

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/01/07/mooses-zhilkin-on-verge-of-making-nhl-debut>

Moose's Zhilkin on verge of making NHL debut Jets call up forward in wake of injured Fleury

By: Ken Wiebe

That Haydn Fleury was able to spend some time with teammates around the rink instead of laying in a hospital bed was already a clear sign of progress.

The Winnipeg Jets defenceman left Tuesday's game against the Vegas Golden Knights on a stretcher after he crashed heavily into the end boards with 6:44 left in the first period.

Fleury was on the receiving end of a hit from Golden Knights forward Keegan Kolesar and because he was so far away from the boards when he lost his balance, the brunt of the impact was taken by his back, though there were other injuries sustained on the play as well.

"Originally, we thought he was staying in the hospital all night. He ended up coming home, I don't think he wanted to hang around (the hospital)," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel, noting the injury isn't as serious as originally feared. "He's got the broken nose, he's got a bruised back. So, he's banged up pretty good. He felt it. But, (it was) great seeing him here and seeing him around the room."

Fleury recently missed time with a concussion and, given the violent nature of the collision, he will continue to be monitored during the coming days.

"You've got to kind of wait and see on it," said Arniel. "I mean, bang your head like that, that hard, and him having some history with it — I'm not saying it's a concussion yet. He still has to go through the next few days here, see how he feels. He may wake up three days from now and feel great. He may wake up three days from now and have some issues."

On Wednesday afternoon, Fleury was placed on injured reserve, which means he will miss a minimum of seven days.

The Jets, who have lost 10 consecutive games (0-6-4), continue a five-game homestand on Thursday against Connor McDavid and the Edmonton Oilers.

Seeing Fleury taken off the ice on a stretcher wearing a neck brace was frightening.

"Time kind of stands still in that moment," said Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey. "It's an intense game — winning streaks, losing streaks, whatever — but in those moments you think of a lot more than just the game and where things are at."

"Just scared for your friend and teammate, but having the faith in our medical staff that they're going to take care of him the best they can when he leaves. They were updating us throughout the game. Just really grateful that, by all accounts, it could've been a lot worse. But at the same time, it's really scary. Just happy he's doing well and we were able to see him."

With Fleury sidelined, the Jets made a roster move on Wednesday afternoon, recalling centre Danny Zhilkin from the Manitoba Moose of the American Hockey League.

Zhilkin, who turned 22 last month, was chosen in the third round (77th overall) of the 2022 NHL draft, is a smart, two-way centre and has seven goals and 14 points in 30 AHL games this season.

Now in his third professional campaign, Zhilkin turned heads at the prospects tournament in Montreal and carried that momentum into training camp with the Jets.

Just a few months later, Zhilkin has been recalled for the first time and could be on the verge of making his NHL debut, either against the Oilers or on Friday against the Los Angeles Kings.

"He's solidified himself as a No. 1 centre in the AHL," Moose head coach Mark Morrison said in a recent interview. "Game in and game out, he shows his speed and his willingness to take the puck to the net. His defensive game is good, his body positioning is good. He continues to take steps forward and that's what he has to do."

The Jets didn't hold an on-ice workout on Wednesday, so Arniel's plan for Zhilkin won't be known until after the morning skate.

Zhilkin is a candidate to slide into the fourth line centre role, especially since Vladislav Namestnikov is mired in an extended offensive drought.

Namestnikov has gone 18 games without a point and has been limited to one assist during the past 29 games — which is surprising when you consider he had six goals and seven points in the first 12 games of the season.

Après-ski-themed night postponed

The club announced Wednesday it's postponing a ski-related promotion in the wake of a deadly fire at a ski resort in Switzerland.

The team was planning an après-ski-themed night against the Los Angeles Kings on Friday. The first 5,000 fans were to receive ski goggles.

Instead, the event will be pushed back to March 10 in recognition of the people killed and injured in a bar fire at a new year's party in Switzerland. Friday is a national day of mourning in Switzerland for the 40 people killed and 120 injured.

Investigators believe sparkling candles in champagne bottles started the fire in the resort town of Crans-Montana, Switzerland, when they came too close to the bar's ceiling.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/01/07/were-getting-real-close-to-everything-is-on-the-table>

***'We're getting real close to everything is on the table'
Jets' Arniel demands more effort to spark turnaround***

By: Ken Wiebe

Josh Morrissey slowly built to a crescendo.

On an afternoon where a multitude of questions had been asked of the star defenceman, Morrissey calmly expressed his displeasure with the predicament the Winnipeg Jets currently find themselves in.

When a team with high expectations suddenly sits dead last in the NHL after going in with serious Stanley Cup aspirations, it's natural to think frustration would be setting in at some point.

But the alternate captain reinforced his belief in the group and gave a passionate answer when asked what his message to fans would be now that this season-long losing skid (0-6-4) has reached 10 games going into Thursday's tilt with the Edmonton Oilers.

"Bottom line, we expect better and we expect to be winning hockey games. That's why we're here," said Morrissey. "That's the expectation that we've created with this group for the fans over the last number of years. I've been fortunate to spend my entire career here in Winnipeg and am very proud to be a Jet and very proud to represent the city and this market."

The soliloquy from Morrissey was one that should resonate on a number of levels.

"It hurts. It hurts we're in the position we're in," said Morrissey. "It's not very fun. A lot of that feeling goes to just wanting to represent the fans and the people in the city the way we feel we should — and, obviously, to replicate the support they give us with the play on the ice."

"The one thing I've been proud of through this stretch is I don't think the effort level can be questioned. That compete and effort has been there. We believe we can get ourselves out of this hole and we have the team to go on a run, which we'll need to do to get back into the playoff mix. Ultimately, I know every guy in this room feels the pride of playing in Winnipeg, being a Jet, and we want to play well for them and do right by them."

At a time when some fans are beginning to turn their attention to the NHL draft lottery and the prospect of landing a Top-5 pick, Morrissey made it clear the focus for the players is on the task at hand — and nothing else.

Jets head coach Scott Arniel had a similar message when he met with members of the media after holding a team meeting on Wednesday afternoon, following the 4-3 overtime loss to the Vegas Golden Knights.

"Probably the short way of saying it is more. I need more. We're close, but we need more," said Arniel, whose team saw its record dip to 15-21-5. "Everybody. Checkers gotta score, scorers gotta check. We've got to do something a little bit more, to find a way to get over (the hump) and grab those two points instead of being close."

With eight one-goal losses (including four in overtime) during this most recent stretch that dropped the Jets into the basement of the NHL, there are a number of areas being addressed these days.

The numbers paint a picture that isn't pretty, with the Jets sitting 23rd in the NHL in goals per game (2.85), 19th in goals against per game (3.15), 25th in penalty killing efficiency (77.4 per cent) and 19th on the power play (18.8).

It's not as simple as needing to improve one area of the game to turn things around either.

Coming out of the holiday break, the Jets have taken steps to improve the defensive-zone play but scoring has often been tough to come by.

But when the scoring has been there, turnovers or breakdowns are taking place at inopportune times, compounding matters for a group that seems to be lacking confidence.

"You can give up 10 chances and, when you're on a roll, it seems like nothing happens and you win hockey games," said Arniel. "For us, right now every little moment matters. It might be a wall play in the second period, it might be a breakout in the third, it might be a coverage situation, it might be a specialty teams' situation."

In an effort to provide a bit more balance to a forward group that has leaned heavily on its top line, Arniel moved Gabe Vilardi onto the second unit with Jonathan Toews and Cole Perfetti.

That trio connected for the Jets' first goal on Tuesday, then Vilardi added a helper on a blended shift with Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor.

Although Connor reached the 20th goal for a ninth consecutive season, the Scheifele line with Alex Lafallo was outshot 11-2 at five-on-five.

The one option Arniel has yet to lean into is splitting up Connor and Scheifele in an effort to try and have each of them drive their own lines.

Arniel concedes that it remains under consideration, but is basically left for in case of emergency, break glass situations.

"It's hard when you have that chemistry and they have the puck the whole time," said Arniel, noting that Scheifele and Connor will remain together on Thursday as the Jets continue this five-game homestand. "I don't know if we're in a position to split them up and hopefully they create chemistry with the next guys that they're playing with. There is something to the fact that maybe their skillset brings out maybe more in somebody else."

"We're getting real close to everything is on the table."

Scheifele has actually been without a point in five of the past six games, the exception coming in the Jan. 1 game against the Toronto Maple Leafs, when he racked up a goal and three points.

So while splitting up Scheifele and Connor might remain an enjoyable topic of debate, there's also a case to be made to keep the dynamic duo together to try and help pull the team out of this lengthy funk.

On the other end of the spectrum, Oilers captain Connor McDavid comes into the contest riding a 16-game point streak.

McDavid notched his 14th career hat trick on Tuesday against the Nashville Predators and, going into Wednesday's action, he's overtaken Colorado Avalanche centre Nathan MacKinnon in the chase for the Art Ross Trophy.

During the point streak, McDavid is essentially on a pace that would see him threaten to generate 200 points in a full season.

"The run he's been on, he's been on another level, even for his standards," said Morrissey. "Certainly, he's an incredible player and someone we'll have to be aware of (on Thursday). Knowing him a little bit, his drive to continue to improve and to continue to get better is scary for the rest of the league."

When the Jets faced the Oilers back on Dec. 29, they actually held McDavid to an empty-net goal and kept Leon Draisaitl off the scoresheet, despite losing 3-1.

"When you play special players like that — and there are a few teams around the league with guys in that echelon — you have to alter your game plan for them, they're that good," said Morrissey. "Obviously, we did a good job of staying committed throughout that game to limit the free chances you give them."

"With players like that, there are going to be times that they create opportunities because of how good they are, but trying to limit the freebies or giving them free offence or odd-man rushes, they're going to feast on that. We did a really good job of being committed to being aware when they're out there."

Winnipeg Sun

https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/winnipeg_jets/jets-nuclear-button-splitting-scheifele-and-connor/article_88074aa2-26e8-4939-a225-4a407416352b.html

Jets' nuclear button: splitting Scheifele and Connor

By Paul Friesen

Mark Scheifele remembers the play like it happened yesterday, the moment that started one of the NHL's most inseparable pairings.

It was early in the 2017-18 season, and his Winnipeg Jets had just called up 20-year-old Kyle Connor from the Manitoba Moose.

"His first game... against Columbus," Scheifele began, his brain darting back to that game with ease. "After the first period he got put with me and Wheels. I got the puck behind the net. He made a good cut to the net, I made a backhand to him and he buried it."

Connor would never go back to the Moose again. He was in the NHL to stay, and to star, alongside his new centre.

"And it's never gone sideways since," Scheifele added.

With only the rare exception, the two have played together ever since, logging more shared minutes than any NHL forward duo over the last several years.

Which brings us to the present, and a Jets season gone sideways for a while now.

While coach Scott Arniel's line-juggling act would rival that of the main attraction at any carnival, he's refused to break up his precious top pair.

While he's been asked about it a few times during this current skid, even acknowledging on Wednesday he's talked about it with his coaching staff, it turns out he hasn't broached the subject with either of the key subjects.

"Not by my knowledge," Scheifele told me. "Nothing."

As for Connor: "He hasn't mentioned it to me at all."

And how would they feel about it if he did, given they've won just three of their last 22 and are buried in the NHL basement?

"Whatever way he deploys us, we're all the type of guys that will do any job," Connor said. "We're at a point where, what is it, 10 straight or something like that, and last in the standings. So I can see the thought process... searching for anything. And if that does get us over the hump, it is what it is."

"But if I had the choice, I'd be playing with Mark every single night."

Scheifele takes the same route to the net on this play.

"That's not my decision," he began. "Obviously I'd love to play with KC. Who wouldn't want to? Control what you can control. Go out and play with whoever you're playing with."

What do the Jets have to lose at this point? Okay, more games, that's true. But maybe there's more.

Maybe Arniel risks losing the room. Or, at least, two of the best players in it.

Told his dynamic duo was open to the idea of being split up, the coach grinned.

"Oh yeah, they are until halfway through the first period," Arniel said.

It's like the nuclear option. The coach has tinkered all around it, moving Gabe Vilardi off that top line. But he refuses to press that button, even as hope continues to fade.

The worry, aside from hurt feelings, is both the known and the unknown: losing the known production of Scheifele and Connor, and the unknown of the new combos. If they fail, it all goes up in flames.

"That's a good way to put it," Scheifele said of the nuclear analogy. "You don't know, exactly."

What No. 55 does know is he absolutely loves playing with Connor. They learn from and feed off each other, some of it instinctual and some of it very deliberate, springing from constant conversations.

"We have an innate sense with each other, know where each other are, knowing if there's something coming, or when to pressure, all that kind of stuff," Scheifele said. "It seems like it gets better and better."

He's right. The pair reached a peak last season, Scheifele with a career-high 87 points, Connor a career-best 97, with 80 goals between them.

With 20 goals apiece, they're on pace for another 80, combined, this year and individual point totals nearing 100.

"We've developed our game to compliment each other," Connor said. "And once one guy's going it pushes the other guy as well, and you just feed off that. In between periods, practices, we're always thinking, talking, seeing different plays. There are certain things that are instinctual... but it's something we've worked at a ton."

"He's a big piece of why I signed here as well."

You can see what Arniel is up against, why he's reluctant to reach for that button, even as so many others in the lineup struggle to produce and could use some star power to ignite them.

I had one final question for the coach: What would it take for him to press that button?

"They'll be together tomorrow," Arniel said, referring to Thursday's game against Edmonton.

Beyond that...

"We're getting real close to everything's on the table."

https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/winnipeg_jets/we-need-you-now-jets-coach-scott-arniel-to-fans/article_5900821c-9505-4694-bb88-488e5e2ff809.html

We need you now: Jets coach Scott Arniel to fans

By Paul Friesen

They've all but dashed the glittery, Stanley Cup hopes of their fans, dropping like an anvil in the NHL standings this season.

But Winnipeg Jets head coach Scott Arniel says this isn't the time to bail on his first-to-worst outfit.

Just the opposite, actually.

"I feel for them," Arniel said on Wednesday. "After what we went through last year and what they're seeing this year, the only thing I ask is that if we've ever needed our fan base to help push us, now is the time to help push us."

They'll have plenty of opportunity, as the Jets play their second of five straight home games against Edmonton on Thursday. Eight of their next 10 are in downtown Winnipeg.

With eight wins in 19 home games, last year's top regular-season team has been underwhelming even in familiar surroundings this season, a far cry from the last few years.

The attendance bump they enjoyed last year, capped by a thrilling, seven-game, first-round playoff win over St. Louis, has levelled off. What happens in the season's second half will likely mirror the team's performance.

"I know there are times where it's been very frustrating for people to sit and pay money to come and watch," Arniel continued. "But right now, if you're a Winnipeg Jets fan, this is when we need you the most. We need everybody. I need more from my players, more from my coaches, more from myself and I need more from our fans."

The coach knows as well as anyone the best way to win over a crowd is to give them something to cheer about.

Playing in the NHL's smallest building, aside from Utah's soon-to-be-expanded facility, the Jets have gone from selling out every game for their first decade back in the league to filling their arena only occasionally, including four times this season.

"We expect better and we expect to be winning hockey games," defenceman Josh Morrissey said. "That's the expectation we've created with this group for the fans over the last number of years. I've been fortunate to spend my entire career here in Winnipeg and am very proud to be a Jet and very proud to represent the city and this market. It hurts. It hurts we're in the position we're in. It's not very fun."

Morrissey says repaying the fans' support with winning hockey is the goal.

Losers of their last 10 games and with an NHL-worst 15-21-5 record, overall, the Jets haven't even come close to doing that through the first half of the season.

"The one thing I've been proud of through this stretch is I don't think the effort level can be questioned," Morrissey said. "That compete and effort has been there. We believe we can get ourselves out of this hole and we have the team to go on a run, which we'll need to do to get back into the playoff mix."

https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/winnipeg_jets/fleury-provides-morale-boost-for-jets-teammates/article_f5e5177a-e182-43e0-b489-8013f75c75e4.html

Fleury provides morale boost for Jets teammates

By Paul Friesen

If ever a team needed a morale boost, it was the Winnipeg Jets as they showed up for work on Wednesday.

Losers of 10 in a row, they got it in the smiling face of defenceman Haydn Fleury.

The last time they'd seen the 29-year-old, he was being wheeled off the ice on a stretcher after a violent collision with the end boards in Tuesday's overtime loss to Vegas.

"We went through something pretty tough with Fleurs getting stretchered off," Mark Scheifele said. "But it's awesome to see him at the rink. Sometimes you've got to take subtle victories. To see his face is huge for morale."

Fleury lost his footing and slid, back-first, into the boards.

The entire team took to the ice as he was put onto a stretcher and taken to the hospital, leaving a splattering of blood behind.

"A very scary moment," defenceman Josh Morrissey called it. "Time stands still in that moment. It's an intense game, winning streaks, losing streaks, whatever. But in those moments you think of a lot more than just the game. Just scared for your friend and teammate, but having the faith in our medical staff that they're going to take care of him the best they can when he leaves."

The team received updates throughout the game, but head coach Scott Arniel says they initially believed Fleury would remain in the hospital overnight.

What they know for sure: Fleury suffered a broken nose and bruised back. Arniel said it was too soon to know if the impact caused another concussion, which felled the D-man earlier this season.

What was certain: seeing him attend Wednesday's noon meeting put a smile on everyone's face.

"It was great," Arniel said. "So he's banged up pretty good. He felt it. But great seeing him here and seeing him around the room. He still has to go through the next few days here, see how he feels."

Fleury is on the injured reserve list.

Help from farm on its way

The Jets finally called for some help from the Manitoba Moose on Wednesday, dialing up forward Danny Zhilkin.

The 22-year-old, a third-round Jets draft pick in 2022, has seven goals and seven assists in 30 games in the AHL this season, including five points in his last six games.

That's more production than he had in 53 games last season (three goals, seven assists) and 44 the year before that (two and five).

In his draft year, Zhilkin posted 23 goals and 32 assists with the Ontario Junior League's Guelph Storm, 29 goals and 27 assists the following year with Guelph and Kitchener.

Moose head coach Mark Morrison called the 6-foot-1, 192-pounder a No. 1 AHL centre as far back as November.

Not-so-magic moments

He must feel at times like he's trying to plug a dozen holes in a dike. Or playing the world's most difficult version of Wack a Mole.

One day, Arniel is working on his team's defensive shortcomings, the next it's a lack of scoring, followed by struggles on the power play or penalty kill.

Often they come as quickly as they go.

"You can give up 10 chances and when you're on a roll it seems like nothing happens and you win hockey games," the coach said. "And for us right now every little moment matters. Every single moment matters. We're trying to get over top of each and every one of those. That's the frustrating part, is that there's a lot of good hockey being played."

"But... we still have to do more. Because we're not winning."

Losers of 10 in a row, their next chance comes Thursday at home against Edmonton.

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/real-kypers-nhl-buzz-what-some-teams-are-weighing-ahead-of-nhl-trade-deadline/>

Real Kyper's NHL Buzz: What some teams are weighing ahead of trade deadline

By Nick Kypreos

The incredibly tight standings halfway through the NHL season has left several teams in a difficult situation trying to figure out what their strategy will be when approaching the trade market. Whether it's parity or mediocrity, the close balance has weaved a daunting web of challenges the NHL hasn't seen since the salary cap was first introduced in 2005.

Usually teams have separated by now and it's become clear who at least some of the sellers will be. Instead, as this season has progressed, it's become increasingly more difficult for GMs and their front offices to determine if they should buy or sell ahead of the March 6 deadline.

As I work away on my trade board next week, this conundrum has formed a complex landscape.

First and foremost is how challenging it still is to manage the salary cap around the league. We know the Colorado Avalanche — with just four regulation losses in 42 games — are going to buy and will be trying to acquire depth at centre. But they have cap space issues and today are projected to have \$3.122 million in deadline day space.

Gone are the days when a small handful of teams would dominate the standings and be able to pluck off needed pieces from those buried at the bottom. There is a wider dispersion of talent in the NHL today, and many teams find themselves in the mushy middle, jostling for a few playoff spots. Those teams that previously may have been sellers are now within striking distance of a playoff berth and face a dilemma of whether to bolster their roster to take a run, or wait to fight another day and potentially sell off a player or two.

And while the sellers have yet to be defined, a lot of potential buyers are in a dangerous position, too. Because there are so many teams that could still end up in or out of the playoffs, a team doesn't want to trade for someone like, say, Nazem Kadri, and then miss out on the playoffs anyway. There isn't much of a trade market yet and it's hard to create one when teams are scared of making a costly trade and finishing short anyway. This is why there's such a glut right now.

Six teams on the outside of the wild card in the Western Conference are within five points of making it. Every non-playoff team in the East is within six points of a wild-card spot.

So even though we're halfway through this season, it's maybe still a tad early for many of these teams to make decisions that will impact not only their current season, but could set the foundation for many years to come.

One good stretch could wildly change your outlook. Just ask the Buffalo Sabres.

Navigating this landscape requires careful consideration, insight and sometimes a bit of luck. Every move has significant implications, which makes it all the more crucial for teams to read the signs carefully throughout the chaos.

Eventually, the floodgates should open and we will continue to share with you what we're hearing around the NHL.

With that, here is some of the latest trade information and buzz around the league...

Winnipeg Jets

From first place a year ago to last place this season, Kevin Cheveldayoff and the Winnipeg Jets are spinning their wheels and it doesn't appear there's much they can do about their slide outside of firing their head coach. It's a big question if you could convince an experienced coach like Peter Laviolette or Pete DeBoer to go there, and there may not be the next young up-and-coming coach (like a Spencer Carbery) available right now, but it's hard to imagine they're not contemplating a change behind the bench first.

On the transaction front, I don't see the Jets doing much of anything and Cheveldayoff isn't one to make hasty decisions. But this is an older, slower team that has to be thinking about moving on from some of its more senior players. In theory, one guy that could make sense to move on from is captain Adam Lowry, but they just re-signed him and he has a no-movement clause. These types of players who would bring impactful returns, like Lowry or Neal Pionk or Josh Morrissey (for a major breakup) are just not going to be on the table. Expect minor moves, such as dealing pending UFA Luke Schenn by the deadline, but not major ones.

If Winnipeg fans are left with anything this season, it's to hope for a Sabres-type of winning streak that lifts them back into the race.

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/jets-mid-season-report-nowhere-to-go-but-up/>

Jets mid-season report: Nowhere to go but up

By Ryan Dixon

A team that finished atop the NHL standings last year just put together the worst quarter of a campaign imaginable. With 41 games to go for the Winnipeg Jets, there's nowhere to go but up. Sadly, there's also less hope by the night that the team is capable of moving in that direction.

The Jets were finishing up a respectable first quarter of the season when they won their 19th game of the year on Nov. 18 to give themselves a 12-7-0 record. Maybe Winnipeg was never going to repeat the heights of last season — the club won its first-ever Presidents' Trophy on the strength of 116 points — but the Jets were well positioned to track down one of the eight playoff spots in the Western Conference.

Then the big prairie sky collapsed.

A team that lost 26 times all season in 2024-25 dropped 19 of 22 games while posting a 3-14-5 record in the second quarter of this campaign. The result is a squad that begins the second half of the year staring up at every other club in the league thanks to its NHL-worst .427 points percentage.

“Didn't necessarily see it coming,” said Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff on Monday, 24 hours before his club blew a third-period lead versus Vegas and lost for the 10th straight game. “But if you look at all the different things, it's a tough league to win in and certainly the situation that we're in, be it one-goal games, be it not maybe playing to the defensive structure that has become our signature for the last couple of years, all of a sudden you find yourself in this predicament.”

Listen, nobody gets to where the Jets are without some bad luck, especially a squad that was so consistently good a relatively short time ago.

Connor Hellebuyck — the reigning league MVP and winner of the Vezina Trophy in 2024 and 2025 — had knee surgery on Nov. 22 and returned (ahead of schedule) on Dec. 13. The Jets won 5-1 in his return and have not registered a victory since.

The one-goal games Cheveldayoff referenced have certainly gone against the Jets; eight of the 10 losses Winnipeg has endured on its current slide have been by a single goal, with four of those defeats — including Tuesday night against Vegas — coming in extra time.

Still, the thought that this club — which played with such pristine structure last year under coach Scott Arniel — could go from the penthouse to the cellar is stunning.

That's why, on the same day Cheveldayoff was holding a press conference about the club's bleak results at the halfway point, Arniel was answering queries after practice about keeping his position behind the bench.

“I'm not thinking about that,” he said. “I've just got to do my job.”

When you're in as bad a spot as Winnipeg is right now, it's fair to question everything.

Key Stats

Record: 15-21-5 (8th in the division, 32nd in the NHL)

Goals per game: 2.85 (23rd in the NHL)

Goals against per game: 3.15 (19th in the NHL)

Power play: 18.8 per cent (19th in the NHL)

Penalty kill: 77.4 per cent (25th in the NHL)

Best surprise

It's slim pickings here, so let's go with the fact Gabe Vilardi has not missed a game this season. The 26-year-old has been plagued by injuries for what feels like his entire NHL career, which now features two-plus seasons in Manitoba. Not only is Vilardi healthy, but he's also producing at a career-best clip that could result in a 75-point season. Put that output in a six-foot-three frame and you can see why Winnipeg locked this player up on a six-year contract last June.

Biggest disappointment

You could certainly take this in any number of directions, but it has to be the complete and utter lack of scoring support for the first line of Mark Scheifele between Vilardi and Kyle Connor. The top trio has totalled 57 goals this year; everyone else on the roster has combined for 60.

The likes of Nino Niederreiter (six goals), Vlad Namestnikov (six goals) and certainly UFA signing Gustav Nyquist (zero goals in 31 games) have not produced the way the club banked on. And while it was obviously optimistic to think Jonathan Toews could step into a second-line role at age 37 after two years away from NHL hockey, his three tallies represent a big disappointment. (For what it's worth, Toews does have four points in his past six outings).

Cole Perfetti — who did find the net versus Vegas on Tuesday — has just nine points in 27 games following a promising 50-point campaign in his second full NHL season last year.

To say the scoring falls off a cliff after the top line is an understatement.

Big question for the second half: Gavin McKenna or Ivar Stenberg?

Joking, not joking.

Winnipeg is locked into its core. There's not going to be any fire sale from a last-place team. By the same token, the Jets have been buyers for several years now and Cheveldayoff acknowledged they're "paying a little bit of a price for that right now" in terms of the futures they've sacrificed in the name of unsuccessfully chasing a title.

The GM certainly didn't sound like a guy who was ready to push more chips in to save a sinking ship. Even if Winnipeg makes hay the rest of January — when it plays eight of its next 10 games at home — how realistic is making the playoffs for this club? And, if there, what are you doing against Colorado in Round 1?

As noted, Winnipeg's best players are signed to long-term deals. In 2025 alone, defenceman Neal Pionk, two-thirds of the top line (Vilardi and Connor) and captain Adam Lowry inked big pacts to remain with the team. And, to be clear, having so many good players under contract at team-friendly cap hits is still a good thing for this franchise.

Especially if it can inject a big dose of talent before next fall.

There's not a lot Winnipeg can do to steer into the skid because it doesn't really have any pending UFAs who would command much in return on the trade market. Still, there's nothing wrong with trying to collect a third- or fourth-round pick here and there while staying near the bottom of the standings and praying for lottery luck.

Nobody planned on a gap year in Winnipeg. But could you imagine running this team back next October with the updated plan for secondary scoring being the likes of a McKenna or Stenberg, two extremely touted offensive prospects for the 2026 NHL Draft who could be ready for the world's best league — at least in a support role — by next fall?

Maybe it's a pipedream, but Jets fans need some kind of hope glom onto right now.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/>

Bain describes mood around Jets amid 10-game losing streak (VIDEO)

With things going from bad to worse for the Jets, who have gone 10 straight games without a win, TSN's Danielle Bain joins SportsCentre.

<https://illegalcurve.com/tsn-o-dog-on-the-winnipeg-jets-theyre-in-trouble/>

O-Dog on the Winnipeg Jets: 'They're in trouble' (VIDEO)

Bryan Hayes, Jeff O'Neill and Jonas Siegel are joined by TSN Hockey analyst Frank Corrado to discuss the state of goaltending in the NHL and how the Winnipeg Jets went from Presidents Trophy winners last season to dead last in the NHL this year.

Canadian Press

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/winnipeg-jets-postpone-ski-goggle-giveaway-9.7036684>

Winnipeg Jets postpone 'apres ski'-themed promotion after deadly Swiss ski resort fire

By The Canadian Press

The Winnipeg Jets are postponing a ski-related promotion in the wake of a deadly fire at a ski resort in Switzerland.

The National Hockey League team had planned an "apres-ski"-themed night for its home game against the Los Angeles Kings on Friday. The first 5,000 fans were to receive ski goggles.

However, the club says it is pushing back the event to March 10, in recognition of the people killed and injured in a bar fire at a New Year's party in Switzerland.

Friday is a national day of mourning in Switzerland for the 40 people killed and 120 injured.

Investigators believe sparkling candles in champagne bottles started the fire in the resort town of Crans-Montana, Switzerland, when they came too close to the bar's ceiling.

Swiss officials can't explain why bar hadn't received fire safety inspection in 6 years ahead of deadly blaze

The Winnipeg Jets lineup includes Nino Niederreiter, a Swiss forward whose career has included stints with Nashville, Carolina, Minnesota and the New York Islanders.

"We join the world in honouring those lost and send our condolences to everyone affected," the team said a statement issued on Tuesday.