

## **Winnipeg Free Press**

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2025/09/22/ford-has-eyes-on-the-prize-at-jets-camp>

### ***Ford has eyes on the prize at Jets camp Feisty forward sticking to identity to earn spot on roster***

By: Ken Wiebe

NHL debuts don't get much more picture perfect than the one Parker Ford got to enjoy.

As fate would have it, the Rhode Island product suited up in his first NHL game against the Boston Bruins — the team he grew up rooting for.

That would have been memorable enough, but Ford added to the enjoyment for himself and those in attendance at TD Garden when he scored on Joonas Korpisalo as part of a four-goal third period outburst in a 6-2 victory for the Jets.

After Ford had gone through his post-game interviews and took a few moments to try and let the moment soak in, he was serenaded by a large group of his supporters inside the arena before he got on the bus with his teammates.

"They were chanting my name as I was coming out," Ford recalled during a one-on-one interview during Jets training camp. "I didn't think that many people were staying after because usually you have to give a pass to everyone. I think I only gave five or six passes out, so it was really cool to see that many people stay after and just give everyone a hug. It just made it that much more special, being able to share that time with everyone."

Ford, who is expected to suit up on Tuesday in an exhibition game against the Edmonton Oilers at Canada Life Centre, would appear in two more games with the Jets before he was returned to the Manitoba Moose of the American Hockey League.

The NHL experience had given him a little extra bounce in his step, but he suffered an upper-body injury that required surgery.

Instead of thinking about when his next NHL opportunity might come, Ford adjusted his sights to making a speedy recovery.

"You go from playing every game and then, all of a sudden, you're out for the rest of the season. It was hard," said Ford, who was signed as an undrafted college free agent after four seasons with the Providence College Friars. "When you're injured, you're trying to do different things. Getting back as soon as you can and just taking small victories. That's what it came down to. Day-by-day, have a goal and try to get to that as

best you can. They're not the same goals as when you're healthy, but that's just how the game goes."

There's no doubt the timing for Ford was unfortunate, since being on the shelf prevented him from getting another shot before the Stanley Cup playoffs arrived.

"Yeah. It was pretty much the last shift of the game. It was just a funky play," said Ford, who joined the Jets taxi squad in early May but didn't see any playoff action. "I don't know. It was just one of those things. Injuries seem to happen when you're least expecting it. I didn't know how bad it was at the start and then I found out shortly after (it was)."

Ford has fully recovered and after a strong off-season of training, he's ready to try and tackle his next goal — which is to become an NHL regular.

Although there don't appear to be many openings available with the big club, Ford isn't concerned with who he might have to leapfrog on the organizational depth chart.

"It's just a different goal-setting process," said Ford. "But that next step is proving yourself to be an every day player. Not just getting a couple of games here and there. Everyone here at camp, they're fighting for jobs. I've been doing it the last two years, trying to earn my stripes. That's something where I need to take the next step, in showing that I can be here every day.

"Obviously, you see guys come and go. That comes into play, but at the end of the day, it's just motivation," said Ford. "You want to be that guy. I want to be that guy to make the team and fight for that spot. Every day, I can almost see it. I just have to get there."

Ford knows the style of game he needs to play in order to enhance his chances to achieve that goal.

When he's at his best, the feisty forward plays with incredibly high intensity and finishes all of his checks while having the ability to provide some secondary scoring.

"My teammates and the coaching staff know what I bring every game and for my whole career, I've been a consistent player. I've had an identity," said Ford. "And for me to stay here, I have to stick to my identity and be one of the best guys at it. That's working hard, doing all of the little things right and playing on both sides of the puck.

"I'm fighting for a bottom-six spot and your job (in that role) is about bringing energy to the team. It might not be goal-scoring, but it could be a big hit or a blocked shot, a smart play even. That's what I think I can bring to the team."

Ford, who turned 25 in July, was overwhelmed by the number of people that stopped him in the summer back home in Rhode Island to share their own personal stories about where they were when he scored his first NHL goal.

“Hearing everyone’s story about how they were watching it, how they heard about it, that was more special to me than actually watching the replay of the goal,” said Ford. “You set that goal (of scoring an NHL goal) for your whole life and then you finally get there. You get there and then it’s like ‘what now?’ That’s the reflecting process.

“How do we move on from here? It’s the same as with the team. How do we get better? After the Jets success last year, how can we get better? It’s a similar process of how I am going to take the next step, that’s what I’m looking to do.”

*ICE CHIPS:* The Jets reduced their training camp roster by six players, assigning four players back to their respective junior teams and two others who were released from their tryout offers and will attend Moose camp.

Sent back to junior were forwards Kevin He (Niagara IceDogs, OHL), Jacob Cloutier (Saginaw Spirit, OHL) and Oakbank product Owen Martin (Spokane Chiefs, WHL) and defenceman Edison Engle (Brantford Bulldogs, OHL). Heading to the Moose are goalie Alex Worthington and defenceman Ethan Frisch.

He was the only player among that group that appeared in the exhibition game against the Wild on Sunday and he showed well, chipping in an assist while using his speed effectively. With the first round of cuts complete, the Jets are down to five goalies, 16 defencemen and 28 forwards — though Kieron Walton remains in concussion protocol.

## **TSN.ca**

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/2025/09/23/what-to-expect-of-toews-ahead-of-jets-debut/>

### ***What to expect of Toews ahead of Jets debut (VIDEO)***

Jonathan Toews will sport a Jets jersey for the first time in tonight's preseason tilt vs. the Oilers. Toews will be on a line with Cole Perfetti and Gustav Nyquist. TSN Director of Scouting Craig Button joins Domino's That's Hockey to share how he likes the fit and how much better the Jets' lineup looks with Toews in the second line centre spot.

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/article/jets-morrissey-scheifele-move-up-to-sit-among-nos-40-31-in-tsns-top-50-players/>

### ***Jets' Morrissey, Scheifele move up to sit among Nos. 40-31 in TSN's Top 50 Players***

By TSN.ca Staff

Winnipeg entered last season with the stigma of a team that has trouble winning on the biggest stage after they lost to the Colorado Avalanche in five games in the first round of the 2024 playoffs.

The naysayers had to eat their words as the Jets quickly soared to the top of the standings last season, putting up a 56-22-4 record to secure the franchise's first Presidents' Trophy.

Two of the biggest reasons for Winnipeg's success last season was the play of forward Mark Scheifele and defenceman Josh Morrissey, who sit at No. 31 and 33, respectively, on TSN's Top 50 NHL Player list.

Scheifele is one of the longest serving Jets and a key part of the team's core since being the team's first-ever draft pick after moving from Atlanta in 2011. He maintained that commitment to the hockey club when he signed a seven-year, \$59.5 million extension at the beginning of last season.

The 6-foot-3 centre responded to his newfound security by registering a career-high 39 goals and 87 points in 82 games, which was a 15-point improvement from the year prior.

Morrissey continued to be one of the league's premier defencemen last season by putting up 14 goals and 62 points in 80 games while averaging a career-high 24:23 of ice time. The 6-foot left-shot defenceman received high praise from around the league, finishing fourth in Norris Trophy voting.

Despite the success in the regular season, the Jets stumbled in the playoffs again, needing a miracle goal in the dying seconds of Game 7 against the St. Louis Blues and then an overtime winner in order to advance to the second round.

Then the team was unable to withstand the Dallas Stars' firepower in the second round, falling in six games.

Scheifele recorded five goals and 11 points in the postseason but was limited after missing two games with an undisclosed injury against the Blues. He also played Game 6 against the Stars with a heavy heart after losing his father prior to the game.

Morrissey had six assists in 12 playoff games and sustained a knee injury in Game 6 against the Stars that would have knocked him out of the postseason if the Jets were able to advance.

Entering the 2025-26 campaign, the Jets aren't afraid to talk about taking the next step forward with the ultimate goal being a Stanley Cup.

"We're not afraid to talk about the Stanley Cup, that's our goal," head coach Scott Arniel told reporters on Thursday from their training camp. "This group for the last three years have won the most regular season games in the league, but [the Florida Panthers] have won the most playoff games. That's where we have to get to and that's our next goal."

“At the end of the day, we feel that when we’re at our best, we’re hard to beat.”

*33. Josh Morrissey, Winnipeg Jets*

*2024-25 Ranking: 44*

Coming in at No. 33 is Morrissey, who maintains his distinction as one of the best defencemen in the NHL.

The 6-foot left-shot defenceman had 14 goals and 62 points in 80 games last season while averaging a career-high 24:23 of ice time. He also had a plus-17 rating during that span.

His strong, dependable play was recognized around the NHL. He finished fourth in Norris Trophy voting behind Colorado Avalanche star Cale Makar, Columbus Blue Jackets blueliner Zach Werenski, and Vancouver Canucks captain Quinn Hughes.

Morrissey added six assists in the playoffs before the Jets were eliminated in the second round.

*31. Mark Scheifele, Winnipeg Jets*

*2024-25 Ranking: N/A*

After not making last year’s rankings, Scheifele gets on the list this year at No. 31. The 6-foot-3 centre started the regular season by signing a fresh seven-year, \$59.5 million contract extension and ended it by recording a career-high 39 goals and 87 points in 82 games.

Scheifele helped the Jets to a 56-22-4 record, securing the Presidents’ Trophy. He added five goals and 11 points in 11 playoff games before his team was eliminated by the Stars.

The Kitchener, Ont., native’s career season has put him on the radar for Team Canada at the 2026 Winter Olympics.

## **The Hockey News**

[https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/winnipeg-jets/latest-news/jets-early-pre-season-training-camp-takeaways-salomonsson-pushing-for-spot-lambert-injured-in-opener#google\\_vignette](https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/winnipeg-jets/latest-news/jets-early-pre-season-training-camp-takeaways-salomonsson-pushing-for-spot-lambert-injured-in-opener#google_vignette)

### ***Jets Pre-Season Takeaways: Salomonsson Impresses, Lambert Injured***

By Jake Tye

Breaking down the main takeaways from Winnipeg Jets training camp, pre-season opener versus Minnesota on Sunday.

The Winnipeg Jets have wrapped up training camp and are now entering the final stretch of their preseason preparations. After a 3-2 overtime loss to the Minnesota Wild in their pre-season opener, they're set to face the Edmonton Oilers on Tuesday in their second exhibition game.

Sunday's matchup, along with the broader training camp, highlighted several key storylines that are drawing attention from insiders. These developments bring added intrigue to the remaining preseason games, as Jets head coach Scott Arniel still faces several important roster decisions, some of which may carry into the early part of the regular season.

#### *Salomonsson Contending For Main Roster Spot*

One of the early names being listed as one to watch is Jets prospect Elias Salomonsson, who the team used a high second round pick on during the 2022 NHL Draft. The 21-year-old Swedish blueliner made the jump to North American pro hockey last season with the Manitoba Moose and did quite well with five goals and 22 assists for 27 points through 53 games. In training camp, he regularly worked with NHL regulars and held his own according to Arniel. Salomonsson working in with better players helps advance his development as he's started to show more of what his game has to offer the further along into the pre-season.

"I think that now that it's a little bit more controlled, a little bit more structure to it, you see his skillset come out," Arniel said on Salomonsson to the media following the pre-season opener "I like the way he plays, he's calm, he works to get back to pucks on the breakout and you saw him on the power play and in offensive situations as well, he's got an impressive bite to him."

The Jets don't have much space on their backend as they're looking to keep it mostly intact after finishing with the league's best defense for two straight seasons. However, if injuries pile up on the right side with an older Luke Schenn sitting on the third pairing at right defense, this could create an opening for Salomonsson. This would likely be down the line at some point but if Salomonsson can continue to impress with his play he could work his way up into being the seventh defenseman on the roster.

#### *Gifted But Young: Danny Zhilkin, Kevin He*

Two names that broke out from the bunch in a big way due to their play on a line together is Kevin He and Danil Zhilkin. The 19- and 21-year-old were put on a line together with AHL winger Samuel Fagemo, with the trio earning the respect of Arniel when asked about a unit that stood out in the pre-season opener.

Arniel was impressed with He's development over the last year with the Niagara Ice Dogs and added weight which the team had asked him to do and it proved to be a difference maker in his game. He picked up a pretty assist on a behind-the-back pass to Danny Zhilkin for Winnipeg's second goal of the first period.

“He got to play in an exhibition game last year, but he looked light, He looked like a guy who was at his first camp,” Arniel said “He came back here 10 or 12 pounds heavier and he ran into some people, he made a great play on the goal, He was a little bit more responsible without the puck.”

While He became well known for his story as one of the highest drafted Chinese-born hockey players in NHL history, Zhilkin came from Russia after being a Jets third round pick in 2022 and has since posted just 17 points in 97 games over two years with the Manitoba Moose. One thing that Arniel noted about his game was that Zhilkin continually asked for help from coaches and management in growing his game and that he has come back this season having put in a lot of work during the off-season and is prepared to have his best season yet.

“[Zhilkin]’s had some conversations with people within our organization, not only (Moose head coach) Mark Morrison, but [Kevin Cheveldayoff], Jimmy Roy, different people have talked to him,” Arniel claimed “That’s got him thinking about what it takes to play at this level, I watched that game in Montreal and I saw the highlights of the second game and he was one of our best players there and again, he was good tonight.”

The duo of rising prospects will be looking to continue their hot streaks further into the pre-season. He was optioned back to Niagara on Monday but will his play over the next few pre-season games, could make the team consider a stint with the Moose in the AHL later in the season.

#### *Brad Lambert Injury Update*

During Sunday’s preseason game between the Jets and Minnesota Wild, high-end prospect Brad Lambert was tripped on a rushing chance and went crashing hard into the goalpost just 34 seconds into the overtime period. He was slow to get up as multiple replays provided different angles of Lambert hitting his face off the ice before his body slammed into the net with the broadcast noting he was clocked at 35 MPH entering the zone.

Arniel noted it was the collision with the net that injured Lambert as he continued to play for another minute or so before leaving the game after being pulled by a concussion spotter. Lambert was evaluated for a concussion but no news has come out since and the next update will likely come on Tuesday when training camp resumes.

#### *Koepke, Anderson-Dolan and Others Battling for Final Forward Spots*

The Jets brought in Cole Koepke this past off-season from the Boston Bruins as a bottom-six option that could add 15-20 points. They were also hoping that Koepke would be able to contribute penalty kill minutes after finishing sixth on the Bruins in penalty kill minutes by a forward last season. Being able to work into the special teams is an area that could earn some of these depth forwards a starting job with the Jets.

The only available spots are likely held by Morgan Barron and Koepke based on current opening night lineup projections which means players like Jaret Anderson-Dolan, David

Gustafsson and recent AHL add Walker Duehr will need to do their best to make an impact. The Jets coaching staff had tried out combinations in Koepke and Duehr as well as Anderson-Dolan and Gustafsson in penalty kill situations with Arniel noting the duos performed well. These four names will all be ones to watch as the position battles continue further into the pre-season.

### **The Athletic**

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6648998/2025/09/22/winnipeg-jets-training-camp-notebook/>

### ***Winnipeg Jets training camp: Who's been helping their case to be an NHL player?***

By Murat Ates

Scott Arniel doesn't sound like a head coach who's expecting one of Winnipeg's top prospects to make the Jets roster.

That doesn't mean he's unimpressed by the performances he's seen at training camp. There are several players helping their long-term chances of becoming Winnipeg Jets, whether as mid-season call-ups or long-term projects.

Arniel spoke glowingly of Elias Salomonsson, Danny Zhilkin, and Kevin He on Sunday. Then after praising their performances, Arniel changed direction and closed with, "I'm watching some of the guys that were trying to make our hockey team that will probably end up being here."

"They have to show they're ready," Kevin Cheveldayoff said when asked about Winnipeg's top prospects last week. "It's not about being a veteran or a non-veteran, it's about being in the National Hockey League, period."

Winnipeg is well-stocked with veterans at every position and, while that invocation is often a setup for the argument that a top prospect deserves NHL time, that's simply not the case for Winnipeg this season. The next wave isn't dominant enough, nor does it require waivers.

But who's been helping their long-term case to be an NHL player? Who's hurt it? There are good stories to be told, even among players who will be cut.

#### ***Colby Barlow: A complete transformation***

Colby Barlow was not supposed to be Winnipeg's standout prospect at this year's training camp.

Barlow is younger than Brad Lambert, who dazzled us with his speed two Jets camps ago before scoring 90 points in 125 AHL games. He's younger than Salomonsson, whose debut season for the Moose was so impressive that it earned favourable



comparisons to Jets stalwart defenceman Dylan Samberg. He's turning pro at the same time as Brayden Yager, the two-way centreman who outscored him by 21 points in the CHL and captained Team Canada at the World Juniors last season.

Barlow's early struggles for Oshawa last season created a sense of doubt: Was there enough pace in his game for him to be more than his prolific one-timer? Was there enough two-way dimension for him to help a team when he wasn't scoring?

Those questions grew louder as Barlow struggled to score in the OHL, finishing his regular season with 32 goals after scoring 40 and 46 times in the previous two seasons — and remained even after his late offensive surge and ensuing playoff dominance. NHL scouts were torn on Barlow's potential, noting his leadership qualities and elite one-timer — a heavy, accurate shot that Barlow can release whether a pass is tape-to-tape or into his feet — while doubting his ability to play at NHL pace.

When Barlow cut inside-out around Ville Heinola on Friday, exposing Heinola's too-ambitious gap, I commented to a colleague that Heinola must have made a mistake. We spent a few moments commiserating on Heinola's need to be better. Then, before our conversation was done, Barlow put Josh Morrissey in a tough spot on his next rush with the same change of pace. Granting that Morrissey's job is won, it was an eye-opening moment.

Where did it come from?

Barlow told The Athletic about two keys to his transformation. The most obvious part is physical: To look at Barlow right now, it's obvious that his body composition has changed. This is the product of hard conversations with Jets development staff, including Jake Wolff, Winnipeg's head strength and conditioning trainer — and hard work throughout last season.

"I cut off a few pounds over last year and into the summer. That's another thing I was working on in Oshawa: leaning down a little bit and just getting faster and stronger. Then, once I found that weight that I was comfortable playing at, that was around playoff time and that's where I played my best hockey all year. I think I found that and tried to build off of it all summer and continue to get stronger and lean down."

Barlow's increased pace was noticeable during Saturday's scrimmage, where he scored on a vicious one-time blast, moving into soft ice before putting a Parker Ford pass into the top half of the net. He went on to set up Lambert's goal in that same scrimmage with a shot that created chaos, helping recover his puck so that Lambert could score from beside the net.

Now a player who ran the risk of being "just" his shot is showing that he can help in other ways — which makes Barlow an exciting prospect all over again.

That brings us to the strength of Barlow's mental approach.

"I don't have Twitter. I don't have Facebook. I have Instagram but it's more of a personalized account," Barlow said. "I just go about my business. I don't like to search (myself.)"

Refreshing, no? For Barlow, it's been particularly important for him to shut out outside noise — whether it was the hype that built up during his 46-goal draft year or the criticism that arrived when he struggled last season.

"I try not to listen to it at all. People can love you one day and hate you the next," Barlow said. "It's kind of 'What have you done for me lately' when it comes to that aspect and I think it's best to mind your own business and understand where you're at with yourself."

It's a lesson for young hockey players and those who observe them. I expected Barlow to achieve more production in the OHL last season; I did not expect him to struggle or to respond to that struggle with this level of physical transformation or emotional maturity. He's 20 years old and will do his best to excel for the Manitoba Moose this season. He says the key to his professional achievements will be sticking to his game, while finding ways to build from it. Look for Barlow to play against Edmonton on Tuesday.

#### *Early standouts: Danny Zhilkin's AHL stock is rising*

Zhilkin is a player whose motor gets him noticed even when pucks aren't going in for him.

The lack of offence has been a problem, despite plenty of effort on Zhilkin's part: After standing out at past Jets camps, filling my notebook with comments about his competitiveness, Zhilkin has scored only 17 points over the course of two injury-shortened AHL seasons. Winnipeg asked Zhilkin to raise his level of preparation heading into this season and Arniel said he's responded to the challenge.

"He's done a fantastic job this past summer coming (in) prepared," Arniel said. "He's had some conversations with people within our organization — not only (Moose head coach) Mark Morrison, but Chevy, Jimmy Roy, different people have talked to him. That's got him thinking about what it takes to play at this level."

Zhilkin is filling the net so far at Jets camp. First, it was two goals against Montreal in the prospect showdown. He scored the game-winning assist against Ottawa, too, and then the shootout winner in Winnipeg's Fan Fest scrimmage. Now Zhilkin is a goal-per-game preseason scorer, too, thanks to this transition attack begun by Samuel Fagemo and neatly teed up by He.

You can hear Zhilkin yelling "Kev! Kev! Kev!" if you watch the clip with sound.

"I was screaming his name, really wanted that puck. So it was a great play by him and great goal by the whole line," he said after the game.

I don't think there's a fast track for Zhilkin to make the NHL. If he makes it, I foresee him needing multiple seasons of AHL impact — with more production than we've seen at that level so far. Still, Zhilkin is only 21 years old and is elevating his stock within the organization. It's fun that he's playing with He, whose hustle matches Zhilkin's and who also brings a physical edge.

*Early questions: Brad Lambert, Nikita Chibrikov, and taking the next step*

I'm still waiting for certainty that Lambert or Chibrikov can be impact players in the NHL.

Lambert's skating is as impressive as ever; it's his decision-making speed that sometimes looks slow. Chibrikov is a player I tout for his ability to win battles and make possession-extending plays at each blue line. On Sunday, both players often seemed to think they had more time than they did, getting closed out along the boards while trying to make plays that were there a moment before. Brayden Yager's decision-making was the fastest of the three — and I trust his defensive zone chops — but he was unable to find separation or establish himself as a five-on-five threat.

Lambert improved as the game went on. He keyed a second period breakout by spinning off a check in the Jets' zone. He picked Adam Benak's pocket after a Jets point shot bounced into the high slot, lifting Benak's stick to create a scoring chance. In overtime, with room to move and fewer obstacles in his way, Lambert was excellent, drawing a penalty with a burst of speed and an outside-in deke that forced David Jiricek to take him down. A concussion spotter pulled Lambert from the game but his impact on overtime was thrilling in a small dose.

Why am I still waiting for proof he's hit the next level?

Whether at practice or in Sunday's game, sometimes Lambert's feet haven't been moving or, when he has reached his electric top speed, he's tried to go one-vs-too-many. Yager burned Lambert during Saturday's scrimmage, picking his pocket on one particularly ambitious attempt. Veteran NHL players have had an easy time keeping Lambert to the outside.

Chibrikov can be excused some growing pains as he gets back up to speed from a lower-body injury suffered last season and an ensuing surgery. He's still great at making himself a pain in opponents' sides. The Jets ran a one-vs-two battle drill as part of their Friday practice, where one player tried to come out of the corner with the puck as his coverage received help defence from a second player; Chibrikov was one of only two players to come close to going one-vs.-two and winning. (The other was Nino Niederreiter, who managed the feat.)

In some ways, the problems are a matter of efficiency. Lambert can fly and he's dangerous when he gets into space; he's still learning how to pick his spots. Chibrikov can win time and space during board battles; he's not making as much use of time and space as an NHL version of the same. I think Chibrikov is closer to a bottom six NHL job

than Lambert is to the Jets' top six but I expect both players to start the season as Moose.

There's doesn't seem to be a forward prospect making a case to win a Jets job — yet. But they're all in the age range where learning happens quickly and some of Lambert and Chibrikov's tools are clearly of NHL quality.

*Elias Salomonsson: Two-time AHL All-Star?*

In my mind, Salomonsson is Winnipeg's top prospect until Sascha Boumedienne proves otherwise. The 21-year-old right-shooting defenceman looked pedestrian at the prospect showdown in Montreal but much more impressive when surrounded by AHL and NHL players.

"That was a pretty scrumbly game, a lot of it," Arniel said of the prospects game against Montreal. "So (Salomonsson) didn't get to sort of stand out on it. I think that now that it's a little bit more controlled, a little bit more structure to it, you see his skillset come out."

I think Salomonsson is more NHL-ready than any of Winnipeg's top forward prospects. I just don't think there's room for him — and the Jets aren't going to make room — even if Arniel calls himself a fan of Salomonsson's game.

"I like the way he plays. He's calm. He works to get back to pucks on the breakout. You saw him on the power play and in offensive situations as well. He's got an impressive bite to him," Arniel said.

Salomonsson looked great running Winnipeg's second power play unit on Sunday. He has deception in his offensive game, looking off defenders and freezing them with fake shot attempts before distributing the puck — and he also took the shot that set up Morgan Barron's goal.

I still think the Jets will assign Salomonsson to the Moose, where he'll look to excel in big minutes, recalling him only when he's proven so dominant for so long that his AHL days are clearly done.

Finally, an honest-to-goodness battle for veteran work

If you're looking for a true fight for jobs, consider each of Cole Koepke and Walker Duehr playing on Barron's wings on Sunday (or Jaret Anderson-Dolan getting tried as a centre, with David Gustafsson moving to left wing.)

I view Winnipeg's most likely fourth line as some combination of Tanner Pearson, Barron, and Koepke but Duehr looked impressive to me on Sunday. I liked the way he closed people off on the boards in all three zones, helping turn pucks over. Koepke is a puckhound too, though, and played 73 NHL games last season to Duehr's 24. Gustafsson is the team's most likely 13th forward but it's meaningful that Arniel wants to see Anderson-Dolan in the middle and on the PK.

Winnipeg is off on Monday; expect a small round of cuts. Kieron Walton is expected to skate soon; he's feeling better after suffering a concussion against Montreal.

## **RG Media**

<https://rg.org/news/hockey/jets-mark-chipman-talks-kyle-connor-extension-update-small-market-teams-jonathan-toews-addition>

### ***Jets' Chipman Talks Connor Extension, Small Market Teams, Toews Addition***

By: James Murphy

The Winnipeg Jets are entering an important season with big questions on the horizon. From Kyle Connor's contract status to the challenges of competing as a small-market team, ownership has plenty to navigate.

With Jonathan Toews coming home to Winnipeg, the Jets also add a proven winner to their lineup. RG sat down with chairman Mark Chipman to discuss Connor's future, the team's outlook under a rising cap, and what Toews brings to the organization.

#### ***Interview With Mark Chipman***

*Is there any concern about Kyle Connor and where contract talks with him are headed?*

"No, I think my sense, and I'm not involved in this directly, this is what Chevy's [Jets General Manager Kevin Cheveldayoff] done so well for us and his group, so I don't envision 'K.C.' going anywhere," Chipman replied. "I think he's part of that group that I've been talking about. He's part of our core, and these guys are very, very close. I think it would be my expectation that we'll get something done sooner rather than later. My instincts are telling me that this is likely going to get done."

*Ottawa Senators owner Michael Andlauer has been very honest with his fanbase that, as a small-market team, the Senators won't always spend to the salary cap, even as it rises. Being in a similar situation, how have you and how will you approach that?*

"Well, I think what you have to understand when you're talking about small market teams is, I mean, we tend to get very focused on the cap because that's what is forward-facing to the public," Chipman pointed out.

"That's what the fans are reading about and hearing about. But the CBA is a very comprehensive document that was engineered to create a sense of competitive balance in the league, and what I mean by that is, yeah, there's a cap, and that helps create that balance. But, there's also a revenue sharing model that, if you build your team the right way, and you run your team responsibly and you can generate the necessary revenues that you can get yourself to the cap. We don't talk about that, and it's a complicated formula that isn't easily explained or understood.

I think what Michael's well aware of, as are we, you can be a small market team and you can be a cap team. I mean, that's what we've been, yeah, the cap's going up, but there are mechanisms inside that adjust. You can't just go to sleep, and it's not a welfare state. You've got to do the work, and you got to run your team well, and Michael will. And if you do those things, you can get to the cap and be competitive."

*With that being said, will it be harder for teams that aren't in a 'hockey market' like Winnipeg or Ottawa, where the community lives and breathes hockey, to maintain that competitive balance?*

"I don't think so. I mean, I look at some of those markets that everybody used to refer to as non-traditional, and they're thriving," Chipman pointed out.

"We go into Nashville, they've done a remarkable job there. And it's not because they don't have a state income tax. I mean, I know that can be helpful, but they've done a really good job of bringing the game to their fan base. And now that the fan base understands how good the game is.

I think that's the responsibility of our league and every individual club is to grow the game and show people how good it is. And then, yeah, there's obviously hotbeds of hockey where it's better understood, let's say, or there's a longer history and heritage to it. But those non-traditional markets really don't exist anymore. I mean, the Florida Panthers just won the last two Stanley Cups. The Dallas Stars are an absolute juggernaut. But I keep going back to Nashville. They've won a Presidents' Trophy in Nashville, and they've gone to the Stanley Cup final in Nashville. I think as long as you've got the quality of ownership that our league now has, it doesn't really matter where the market is because the game speaks for itself if you do it the right way.

I also believe that part of the magic of our game is the quality of the people who play it. So it's going to continue to grow, and it should. So, I don't look at it as we're in non-traditional markets anymore. There's no such thing. And I think that's what the league's done an exceptionally good job of is finding that. It took time. It wasn't a linear path, but when you get good owners in good markets that are investing in the game and investing in taking care of players, it's just naturally going to grow."

*What will the addition of Jonathan Toews bring to this team?*

"I don't think there's been a better leader in the game in my time," Chipman said of the 37-year-old and future Hall of Famer. "We came into the league in 2011, just as Jonathan was hitting his stride, right in that 10-year period where they won three cups. I don't know. I mean, I think you talk about Jonathan and Sidney Crosby in the same sentence, right, in that 10-year block in terms of leadership. So, to have somebody with those intangibles, I think it's just invaluable. I think we've got a very mature group. I've been saying these kids have grown up together. They're men now. And I think it is a very natural fit. If he were with just a whole bunch, a brand new rebuild team or

whatever, I don't know that that works, but I think it does work with us because we're a very mature group."

*How excited are you for the new season?*

"This time of year always has some form of excitement," Chipman replied.

"The team is a really good group, and they've won 154 games over the last three years, which is the most of any team in the league over that stretch. So there's sort of a built-in excitement/expectation, and there has been over the past several years, to be honest with you. It's a team that's only missed the playoffs once in the last eight years. So there's been this growing level of expectation that I think turns into excitement. So I would say that's the trajectory we're on. And yeah, there's a palpable sense of anticipation in the group right now."

*As has been the case with so many Stanley Cup winners, there are moments and lessons learned from previous seasons that helped a team finally win it all. Do you feel like your team is building off moments and lessons like that?*

"I would think so," Chipman said. "I mean, look, there've been years where we got past the first round and past the second round and got into a conference finals. But every year and every series is different. And I think you take something from it all, and you learn something from every series; they're always different.

Last year, two very different series. The first one was the most physical series I've ever observed in my time in the game. It was like St. Louis was the best team in the league from the trade deadline on. They were really playing well, and they're a really good team, and they're very physical. We matched their physicality. Sometimes it didn't feel like that, but it felt like we were the only ones getting hit. But they hit, there were like 600 plus hits in that series, and it was pretty even. I think we actually had a few more, but I think we learned, I think our guys learned how to survive a really physical series that for sure, and that's something they can put in their pocket.

In the Dallas series, I thought we played really well. I think the group was physically pretty tired going into it, but I liked the way we responded. I thought we played really well. And right up into game six, we had a lead in game six, and I think we felt like we were going to win that. And if we win Game 6, we've got a really good chance of winning Game 7 at home.

We had a heartbreaking development before game six, when Scheif's [Mark Scheifele] father passed away, but that was really galvanizing for our group. And I don't know that we could have got through that game the way we did if this group hadn't grown up together and been through those other playoff series over the past eight years. We almost pulled it off with a really, really difficult tragedy that occurred. So I don't know. I mean, I think you'll learn with every series, and so hopefully we've got something to build on for this year.