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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/blog-nino-reaches-1000-games>

***BLOG: Nino reaches 1000 games  
Niederreiter and Josi discuss their friendship and the journey to 1000 NHL games***

By Jamie Thomas

Nino Niederreiter will make history on Saturday night when he steps on the ice for the Winnipeg Jets as they host the Washington Capitals.

The Jets forward will become the first Swiss born player to play his 1000th game in the National Hockey League. Not bad for a guy whose goal was to just get to the NHL.

“I mean, when I was growing up, there was always Mark Streit to kind of pave the way for us. And everybody wanted to be like Mark Streit and hopefully play one game in the NHL,” said Niederreiter.

“And then there's the 500-game mark, where a few guys now reach, and now being able to achieve the 1000 games itself was something which I hope other players gonna look up to and say, I want to play 1000 games there one day.”

Streit who played 786 NHL games (Islanders, Flyers, Canadiens and Penguins) has since been passed by Niederreiter and Preds defenceman Roman Josi (980). If Josi stays healthy, he won't be far behind his good friend.

“Looking back when we were younger, 20 years ago or even 25 years ago, it felt impossible and then Mark Streit was the first player who really established himself in the NHL and Nino came up as a high draft pick (5th overall in 2010 NHL Draft),” said Josi.

“To be able to be doing what he's doing for that long and the way he plays too, he plays a hard game. He does that every night. It's just really special, it's huge for Swiss hockey, it's huge for kids back home seeing Nino getting to 1000 games. I think it gives all the kids in Switzerland all the confidence that Swiss kids can do it, we can get to that many games which is pretty cool.”

Josi remembers the first time he met Niederreiter.

“(2008) Under-18 World Championships in Russia, he's two years younger than me. He was the youngest player on our team, and I just remember there was a lot of hype around him because he was playing up so much on the national team,” said Josi.

“It was pretty fun; we got along right away. He was way advanced, the way he played, he was playing up three years with the national team at the time.”

The two have played together at numerous international events and have helped Switzerland to four silver medals at the World Hockey Championships starting with the first one in 2013.

“We were roommates at the time. I don't think a lot of people gave us a chance,” said Josi.

“We went all the way to the finals, and it was just really cool being able to do that with him. I think I was 22, he was only 20. Just going on that run together with the Swiss national team, first time we won silver (since 1935) that was maybe the most special one.”

Niederreiter was asked about what makes his friendship with Josi so special.

“We kind of grew up together in Switzerland, playing on national teams, and then we kind of broke into the league (NHL) the same time we went the first All Star break we ever had. We went together to Miami with Mark Streit,” said Niederreiter.

“So, we kind of grew into the league together, and we follow each other. We're obviously very close friends, obviously with the national team and playing together in Nashville for a little bit. So, it's being able to achieve it together basically within 20, 30 games are definitely very special.”

The duo will be back together again in a Swiss uniform at the 2026 Milano Cortina Winter Olympics in February. Niederreiter was hoping the Jets would be having more success on the ice to help make game 1000 even more memorable and the dream of returning to the Olympics for the first time since 2014.

“It's definitely a special season, like you mentioned, and but honestly, at the end of the day, if you're not winning hockey games. It's just not as fun as you want it to be. But like I said, it is very fortunate to have a chance to play 1000 games,” said Niederreiter.

“The Olympics is something which I'm very proud of playing once again. And obviously I know it's most likely going to be my last Olympics, so it's something which I definitely want to soak it all in.”

Switzerland has never won a medal at the Olympics in men's hockey, but Josi and Niederreiter are hoping to build off their countries silver at the 2025 World Championships, they lost 1-0 to the United States in the gold medal game.

“It's just exciting that all the best players will be back. I think especially for us with Switzerland, there is definitely a lot of momentum from the past World Championships,” said Josi.

“I think Swiss hockey is in a good place; we got a lot of players in the NHL making big impacts on their teams. Nino's about to play his 1000th game which is really special. We'll have a really good team. Obviously, we know what we're up against with all the best players coming but we feel confident about our team.”

Niederreiter was recently asked by a Swiss reporter about who his starting five players would be and he listed Timo Meier, Nico Hischier and Kevin Fiala up front, Josi and Jonas Siegenthaler on defence. The 33-year-old said he would put himself on the second line somewhere, which didn't surprise Josi.

“He should be on the top line. I think anyone who crosses paths with him, he's an extremely humble guy. I think you see it the way he plays too,” said Josi.

“He's a team first guy, like he's one of those guys you want on your team. Whatever he does he does it for the team, he's just an amazing person, really humble guy.”

Niederreiter wasn't surprised when he was told that Josi thought he should be on line one.

"I mean, like I said, there were so many good Swiss players coming up, and I'm obviously a different kind of player than we have right now is Fiala, Hirsch and Timo Meier, they're obviously playing a different game than I do," said Niederreiter.

"So it's a it doesn't matter to me who's in the first five players are out there, but at the same time, like I said, I'm definitely proud that I have a chance to play 1000 game tomorrow night, and the career I had so far, and hopefully I can top it off one day was a Stanley Cup."

Jets fans are hoping that Niederreiter can make it that last dream a reality.

### **Winnipeg Free Press**

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/12/12/hellebuyck-cant-do-it-all>

#### ***Hellebuyck can't do it all Expecting one player to magically fix Jets' problems would be foolhardy***

By: Mike McIntyre

Connor Hellebuyck is a huge fan of True hockey gear — his glove, blocker and pads all bearing the company logo.

Might they be able to whip up a cape for him as well?

The Winnipeg Jets will need Hellebuyck in full superhero form, swooping in to help save a season that has gone off the rails in the three weeks since he went under the knife for arthroscopic knee surgery.

His return — which could come as early as Saturday night against the Washington Capitals — is desperately needed for a team that has won just two of 11 games without him.

"Getting close," Jets head coach Scott Arniel said following Friday's practice, in which Hellebuyck handled a heavy workload while the other two masked men — Eric Comrie and Dom DiVincentiis — shared reps at the other end of the rink.

Provided the reigning Hart and Vezina Trophy winner wakes up feeling right, don't be surprised if he gets the call against Alex Ovechkin and company, who arrive at Canada Life Centre riding a 7-0-2 heater. That would amount to an early Christmas present for the Jets, given the original timeline of four-to-six weeks on the shelf.

But as welcome as that development is — Arniel compared it to Connor McDavid or Nathan MacKinnon returning for their teams — it's important to remember Hellebuyck is still mortal. Expecting one player, even one this good, to magically erase all of Winnipeg's problems would be foolish.

"We can't give up the Grade A (chances) that we've been giving up, no matter which goalie is in there," said Arniel.

“We can’t give up the Grade A (chances) that we’ve been giving up, no matter which goalie is in there.”

“(Prior to his injury) we started off slow, especially defending. We were winning, but we were also giving up a lot. Before he had the surgery we were starting to turn the corner on how we were playing without it. But since then it’s the inconsistency, whether it was the offensive side or the defensive side, it’s just been very irregular of us doing it on a nightly basis.”

The latest example came Thursday in an ugly 6-3 loss to the Boston Bruins. Winnipeg is now 5-12-1 over its last 18 games, representing a stunning drop for a group that won the Presidents’ Trophy a year ago and opened this season 9-3-0

“Five-on-five. Special teams. Individual games. Moments in games. (Handling) momentum,” veteran defenceman Josh Morrissey said Friday when asked to identify areas in need of improvement.

Notably, he didn’t mention goaltending — nobody is going to throw the well-liked Comrie under the bus — but that area has sagged as well. The 14-15-1 Jets now find themselves in a sizable hole, bordering on crater, with 52 games left to climb out of it. Only Vancouver, Calgary and Nashville have fewer points in the NHL standings.

“I don’t think you can start looking at the big picture. You’re just going to get swallowed up by that,” said Morrissey.

“Bottom line, it’s easy to get caught up in stretches and what’s ahead and the big picture. It’s really just about focusing on what you can do each day, the preparation as individuals and as a team. If you start looking too far in the rearview mirror or too far in front, things are just going to compound.”

The Free Press asked Arniel whether other help could be on the way in addition to Hellebuyck. If not via trade, then perhaps from a Manitoba Moose team that has stabilized after a rough start.

Among the candidates: draft picks David Gustafsson, Brayden Yager, Danny Zhilkin and the trio of Brad Lambert, Parker Ford and Nikita Chibrikov who all got brief auditions with the Jets earlier this year. Established veterans such as Walker Duehr, Samuel Fagemo, Jaret Anderson-Dolan and Phil Di Giuseppe are all waiting for an opportunity as well.

“I don’t tell the manager anything. We discuss things.”

Surely someone could provide a spark for a group that looks lifeless?

“It’s extremely tough now that we’re healthy. It’s hard. When it’s a 23-man roster, it’s not like you can pull a piece out and make a move,” Arniel replied.

That may be true, but what about creating room by placing someone on waivers? The Jets have plenty of passengers these days, with pending unrestricted free agent Gustav Nyquist (0 goals, 6 assists in 21 games at US\$3.25 million) at the front of the line. He returned Thursday after four games as a healthy scratch, then took a costly first-period penalty that led to the tying goal.

Another pending UFA forward, Tanner Pearson, was scratched against Boston after just five points in 27 games. And Colin Miller, also a pending UFA, can't crack the top six on defence, and that group is about to get more crowded with Haydn Fleury ready to return from a concussion.

None of those players were drafted or developed by the Jets, meaning the investment is minimal. If the goal truly is to win now, isn't it time to try shaking something loose? If another team claims the contract, so be it. If not, the player goes to the AHL and a roster spot is freed.

"We certainly talk about it and we're starting to have more conversations," Arniel said of potential internal moves. "For me, I've got to coach what's here, what's in front of me. But we do communicate about how we want to move forward."

Some may view that as a subtle shot across the bow, perhaps a hint his hands are tied by the roster. Arniel was asked what he might be telling general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff what he needs right now.

"I don't tell the manager anything. We discuss things," he said.

"It's very hard to make moves. It really is. At the end of the day, each team would love to at different times make changes, whether you're running at the top and you want to add a piece. But, right now, it's tough to do anything and, at the end of the day, my job is to coach the guys I have in front of me right now."

One of Winnipeg's biggest strengths last season was the bond that formed within the group, which won a franchise-record 56 games. Is all this losing now testing that unity, given much of the same core remains?

So far, so good, said Arniel.

"I think that goes to our leadership group keeping those guys together. Recognizing that we're not going to win with five or six," he said.

"We're going to have to win with 20 guys, 23 guys. It's going to take us all to get ourselves back into this race. I think that it's been a good group. The last few years, it's always been a good group. Hopefully they're leaning on each other through these tough times as well."

Added Morrissey, one of the team's alternate captains and one of the few players — along with the top line of Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor and Gabe Vilardi — not mired in a slump: "I think everyone in the room feels the responsibility and the onus on themselves to try and be part of the solution."

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2025/12/12/swiss-sniper-to-hit-historic-milestone>

***Swiss sniper to hit historic milestone  
Niederreiter first Switzerland-born player to reach 1,000-game mark***

By: Mike McIntyre and Ken Wiebe

A weekly lap around the NHL by Free Press hockey writers Mike McIntyre and Ken Wiebe

Nino Niederreiter vividly remembers his first NHL game. He had just recently turned 18 years old, fresh off being the fifth-overall draft pick by the New York Islanders that summer, and his team was hosting the Dallas Stars to kick off the 2010-11 campaign.

"I had a shot on net. And that's about it," Niederreiter said on Friday with a laugh.

The power forward would play eight more games that fall — scoring his first goal and registering his first assist — before getting sent back to the Portland Winterhawks of the Western Hockey League. The next two years would be split between the NHL and AHL before Niederreiter established himself as a full-time big-leaguer starting in the fall of 2013.

Just look at him now. The 33-year-old is set to play his 1,000th NHL game on Saturday night as the Jets host the Washington Capitals. Only about five per cent of players ever hit this milestone, with Niederreiter becoming just the 415th in NHL history.

He will also be the first Switzerland-born player to do so, squeezing ahead of good friend (and former Nashville Predators teammate) Roman Josi, who is at 980.

"That is definitely very cool," said Niederreiter, who has 495 points (246 goals, 249 assists) in his career.

"I grew up in a time where the NHL was so far away. Playing in the NHL was kind of like a dream. And seemed impossible to reach. Then you get drafted and you hope to play one game, and now you're standing here playing 1,000 so it's a definitely dream come true. And I wouldn't change anything, to be honest."

His idol was Swiss defenceman Mark Streit, who went on to play 786 NHL games between 2005-2018.

"He kind of paved the way for us. And everybody wanted to be like Mark Streit and hopefully play one game in the NHL," said Niederreiter, who now serves as a role model for kids back in his home country and will represent Switzerland at the upcoming Winter Olympics in Italy.

"Then there's the 500 game mark, where a few guys now reach, and now being able to achieve the 1,000 games itself was something which I hope other players are going to look up to and say, I want to play 1,000 games there one day."

Niederreiter has plenty of family members and friends flying in to help celebrate his feat, along with plenty of proud teammates.

"He's getting old," joked Jets captain and frequent linemate Adam Lowry.

"It's an incredible milestone. It's a testament to his career, the work he's put in, the consistency he's had. I think he's an unbelievable teammate, he's come in here and fit right in the room. He's got a great personality. He's been a terrific linemate. I've been super fortunate to have the opportunity to play so many minutes with him since he's gotten here."

"It's an incredible milestone. It's a testament to his career, the work he's put in, the consistency he's had."

Niederreiter is in the second of a three-year contract extension he signed with the Jets, who originally obtained him in a February 2023 trade with Nashville. He is currently fifth in team scoring with 15 points (6G, 9A) in 30 games.

“Everybody loves Nino,” said defenceman Josh Morrissey.

“What he’s done and the level of consistency he’s brought to get there is special. I think everyone involved in the game knows the hours and the work it takes and commitment and sacrifice. It’s the best league in the world. It’s tough to get here and even tougher to stay here. To be able to get here and excel for 1,000 is a special milestone for anybody.”

The only thing raining on Niederreiter’s parade right now is the fact the Jets are in a major funk, with just five wins in the past 18 games.

“There’s no better feeling than winning hockey games. Obviously it would have felt a lot better going into a game like (Saturday) night with that special milestone with winning a few hockey games,” he said.

Perhaps his big night might light a spark for his squad? Stay tuned.

#### *AROUND THE GLASS CAPITAL GAINS*

For all of the talk about Canada’s goaltending situation for the upcoming Milan-Cortina Olympics, Jets fans should get a close look at the front-runner for the starting job on Saturday.

Although backup Charlie Lindgren got the call last month when the two clubs met, Logan Thompson is expected to face the Jets in the second and final meeting of the season.

Thompson, who played for the Brandon Wheat Kings of the WHL, is among the league leaders in goals-against average (1.96) and save percentage (.926) in 22 starts this season.

Speaking of Canada’s potential players, right-winger Tom Wilson is leading the Capitals in both goals (17) and points (32) and also brings a physical presence and can kill penalties. Defenceman Jakob Chychrun is also in the mix to make the team and he currently sits third in team scoring with 11 goals and 25 points in 31 games.

#### *LOCAL TIES*

Alex Steeves isn’t technically a Manitoban, but he’s got plenty of local connections, which meant Thursday’s game between the Boston Bruins and the Jets had a little more meaning attached to it.

The 26-year-old forward was born in Saint Paul, Minn., but his father Glen played college hockey for the University of Manitoba Bisons while studying medicine and his uncle, Gord, was a longtime politician. Steeves also had plenty of support in the crowd from some relatives from Carnduff, Sask., which is where his grandfather’s family farm was located.

“I’ve played a handful of AHL games here (with the Toronto Marlies), but never in the NHL,” Steeves said after Thursday’s morning skate.

“It means a lot. A lot of the people that have supported me who will be here will be so excited. For me, I’m trying to make it just another game. But it definitely means more than that. I’ve been a Jets fan since the team came back, by extension of my dad.”

Steeves has spent the bulk of his career in the AHL to date, but he looks to have found a home with the Bruins this season. Although he was held off the scoresheet in Thursday’s 6-3 win over the Jets, Steeves has six goals and eight points in 16 NHL games, occasionally finding himself skating on a line with David Pastrnak.

“It’s been a blast. It’s been a really good opportunity to show my game in a bunch of different roles here,” said Steeves.

“I’m just trying to help the team win games and stick around. It’s been a really long journey here, but a journey I wouldn’t trade for anything. I always kept the belief in myself that it was going to come somewhere and it’s been coming here. I’m just working my butt off to preserve it and keep getting better.”

Steeves finished second in the AHL in goals last season with the Marlies, racking up 38 goals and 64 points in 61 games — impressive totals that caught the attention of the Bruins in free agency.

Originally added as a depth player, Steeves opened the season with the Providence Bruins, but has been flourishing since getting recalled in early November when Elias Lindholm was injured.

“I would say I’m kind of a hard, skilled player at this level,” said Steeves. “Play straightforward, try to play fast, very physical and disruptive out there. Maybe a pest to play against. I also think that when the scoring opportunities become available, I’m pretty dangerous there too. But I try to lead with the physicality and that leads to scoring chances.”

Steeves was always drawn to hockey, which makes sense given his dad’s connection to the sport.

“Probably just a byproduct of my parents. Looking back at photos, I had a hockey stick in my hand and was skating as soon as I could,” said Steeves, noting that Glen played in the WHL with the Swift Current Broncos and in the Manitoba Junior Hockey League with the St. Boniface Saints.

“From before I even had thoughts, I was a hockey player and once I had thoughts, I grew to absolutely love the game. I played with my brothers and being around it so much. I played some other sports growing up but hockey was always my passion.”

A graduate of the USHL, Steeves spent three seasons playing NCAA hockey with the Notre Dame Fighting Irish before signing as an undrafted free agent with the Toronto Maple Leafs.

During four seasons in the Maple Leafs system, Steeves appeared in 14 NHL games. He feels fortunate to have spent all of his time in professional hockey with two Original Six franchises.

“The main thing you notice is history, expectation, fan base, stuff like that. Deep roots and really it just comes to being around longer. There’s been more history, more glory, more heartache and that leads to fans with high expectations,” he said.

“You’re always kind of pleasantly surprised by the following the organization has in different cities. (With) Original Six teams, more than anything, you notice that.”

## **Winnipeg Sun**

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/healthy-connor-hellebuyck-no-saviour-for-jets-teammates-say>

### ***Healthy Connor Hellebuyck no saviour for Jets, teammates say***

By Paul Friesen

The ultimate help for the Winnipeg Jets is on the way, maybe even right at their front door.

Goalie Connor Hellebuyck could return from knee surgery as early as Saturday night when the Jets host Alex Ovechkin and the Washington Capitals.

Hellebuyck took part in Friday’s full practice and head coach Scott Arniel did not rule him out for the next night.

“Getting close,” Arniel said, calling the decision day-to-day.

If the three-time Vezina Trophy winner as the NHL’s best goalie and last season’s Hart winner as most valuable player does, indeed, play Saturday, it’ll mark exactly four weeks from the day he was injured.

It’s a few days less than that from his surgery, which was pegged as needing a four-to-six week recovery.

While Hellebuyck’s healing has been swift, teammates say he’s not going to be their saviour from a swoon that’s seen them lose nine of their last 11 games.

“The way we’re playing right now, I don’t know,” winger Kyle Connor said, Friday. “You put that many chances on him, as good as he is — it starts with our play. He is a phenomenal player. He’s going to give us a boost... but I don’t think we’re just relaxing and saying, ‘We’re back, now that we’ve got Helle.’”

“We’ve got some more foundational issues that we need to work on.”

The NHL’s stingiest team the last two seasons, the Jets have fallen to 15th in the goals they give up per game.

“You don’t want to put pressure on one guy,” defenceman Luke Schenn said. “Obviously he’s the MVP of the league and in my mind top goalie in the league. But you don’t want to say ‘saviour.’ It has to be every guy in this room.”

Arniel says that’ll be his message when his No. 1 netminder does return, even if No. 37 should make a difference.

“If you take McDavid out of Edmonton, you take MacKinnon out of Colorado... these Hart Trophy-type players, it is a blow to your team,” Arniel said. “When that’s a goaltender, that’s obviously a whole different ballgame. So to have him back in the fold will be major for us in that

sense. And hopefully the group in front of him recognizes... we have to start being a lot better in our details and our structure and our play to get ourselves back in the mix.”

With Hellebuyck out, Eric Comrie has seen his record fall to 6-8-1, with a goals-against-average of 3.30 and saves percentage of .886, both marks in the bottom half of the league.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/blaming-others-for-winnipeg-jets-slide-a-cop-out-kyle-connor>

### ***Blaming others for Winnipeg Jets' slide 'a cop-out': Kyle Connor***

By Paul Friesen

Losing can get ugly, straining bonds in a dressing room and causing second-guessing, even finger-pointing.

The Winnipeg Jets are in the middle of that dark swirl right now, two wins in their last 11 games leaving them five rungs from the bottom of the NHL.

Forward Kyle Connor doesn't shy away from the challenges of keeping things from getting worse.

“We've tried just about everything under the sun to try to get everybody going,” Connor was telling me on Friday. “It's everybody's responsibility now. Guys have got to take ownership. Personally, I've got to take ownership and be a lot better. That's where the mindset needs to be. Stop pointing fingers, stop blaming, stop looking around. That's where it just spirals and you're creating excuses for yourself.

“So that's where we're at now.”

This is new territory for Connor and most of his teammates.

The only season he even remotely compares to this is the one where head coach Paul Maurice bailed, mid-season.

That's the most recent time the Jets missed the playoffs — the only time in Connor's eight seasons.

He's not sure there's anything to draw from that experience. But he knows one thing.

“The easiest thing to do is blame others,” he said. “It's a cop-out. You need to take control. We have guys that are doing it. We do do it. But at times there's still instances where, myself included, you need to take ownership on a play, not just point the finger. It's easy to say, 'I got my guy.' But we need to all be leaders here and pull each other together.”

The implication from the 29-year-old was impossible to miss: This group's bond is being tested like it hasn't been before. At times it may be fraying a little.

But he wanted to make it clear it hasn't ruptured.

"I don't want (it) to be like this group is coming apart," he said. "Because guys are pushing each other. This group's been together, yeah we've got new faces, but it's been together. We know when to push each other. But it's just going that extra mile."

Not just physically, not just on the ice. But verbally, too.

No family feud has been solved by letting things fester, even if that's the natural tendency.

"When you're going through a stretch like this, you need to almost have more conversations with each other," Connor said.

"It's tough to do. Everybody maybe naturally is to just tuck your tail sometimes and not put in the extra work. But I don't think we're that type of group."

A closed-door, players-only meeting following a 5-1 loss in Buffalo last week was just one example of this team trying to hammer out its problems.

There have been more.

"We've done it a lot," Connor said. "We've had meetings not just that are public... we also meet every single day with Arnie (coach Scott Arniel) and go over stuff."

"And at a certain point it needs to be on the players. We need to win a game here. You've got to get out of it. So it's on the players."

Arniel counts on the leadership group to keep the team together.

"The last few years, it's always been a good group," the second-year head man said. "Hopefully they're leaning on each other through these tough times as well."

Defenceman Luke Schenn says there's no reason to worry about that, even as last year's Presidents' Trophy winner has reached the 30-game mark with just 14 wins, leaving four points and four teams between them and the last wildcard playoff spot.

"There's no issues there," Schenn said. "Everyone gets along great. We've got a lot of good personnel in here, a lot of good character. A lot of guys who've played a long time in this league and have gone through adversity. So that's one thing this group has, is character from past experience."

"Now we've just got to channel it and do it all together."

The next chance to turn it around comes Saturday at home against Washington.

Anyone expecting a magic bullet from GM Kevin Cheveldayoff in the form of a big move, Connor says, is only going to make things worse.

"That's how it just spirals out of control: you don't take responsibility for your actions," he said. "We're not looking for someone to bail us out. It needs to be here. I don't think we can go up to Chevy and start naming players that we want on this team."

"It's here, and we've shown glimpses of it."

Connor goes back two years, after a bitter, first-round playoff loss to Colorado.

The Jets vowed to get five to ten percent better, to a man — and finished first overall the next season.

“It’s almost as simple as just getting back to that,” Connor said. “Look yourself in the mirror. Everybody has another level to get to. And not waiting for the GM to bail you out.”

The trade deadline is still a long way off.

As for rock-bottom, we’ll see.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/nothing-else-was-working-so-jets-luke-schenn-tried-his-fists>

### ***Jets' Luke Schenn tried his fists when nothing else was working***

By Paul Friesen

His coach had tried almost everything, changing the lines, rotating players in and out, showing video, good and bad, and talking ad nauseum.

So Winnipeg Jets defenceman Luke Schenn took matters into his own hands in the last game.

Make that his fists.

Schenn challenged Boston forward Mark Kastelic to a scrap at the opening faceoff of Thursday’s game, trading punches with a 6-foot-4, 234-pounder who’s 10 years his junior.

“We’re on home ice, you’re playing one of the bigger, heavier teams in the league and you want to try to show that you’re going to stand your ground at the start of the game,” Schenn said a day later. “I was just trying to do it for the boys on the bench and get everyone going. Try something else to get going at the start of the game.”

Horrible starts against Dallas two nights earlier and in Edmonton the game before that that led to Schenn’s decision.

There was no old grudge he was carrying against Kastelic, even if the two had fought before.

It’s an old-school approach that would leave some wondering about the point of it.

“A lot of people that have never played an NHL wouldn’t understand,” Schenn acknowledged. “Everyone’s got their thoughts and opinions, but there’s been a lot of guys that have done it before me that I respect, played a long time. You want to earn your teammates’ respect.

“I would never go to anyone else and tell them how to do their job when I’m not in their line of work.”

Whether the tactic worked or not is debatable: the Jets scored first, at least, but barely two minutes later gave up the first of three goals in a span of 2:44 on their way to a 6-3 loss.

"I'm not the one to answer that," Schenn said. "You go there with the right intention."

His head coach says the response was what you'd hope for, at least for a time.

"Yeah... for the first 10 minutes," Scott Arniel said. "I didn't know that was coming but, at the end of the day, that's a good message to send. That's a hard part of the job and not a lot of guys want to do it anymore."

It was the third fighting major Schenn has taken in his 21 games this season.

#### *Swiss history*

Jets winger Nino Niederreiter will play his 1,000th career game against Washington on Saturday, making him the first player from Switzerland to reach that milestone.

Niederreiter says the pre-game celebration that's planned would be a lot more fun if his team was winning.

"At the same time, I try to enjoy it as good as I possibly can," the 33-year-old said. "But the end of the day, we're here to win hockey games and not celebrate some milestones."

Niederreiter will have a host of family and friends from back home, even a former coach, in the building.

As popular as any player in the Jets room, he hopes to be a shining example for Swiss kids with similar aspirations.

"When I grew up... the NHL was so far away," he said. "Seemed like it's impossible to reach. And obviously going over to Portland (for junior hockey), things get a little closer. Then you get drafted and you hope to play one game, and now you're standing here playing 1,000. So it's a definitely dream come true. And I wouldn't change anything, to be honest."

Countryman, good friend and former teammate Roman Josi, the long-time Nashville Predators defenceman, is 20 games behind Niederreiter on the road to 1,000.

The two are pegged to represent Switzerland in the Milan Winter Olympics again in February.

"I know it's most likely going to be my last Olympics," Niederreiter said. "I definitely want to soak it all in."

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<https://www.nhl.com/news/2026-heritage-classic-to-celebrate-winnipeg-jets-says-executive-chairman-mark-chipman>

***Heritage Classic in 2026 will celebrate Jets 2.0, Chipman says  
Winnipeg will host Canadiens outdoors next October***

By Dan Rosen

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. -- The 2016 Heritage Classic in Winnipeg was a celebration of a historic rivalry and the former players who made it special. It was all about the history between the original Winnipeg Jets and the Edmonton Oilers.

When the Jets host the 2026 Tim Hortons NHL Heritage Classic against the Montreal Canadiens at Princess Auto Stadium on Oct. 27, the celebration will be all about the current version of the franchise.

In fact, the outdoor game will be played 17 days past the 15th anniversary of the Jets' first home game since returning to Winnipeg, a 5-1 loss to the Canadiens on Oct. 9, 2011.

The franchise relocated to Winnipeg from Atlanta following the 2010-11 season, bringing NHL hockey and the Winnipeg Jets back to the city for the first time since 1996, when the original Jets relocated to Arizona and became the Phoenix Coyotes.

"We've got a lot of players that have made a real impact in our city over the past 15 years that we expect to welcome back," Jets executive chairman Mark Chipman told NHL.com at the Board of Governors meetings earlier this week. "So, we can celebrate this, call it the 2.0 era, and maybe it is a way to do away with the distinction of 1.0 and 2.0 and just call it the Winnipeg Jets."

Chipman said the plan is to have Jets alumni from this era return to Winnipeg for the outdoor game, including Dustin Byfuglien, Toby Enstrom, Andrew Ladd, Blake Wheeler and Bryan Little.

"It would be our hope that those guys would be a part of this for sure," Chipman said.

Chipman fondly remembers the first Heritage Classic game in Winnipeg, even though it was a 3-0 loss to the Oilers on Oct. 23, 2016, because it was a chance to recognize the rivalry with Edmonton that went back to the World Hockey Association days and welcome back players from that era.

Former Jets, including Dale Hawerchuk, Teemu Selanne, Teppo Numminen, Thomas Steen, Dave Babych, Dave Ellet and Bob Essensa returned and played in an alumni game against the likes of Oilers greats like Wayne Gretzky, Mark Messier, Jari Kurri, Kevin Lowe and Grant Fuhr.

The Jets alumni won 6-5.

"The ability to have Dale Hawerchuk and Wayne Gretzky, Messier and Coffey, all the players from that era be a part of it really elevated it," Chipman said. "It was a way to celebrate not just the fact that we were back -- we had been back for several years by then -- but it was our ability

to tie everything together from our history. That's what it was. And there had never been one in Winnipeg so it was really unique."

Chipman is excited that the opponent next year will be the Canadiens, which will also allow the marketing teams to lean into the history of hockey and the Stanley Cup in Winnipeg and Montreal.

"If you go back, and our marketing team pointed it out, the first 10 years the Cup was awarded (1893-1902) it was either Montreal (AAA, Victorias or Shamrocks) or Winnipeg (Victorias) winning it," Chipman said. "Much more so Montreal than Winnipeg, but there's that cool aspect to it. Just lots of history to celebrate. I think it'll be a lot of fun."

Chipman said from the planning and execution side of the event there's a comfort level in being back in the same stadium where the first Heritage Classic game in Winnipeg was played. It's the home of the Winnipeg Blue Bombers of the Canadian Football League.

"Less stressful," Chipman said. "Just knowing the venue and knowing the folks at the League too, because it's really the League's event and we're hosting it. Our group is really excited about it. Last time it felt a little daunting at times. Now we're just excited. We've got a playbook."

Mostly, Chipman said, he hopes the Heritage Classic will allow the Jets and their fans to pause from the day-to-day minutia and analysis and take time to reflect on the past 15 years.

"You know, sometimes you just go from one year to the next to the next, and it's this never-ending pursuit, but sometimes it's nice to just pause and celebrate, right," Chipman said. "It gives you this very unique way to celebrate how grateful we are that the League is back in our community. To be able to do that with Montreal is a poignant reminder of how humbling it is, honestly, that we're back in the National Hockey League."

"We have been for a long time, but I think it allows our community to refocus on that, that we are a part of this and we have been an important part of the history of the game."