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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-jets-lose-3-2-to-wild>

THREE THINGS: Jets lose 3-2 to Wild

By Jamie Thomas

The Winnipeg Jets had plenty of chances to tie the game late but came up short in a 3-2 loss to the Minnesota Wild at Grand Casino Arena. Winnipeg got goals for Cole Koepke and Vladislav Namestnikov, The Jets outshot the Wild 28-19 including 25-14 over the final two periods. The Jets will wrap up the preseason Friday in Calgary against the Flames.

HELLE PRESEASON DEBUT

The reigning Hart and Vezina Trophy winner was in good form throughout the night and Hellebuyck and the Jets had a much better evening than last preseason in St. Paul, the Jets lost that game 8-5. Hellebuyck allowed eight goals on 29 shots with the Jets dressing a younger lineup and facing most of the Wild's regular roster. Tuesday night, Hellebuyck allowed goals to Matt Boldy (breakaway), Kirill Kaprizov (redirection) and Marcus Foligno and had 16 saves.

POWER PLAY OK

Winnipeg went 0-for-4 on the man advantage this evening but showed some solid puck movement and did so without Morrissey, Scheifele and Connor. Even though the game winning goal by the Wild was a shorthanded marker from Foligno, the Jets fired nine power play shots at Jesper Wallstedt.

There was looks there that we didn't finish, but at the end of the day, their goaltender had something to say as well," said Scott Arniel.

"I mean, he was good. And especially late there, we had some, a couple of real good looks there, some point blankers."

TOEWS AND NAMESTNIKOV UPDATE

Jonathan Toews played only 10:02 tonight after leaving the game in the second period and did not return. Arniel said that he tweaked something and that they will have to wait and see what's up after they get back to Winnipeg and have it looked at. Vladislav Namestnikov took a nasty hit from Yakov Trenin in the third period and was later taken out of the game by the concussion spotter, Arniel said that Namestnikov is fine.

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/09/30/jets-centres-fail-to-finish>

Jets centres fail to finish

Toews, Namestnikov leave game early, Hellebuyck solid in pre-season debut against Wild

By: Mike McIntyre

Forget the final result for a minute — a hard-fought 3-2 loss to the Minnesota Wild.

The biggest takeaway from Tuesday's pre-season tilt in St. Paul was that the Jets' top two centres who were dressed for the contest — Jonathan Toews and Vladislav Namestnikov — didn't make it to the final buzzer.

That's especially concerning given shutdown centre Adam Lowry (offseason hip surgery) and shutdown defenceman Dylan Samberg (broken wrist) are already sidelined.

Toews, playing his third tune-up of the fall as he returns to the NHL after a two-year health-related hiatus, lasted only until the midway mark of the second period. He logged 10:02 of ice time and won six of 10 faceoffs before exiting. There was no obvious incident leading up to his departure.

"He just tweaked something," coach Scott Arniel told the team's radio broadcaster, CJOB, following the game. "We'll just wait until we get home and get it looked at and go from there."

Namestnikov's issue was far less mysterious. Late in the third, Wild forward Yakov Trenin drilled him from behind, sending him headfirst into the boards. Namestnikov, slated to start the year as the third-line centre in Lowry's absence, got up slowly and made his way off the ice but did not return.

That was the (concussion) spotter. The spotter took him out," said Arniel.

"He's fine. He said he's fine. There's nothing you can do about that. It was more I'm going to say upper body, not his head though, but he was fine. The spotter said he had to come out."

Trenin was assessed only a two-minute boarding penalty on the play, which will no doubt be reviewed by the NHL's Department of Player Safety.

The Jets had another scare in the dying minutes when Wild defenceman David Jiricek hit Parker Ford from behind, again resulting in a boarding minor.

At that point, the Jets were eager to see the clock run out.

Namestnikov scored one of Winnipeg's two goals on the night, with energy forward Cole Koepke scoring the other.

"I thought it was a real good effort," Arniel said of a game in which the Jets had a much less experienced roster than the Wild. "There was no quit, we had some great looks at the end. Their goaltender make some key stops."

Winnipeg is now 1-3-1 in the pre-season.

Hellebuyck debut

The stat line won't jump off the page, but Connor Hellebuyck's long-awaited pre-season debut was steady.

The reigning Vezina and Hart Trophy winner stopped 16 of 19 shots, including a highlight-reel glove save on Marco Rossi in the third to keep Winnipeg within one.

Hellebuyck caused some concern when he missed Monday's practice after reportedly "not feeling right," but those fears were eased when he fully participated in Tuesday's morning skate.

He's expected to go the distance again Friday in Calgary as the Jets wrap up their exhibition schedule before opening night next Thursday.

Blue-line battle

With Samberg sidelined, attention turned Tuesday to four defencemen fighting for jobs: Haydn Fleury, Logan Stanley, Colin Miller and Ville Heinola.

All four could crack the opening-night roster alongside Josh Morrissey, Neal Pionk, Dylan DeMelo and Luke Schenn. The pecking order — including who might step into Samberg's spot next to Pionk on the second pair — remains unsettled.

Stanley, paired with Pionk, had an up-and-down night. He was caught pinching in the first, springing Matt Boldy on a breakaway for Minnesota's opening goal. He later earned an assist when his point shot missed the net and Alex Iafallo corralled the puck to set up Namestnikov.

Boldy burned the Jets again in the second, slipping around Miller for another clear look, but Hellebuyck made the stop. Heinola took a first-period high-sticking penalty, while Fleury — who spent time with Pionk last year when Samberg broke his foot — had a relatively quiet night alongside DeMelo. Which, for a defensive defenceman, is just fine.

Forward focus

There's not as much mystery up front, with likely just one final roster spot up for grabs at this point. The five main contenders — David Gustafsson, Nikita Chibrikov, Brad Lambert, Jaret Anderson-Dolan and Parker Ford — were all in the lineup Tuesday.

Each had flashes. This was Gustafsson's best game of the fall, and he was a perfect five-for-five in the faceoff circle. Ford, a winger who has been given a shot at centre, was excellent as well, going six-for-seven. Lambert, on the other hand, is a centre who

has been mostly playing wing this fall but was moved back up the middle for one night. He went one-for-11 in the dot.

“Some guys really stepped up and did a good job of taking advantage of the opportunities that were thrown at them,” said Arniel.

136-million dollar man

Kirill Kaprizov had himself a day.

The 28-year-old star signed an eight-year extension with the Wild on Tuesday morning worth an average annual value of US\$17 million, instantly becoming the highest-paid player in the NHL by a wide margin. The contract — heavy on massive signing bonuses — is viewed as a potential game-changer across the league.

You have to wonder how this will affect the Jets’ ongoing talks with Kyle Connor, who is entering the final year of his deal. Elite forwards like Jack Eichel (Vegas), Adrian Kempe (Los Angeles) and Artemi Panarin (New York Rangers) are also in line for new contracts and will no doubt take notice.

All of them stand to benefit from a rising salary cap, which jumped to US\$95.5 million this season and is projected to hit US\$113.5 million by 2027-28 — with the potential for even bigger spikes beyond that.

Kaprizov celebrated his windfall by reminding everyone why he’s worth it. He set up Boldy’s opening goal with a slick pass to spring him on a breakaway, then scored one himself in the second period by tipping home a point shot from rookie defenceman Zeev Buium.

Extra, extra

The Jets went 0-for-4 on the power play, though it’s worth noting top weapons Connor, Mark Scheifele and Morrissey didn’t dress. Winnipeg killed off one of two penalties.

While the night ended with a couple of questionable hits, this might have been the least physical game in Jets-Wild history. The teams combined for just 31 hits — 19 by Winnipeg.

Minnesota goaltender Jesper Wallstedt stopped 26 of 28 shots he faced.

Canadian Press

<https://www.cbc.ca/lite/story/1.7647485>

Jets forward Cole Perfetti looks back at 'Manitoba Miracle' Game 7 goal ahead of 2025-26 regular season

By Judy Owen

Cole Perfetti is missing a special piece of hockey memorabilia.

The Winnipeg Jets forward scored a historic, game-tying goal in last season's first round of the NHL playoffs that a local restaurant commemorated with a limited number of T-shirts.

The white shirt has Perfetti's first name in blue capital letters and under it the time of 0:1.6, the initial seconds remaining on the clock in the third period when his redirection tied Game 7 against the St. Louis Blues 3-3.

Scorekeepers adjusted the clock to 2.2 and the Jets went on to win in double overtime with a goal from captain Adam Lowry. The league rounds up, so the official scoresheet read 19:57 — the latest tying Game 7 goal in NHL history.

The shirt, which also has "We Believe" on it, kept the original 1.6 seconds.

Perfetti never did get his hands on one of the souvenirs.

"My parents and grandparents were here for that game. I think they did maybe get one or two, but I'm not 100 per cent sure, to be honest," Perfetti said this week at Jets training camp.

"I know I never did. They were cool shirts, though."

Jets captain Lowry scores Game 7 winning goal in double OT against Blues

The forward from Whitby, Ont., doesn't really need the memento. After all, he has the memory of the goal dubbed the "Manitoba Miracle."

Perfetti also has the not-so-great memory of the Jets getting knocked out of the second round in six games by the Dallas Stars, ending a season in which Winnipeg won its first Presidents' Trophy for having the top regular-season record.

The 23-year-old also reached personal highs last season, finally playing all 82 games and recording a career-best 50 points off 18 goals and 32 assists.

"Last year, that confidence was growing and growing throughout the year," Perfetti said. "Going into the playoffs I was feeling really good about myself and the team."

"I definitely took that into the summer. I feel my confidence is at a good spot and I have very high belief in myself."

Jets head coach Scott Arniel shares that belief.

"When it got to the playoffs, I thought he was one of our best forwards, most consistent forwards," Arniel said of Perfetti. "Not so much scoring goals, but just getting inside and playing hard."

Now he wants Perfetti to build off that growth.

"He's a top-six forward on our hockey team, one of the best teams in the league, and he has something to bring every night, and we're seeing that," Arniel said.

The coach has slotted Perfetti on the wing with centre Jonathan Toews and veteran free-agent signing Gustav Nyquist. Toews, who's returning to the game after a two-year absence for health reasons, is 37. Nyquist is 36.

"There was a little bit of nerves, but more so excitement," Perfetti said of skating with the duo.

"Those are guys that have been doing this for a long time in this league at a high level and been impact players."

Toews was one of his favourite players growing up.

"So now, to be able to be on a line with him, it's pretty surreal and just exciting to get that opportunity," Perfetti said of the former Chicago Blackhawks captain and three-time Stanley Cup champion.

Nyquist said Perfetti doesn't seem like a youngster.

"He's mature beyond his years by a lot," said Nyquist, who split time last season between Nashville and Minnesota. "He's a really good kid who works hard and gets open — wise beyond his years."

Jonathan Toews sees 1st pre-season action in Winnipeg colours, as Jets fall 3-2 to Oilers

Jets fans 'just want to see them finish it off this year' after strong 2024-25 season
Perfetti, who will get time on the first power-play unit, was in the gym during the summer building his explosiveness.

"Working on the stuff that can translate to the first couple steps on ice, kind of out-of-the-gate speed," he said. "I feel good on the ice from it, so I feel a little bit faster, a little quicker."

Winnipeg's second line last year featured speedster Nikolaj Ehlers, who signed with Carolina in the off-season.

While the new line won't have that speed, Perfetti said the trio shares high hockey IQ and a similar style of play.

"I think we're all passers," Perfetti said. "At times, we're going to have to adjust and one of us is going to have to be a little selfish and shoot.

"But that's the beauty about that — everyone on that line has a little bit of a knack for scoring but also has that pass-first mentality and looking for the right play.

"When three guys think alike like that and play a similar style, I think it's easier to build that chemistry. I think it's going to be good."

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11458960/analysis-winnipeg-jets-kyle-connor-contract-2/>

ANALYSIS: Jets' Connor likely to see big payday with contract extension

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

If both the Winnipeg Jets and Kyle Connor were waiting for some kind of movement in the industry to perhaps gain a baseline in their negotiations toward a contract extension, Tuesday's news out of Minnesota might have been that moment.

In the equivalent of what could be a hockey tsunami, the deal Kirill Kaprizov and the Minnesota Wild struck — the richest contract in league history to date, by the way — will certainly send a financial tidal wave across the league, in particular, right here in Winnipeg with Connor, the team's best winger and a free agent at the end of the season.

As we understand it, Connor is agreeable to signing an extension and the Jets to providing him with one, but after what the market bore for Kaprizov at \$136 million over eight years for an average of \$17 million per year, that thud you heard was a huge domino falling within the market — and undoubtedly numbers that others like Connor McDavid, Jack Eichel and Connor will work off of for their next deals.

For Connor, that chain reaction will likely have his next starting point per season at somewhere between \$12 and \$14 million — which, like Kaprizov, would nearly double his current salary.

It's an extremely lucrative increase, for sure, but a necessary one if the Jets want to remain competitive in the now-more-than-ever high-stakes card game that is the National Hockey League.

Of course, there are other factors to consider in addition to the money — for instance, length of contract and how the deal is actually structured, especially since front-end-loaded, signing bonus-laden deals are what the players are now demanding. But the total dollar amount is, of course, the most important part of the equation.

Now, it's unsure how negotiations are progressing between the Jets and Connor at the moment. One can only presume they're talking, but after what came out of Minnesota on Tuesday, it's likely only a baseline for a player like Connor to cash in and more unprecedented movement to follow.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11458630/toews-leaves-game-early-as-winnipeg-jets-fall-3-2-in-minnesota/>

Toews leaves game early as Winnipeg Jets fall 3-2 in Minnesota

By Christian Aumell & Russ Hobson Global News

The Winnipeg Jets squandered leads twice in a 3-2 pre-season loss in Minnesota Tuesday night, but the main concern is the status of Jonathan Toews.

Winnipeg's top off-season pickup played his last shift of the game just shy of the midway point of the second period.

"He just tweaked something," head coach Scott Arniel told 680 CJOB after the game. "We'll just wait and see, we'll wait until we get home, get it looked at and go from there."

Vladislav Namestnikov also had to exit the game after taking a hit from behind in the third period, but he didn't leave the game on his own volition.

"That was the (concussion) spotter," said Arniel. "Spotter took him out. He's fine. He said he's fine. Nothing you can do about that. He actually was more of, I'm gonna say upper-body, not his head though. But he was fine. He was fine. The spotter said he had to come out."

Namestnikov and Cole Koepke scored the goals for the Jets in the loss, while Connor Hellebuyck only made 16 saves in his pre-season debut.

The Jets had two different one-goal leads, but the Wild scored twice in the second period to take the lead, and there was no scoring in the final frame.

"I thought it was a real good effort," Arniel said. "We got to their goalie early, twice we got up with the lead, but a couple mistakes on our specialty teams. A little bit of the difference there in the second, but you know what, there was no quit. We had some great looks at the end, obviously their goaltender made some key stops.

"Guys are battling for jobs. Some guys really stepped up and did a good job of taking advantage of maybe the opportunities that were thrown at them."

Logan Stanley, Ville Heinola and Haydn Fleury were all in the Jets lineup as they battle for the extra job on the blueline after the injury to Dylan Samberg.

“There was some times where we maybe didn’t move quick enough,” said Arniel. “Or we weren’t quite sharp enough, but I did like a lot of what each and every one of those guys brought, whether we had to use Ville on the power play, Stan was doing a good job with his size, and I thought that Flur skated well. Those are the things they have to continue to do and with Sammy being out, those guys have to continue to play at a high level.”

Winnipeg opened the scoring at the 5:24 mark of the first when Koepke was in the right place at the right time in the Wild end. He intercepted a pass in the Minnesota end and deposited it past Jesper Wallstedt to make it 1-0.

Just shy of 12 minutes into the period, the Wild drew level when Matt Boldy got free behind the Jets defence and walked in alone on, beating Hellebuyck high in the Hart Trophy winner’s first game of the pre-season.

The game remained tied until the opening minute of the second period. Alex Lafallo won a puck battle behind the Minnesota net and fed Namestnikov in front for a tap-in to make it 2-1 for Winnipeg.

Minnesota got things level again on the power play just shy of seven minutes into the second. With Dylan DeMelo in the box, Kirill Kaprizov, fresh off signing the biggest contract in NHL history, deflected a point shot past Hellebuyck to tie the game.

The Jets failed on their first power play look of the night and during their second PP chance, the Wild took the lead. Neal Pionk attempted an ill-fated D-to-D pass on the backhand and it was intercepted by Marcus Foligno. He blazed up the ice with the puck and beat Hellebuyck to give the Wild their first lead of the night.

Winnipeg outshot Minnesota 12-7 in the second and 13-7 in the third but 3-2 would be the final score.

The third period was marked by a couple of questionable hits by the Wild. Namestnikov was crumpled into the boards by Yakov Trenin and just a few minutes later, Parker Ford was hit from behind.

Winnipeg is expected to ice a lineup that either closely or completely resembles its opening night roster when they conclude their preseason schedule Friday night in Calgary.

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6675337/2025/10/01/winnipeg-jets-2025-26-season-preview/>

Winnipeg Jets 2025-26 season preview: Playoff chances, projected points, roster rankings

By The Athletic NHL

By Sean Gentile, Shayna Goldman and Dom Luszczyszyn

There's often a very clear defining line between the teams that have it and the teams that don't. The Winnipeg Jets are on the wrong side of that line.

No team has more points than the Jets' 226 over the last two seasons, but somehow they were still 2.2 seconds away from yet another first-round exit. A crystal-clear loss in the second round to a team that does have it only drove home the point that for now, Winnipeg does not.

Despite a plethora of regular-season success lately, the Jets enter the 2025-26 season with a lot to prove. And the path to prove it got a lot more difficult over the summer.

The projection

After losing Nikolaj Ehlers to free agency, it's fair to expect the Jets to take a step back. An aging core that's unlikely to repeat last season's magic only adds to that. The Jets reach the 115-point mark in nine percent of simulations and the 110-point mark in 19 percent. Getting back to their previous heights will be a tall order.

Still, it feels like the Jets aren't getting the respect they deserve after those two magnificent seasons, with oddsmakers placing their chances a shade lower than this. The Ehlers loss is big, yes, but the rest of a Presidents' Trophy-winning club remains intact. Winnipeg should remain a very solid playoff bet for that reason, with a real chance of contending.

The Central Division won't make that easy. The Jets enter the 2025-26 season third in the pecking order. Despite the regular-season success of the last two seasons, there are still questions surrounding this group.

The big question

How large of a loss is Nikolaj Ehlers?

One way to explain what Winnipeg lost from its lineup when Ehlers signed for six years in Carolina is by simply to state that he signed with Carolina, a team badly in need of a dynamic, creative player who also fits in with their overall scheme.

Ehlers, despite intermittently odd usage with the Jets, is a productive play-driver in all three zones. That checks a lot of boxes. If you like some points with your two-way substance, or vice versa, he's your guy. Despite second-line minutes, Ehlers was 17th in five-on-five points per 60 over the last three seasons. Sounds like a player who, over that three-year span, should've averaged more than 16 minutes a night. Despite worse linemates, the Jets also won their minutes more decisively with Ehlers compared to with first-line star Kyle Connor.

In terms of five-on-five production rate, Ehlers slots in between Elias Pettersson and Jesper Bratt. Say what you will about the former, but there's a 102-point season mixed in there. Bratt, meanwhile, is one of the most effective wingers in the game.

That spot makes sense for Ehlers — he's active and effective in the transition game, and better than most wingers in exiting the defensive zone, gaining the offensive zone and then helping his team create shots and chances. A little less tangibly, he has the kind of game-breaking skill the Hurricanes have lacked and have been openly chasing for the last few years. (Hello, Mikko Rantanen.)

That's not to say Ehlers is perfect. He gambles a bit too frequently, he's not a high-end defensive player and his postseason track record (like the rest of his former team) is spotty at best. He is, however, quite good, and the Jets are going to miss him in a few different areas.

One of those is on the power play. In 2024-25, Ehlers averaged more time with the man advantage (4 minutes, 1 second) than he had in any season since 2017-18. The Jets, after years spent resisting the urge, were better for it — Ehlers produced 7.55 points per 60, 23rd in the league among players with at least 50 power-play minutes, right between Nathan MacKinnon and Auston Matthews. Not coincidentally, the Jets led the NHL in conversion rate (28.9 percent, up 10 points year over year) and goals scored per 60 minutes of power-play time (11.15, up from 6.45 in 2023-24). It's fashionable and correct to credit Hellebuyck for the Presidents' Trophy win, but the power play had a whole bunch to do with it as well, and much of that began with Ehlers.

At five-on-five, he was the offensive engine for a highly effective second line, leading the way for Cole Perfetti and Vladislav Namestnikov. Together, they controlled more than 55 of the expected goal share and outscored opponents 24-14. Perfetti is the only one of the three set to start the season on Winnipeg's second line, and he'll need to consistently elevate his production; his five-on-five points per 60 declined in each of his three full NHL seasons. That's not to say it was all bad for Perfetti — after the trade deadline, his points per 60 at five-on-five (2.56) was second on the Jets behind Connor. He was also shooting the puck more frequently and (maybe most importantly) staying healthy. No forward on the roster is better equipped to assume a bigger role.

He won't have Ehlers as a security blanket, though, and neither will the rest of the Jets.

The wild card

Can Jonathan Toews be an everyday second-line center?

The 2024-25 Jets asked a lot of their second line, as we established, and it generally delivered despite having Namestnikov, a player best suited for third-line minutes, in the middle. We know Toews' story is a remarkable one, and he's one of the league's most accomplished players. The NHL is better with him in it. The question is whether Winnipeg's second line will be better with him on it.

The answer is ... well, it's tough. For one, there's not much of a precedent to work with. Toews is 37 and hasn't played an NHL game since April 2023. At the time, he looked fairly out of gas. Blame the tanking Blackhawks for that, but Toews' personal results were brutal, too. He was toting around an expected goal share of 38 percent and the Blackhawks had been outscored 42-20 with him on the ice. They were, across the board, a less effective team in his minutes.

We should be willing to allow for the fact that Toews was dealing with major health issues, and that two years of rest and rehab will suit him well. We should also be open to the possibility that playing for his hometown team, on a roster designed to win hockey games, counts for something. If this all works out, though, it won't be anything less than unexpected. The average second-line center clocks in with a 4.0 Net Rating, and Toews' projection is miles away. Mix in the fact that the Jets replaced Ehlers with Gustav Nyquist, and it's not looking good.

The strengths

Between trying to replace Ehlers and seeing what Toews still has left in the tank, the Jets have a few questions up front. At least their top line is a reliable source of offense.

No one played together more than Kyle Connor, Mark Scheifele and Gabriel Vilardi's 905 five-on-five minutes last year. Connor is the best goal-scoring threat of the combination. He consistently generates a high rate of chances and can beat goalies in all different ways. Last season, Connor's all-around game improved with a 52.7 percent expected goals rate after hovering around or below break-even in the last six seasons, along with an uptick in playmaking.

Connor isn't a true No. 1 forward on a contender, but the Jets have to hope Scheifele and Vilardi, who are both above league-average relative to their respective roles, can compensate for that.

Scheifele is the puck-mover this roster craves, especially since Ehlers' departure. He carries play into the offensive zone to generate chances in transition at a high rate and is a dangerous primary passer (which tends to assist Connor's scoring). Last season, his goal scoring was back on the rise with 39 tallies to give that top line even more dimension. With Vilardi on the wing, this combination has three scorers capable of 25-plus goals.

The Jets' defensive glow-up helps Scheifele and Connor play to their offensive strengths. A lot of that has to do with a few staples on the blue line. That starts with Winnipeg's No. 1 Josh Morrissey, who has grown into a top-10 defenseman in the league with a plus-15.4 Net Rating.

Morrissey's game is very complete and well-rounded, which translates to all-situations play. He is sound in his own zone and can help move the puck up ice from defense to offense. While he isn't the leading puck retriever on his team — the Dylans are the most active — he is the most efficient, with few failed attempts. Morrissey's scoring doesn't

stack up to Cale Makar, Quinn Hughes and Zach Werenski, but he still finished top 10 among defensemen in each of the last two years.

Dylan DeMelo plays a quieter game that complements Morrissey, between his blue-line defense and zone exits. In a league-high 1,225 five-on-five minutes, Morrissey and DeMelo earned a 56 percent xG rate and outscored opponents 51-36. And this season, these two are likely going to have to take on even more to start the season, with Dylan Samberg sidelined for six to eight weeks.

Samberg is one of the biggest risers in Winnipeg. He proved his defensive instincts could translate to a tougher workload after thriving in sheltered minutes. That earned him a projected plus-3.4 Defensive Rating heading into this season and a place in this year's Player Tiers project, after the insider panel called for his inclusion. One executive doesn't see much separation between Samberg and Mikey Anderson. Another thinks he is "in the Travis Sanheim mold."

Samberg's growth made him a stabilizing force on the second pair alongside Neal Pionk. Despite a challenging workload, the Jets didn't give up much in their minutes — just 2.14 xGA/60 and an even lower rate of goals against at 1.79. And their presence didn't stop the team from creating offense, either; in fact, their on-ice 3.14 GF/60 led the Jets' mainstay defense pairs.

That top four brings the Jets' blue line up to a plus-6.3 Defensive Rating that ranks third in the league.

And that's given Connor Hellebuyck the most support he has had in years.

While the defense is a critical part of the Jets' strategy, Hellebuyck is their ultimate backbone. He is a workhorse in net who generally starts upwards of 60 regular-season games with elite results. Last season, he led the league with 49.5 goals saved above expected, the third-highest mark of any goaltender since 2007-08.

Goaltenders rarely win MVP honors in the regular season. But Hellebuyck's 2024-25 wasn't just Vezina-worthy; he was the first goalie to take home the Hart Trophy since Carey Price in 2014-15.

"He's MVP-caliber," one analyst said over the summer. "If you want to build your team, you start with players like that."

The weaknesses

This team generally goes as far as Hellebuyck can take them — and in the playoffs, it isn't far enough for a true contender. To his credit, he tightened up in Round 2 against the Stars to give the Jets a chance to win the series. It just wasn't enough to erase a nearly disastrous opening series against the Blues, or his history of playoff struggles.

“It’s hard to be great every year. That’s where Hellebuyck gets his praise,” one coach said. “He’s just been so bad in the playoffs that it gets hard.”

That’s why, despite Hellebuyck being the literal MVP of the regular season, he did not land in that tier. Instead, he leads the position as a franchise player in 2A.

The Jets still have to figure out if this is the most extreme case of the yips (think back to Playoff Bob before his Florida glow-up), or the result of a demanding workload.

That’s why a reliable backup in Winnipeg is so important. Eric Comrie was solid in his role last year, with a .914 save percentage and a GSAX of 4.78 in 20 games. Based on the last few years, he grades out as an average backup. But that may not be enough for the Jets to trust him with more playing time, which could lead to the same result next spring.

The coaches may be even less inclined to start Comrie more if the defense struggles without Samberg. With a healthy top four, that bottom pair of Hadyn Fleury and Luke Schenn already looked like a weak point. While they don’t have a ton of experience together, their play down the stretch and in the playoffs was less than stellar. In roughly 42 five-on-five postseason minutes, Fleury-Schenn had a sub-28 percent xG rate.

Without Samberg, someone such as Colin Miller could get some playing time — he’s at least a passable third-pair player. Or it could mean more Logan Stanley or Ville Heinola, both of whom grade out just as poorly as Fleury. Winnipeg potentially starting the season with three replacement-level defensemen in the starting lineup will make life really tough on Hellebuyck.

Hellebuyck can make up for where the defense lacks in the regular season, but the pressure then shifts to the forwards to provide steady goal support. And that’s where Ehlers’ absence is going to be felt most. Even if Perfetti has a breakout year, the roster is still lacking secondary weapons.

No one outside the top four has a positive Offensive Rating, which brings the forward group down to a minus-2.5, ranking 19th in the league. Adam Lowry makes up for it with elite defense. Alex Lafallo is solid in his own end, too, and can step up when asked. It’s the rest of the supporting cast that lacks on both ends of the ice.

Namestnikov worked as a 2C last year because Ehlers and Perfetti drove that line. But a contender should want more from a middle-six center (and his actual placement depends on Toews). Namestnikov is ideally more of a utility forward for the bottom six. So is Nyquist at this point in his career, and Morgan Barron.

Without a secondary layer, the ceiling of the group looks limited — something that’s already in question given how Connor and Scheifele stack up to the best forwards in the West.

The best case: 113 points

Just like last season, Winnipeg's stars shine and Hellebuyck plays at an MVP level. Perfetti fills Ehlers' void adequately and the Jets win the Central, this time parlaying it into a deep playoff run.

The worst case: 88 points

Hellebuyck is only OK, while the power play takes a massive step back without Ehlers. Scheifele and Connor come back to earth after resurgent seasons and without elite goaltending, the Jets get squeezed out of the playoffs.

The bottom line

Even without Ehlers, the Jets still are a playoff-caliber team. But is this a true contender once the regular season ends? After several early exits — and with Hellebuyck playing at such a high level — a playoff appearance alone won't define the season as a success. Winnipeg has some questions to figure out before next spring.

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6677565/2025/10/01/nhl-predictions-2025-26-divisions/>

Predicting the 2025-26 NHL season, from Stanley Cup contenders to bottom-feeders

By Sean McIndoe

We're less than one week from meaningful hockey, and yes, you've seen a million previews. But what if I told you this one was going to be accurate?

It won't be, for the record. Probably not even close. But what if I told you that? Let's pretend that I just did.

It's time for the annual four-division gimmick, one that's so old it stretches back to a time when the NHL having four division was considered news. The rules have stayed consistent ever since. I get four divisions: the bottom-feeders, the middle-of-the-pack, the legitimate Stanley Cup contenders and then the teams I just have no idea about. And because I enjoy making my own life difficult, that eight-teams-per-division rule is mandatory.

Sounds simple enough. And in theory, it is ... as long as we pretend that an NHL season is ever predictable. Let's start from the bottom and work our way up.

The your-guess-is-as-good-as-mine division

I'm kind of dumb, and I don't know much. But I do know what I don't know, and these are the teams I'm convinced I know the least.

Winnipeg Jets

Last season: 56-22-4, +85 goals differential, first place overall, lost in second round

Their offseason in six words: Ehlers gone, but Toews comes home.

Why they're here: We spent all of last year refusing to believe the Jets were legitimate Presidents' Trophy contenders, right up until they actually won it. Well, that's not completely true — it feels like some of us still don't believe that happened, despite what the standings tell us. And if you're in that group, you're expecting a meaningful step back this season, maybe one that involves Connor Hellebuyck not being the best goalie in the world like he usually is. I'm honestly not sure which group I'm in; part of me wants to believe, part of me thinks the most likely outcome here is third place in the Central, followed by another early playoff exit. Luckily, I get to wimp out on eight teams, and I'm playing one of those cards here.

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/new-faces-in-new-places-for-2025-2026-season>

Toews, Marner among new faces in new places for 2025-26 season Marchand, Ehlers, Kreider also to play against former teams for 1st time

By David Satriano

Many NHL players have changed teams either via free agency or trades -- including before the NHL Trade Deadline last season -- and will visit their former homes as a visitor for the first time this season. NHL.com takes a look at some of the bigger names who have moved on and when they will visit their former team (listed by date).

Nikolaj Ehlers, Carolina Hurricanes at Winnipeg Jets, Nov. 21

One of the top free agents available this offseason, Ehlers signed a six-year contract with the Hurricanes on July 3 after 10 seasons with the Jets. He had 520 points (225 goals, 295 assists) in 674 regular-season games with them and ranks in the top seven in each of those categories in franchise history.

Jonathan Toews, Winnipeg Jets at Chicago Blackhawks, Jan. 19

It will be a memorable day for the player who wore No. 19 for the Blackhawks for 15 seasons. Toews won the Stanley Cup three times, the Conn Smythe Trophy, had more than 800 points and was voted one of the 100 Greatest Players in NHL history at the League's centennial celebration in 2017. The longtime Chicago captain last played in 2023 and signed with his hometown Jets on July 2; he did not play in the League the past two seasons. Toews could face his former team for the first time in Winnipeg on Oct. 30.

Winnipeg Sun

https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/toews-and-namestnikov-leave-early-winnipeg-jets-lose-3-2-to-the-minnesota-wild?itm_source=index

Toews and Namestnikov leave early, Winnipeg Jets lose 3-2 to the Minnesota Wild

By Gordon Anderson

The Winnipeg Jets dropped a 3-2 result to the Minnesota Wild in NHL preseason action at the Grand Casino Arena in St. Paul on Tuesday night.

Marcus Foligno scored the game-winning goal at 14:29 of the second period when his shot beat Connor Hellebuyck high to the glove side for a short-handed goal.

A bigger concern for the Jets is the health and welfare of Jonathan Toews and Vladislav Namestnikov as both players didn't finish the game.

Toews didn't play a shift in the third period. His last shift was recorded at 10:55 of the second period. Overall, Toews logged 10:02 of ice time on 10 shifts.

Head coach Scott Arniel told CJOB radio that Toews 'tweaked something,' The team will get Toews evaluated when they return home. There was no post-game update on Namestnikov.

Namestnikov didn't return to the game after Yakov Trenin hit him headfirst into the side boards with a check from behind at 13:31 of the third period. Namestnikov scored a second-period goal for the Jets.

Minnesota goalie Jesper Wallstedt stopped 13 shots in the third period and 26 of 28 in the game.

Making his first start of the preseason, Hellebuyck made 16 saves. Earlier this week, head coach Scott Arniel stated Hellebuyck will start the final game of the preseason, Friday night in Calgary against the Flames.

Cole Koepke also scored for the Jets.

The Jets went 0-for-4 with the powerplay. The Wild converted once on two opportunities.

On Tuesday afternoon, the Jets placed Tyrel Bauer and Isaak Phillips on waivers for the purpose of loan to the Manitoba Moose. Ashton Sautner and Dawson Barteaux were released from their professional tryouts. Keiron Walton was loaned back to the Sudbury Wolves of the Ontario Hockey League. Philip Di Giuseppe and Mason Shaw cleared waivers and were assigned to the Moose.

Matt Boldy and Kirill Kaprizov also scored for the Wild.

On Tuesday the Wild announced the signing of Kaprizov. The forward signed an eight-year deal worth US \$136 million. Kaprizov will make one million in salary over the course of the deal. He will make the rest of the money via signing bonuses. During the

first four seasons of the contract the signing bonus payable is \$19.1 million per year. In year eight the bonus is \$12.7 million.

The Jets wrap up the preseason on Friday night in Calgary against the Flames.

<https://winnipegssun.com/sports/jonathan-toews-the-winnipeg-jets-and-the-task-that-lies-ahead>

Jonathan Toews, the Winnipeg Jets and the task that lies ahead

By Gordon Anderson

Jonathan Toews has overcome the early challenges in his return to professional hockey, but more daunting challenges lie ahead.

“We can’t do anything about the workload that’s coming, the four games in a week that’s going to be consistent here, moving forward. He just has to go through it,” Jets head coach Scott Arniel said at the Hockey For All Centre earlier this week. “He just has to keep playing it and doing it.”

Toews missed two NHL seasons due to health struggles associated with long COVID and chronic immune response syndrome.

Toews was in the lineup for his third exhibition game of the preseason as the Jets were in Minnesota to play the Wild on Tuesday night. The Jets will finish the six-game preseason schedule in Calgary against the Flames on Friday night.

“I know the structure and the systems are becoming a little bit more second-nature (for Toews),” Arniel said. “He’s got it, he’s not thinking through it and slowing down for it to happen. I think the offensive stuff, with his linemates and stuff, I know it’s going to look a little bit different tomorrow, but his offensive instincts and the plays that he’s so good at, I think it’s getting better... By next Thursday, he’s good to go.”

On Tuesday morning, Toews skated between Cole Perfetti and Nino Niederreiter, though Arniel has said he expects Toews to centre a line with Perfetti and Gustav Nyquist once the regular season begins.

Speaking of the regular season, the Jets begin the six-month march to April with six scheduled games between the home opener on Oct. 9 against the Dallas Stars and a road game against the Flames on Oct. 20.

Because of the league’s participation in the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics come February, the locals will play a heavily condensed schedule with 11 games in October and 13 games in November.

"There's going to be less practice time, more recovery days, and hopefully every time that Toews steps on the ice for a game, he's feeling fresh and can do that," Arniel said.

Despite what lies ahead, either wonderful or woeful, the early returns are quite promising.

"He's a machine," Arniel said. "He's at the rink all day. He trains. He looks after himself. He does a lot of stuff away from the rink."

But Arniel says the 37-year-old has the guile to persevere the road ahead, to read the subtle clues about his body's reaction to the workload that no amount of preseason work can ever prepare a player for.

"For me, his head and (the way) he (thinks about) the game," Arniel said. "He's a smart hockey player. His heart's always going to be there. And his hands. I know we were concerned about his legs but he's keeping up, he's doing all of the right things. I mean, it's not Game 80 yet or Game 75 where he's had to go through a long season, but right now I think he's up and running in those areas. He has all of those traits that, when you draft young players, you hope they have all four of them. He has all four."

https://winnipegssun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/jets-depth-will-get-an-early-test-with-adam-lowry-and-dylan-samberg-missing?utm_source=winnipeg-jets

Jets depth will get an early test with Adam Lowry and Dylan Samberg missing

By Gordon Anderson

The injury to Jets defenceman Dylan Samberg has had a knock-on effect in the dressing room.

"We'll just have to step up here and do the job as a group," Jets defenceman Dylan DeMelo said. "He does a lot for us, defensively, so rock solid, and really came into his own last year. So, it's a big loss, but we have enough guys in here to fill that slack for the time being. We wish him a speedy recovery."

DeMelo led the team in short-handed time on ice last season at 173.29. Samberg was second to DeMelo in short-handed time on ice with 146.23. The Jets finished 13th in the league with a 79.4 per cent penalty kill rate, allowing 44 goals on 199 opportunities.

Samberg left the playing surface on Saturday evening at the Canada Life Centre after colliding with Flames forward Ryan Lomberg along the boards near the Calgary bench during the second period. His last shift was recorded as 16:25.

"Yeah, it's tough," DeMelo said. "(Injuries) come with the job, because you want to play some games and be sharp. But obviously, things happen out there. It's a physical game, (and it was a) fluky play."

Last season, Samberg missed seven weeks with a broken foot after blocking a Steven Stamkos shot against the Nashville Predators on Nov. 23. The team managed an above .500 record without Samberg in the lineup, going 11-8-3. Samberg made his return against the Los Angeles Kings on Jan. 10.

And with forward Adam Lowry also out of the lineup for another month, possibly longer, recovering from hip surgery back in May, the team's depth is going to get tested early. Adding in a compacted schedule due to the Olympic break, and the Jets will play 24 games between Oct. 9 and Nov. 30.

"We've always about our depth here, and we think we have a good roster, one through 12, 13, 14, 15, whatever you want to say," DeMelo said. "And same thing on the back end, with our extra bodies, the guys that can step in. We've always preached that we're sum of all parts, and we need to have that again, maybe a little earlier than we like to, but we're confident with what we got and guys being able to step up."

DeMelo skated with Haydn Fleury on Tuesday morning in lieu of Tuesday night's match up with the Minnesota Wild.

"This might be our first game together. I am looking forward to playing with him, he really came on last year for us, stepped in when we had injuries and guys out, and stepped in and did an amazing job," DeMelo said. "It's not easy sitting out for long stretches and coming in and having to play a lot of minutes. So, he's a guy that's got a lot of skill and skates well and closes a lot of space, big, rangy guy. So, I look forward to playing with him."

Until Samberg returns to the lineup on a full-time basis, the 'whatever the team needs for' role on the back end is the reality for depth defenders like Fleury, Colin Miller and Ville Heinola. Heinola and Miller were paired up on Tuesday morning.

And while head coach Scott Arniel didn't speak directly about Logan Stanley there is a good chance the 6-foot-7 defender from Waterloo, Ont., was included in this verbal missive delivered on Tuesday.

"All these guys have to get themselves ready for the start of the season," Arniel said. "We'll see how it plays itself out. All I can do is give them a chance, put them on the ice, put them in those opportunities so they can go excel and do what they do best. There's been competition since Day One, and those guys have to continue to battle for the job."