ehlers for the first time in 10 seasons.

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6655470/2025/09/26/nhl-jets-prospect-ville-heinola-preseason-waivers/>

At Jets camp, a prospect left behind tries to prove he belongs in the NHL

By Murat Ates

When Ville Heinola was drafted in the first round in 2019, he had no way of knowing how quickly the Winnipeg Jets' defence corps would be torn apart. He was an undersized, offensively gifted 18-year-old with limited English, raised on skid steers and frigid Finnish winters. It seemed clear that he needed to get better at defending against big, strong, veteran pro players before he could make an NHL club.

Then, a series of free-agency departures, Dustin Byfuglien's sudden retirement and a slew of injuries put Heinola in the Jets' opening-night lineup. Three and a half months after getting drafted, he was an NHL player. In his fourth career game, he one-timed a Mark Scheifele centering feed past the Pittsburgh Penguins' Matt Murray for his first NHL goal.

"I was dreaming of that," he said that night.

Six years later, Heinola's dream come true in Pittsburgh is still the peak of his pro career. He was the first 2001-born player to score an NHL goal but still hasn't scored his second one — or even played a full season in the league.

When COVID-19 hit, Winnipeg placed Heinola on its NHL "taxi squad" for much of 2020-21; it seemed like a great development opportunity, but over a month passed without him playing a game. The Jets acquired high-end veterans the year after that, relegating Heinola to a starring role in the minors.

Two seasons ago, it looked like Heinola had finally won another NHL job at training camp, but he broke his ankle in his final preseason game. This led to surgery, the installation of a screw in Heinola's ankle, and a months-long rehabilitation process that limited him for the rest of the season. Last season, Heinola's surgically repaired ankle became infected, necessitating a second surgery — and a second rehabilitation process along with it.

"I'm not going to lie," Heinola says now. "I was in a dark place for a couple of months."

Heinola is 24 years old now. Six years in North America have improved his English. He can articulate the pain he's been through and the hope he feels now that his ankle has healed for the second time.

"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," he says.

"Everything went well. The ankle feels great. It's such a relief, and I just want to enjoy hockey now."

But Heinola's sliding-doors moment is now ancient history. Instead of the seas parting for him, with multiple departures and injuries creating a route straight to the NHL, Heinola is the forgotten defenceman at Jets camp. There are eight veterans ahead of him on Winnipeg's depth chart — plus 21-year-old Elias Salomonsson replacing him as the Jets' top defensive prospect — with a maximum of eight jobs available to win.

"There's not much you can do about it," Heinola said. "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."

He's gone from "right place, right time" to "right place, dwarfed by the competition." That's a reality in the NHL, where top-end talent always finds a way but the middle class of players fighting for jobs often need a lucky break to cement their big-league status.

There are other ways players like Heinola can earn NHL jobs. He's reached an age where Winnipeg can't simply assign him to the minors anymore; he'd go on waivers first, meaning any other team could claim him and keep him in the NHL. This was Johnathan Kovacevic's route from Winnipeg to a productive big-league career — and the five-year, \$4.0 million AAV contract he signed this summer. Declan Chisholm, another young defenceman for whom Winnipeg didn't have room, has played more NHL games since the Wild claimed him on waivers in 2024 than Heinola has in his entire career.

There are also protections built into the NHL's collective bargaining agreement. If Heinola plays fewer than 27 NHL games this season, Winnipeg will lose him to Group VI free agency — an

infrequently invoked part of the CBA whose purpose is to give freedom to older players who haven't had significant playing time.

"I'm just waiting for my opportunity," Heinola said. "I haven't gotten a really good opportunity yet and I feel like if I can get the opportunity, I know I can play. I know if I get the chance, if I just get to play, I will show these guys that I am ready."

It's the kind of situation that's difficult to win, especially when a player is not playing at such a high level that his path to a job becomes obvious. Every decision Heinola makes on the ice comes with high stakes. Every puck possession or defensive zone play becomes an audition.

"It's about understanding your leash," Jets star defenceman Josh Morrissey once told The Athletic. "Let's say you toe-drag someone at the blue line. If you pull it off, you're a hero. If you don't pull it off, you'd better have some leash."

Late in the first period of Monday's preseason game, Heinola tried to carve into the neutral zone with the puck on his stick to kick-start a Jets rush, ignoring a simpler D-to-D pass opportunity to do so. It's the kind of play that looks brilliant if a lane opens up; Heinola was forced to double back, passing the puck off and scrambling back towards his position on the opposite side of the ice. The puck bounced back to him before he got back; this time, he tried a mid-air pass with his backhand that got picked off by an opposing forward.

It wasn't the kind of moment that would earn an NHL long-shot his next shot at a job, but a player has to get noticed somehow. A player has to be willing to try.

These 14 young players with potential upside might land on the wire over the next two weeks. "I look back a couple of years when I played great at training camp," Heinola said. "(I want to) find that rhythm again and get my legs underneath me."

He's also taking cues from veterans like Morrissey.

"When I was hurt, I watched a lot of hockey and I felt like that really helped me a lot," Heinola says. "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, who kind of plays the game in a same style as me. I was just trying to learn and watch those guys as much as I can."

It's possible Heinola has simply missed his window — that he needed to show more, sooner, or be provided a better development path to prove he's an NHL player. A defining element of having a best league in the world is that not everyone is good enough to play in it. Perhaps he'd never have reached everyday status even if he'd been given all of the opportunity in the world.

The exhilarating, exhausting, agonizing part is the "what if."

What if the Jets had kept Heinola all along? What if they'd traded him when the first-round pick and 2019 World Junior gold medalist was on the way up? What if he gets cut and claimed by another team, getting the chance to start his NHL career somewhere else? What if he makes the Jets out of camp, turning the pain of his recent struggles into prologue for a full-time NHL career?

"I try not to think about those things at all," says Heinola. "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."

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6637860/2025/09/25/nhl-waivers-targets-2025-preseason/>

NHL waiver targets: Who could be the best pickups when teams trim rosters for 2025-26 season?

By Corey Pronman and Harman Dayal

Waivers are often the graveyard of NHL fans' former hopes and dreams, full of players fans hoped would fill a meaningful role on their favorite teams. They can be a second chance for players who, due to various circumstances, haven't been able to secure a full-time role with their current NHL team. Today, we highlight several players NHL teams could target if they hit waivers, looking specifically at young players who could have upside.

This article is largely speculative — we don't know if these players will for sure be on waivers or will for sure be claimed, but several players in past versions of this article have been claimed each year. We also won't be analyzing Connor Ingram because his waiver situation was already covered in a separate story.

Logan Stanley, LHD, Winnipeg Jets

Stanley's size, skating and physicality have always been exciting traits for evaluators, but his mediocre skill and hockey sense have kept him on the periphery of being an NHL regular. Now with youngsters like Elias Salomonsson in Winnipeg pushing for ice time, his time with the Jets could be coming to an end without a convincing training camp. A team looking to get bigger could target him in that scenario.