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<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/11/14/we-need-to-start-grabbing-our-points-right-now>

'We need to start grabbing our points right now' ***Coverage lapses, puck management concerns storyline of Jets road trip***

By: Ken Wiebe

CALGARY — Scott Arniel didn't want to put a label on it.

The head coach of the Winnipeg Jets certainly recognizes the swoon that his team is working through, having lost four of the five games on this road trip going into Saturday's finale against the Calgary Flames.

Arniel has been around long enough to realize that every season brings its own challenges and stretches of tension, but he also knows how high the stakes are for a group that is searching for some early-season answers as they sit at 10-7 for the season and are suddenly in a battle for a wild-card berth in the Western Conference.

The Jets have earned the benefit of the doubt from Arniel, yet they've got to raise their collective level quickly if they want to avoid taking on any more water.

"There isn't panic and there isn't a sense of urgency, but we're in the toughest division in the league," said Arniel, who put his team through the paces inside the Scotiabank Saddledome on Friday afternoon. "And if you happen to look over (at the standings), they're not losing too many games, the other teams (in the Central). We want to stay in the pack here.

"We can't wait until December or January and decide it's time to turn it on. It's too hard of a league. We need to start grabbing our points right now."

To say the Jets are a bit of a contradiction right now would be accurate. They've got plenty of things going for them, yet the issues that have been plaguing them have lingered too long for Arniel's liking.

Too many times on this season-long swing the Jets have committed defensive faux pas, either in terms of coverage lapses or puck management concerns.

Thursday's 5-3 loss to the Seattle Kraken was another prime example.

Three of the five goals allowed were blatant miscues in the defensive zone, one came on the power play and another was scored into an empty net after the Jets missed a glorious chance to tie the game at the other end earlier in the shift.

"Everyone talks about the speed of the game and the skill — which is a fact — (but) what it all comes down to at the end of the day is winning battles in the corners, along the wall, (competing), who is hard at both sides in front of the net," said Jets defenceman Luke Schenn. "That's really where the game is won and lost at the end of the day.

“As much as (the game) has changed, it really hasn’t. You go back to those basic things. Win your battles and chip away at it.”

The Jets haven’t lost the ability to win more of those battles, but what’s clear is that they’re not winning enough of them right now.

“It’s no secret the trip hasn’t gone the way we wanted it to. We’ve let a few games slip away,” said Schenn.

“The reality of the schedule right now is you don’t have a lot of time to dwell on things. You have to correct things on the fly and learn from it. A lot of teams are in similar situations. As soon as it feels like you find your footing and your game a little bit, you run into a team and you have an off night — that’s the way it goes.”

After dropping the first three games of the trip on the swing through California, the Jets thought they’d taken a big step towards getting back on track in the 5-3 victory over the Vancouver Canucks on Tuesday.

Yet they couldn’t follow that up with another strong effort.

The ability to close out games when building leads last season was another part of the DNA that helped the Jets win the Presidents’ Trophy.

Schenn conceded that the identity for the current group has yet to fully form, but he has a good idea of what it’s going to be.

“Defending is the way this team has had success in the past,” said Schenn. “In particular last year, when I got here, I just noticed how hard the guys defend, play the right way with structure, and don’t cheat the game.

“You have skilled guys, but we have guys that are committed to playing the right way.”

On the first day he spoke to the media during training camp, Arniel discussed the need to reinvest in the style that made the Jets so successful.

The desire to win hasn’t waned, though the Jets haven’t done a good enough job of meeting that gold standard on a consistent basis. Until that happens, it’s going to be tough to make up some of the ground the Colorado Avalanche and other teams have made during this slide.

“It starts with being mentally dialled in,” said Jets winger Kyle Connor. “We haven’t played a full 60 (minutes). There’s some glimpses (where) we really liked our game. But, we just kind of fall asleep and we’re not executing. We’re playing slow at times. And (then) it’s tough to get something going.”

One line that has been able to get going during the past couple of games is the one centred by captain Adam Lowry, who has five games under his belt after returning to the lineup after off-season hip surgery.

The trio, that also includes Nino Niederreiter and Alex Iafallo, has produced three goals during the past two games while buckling down at both ends of the ice.

"We've always had that line that you can throw out in key situations, to go against other team's top lines, to stay out of our end of the rink and gain momentum the other way," said Arniel. "They've done it two games in a row. When your big, heavy line and your checking line can do those types of things, it opens up the opportunities for other lines to step up and do things as well."

LOOSE PUCKS: Jets forwards Morgan Barron and Cole Koepke shed their non-contact jerseys on Friday and were full participants in the workout, though Arniel said they probably won't be an option to return on Saturday but there would be a good chance for them to be in the lineup for Tuesday's home game against the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Given the lighter workload in Thursday's game and the circumstances the Jets find themselves in after dropping four of the past five games, Connor Hellebuyck is expected to be between the pipes on Saturday against the Flames, with Eric Comrie then likely to make his fifth start of the campaign versus the Blue Jackets.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/11/14/ehlers-looking-forward-to-special-game-against-jets>

***Ehlers looking forward to 'special' game against Jets
Former winger returns to Canada Life Centre Friday in clash against old club***

By: Ken Wiebe and Mike McIntyre

TORONTO — Nikolaj Ehlers didn't need a reminder about what was coming next Friday.

The former Winnipeg Jets winger is eagerly awaiting his first trip to the place where he spent the first decade of his NHL career.

And for the record, Ehlers wasn't trying to pass it off as just another game on the schedule — and good on him for that.

"It will be special," Ehlers said after chipping in two assists in a 5-4 victory over the Toronto Maple Leafs last Sunday. "I've always said that I'm not ever nervous for a hockey game, but for that one, it might creep in a little bit. I have a lot of good friends on that team who have been family and are still family.

"It's going to be emotional for myself, for sure."

"I've always said that I'm not ever nervous for a hockey game, but for that one, it might creep in a little bit. It's going to be emotional for sure."

Chosen ninth overall by the Jets in the 2014 NHL draft, Ehlers spent the first 690 games of his career with the organization, literally and figuratively growing up from a 19-year-old rookie to someone who was counted on to produce through his 20s.

One of the most exciting games he played with the Jets came in Game 7 of the first-round series against the St. Louis Blues in May, when he helped set up the goal by Cole Perfetti just before time expired in regulation that sent the deciding contest to overtime.

“There are so many great moments that I had in a Jets jersey,” said Ehlers, who had 228 goals and 530 points for the Jets. “Starting from when I put it on, on the stage in Philly (at the 2014 draft) to playing that Game 7 against St. Louis. That was one of the coolest moments I’ve ever been a part of.”

Unlike many marquee unrestricted free agents, Ehlers took his time before making such a critical decision on his future, taking until July 3 (two days into free agency) to ink a six-year deal with the Carolina Hurricanes worth US\$51 million and carries a cap hit of US\$8.5 million.

“I see similarities to what I was used to in Winnipeg,” said Ehlers. “The people are extremely helpful, extremely nice. Having a good group of guys like we have here made everything a bit easier for myself.

“Everything is completely new. You have a lot of new things you need to figure out and, as time goes on, you start to figure things out and you don’t have to use your maps on your way to the rink anymore or to the grocery store. I’m settling in nicely. So far, it’s been really great, which is really exciting.”

For Ehlers, it wasn’t about turning his back on the Jets or the province he called home for a decade, it was about getting out of his comfort zone and pushing himself to take the next step in his career.

“I talked to a lot of people in that whole process,” said Ehlers, noting that Hurricanes goalie and fellow Dane Frederik Andersen was one of them. “I don’t know if I asked for advice, but those guys I am super close with and that chipped in with everything they had and made me not have any big questions left to ask.”

“Yes, it’s great that the GM wants you, but you want the coach to want you or it’s not going to work.”

The wooing process was a lot to take in, with Hurricanes general manager Eric Tulsky and head coach Rod Brind’Amour making strong pitches about why they felt Ehlers would fit so well with what they’ve built.

“That’s what you want,” said Ehlers. “Yes, it’s great that the GM wants you, but you want the coach to want you — or it’s not going to work. They showed that interest from Day 1 and that feels good. When a team wants you that bad. That was something that was very important to me.”

Although Ehlers got off to a slow start offensively, despite top line minutes with Winnipegger Seth Jarvis and Sebastian Aho, he’s settled into the groove during the past 10 days or so and is up to three goals and 11 points after Friday’s game against the Vancouver Canucks.

“He got a goal a few games ago and you can just see that all of a sudden, there’s a little more — I don’t know — pep in his step or whatever,” said Brind’Amour. “He’s a little more comfortable. It’s a lot of pressure when you come to a new team, with all the hype. More so when you’ve been somewhere for a long time.”

As he stood inside a mostly empty visitors dressing room, Ehlers conceded that there were a lot of adjustments both on and off the ice to sort through in the early stages of the season.

"It's been good," said Ehlers. "Challenging is the wrong word because that makes it sound like it's super, super hard but there are going to be small challenges when you've been in one place for 10 years and suddenly, it's a new country, new teammates, new coach, new everything."

It wasn't easy going 11 games without a goal for his new team before finding the back of the net on Nov. 4.

"You maybe don't feel that way, but you're doing it anyways," said Ehlers, asked if he was squeezing the stick a little more tightly during the dry spell. "I had some bigger chances, even a breakaway in Anaheim where I fumbled (the puck) into the corner.

"I've been through it before, where it just doesn't want to go in. But I'm also old enough to know that, at some point, (the goals) are going to come. Obviously, I would have wished for a bit better start, but we were winning games — so that made it a little easier for me. It's nice to finally get it going."

Ehlers snapped his drought against the New York Rangers — the same team he scored his first NHL goal against.

In a move that Jets fans would recognize, Ehlers tossed the imaginary monkey off his back once he made his way back to the Hurricanes bench.

"It felt nice to get that first one, finally," said Ehlers. "It's crazy how that goal reminded me of my first goal in a Jets jersey. So, that was kind of neat."

The main difference was that the first of his NHL career came against Henrik Lundqvist and this one came against Igor Shesterkin.

The Hurricanes are a team that's been excellent during the regular season and has made some impressive playoff runs during Brind'Amour's tenure, but they've lacked goal-scoring in recent Eastern Conference finals, which is one of the reasons Ehlers was a top target for them.

Given his speed, game-breaking ability and zone entry prowess, the expectation is that Ehlers can come through when the chips are down.

The Hurricanes play a fast, high-pressure game and are known for getting a high volume of shots on net, with an attack mentality — all things that should suit Ehlers' game.

"I thought that part (of the transition) would be a little bit easier. It hasn't been," said Ehlers. "But at the same time, I also knew that certain things were going to take time. I'm starting to get more and more comfortable with the new system. I'm trying to figure things out and that is also trending in the right direction."

AROUND THE GLASS ROSLOVIC SHINES

Speaking of strong stretches for former Jets, 2015 first-rounder Jack Roslovic had himself quite a week, recording a pair of overtime winners for the Edmonton Oilers.

Roslovic, who was signed to a one-year deal with the Oilers on Oct. 8 for a show-me contract worth US\$1.5 million, is up to five goals and 12 points in 17 games.

Talent has never been the issue for Roslovic, who was chosen 25th overall in 2015, the same year the Jets got Kyle Connor with the 17th pick.

Inconsistency has been what has plagued Roslovic, but he joined a team looking for speed and skill to provide secondary scoring and that's precisely what he's been able to do so far.

RIP LARRY BROOKS

The hockey world lost a great writer and dogged reporter when longtime New York Post columnist Larry Brooks died this week after his battle with cancer.

Brooks covered the NHL with incredible passion and a fierce desire to get to the bottom of the story.

Having been fortunate enough to cover a couple of Stanley Cup playoff series involving the Rangers (one against the Philadelphia Flyers and another against the Washington Capitals), Larry was someone who was great to talk hockey with.

Not only did he do an excellent job on his beat, he's someone that did outstanding work when it came to mentoring and he was well-respected by those he worked with and covered.

Our thoughts are with his family and friends.

Sports Illustrated

<https://www.si.com/onsi/breakaway/winnipeg-jets/josh-morrissey-team-back-track>

Jets Need Top Defender to Get Team Back on Track

By Jacob Punturi

The Winnipeg Jets were the best team during the regular season last season, but things are looking very different through the first quarter of this season. The team is 10-7 through their first 17 games, and while they hold possession of a Wild Card spot in the Western Conference, there is a different feeling in Winnipeg.

Usually, the Jets turn to their back-to-back Vezina Trophy-winning goalie Connor Hellebuyck to snap them out of any slump. This time around, their superstar puck-stopper isn't the one who can lift them out of their 5-5 stretch in the past 10 games, but their top defender can. Josh Morrissey is off to a strong start, and while the Jets are figuring things out, they are looking toward their number one defenseman to drag them out of the early-season slump.

Top Puck-Mover

Morrissey's game is predicated on two things. The first is that he is one of the top puck-movers in the entire NHL. The 30-year-old is a heads up, high IQ player with the puck on his stick.

He is so strong at starting the play from his own end. He knows exactly when to make that first pass to exit the zone or when to hang onto the puck. When he makes that breakout pass, it's always crisp and exactly where the skater is going, not where he was coming from.

When he's in the offensive zone, that skillset remains. He has a cannon of a shot when needed, but he's always scanning the zone for his teammates and the best scoring chance, and he's

able to thread a needle to place the puck where it needs to be. It's how he's stormed out to 17 points in his first 17 games this season, putting him on pace to exceed 65 points for the fourth consecutive campaign.

Defensive Zone Menace

The other huge part of his game is being an absolute menace in the defensive zone. Despite being one of the smaller defenders in the league, standing 6'0" and weighing just under 200 pounds, he's nasty to play against. He gets under his opponents' skin and is incredibly frustrating to deal with when trying to get into position in the offensive zone.

The other area where Morrissey surprisingly excels in the defensive zone is blocking shots. He's blocked over 100 shots in each of the last four seasons, but he's off to a slightly more productive start in that department in 2025-2026. In 17 games, he's blocked 33 shots, good for 1.94 blocked shots per contest. If he keeps that pace, he will set a new career high this season.

Why the Jets Need Even More

The Jets have high expectations for the season after their disappointing exit from the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs. In order to reach that next phase, they need even more from their top defender. He's been excellent, but the team hasn't matched the level he's bringing. Until they do, the Jets need their star defenseman to drag them out of this early-season skid.

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6808162/2025/11/15/winnipeg-jets-stanley-cup-mackenzie-weegar-trade/>

Winnipeg Jets mailbag: Closing Stanley Cup contention window? MacKenzie Weegar trade?

By Murat Ates

The Winnipeg Jets lost four out of five games on their Western Conference road trip and their firm grip on their playoff spot.

Its poor underlying numbers and lack of execution — inconsistencies winning battles, moving the puck or playing at pace — have caught the attention of national media. Coach Scott Arniel said in Calgary that Winnipeg's struggles are about executing plays, whether players are under pressure or not.

Now the Jets are fighting for a wild-card spot, and fans are frustrated.

This Jets mailbag picks up on fans' frustration, responding to questions about the lack of quality and pace, the need for improvements and what Winnipeg can do to make the most out of a Stanley Cup window that looks to be closing. It's an older, slower team, but isn't it supposed to be good?

Let's dig into all of it with data, opinion and guest appearances.

With underlying team metrics screaming danger, what is your interpretation of the metrics and results lately? Are the Jets, the league's oldest team, going to mirror the 2025 Blue Bombers

soon? They got too old, too slow, faster than they realized and the window slammed shut. — Andywpg

There's no issue with your premise: Winnipeg's share of five-on-five expected goals is the worst, second-worst or third-worst in the NHL, depending on whether you're looking at Natural Stat Trick, MoneyPuck or Evolving Hockey. The team has spent the fourth most time in their own zone at even strength, according to NHL EDGE. And if you've been watching them regularly, you've seen a Jets team hemmed in their own zone, struggling to make clean breakouts and beaten in transition.

When a team goes from great to awful, it's often due to a combination of factors. Winnipeg's shutdown centre, Adam Lowry, has driven play against top competition for multiple seasons, but he played in just his fifth game Thursday night. Dylan Samberg is the Jets' best shutdown defenceman, and Thursday's game was his first. Those two absences, along with Cole Perfetti's early-season ankle injury, Nikolaj Ehlers' UFA departure and a roster that's among the oldest and slowest in the NHL, have put Winnipeg in its own zone more often, kept it there longer and stopped the Jets from chaining together consecutive, heavy, cycling shifts in the offensive zone.

Good health will help — my guess is we've reached the low point of the Jets' five-on-five shot metrics — but Winnipeg's lack of pace is an element to keep an eye on. I don't see how they get back into the top 10 in expected goals for and in expected goals against per minute, as they were last season, but I foresee improvement. The difference between good and bad in some of these respects can be as simple as one clean breakout and one extended shift per period.

Here are three things the Jets could do to help:

- Limit Luke Schenn's minutes
- Promote Morgan Barron when he's up and running again
- Balance the middle six minutes between Jonathan Toews and Adam Lowry's lines as Lowry starts to feel good

With an aging core and a window of probably two or three years, is now the time for the Jets to take some big swings and trade some top prospects? I reckon the Jets need another top-four defenceman (even with Dylan Samberg's return) and another top-six forward to truly contend. — Kip L.

The more I think about Kip's question, the more two things happen.

The first is that I begin to question some of the ways we talk about windows to win. My gut reaction is that the Jets should go "all in" while they have a best-in-class No. 1 goaltender in Connor Hellebuyck (32), a solid No. 1 centre in Mark Scheifele (32) and a franchise-caliber defenceman in Josh Morrissey (30.) Then I turn it into a numbers game and wonder if I have the math wrong.

How long do you think those three players will merit star status, with Hellebuyck and Morrissey in particular among the best few players in the world at their position? Let's call it three years.

What are Winnipeg's odds of winning the Cup in any one season? One answer comes via Dom Luszczyszyn's model (I'll hold for your collective groan), and it puts the Jets at four percent this year. Another comes from guaranteeing Winnipeg a playoff spot and giving it 1-in-16 (or 6.25

percent) odds of winning the Cup in any given season. Either way, these are low numbers because hockey is chaotic, and it is hard.

The mathematical battle that would help us answer your question:

To what extent does Winnipeg going “all in” by trading prospects for established talent raise its odds of winning the Cup during this three-year window — and how does that compare to the degree to which it reduces future Jets’ odds of winning? This is where my knowledge fails me. You could airdrop Nazem Kadri and MacKenzie Weegar onto this year’s Jets and they’d still be underdogs to Colorado, Vegas and Carolina. What are the marginal gains here (and are they worth it?)

The second thing is that I decided that sports are supposed to be fun. I think people regret not trying more than they regret trying and then failing. Whatever the odds say, there has to be something satisfying about a team looking at Hellebuyck, Morrissey, Scheifele, Adam Lowry and Winnipeg’s relative wealth of quality veterans over the age of 30 and saying “whatever it takes.”

The odds of the world’s best goaltender (pending a return to playoff excellence), a top-five defenceman and Winnipeg’s point-per-game star centre aging out of excellence someday are 100 percent. If the Jets believe they have a winner, they owe it to their core to keep pushing.

What are realistic trade scenarios for MacKenzie Weegar? Brad Lambert, Elias Salomonsson and a pick? Would that be giving up too much, too little, or about right? — Glen L.

A second-round pick would complete this deal, making it the right combination of painful and exciting to call it “about right.”

Weegar is the player Jets fans hope Elias Salomonsson becomes: a top defensive stopper who wins his battles and has the mobility to help transition the puck and help in the offensive zone. He’s also 31 years old and signed through 2030-31 to a team-friendly, \$6.25 million average annual value contract. He’s viewed as a star player by league executives and still drives play, even for the 32nd-place Flames — a fact that might shock you if you’ve glanced at his -16 rating and wondered if Weegar is suddenly washed up. Calgary has dominated the flow of play during Weegar’s shifts, including scoring chances and expected goals, while getting outscored 19-7 at five-on-five.

There is miserable puck luck involved in that minus rating, but Weegar is less involved in Calgary’s offence than he has been in previous seasons. He’s on pace for 17 points after 47 last season and 52 the year before, while taking fewer shots and contributing less to the Flames’ transition attack. (He’s also “enjoying” some of the worst on-ice shooting percentages available, with Calgary’s power-play scoring on a smaller percentage of its shots than most teams do at five-on-five.)

Weegar is still a top-pairing, right-shot defenceman, though, and he can play either side. That makes him an ideal complement to Morrissey on the first pair, while giving the Jets insurance in their top four should Morrissey or Dylan Samberg miss time.

Fast forward three seasons, and Jets fans might struggle as Salomonsson grows into a top-four defenceman, Lambert emerges as a second-line scorer on Calgary’s right wing, the Flames hit on that second-round pick and Weegar ages out of top-tier performance. A “win-now” team with

an aging core and a 32-year-old Hellebuyck needs to put a heavy emphasis on the immediate term.

My third thought was to ask an impartial observer. Here's prospects expert and all-around good guy, Scott Wheeler:

"I don't hate this deal for either side. Flames fans probably view any deal that doesn't include a future first as a no-deal for Weegar, but Salomonsson is also better than they probably realize, and he's different from the other D prospects they have in their pool."

Why is this team sticking with Luke Schenn? Is management scared to admit they overpaid for him in March? — Michael D.

Sometimes when people pick teams, they start with their biggest difference-makers and obvious must-haves before going to medium-tier priorities. People make choices for the last spots on teams — say, the edges of an NHL roster — not because of the objective quality of the available options but more to fill perceived gaps left by their higher-priority items.

Luke Schenn is a two-time Stanley Cup champion, a veteran, and a throwback — an old school, blood and guts player who hits a note Winnipeg doesn't necessarily get from superior defencemen further up the depth chart. It doesn't matter much to the Jets that Schenn has been beaten badly at even strength. Their bar for third-pairing success may not be high, given the team's collective issues. The Jets believe that Schenn will be there for them at crunch time, despite his injury-impacted results in last year's playoffs.

I don't know if my interpretations are correct. I do know that Winnipeg has yet to score with Schenn on the ice at five-on-five. He's a slow skater by NHL standards, and he's not making up for it with quick decisions and crisp exit passes. Note that Colin Miller has similarly awful five-on-five numbers this year, so there's an element of pick your poison here.

Teams choose their end-of-the-roster players because they perceive those players will provide something that comparable players don't. It makes me want to see Salomonsson for a while.

One month in, how are we feeling about Jonathan Toews and his outlook for the rest of the season? He is three games away from hitting his first bonus. — Morgan C.

Jonathan Toews has played in all of Winnipeg's 17 games so far — it's tremendous news with respect to his health — and is set to hit his first \$500,000 bonus Thursday against Carolina. He has three goals and five assists for eight points, while playing on the second power play and getting second-line minutes at even strength.

As we've repeated ad nauseam, the Jets' bet is on the second half of the season. I don't see a second-line centre — not on a team with Cup-winning aspirations, anyway — but they will be patient in their evaluation.

Why not?

Toews has been outscored 11-6 at five-on-five so far, which accurately reflects the flow of play with him on the ice. He's generated less offence than either Adam Lowry or Vladislav Namestnikov produced in the middle six through 17 games last season.

But I'm not here to pitch you on the idea that Toews is a finished product or to claim I don't see brilliance in his game. His sense of "what the next play is going to be" is among the best I've ever watched. He knows when to be where in the defensive zone and has clever ideas on the attack, too, making passes that require a great read of how people are moving in the offensive zone.

What does an NHL executive see?

"Never bet against smart," said a member of an Eastern Conference team's front office who was granted anonymity in order to speak freely about an opposing team. "His skating isn't what it was — not close — but he's still very, very smart. He can make a lot of plays. Sense is still high-end. Good details."

The executive was optimistic that Toews could help Winnipeg in a third-line role.

"He gets better every week. There's hope there. Might be finding a way to live within his physical limits. He's not going to beat people one-on-one very often any more and defending against speed will be harder, (but) I think he'll figure it out. As I said, never bet against smart."

How does that sound to you?