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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/zhilkin-line-impressive-in-jets-ot-loss>

Zhilkin line impressive in Jets OT loss

"I think the Zhilkin line, all three of those guys were real good."

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – Yakov Trenin scored at 3:59 of overtime helping the Minnesota Wild best the Winnipeg Jets 3-2 at Canada Life Centre Sunday night.

Morgan Barron and Danny Zhilkin scored for Winnipeg, who had a 2-0 lead just over eight minutes into the first period. Thomas Milic stopped seven of the eight shots he faced; Isaac Poulter allowed two goals on eleven shots and took the loss.

Winnipeg will be back in action on Tuesday night when they welcome the Edmonton Oilers to town.

GOOD NIGHT FOR HE, FAGEMO AND ZHILKIN

Kevin He, Samuel Fagemo and Danny Zhilkin had an impressive night as the trio combined for four points (1G, 3A). Fagemo had a helper on Morgan Barron's power play marker that opened the scoring at 5:33 of the first. Zhilkin would make it 2-0 on a beautiful passing play was started by Fagemo who found He at the Wild blueline, He then went behind his back to Zhilkin.

"I think the Zhilkin line, all three of those guys were real good," said Scott Arniel.

"I thought He and Fagemo, I thought those guys all played really well. For me, the game was we were really good in the first half, and they were a lot better in the second half."

ZHILKIN'S CONFIDENCE GROWING

Danny Zhilkin had a solid final two months with the Manitoba Moose last season and has carried that momentum into this one. Zhilkin scored two times against Montreal in the Jets first game of the 2025 Prospect Showdown, he added a primary assist on Fabian Wagner's OT winner over Ottawa. The Jets 2022 third round pick's goal tonight looked like it would be the game winner before Hunter Haight tied the contest late in the third period.

"Yeah it's been going pretty good. I had momentum on the back end of last season, just had a great summer and knew what I had to work on, knew that I had to come into camp in shape," said Zhilkin.

"I think I did that, I think I feel pretty good out there and I'm hoping to continue this momentum."

GETTING TO KNOW FAGEMO

The Jets signed Fagemo back in July to a one-year, two-way deal. The Swedish forward had a strong campaign in 2024-25 with the Ontario Reign (LA Kings affiliate) with 29 goals in 67 games in the AHL.

"On the ice I just do my best, show up to practices, games and do my absolute best," said Fagemo.

"I think I will try to have fun and it's such a great experience to come here and just have fun."

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/09/21/zhilkin-he-stand-tall-in-jets-pre-season-opener>

Zhilkin, He stand tall in Jets pre-season opener

By: Ken Wiebe

When you're in the group of players that isn't completely sure how many chances you're going to get to catch the attention of the coaching staff and the management team, it's critical to strike early.

Enter Danny Zhilkin, a Winnipeg Jets forward prospect whose development had seemingly stalled during his first two professional seasons with the Manitoba Moose of the American Hockey League.

Now that he's back to full health and spent the summer working on a number of areas of his game that were relayed to him in discussions with various members of the organization, Zhilkin is off to a fantastic start.

After standing out as the Jets best player during the prospect tournament in Montreal last weekend, Zhilkin scored an impressive goal off the rush on a one-timer in a game his team eventually lost 3-2 in overtime to the Minnesota Wild on Sunday at Canada Life Centre.

"Whatever the reason, he's done a fantastic job this summer and coming (in) prepared," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. "He plays a lot of different kinds of roles. I'm not sure if he's a penalty killer or a power play guy. He's got some offence to him. He's done a better job on his face-offs, he's responsible at his end of the rink. Another guy where we're seeing growth. "That's what you want with your young guys. You want to see them mature. Sometimes it takes guys a couple of years to find it. Some guys get it quicker than others. He really has opened up a lot of eyes for guys."

Given the organizational depth the Jets added during the off-season, the deck might be stacked against Zhilkin making the team out of training camp but if he can keep up this level of play, it's apparent he could work his way into the discussion of being a recall candidate.

Let's take a closer look at what unfolded in what will be the first of six exhibition contests for the Jets:

THE WHEELS – Speaking of players continuing to progress, Jets forward prospect Kevin He was quite noticeable, thanks in part to his explosive skating.

Much like he did last fall when he suited up in his first NHL exhibition game, He used his wheels on multiple occasions to make life difficult on his opponent.

"Obviously, he can burn," said Arniel, noting that He added 10 or 12 pounds of muscle from last year's training camp to this one. "Last year, but he looked light. He looked like a guy who was at his first camp. (On Sunday), He ran into some people, he made a great play on the goal, he was

a little bit more responsible without the puck. He's a kid that went back and had a really good year in the Ontario Hockey League.

"You love to see guys grow and progress each year. That's what he's done."

He got on the scoresheet with a nifty drop pass to Zhilkin, who buried his shot to make it 2-0 for the Jets.

Jets defenceman Colin Miller got the play started with a clean zone exit to Sam Fagemo, who found He with a cross-ice stretch pass that allowed him to attack the offensive zone with speed.

As the Wild defenceman tried to force He into a mistake, he identified that Zhilkin had joined him on the rush as the trailer and calmly left the puck for him to one-time the puck home at 8:02 of the first period.

Zhilkin conceded that he was vocal in letting He know he was open on the play.

"Yeah, I was screaming his name, I really wanted that puck," said Zhilkin, chosen by the Jets in the third round of the 2022 NHL Draft. "Hard work is paying off. I just have to continue to do my best and hopefully, try to turn heads here and keep going."

Although He was given a penalty for hooking during the first period, he showed great hustle on the back check on the play.

But as He went to lift the stick of Wild forward Adam Benak, he caught his hands – which led to the infraction being called.

Given how much depth the Jets have at forward and considering He isn't eligible to be sent to the Manitoba Moose of the American Hockey League, the idea for the 2024 fourth-rounder is to try to keep earning extra looks to delay his return to the Ontario Hockey League as long as possible.

THE REMOVAL – Jets forward prospect Brad Lambert was on the ice ready to try to deliver on the power play after a penalty he had drawn with an explosive rush on the first shift of the three-on-three overtime that ended with him crashing into Wild goalie Jesper Wallstedt after he was tripped by defenceman David Jiricek.

But after one of the referees made his way over to the Jets bench, he informed Arniel that Lambert had to be removed at the prompting of the concussion spotter.

"He stayed on his hands and knees a little bit too long I guess," said Arniel. "I just got told and he has to come out. I don't know anything on him yet. I'll probably know in the next day or so."

Lambert, who was used at right wing on a line with Brayden Yager and Phil Di Giuseppe, finished the game with two shots on goal and two hits in just more than 17 minutes of ice time.

Lambert is one of the young players trying to force his way onto the Jets' roster by utilizing his speed and showcasing his skill.

Earlier in the contest, Lambert was hit hard behind the net in the offensive zone by veteran blue-liner Jack Johnson, who is in Wild camp on a pro tryout offer.

THE HITS – If you thought this would just be a sleepy exhibition game, Wild forward Yakov Trenin took an early run at Jets defenceman Logan Stanley on the forecheck on one of the first shifts of the contest.

Stanley went right back at Trenin and caught him with a cross check, letting the Wild winger know he didn't appreciate it very much.

Jets blue-liner Tyrel Bauer connected with a heavy hit on Wild forward Lirim Amidovski, while Bauer was on the receiving end from a hard check from Hunter Haight.

THE KEY PLAY

Wild forward Yakov Trenin finds a loose puck in front of the Jets net and buries his shot for his second goal of the contest with 61 seconds to go in overtime.

THE THREE STARS

Wild F Yakov Trenin: Scores twice, including the overtime winner.

Jets F Samuel Fagemo: Chips in a pair of assists, records three shots on goal.

Jets F Kevin He: Supplies a sweet drop pass for an assist, uses his speed effectively.

EXTRA, EXTRA – Morgan Barron notched a power-play marker for the Jets' other goal, providing a screen on a point shot by Elias Salomonsson before finding the rebound in front... Jets forward prospect Nikita Chibrikov had three shots on goal, seven shot attempts, four hits and one blocked shot... The Jets will be back in action on Tuesday when they host the Edmonton Oilers. Over the course of the weekend, Arniel announced that Winnipegger Jonathan Toews would be making his exhibition game debut on Tuesday against the Oilers.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2025/09/21/from-fan-to-crease-poulter-lives-out-jets-dream-on-home-ice>

From fan to crease: Poulter lives out Jets dream on home ice Winnipeg-born goaltender soaks in special debut as family, friends roar in support

By: Mike McIntyre

Jonathan Toews may have been missing in action as a healthy scratch, but Winnipeg hockey fans still had a hometown debut to cheer about on Sunday as the NHL's pre-season got underway.

Goaltender Isaac Poulter took over in the third period for the Jets, replacing starter Thomas Milic. The announcement alone drew a roar from family and friends scattered throughout the crowd at Canada Life Centre.

"It's just so special," the 24-year-old told the Free Press following the game. "I grew up watching the Jets for years, and the Manitoba Moose before that."

Poulter was tested early, coming up big on a sharp chance from Minnesota Wild prospect Danila Yurov to preserve a 2-1 Jets lead at the time.

"People might say 'Oh, it's only the pre-season.' But, you know, it's a chance for me to make an impression on everyone in the organization because it's my first year here," he said.

"I tried to enjoy it, rather than just focus on the nerves. My goal was to have fun with it, and try to get in front of as many pucks as I could."

Unfortunately for Poulter, he was victimized by a bit of bad luck when Wild forward Hunter Haight took a shot that deflected off the stick of Jets defenceman Logan Stanley and beat him high to tie it up with 2:58 left in regulation. Stanley came over to his stall after the game to apologize.

Then, in three-on-three overtime, Poulter stopped an initial shot from Matt Kiersted before Yakov Trenin snapped home the rebound with 61 seconds left on the clock to give the visitors a 3-2 triumph.

Still, with nine saves on 11 shots, Poulter left the rink smiling.

"To have an experience like this, hopefully can keep the ball rolling and maybe get in a real game this winter," he said.

The Jets have a bit of a crowded crease within the organization right now behind the obvious No. 1 man in reigning Vezina and Hart Trophy winner Connor Hellebuyck and his trusty sidekick, Eric Comrie. Those two are clearly locked and loaded with the big club.

Beyond them lies opportunity.

Milic, 22, is about to enter his third year as a pro after being drafted by the Jets in 2023 (fifth round, 151st-overall). He's bounced between the AHL and ECHL over his first two seasons and seems likely to be given the first crack at winning the No. 1 job with the Moose this fall. The B.C. product stopped seven of the eight shots he faced Sunday through two periods.

The Jets also have 21-year-old Domenic DiVincentiis in the system. The seventh-round pick from 2022 turned pro a year ago and split his rookie campaign with the Moose and the Norfolk Admirals of the ECHL.

Might Poulter edge him out for the other AHL job to start the year?

Poulter, despite not being drafted, is the most experienced of the trio at the pro level. He's logged 77 AHL games with the New Jersey Devils organization during the past three years, posting a 16-13-6 record with a 2.86 goals-against average and .898 save percentage for Utica last season.

Winnipeg targeted him in free agency this summer to create more internal competition.

"We didn't know what was going to happen. Once the phone rang and it was (Winnipeg) it was kind of a no-brainer," said Poulter, who spent four seasons with the Swift Current Broncos of the Western Hockey League prior to turning pro in the fall of 2022.

"But it's weird now, because I haven't left yet. I haven't gone anywhere. I've been playing on the road since I was (a teenager). Now, all these years later, to be back home, it's so different and so nice. It's been such a blessing."

Poulter already has NHL regular-season games on his resume, although not in an official capacity — he dressed as the backup in New Jersey eight times during the past two years. He's hoping that next milestone comes at some point here in his own backyard.

"When the chance comes, I just want to be ready."

"Just kind of waiting and trying to make the most of the opportunity I have when I am in playing games (at any level)," he said. "When the chance comes, I just want to be ready."

For now, Poulter is soaking up every chance to learn from Hellebuyck, with whom he shared a practice group Saturday.

"I had some time to watch him and chat briefly. It's pretty crazy," said Poulter. "There's a lot of things I can learn from him and try to take into my own game. Even if it's just on the mental side."

And should he ever want to talk with another member of the organization about what it's like to lace up the skates in front of a hometown crowd, Poulter can now turn to Toews — who is expected to make his Jets debut on Tuesday when the Edmonton Oilers come to town.

"He's someone I grew up watching. I have one of his jerseys at home. I even had the chance to meet him when I was nine or 10 in Toronto and watching a (NHL) morning skate. He happened to be there and even signed a picture for me," said Poulter.


"He's a guy who has won three Stanley cups and played for Team Canada on multiple occasions. And his preparation is next to none. I'd say I get to the rink here pretty early, but he was up there in the gym a couple mornings before me. Watching how he prepares, how seriously he takes it, that's something a lot of young guys can learn from and appreciate."

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11439829/analysis-winnipeg-jets-kyle-connor-adam-lowry/>

ANALYSIS: Connor, Lowry deals key for Jets as season set to begin

By Kelly Moore Global News

ANALYSIS: Connor, Lowry deals key for Jets as season set to begin -  image in full screen

Opening night for the Winnipeg Jets is two and a half weeks away.

There is reason to believe the team will have extensions in place by then with Kyle Connor and captain Adam Lowry.

In Edmonton, there is hand-wringing over Connor McDavid's "indifferent" responses to re-upping long-term with the Oilers.

The concern is real in Minnesota, if the reports are true that Kirill Kaprizov and his agent rejected an eight-year deal for \$16 million per.

But you don't get that same sense in Winnipeg about how things will eventually play out between Connor and the Jets.

And I also find it very interesting that GM Kevin Cheveldayoff is very quick to add Lowry's name to the conversation when the talk gets around to contract extensions.

Here are some reasons why Winnipeg hockey fans should be optimistic that an agreement will be reached before the curtain goes up on the Jets' 15th season Oct. 9 versus Dallas.

Connor is about as low-maintenance a superstar as there can be. He wants to win. So does this organization, and they have not been shy about their Stanley Cup aspirations — even if they begin the season as the ninth choice on most popular sports betting sites.

I'm not sure the guy they call "KC" can find a better gig than the one he has going with the Jets, as head coach Scott Arniel pointed out last week — playing on one of the league's best lines, the centrepiece of the NHL's top-producing power play, and getting some time on the penalty kill as well.

Cheveldayoff says the Jets are all about negotiating "fair deals." If TSN's Darren Dreger is correct in his analysis, \$12 million is the magic number to cross the Ts and dot the Is on this transaction. That represents almost a 60 per cent increase from Connor's previous deal of \$7.1 million per season.

This could almost be too idealistic, but what if Chevy is aiming for a repeat of two years ago when the Mark Scheifele and Connor Hellebuyck deals were announced, about 48 hours in advance of the season opener in Calgary?

Wouldn't it be something if history were re-visited with Connor and Lowry this fall?

Canadian Press

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/jets-hockey-wild-1.7639817>

Jets stake 2-0 lead but lose NHL preseason game in overtime to Wild Yakov Trenin's 2nd goal of game gave visiting Minnesota Wild 3-2 comeback victory

By The Canadian Press

Yakov Trenin's second goal of the game, at 3:59 of overtime, gave the visiting Minnesota Wild a 3-2 come-from-behind win over the Winnipeg Jets on Sunday.

The Jets led 2-1 with under three minutes left in the third period when the Wild's Hunter Haight scored on the power play to force the extra period.

Morgan Barron and Danil Zhilkin scored first-period goals for the Jets, with Samuel Fagemo notching an assist on both.

Kevin He had the primary assist on Zhilkin's goal after feeding a nifty backhand pass to the speedy Russian who one-timed it home.

Trenin started the comeback with a goal at 4:23 of the second period.

Wild defenceman David Jiricek was penalized 34 seconds into overtime for tripping the Jets' Brad Lambert but Winnipeg couldn't convert on the power play.

The Jets outshot the Wild 23-19, and 4-2 in overtime.

Jesper Wallstedt stopped 21 of 23 shots for the Wild, while Isaac Poulter stopped nine of 11 shots and Thomas Milic stopped seven of eight shots for the Jets.

Yahoo Sports

<https://ca.sports.yahoo.com/news/brad-lambert-turned-doubts-ahl-123743621.html>

How Brad Lambert Turned Doubts into AHL Success with Manitoba Moose

By Jake Tye

THE WAY BRAD LAMBERT shrugged off embarrassment during a November tilt versus the Rockford IceHogs was telling. His Manitoba Moose were on a 4-on-3 power play, and Lambert, a right shot situated on the left flank, received the puck off the faceoff. He opened up his hips and walked the blueline – forcing a Rockford penalty-killer to press him – before deferring to an open teammate. He rotated out to open real estate on his strong side, and the puck was cycled back to him moments later. He took four strides up to the hash marks before unleashing a top-corner snipe. After the goal, he glided to the right of the ice and pulled off the ol' “are you not entertained” celebration before a record-scratch moment. While attempting to slam the glass in exuberance, Lambert wiped out. “I didn’t see the boards there,” a grinning Lambert said. “They came quick.”

Over the past few years, it’s been hard for Lambert, who turns 20 in mid-December, to shrug things off and smile. Once dubbed a “can’t-miss prospect,” Lambert had a disappointing draft year, plummeting his stock. He was still taken 30th overall in 2022 by the Winnipeg Jets, but concerns remained after his struggles in Finland’s Liiga carried over to the AHL. The Lahti native’s tantalizing skill set – highlighted by his elite skating and puck skills – was shown in flashes, but he was clearly outmatched against men. As a result, his confidence compounded negatively.

But this year? Lambert isn’t squeezing his stick too hard. He had 10 points in his first 10 games while shouldering top-line center duties and playing a key role on the first power-play unit. He’s been one of Manitoba’s most relied-upon players at 5-on-5, and his team-high 71.4 percent goals-for percentage speaks to why.

It’s a night-and-day difference from his first AHL stint at the start of last season, when he recorded three points in a 14-game span that ended with a 10-game scoring drought. During his first taste of the minors, Lambert looked timid, and he struggled to cut to the inside – which is much harder to do on the smaller North American ice, especially against grown men. So, it made sense that after representing Finland at the World Junior Championship, Lambert joined the WHL’s Seattle Thunderbirds for the second half of 2022-23, where he dominated his age class for the first time in a while. In 43 regular-season and playoff games, Lambert combined for 64 points – 26 of which came in the post-season, where Lambert finished second on the Thunderbirds in scoring.

Moose coach Mark Morrison says this time around, Lambert is much better at managing his game, which is a testament to his maturity and hockey IQ. "People see when he has the puck and skates fast, but it's the stuff off the puck, like picking up your check and playing smart in the 'D' zone, where he's really improving, and that's most important."

Lambert knows mastering those intricacies is imperative in his pursuit of becoming an NHLer. "A big part of it is just knowing the different situations," he said. "We've talked through it. If there's a minute left on the clock and we're winning, you're making different decisions than what you would be if you were losing."

Morrison says he's been most impressed with how Lambert has managed his game. While the shiny point totals are encouraging, it's the way in which Lambert is going about producing that most impresses Morrison. "He doesn't hang onto the puck and try to beat three guys all by himself," Morrison said. "He'll move it and go to get it back. He just makes smarter plays with the puck."

That maturity is what's helped him thrive in his natural position down the middle, which is where Lambert believes he's most dangerous. "I can use my speed better," he said. "I'm pretty good at pouncing on loose pucks down low in our own zone and getting them out."

There's a lot that goes into being a center at the professional level, let alone the NHL, but Lambert hasn't been cutting any corners. "To coach Brad Lambert, it's a pleasure," Morrison said. "You coach him and he's attentive to what you tell him. It's not like he just listens and then doesn't go out and try it. He'll go out and try things. He might get it wrong once or twice, but he eventually succeeds at it because he takes the things we're coaching him on and puts them into play."

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipegsun.com/sports/the-jets-drop-pre-season-opener-in-overtime-to-the-minnesota-wild>

The Jets drop pre-season opener in overtime to the Minnesota Wild

By Gordon Anderson

Yakov Trenin scored the winner in overtime as the Minnesota Wild beat the Winnipeg Jets 3-2 at the Canada Life Centre on Sunday afternoon. Trenin, who scored twice for the Wild, swiped at a bouncing puck in the slot and knocked it over the left arm of Jets goalie Isaac Poulter at 3:59 of the extra period in the pre-season opener for both teams.

"For me, we were really good in the first half, and they were a lot better in the second half," Arniel said.

The Jets built a 2-0 lead before the visitors responded with three consecutive goals to grab the win. The Wild outshot the Jets 14-10 in the second and third periods. The home team outshot the visitors 23-19 for the game.

Prior to the winning goal, the Jets had a four-on-three power-play opportunity but failed to capitalize. Winnipeg went 1-for-4 with the man advantage, scoring on a two-man advantage in the opening period.

Morgan Barron and Danny Zhilkin scored for the Jets.

“Zhilkin has 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 GM Kevin Cheveldayoff, different people have talked to him. That’s got him thinking about what it takes to play at this level. He was good tonight.”

Thomas Milic stopped seven of eight shots in 40 minutes of action for the Jets. Poulter assumed the net for the final 20 minutes and turned aside nine of 11 shots.

Hunter Haight also scored for the Wild. Minnesota went 1-for-3 on the power play.

Jesper Wallstedt went the distance in the nets for Minnesota and turned aside 17 of 19 shots in regulation, plus four more in the overtime session.

Winnipeg opened the scoring with a five-on-three goal at 5:33 of the first period when Barron slammed home a rebound from an Elias Salomonsson point shot.

The Jets doubled the advantage with an even-strength goal at 8:03 when Zhilkin’s shot from inside the right face-off circle squeezed through Wallstedt. Kevin He picked up the primary assist, dropping the puck back to Zhilkin for the one-timer.

“I saw the play developing up the ice, (Samuel Fagemo) made a great cross ice pass to Kevin, Kevin with a great handle and I was screaming his name, calling for the puck,” Zhilkin said. “It was a great pass by him, just shot it and it went in.”

Trenin cut the deficit to 2-1 at 4:23 of the second period when his shot attempt found the short side over the left shoulder of Milic.

The Wild tied the game with a power-play goal at 17:02 of the third period when Haight’s shot from the left faceoff circle deflected off the stick of Logan Stanley and over the left shoulder of Poulter.

The Jets host the Edmonton Oilers on Tuesday evening at 7 p.m.

https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/free-agent-cole-koepke-looking-to-add-a-physical-up-tempo-element-to-the-jets?utm_source=winnipeg-jets

Free agent Cole Koepke looking to add a physical, up-tempo element to the Jets

By Gordon Anderson

Cole Koepke shortlisted three reasons why Winnipeg was an easy selection in the early days of free agency.

“The core of this team is elite and in the Stanley Cup contender window,” he said. “This team is right there.”

The Jets signed the 27-year-old American forward to a one-year deal, worth \$1 million US back on July 1.

With less than one week in the bag at Jets camp, the Minnesota resident has learned several things about the Winnipeg way of doing things.

"Everything we do here is hard," Koepke said. "It is winning your battles, and it is doing it fast, and doing it over and over (so it) becomes second nature. It is the top guys that are leading the way, and everyone follows."

During the team's intra-squad game at the Hockey For All Centre on Saturday morning he was on a line with Morgan Barron and free agent signing Tanner Pearson. He will likely fill a role on the fourth line this season. Koepke scored for Team White in a losing cause as Team Blue won 5-4 in a shootout.

"I'm impressed. He moves well," head coach Scott Arniel said. "He's got some bite to him, and he also has some finish. We've talked about our fourth line being a little heavier and a little bit more offence, he's in that role, he's fighting for that opportunity, and I like what I've seen so far."

Last season was a breakout year for Koepke as he found some semblance of a scoring touch, registering 10 goals and chipping in with seven assists in 73 games with the Boston Bruins.

The Jets aren't counting on 20 goals from the former University of Minnesota-Duluth Bulldogs winger. What the team requires is a guy who can get up and down the ice at pace, throw his weight around and assume a role on the penalty kill.

"I bring a lot of speed and a lot of physicality," Koepke said. "I am fast and physical, and I have had some success scoring in my career. I will pitch in with that as much as I can as well."

Prior to finding his hands around the net with the B's, his lack of playing time in the NHL grinded at his confidence. In 26 games with the Tampa Bay Lightning, scattered over the two previous seasons, Koepke scored once and added two assists.

Even though he was down on his luck, Koepke always believed he could produce points and earn a regular spot in an NHL lineup.

"There are a lot of players who are capable of playing in the NHL, but there are only so many spots so you always have to show what you can do," Koepke said. "I always knew I was capable of (scoring and playing a regular shift), I just needed to go out and consistently do it to earn a spot."

Offensive production and consistent play at both ends of the ice need to be a steady part of his overall game this season. He hasn't done either for long enough to have a relaxed mindset about his place in the league or in the Winnipeg lineup, for that matter.

He has come to camp with the idea that he hasn't earned anything.

"I am coming in with the same mindset this year, knowing that I am fully capable of playing in the league but I am not going to take any time off because I know there are a ton of great players in the organization and everyone wants that spot," he said. "If you slip up, that spot is going to be gone. You have to earn your spot every single day."

Koepke got the start on Sunday afternoon, playing left wing on a line with Barron and Walker Duehr, as the Jets opened the pre-season with a 3-2 overtime loss to the Minnesota Wild at the Canada Life Centre.

Koepke played 13:34 minutes at five-on-five and 1:55 on the penalty kill. In total, he played 24 shifts. He was credited with two hits, one shot on goal and one blocked shot.

His overall body of work in game one of the pre-season could be a precursor to what you can expect during the regular season.

Without a doubt, he will do his job earnestly.

"I am trying to come in and help the team and I want to contribute in any way I can," Koepke said. "They have high standards and practicing with these guys every day is only going to push me and make me better. I am excited to do whatever I can to help."