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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/blog-salomonsson-nhl-debut-and-line-juggling>

BLOG: Salomonsson NHL debut and line juggling

Salomonsson: "Of course, something I dreamed of so a lot of emotions right now."

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – After having Monday off, the Winnipeg Jets got back to the ice before leaving on another long road trip.

Neal Pionk wasn't out on the ice, but Elias Salomonsson was, and he was skating with Pionk's defence partner, Dylan Samberg. All signs pointing to the young Swede making his NHL debut Wednesday night in Washington.

"It's looking that way, yeah. It's looking that way. You know what? P's (Pionk) day-to-day. He actually skated today, which is good news," said Scott Arniel.

"He'll be coming on the trip then. But tomorrow, he's going to get his first look."

It took a few questions to get the information out of Salomonsson that he was playing, the Jets 2022 second round pick had a lot of smiles during his media availability. Salomonsson got the news on Monday night.

"Mo (Mark Morrison) called me the coach of the Moose," said Salomonsson.

"Lot of excitement. Of course, something I dreamed of so a lot of emotions right now."

As for Pionk, the Jets defenceman played only two shifts against the Wild on Sunday before leaving with a lower body injury. Pionk skated on another rink at hockey for all centre and the news with regards to him is positive.

"When we first heard, we thought it was a lot more severe. I thought I'd be giving you the ol' 'week-to-week,' but now I got the 'day-to-day' which is really good news," said Arniel.

"He'll obviously have to see how it feels after skating today but it was good that yesterday it felt a lot better than it did during the game, so that's a good sign."

That wasn't the only news from practice on Tuesday as there were some new look lines as well.

Arniel did some more tweaking to his bottom nine forward groups as Vladislav Namestnikov moves between Cole Perfetti and Tanner Pearson, Adam Lowry reunites with Nino Niederreiter and Alex Iafallo and Jonathan Toews centering Morgan Barron and Gustav Nyquist.

"It gives me some big heaviness on the wing as well, especially with this road trip, with Bear being over there. But I just wanted to see Vladdy back in the middle," said Arniel.

"And obviously we know what he did for us last year and I just think he's a puck possession guy and it'll help that that, maybe spark those other two guys."

Barron has played the majority of the season at centre on the fourth line but is looking forward to playing with Toews.

“You guys know, he’s had a ton of success. Really excited to kind of get the chance,” said Barron.

“Current version of me is very excited, but younger version of me would have been blown away. It’ll be fun.”

Global Winnipeg

<https://www.nhl.com/news/minnesota-wild-winnipeg-jets-game-recap-november-23-2025>

ANALYSIS: Prospect Salomonsson’s addition to lineup can only help Jets compete

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

It’s a debut that has been much anticipated, even though he was only introduced to North American hockey last season.

But when Elias Salomonsson steps on the ice tonight in Washington and takes the solo hot lap in the warm-up skate, it will mark the official arrival of one of the Winnipeg Jets’ blue-chip prospects — a player fans are eager to see and one the organization no doubt feels is time to assess at the NHL level.

For his part, Salomonsson has stirred great interest since being selected by the Jets in the second round of the 2022 draft. Blessed as an excellent skater with above-average puck mobility, the 21-year-old Swede is assuredly the future of the Jets’ blueline.

With a full season at the American Hockey League on his resume from last year with the Moose, an impressive training camp and two pre-season games this past fall with the Jets — and another solid start to this AHL campaign — it was likely an easy decision for the team to tap him as Neal Pionk’s injury replacement.

But let’s be clear on expectations as he slots in tonight, presumably on the right side with Dylan Samberg. Salomonsson is not the panacea for what currently ill the Jets and their position below the playoff line, although if he can simply advance the puck and defend his own zone in the NHL, as all indications suggest he can, then maybe he’ll aid in Winnipeg’s ability to play faster and thus create more offence.

After all, the NHL isn’t getting any slower or older and having players like Salmonsson push into the lineup can only serve to better Winnipeg’s ability to compete in that ever-changing environment.

Now, the length of Salomonsson’s stay with the Jets will depend on a few factors, like how long Pionk is out, how the Jets want their defensive pairings to look moving ahead and ultimately how he plays.

As mentioned, it was just slightly more than a year ago that Salomonsson was introduced to North American hockey; tonight in Washington, D.C., that introduction will eagerly extend to the National Hockey League, too.

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/11/25/jets-telltale-trip-begins-in-washington>

Jets telltale trip begins in Washington Club looking to flip script as puck drops on season-defining road games

By: Mike McIntyre

WASHINGTON — Just before jumping on the team charter Tuesday afternoon, Winnipeg Jets forward Morgan Barron was asked about yet another extended stretch away from home, sweet home.

“It’s always fun to get out on the road,” he told reporters following his team’s practice.

Is it, though? The last time the Jets packed their bags, they were among the NHL’s elite with an impressive 9-3-0 record. But their plane wasn’t the only thing that went south — their overall game did, too, as they managed just two wins over six contests in hostile territory.

A return to Canada Life Centre didn’t offer much relief, producing only one victory in three outings last week. Just like that, the Jets have gone from looking like legitimate Stanley Cup contenders to sitting in a precarious spot below the playoff line.

Now a challenging five-game trip awaits for the 12-9-0 club, beginning Wednesday here in the U.S. capital, and you get the sense this stretch could be season-defining — or, if it resembles the last one, season-deflating.

“I think we have a bad taste in our mouth from the results of last trip,” Barron said. “So it’s a good opportunity to go into some great buildings and some tough atmospheres and really kind of come together.”

Motivation comes in many forms, and the Jets shouldn’t be lacking any over the next eight days. Here’s a few storylines to keep an eye on:

A “D” DEBUT

It appears Elias Salomonsson, the organization’s top blue-line prospect, is set to make his NHL debut against the Capitals.

“Something I dreamed of, so a lot of emotions right now,” said the 21-year-old, who was selected in the second round (55th overall) of the 2022 draft. “It should be awesome.”

Salomonsson was called up from the Manitoba Moose and skated Tuesday on the second-pairing with Dylan Samberg. That’s the spot normally occupied by Neal Pionk, who left Sunday’s 3-0 loss to the Minnesota Wild with a lower body injury.

“When we first heard, we thought it was a lot more severe. I thought I’d be giving you the ol’ ‘week-to-week,’ but now I got the ‘day-to-day’ which is really good news,” Arniel said of Pionk.

Still, even if Pionk is cleared, the plan is to get Salomonsson his first taste of NHL action.

“He’s progressing to be an NHL player,” said Arniel. “For Sal to come in here now and get some reps, get some experience, get that first game under his belt, all of those things that come with going into the game, he’ll get it real quick.”

Salomonsson has six assists in 17 AHL games this season and is known as a strong puck moving defenceman that plays with an edge. His girlfriend, who lives with him in Winnipeg, is now planning to follow him to D.C. while his parents, who are in Sweden, were scrambling to make last-minute travel arrangements.

A SECOND “HOT LAP?”

The Jets are one of the older teams in the league, so they don’t see many “hot laps,” which is the traditional solo skate before warmup for a debuting player.

But they’re likely to see not one, but two, this week. In addition to Salomonsson, expect goaltender Thomas Milic to face NHL firepower for the first time.

Eric Comrie is now the No. 1 netminder with Connor Hellebuyck likely sidelined until at least Christmas after undergoing arthroscopic knee surgery last weekend. Comrie will make his fourth straight start Wednesday in Washington, and he’s expected to be in net for the Black Friday matinee in Raleigh against the Hurricanes.

That would open the door for Milic, 22, to get the call Saturday in Nashville.

“I think (Milic) has been our best player down there, for sure. He won us a lot of games,” Salomonsson said of his Moose-turned-Jets teammate. “He’s so quick out there, sees the game really well. So think he earned a call up for sure.”

Comrie would then likely finish up the trip with games in Buffalo and Montreal next Monday and Wednesday.

Perhaps these injections of energy and excitement will be infectious and give the Jets the jolt they desperately need.

NEW-LOOK LINES

Offence has been an issue for the Jets, who have already been blanked three times this season. That has Arniel firing up the line blender and setting it to “max.”

The top trio of Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor and Gabe Vilardi remains intact — which is no surprise given their elite production. Everything else, however, got a makeover at Tuesday’s skate.

Barron, who has played centre all season, is shifting back to the wing alongside Jonathan Toews and Gustav Nyquist. The idea is to pair his speed with their veteran savvy and hope the mix pays off.

“I’ve said all along I’m happy to play anywhere. Whatever the team needs at the time. Obviously some change but I’m excited for it,” said Barron.

Nyquist (0 goals, 6 assists in 16 games) and Toews (one goal, no assists in his last nine games) are both searching for offence.

Vlad Namestnikov — last year's second-line centre — moves from wing back to the middle between Cole Perfetti and Tanner Pearson.

"I just wanted to see Vladdy back in the middle. Obviously we know what he did for us last year and I just think he's a puck possession guy and it'll help that, maybe spark those other two guys," said Arniel.

That leaves captain Adam Lowry with Nino Niederreiter and Alex Iafallo, while Cole Koepke was the extra forward.

"I just wanted to see Vladdy back in the middle. Obviously we know what he did for us last year and I just think he's a puck possession guy."

PUCK LUCK TURNS?

Go figure: The Jets opened the season hot despite what they themselves admit was some shoddy shinny. Elite goaltending and strong special teams masked plenty, but the results were undeniable.

Lately, however, the opposite has happened. Underlying numbers suggest Winnipeg has significantly improved at five-on-five, yet results haven't followed.

The site MoneyPuck has a clever "Deserve To Win" meter for every NHL game which gives an analytic-based assessment of how the action unfolded. Essentially, they calculate what should transpire based on key metrics such as scoring chances, high-danger chances, shot attempts and the like.

According to their program — which involves running the data through 1,000 simulations — the Jets should have beaten both Carolina (58.8 per cent "deserved") and Minnesota (65.1 per cent "deserved").

"The first 10 games we were showing a lot of red. Our record was real good, but it wasn't a recipe that was going to have success for 82 games," said Arniel.

"Our last 10 games has been way better, and the numbers have really improved defensively. The scoring part, the offence needs to obviously continue to improve and get better. But, at the end of the day, I like more of how we're playing without the puck. We're limiting the amount of chances. Right now, though, we've got to stay in those one-goal games. The results I'd like to see go a little bit our way."

Translation: The Jets hope their puck luck turns and some of those analytics-based "deserved" wins start showing up in the standings.

"We don't feel like we've really played — maybe one or two — complete 60 minute efforts," said Barron.

"If you can continue to do that, we're going to be a great team. But we have to prove we can do that. Internally we have that belief. But it's a matter of stringing those periods together and stringing games together. I think for us, the big emphasis is peaking at the right time and kind of continuing to grow. If we keep moving in the right direction throughout the course of the year, I think it will put us in a really good spot."

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/11/24/jets-on-the-outside-looking-in-at-seasons-quarter-mark>

***Jets on the outside looking in at season's quarter mark
Trademark consistency, attention to detail noticeably absent after hot start***

By: Ken Wiebe

As it stands right now, the Winnipeg Jets are a bubble team.

That's what Jets defenceman Dylan DeMelo essentially said without actually using those exact words in the wake of Sunday's 3-0 loss that left his team at 12-9-0.

"We are exactly what our record says we are," DeMelo surmised.

DeMelo hit the nail on the head at the end of his analysis of where things stand just past the quarter point of the regular season.

There are a multitude of reasons this edition of the Jets is not sitting atop the NHL standings and looking down at the other 31 teams after a historic start.

The trademark consistency and attention to detail, specifically on the defensive side of the puck, has been noticeably absent for a good chunk of the first quarter of the season.

It's not that the Jets have forgotten how to play the system that made them the toughest team to score on in each of the past two seasons, they simply haven't been as committed to it.

"We are exactly what our record says we are."

Inopportune breakdowns are occurring more often and the inability to win one or two extra battles has often been the difference in those tight games the Jets were so quick to lock down in the recent past.

As Jets head coach Scott Arniel was quick to point out when asked about the lack of consistency compared to last season, a number of key injuries have certainly played a role — both in terms of results both from game to game and within them, especially when it comes to the second-period stumbles that has shifted the momentum dramatically at times.

The issue for the Jets is that the injuries keep piling up, most recently with goalie Connor Hellebuyck (out four-to-six weeks with a knee injury that required arthroscopic surgery on Saturday) and defenceman Neal Pionk, who left Sunday's game in the first period with a lower-body issue.

The Jets were off on Monday, so an update on Pionk's status for the upcoming five-game road trip won't be available until Tuesday, but given how gingerly he was moving around at times on Sunday, it wouldn't be a surprise if he's on the shelf for at least a few games here.

There's room on the roster for the Jets to recall a defenceman from the Manitoba Moose of the American Hockey League, even if for insurance purposes, so expect one of Elias Salomonsson, Kale Clague or Ville Heinola to get the call if required.

The Jets also played significant portions of the opening quarter without defenceman Dylan Samberg (who missed 16 games), winger Cole Perfetti (16 games), captain Adam Lowry (14 games) and forward Morgan Barron (six games).

No doubt that's had an impact on the results, but these Jets have prided themselves on finding solutions to the things that are ailing them and this latest round of adversity needs to be met head on.

"The only pressure we have is what we put on ourselves," said DeMelo, asked about where the Jets find themselves in the standings currently. "At the end of the day, if we win the next game or lose it, it doesn't matter in regards to the season. It isn't going to be done. We still have a long way to go. It's more of the process, and I think that's our concern as a team. I don't think we are playing the way we want to play."

How can the Jets get back to the way they want to play?

How do they get closer to the team that started 9-3 before going 3-6 to pass the quarter point?

That's where things get interesting.

There's been plenty of chatter surrounding the speed element of the Jets' game.

The Jets aren't playing as fast as they were last season, which isn't a big surprise when it comes to the departures of Nikolaj Ehlers, Mason Appleton, Brandon Tanev and Rasmus Kupari up front.

The guys coming in mostly feature age, experience and size.

To me, what's been ailing the Jets has less to do than straight line speed than it does with not playing fast enough.

The other thing that hasn't been discussed enough is that the Jets haven't been nearly as disruptive on the forecheck and that lack of creating chaos has led to more one and down situations.

"The only pressure we have is what we put on ourselves."

It also means the Jets are spending more time defending and that's caused an increase in breakdowns to the system.

The Jets also haven't played as fast in the neutral zone and their back pressure was essential in creating a number of goals off the rush last season.

Special teams have mostly been good, though allowing backbreaking shorthanded markers in consecutive games was also a factor in losing to the Carolina Hurricanes and Minnesota Wild.

It's not surprising the Jets dipped a bit on the power play, sitting ninth in the NHL going into Monday's action (23.9 per cent) — though some regression from being the top unit for nearly all of last season was expected.

The penalty kill has made gains, jumping from 13th to sixth while operating at 83.8 per cent efficiency (an even more impressive number when you consider the time missed by Samberg, Lowry and Barron).

The Jets are tied with the Tampa Bay Lightning for 11th in the NHL in goals for per game (3.14), but they have already been shutout three times in 21 games this season — after getting blanked just once in 95 games last season, including the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Five-on-five scoring has been a concern, with the Jets recording 40 goals but allowing 39.

The other issue the Jets need to solve quickly is the lack of secondary scoring on a consistent basis.

The Jets' top line of Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor and Gabe Vilardi has outscored opponents 17-12 at five-on-five and taken care of the bulk of the scoring at even strength.

Offence from the defence is on the rise, with Josh Morrissey putting together a start worthy of Norris Trophy consideration.

Even as his seven-game point streak came to an end on Sunday, he's generating more than a point per game while playing heavy minutes and defending well on the top pairing.

His five goals leads the Jets' defence corps that has three from Logan Stanley and one each from Pionk and DeMelo.

But the Jets are going to need more production from the middle-six to get themselves back on track.

During the past nine games, the Jets have been shutout twice and been limited to 22 goals — an average of 2.44 per game (a sharp contrast from the overall average of 3.14 through 21 games).

The reason for the dropoff is fairly easy to detect, as the Jets have two goals from Alex Iafallo and one goal each from Nino Niederreiter, Cole Perfetti, Jonathan Toews and Lowry.

This isn't about one player hitting a dry spell, it's about the collective coming together to deliver results.

The search for the optimal permutations and combinations is ongoing and the Jets have several players who need to find their offensive mojo.

If they can do that, while buckling down defensively, the conversation surrounding the Jets could shift as they approach the midway point.

But for the time being, the Jets find themselves in the midst of a fight for a wild card spot as they go to work on solidifying their identity.

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/mom-and-dad-challenged-to-make-salomonssons-winnipeg-jets-debut>

Mom and dad challenged to make Salomonsson's Winnipeg Jets debut

By Paul Friesen

Hopefully the Salomonssons have a good travel agent. Because they need to find a way to get from Skelleftea, Sweden, to Washington, D.C., by late Wednesday afternoon.

That's where their son, Elias, will make his NHL debut, suiting up for the Winnipeg Jets against the Capitals.

"My girlfriend is here in Winnipeg right now with me, so much easier for her," Salomonsson said before the Jets boarded their flight on Tuesday. "But hopefully can get mom and dad."

The 21-year-old defenceman, a Jets draft pick three years ago, will be pressed into action after Neal Pionk got hurt in Sunday's 3-0 loss to Minnesota.

While Pionk's injury isn't as bad as the Jets first feared – the veteran skated on his own before Tuesday's practice – he'll sit out at least one game, allowing a dream born in Sweden to come true.

Salomonsson, who'd been down on the farm with the AHL's Manitoba Moose, got the call from Moose bench boss Mark Morrison Monday night.

"Something I dreamed of, so a lot of emotions right now," he said. "Ever since you start watching it on TV... every kid dreams of that."

Head coach Scott Arniel says getting a young defenceman's feet wet in the NHL now beats throwing him into the deeper waters of the second half of the season.

"The big reasoning behind it... is that it's early," Arniel said. "If you have to try to hit our season in February or March, it can be really tough on a defenceman."

While Arniel had Salomonsson paired with Dylan Samberg at Tuesday's practice, he wasn't committing to that duo for the start of Wednesday's game.

As high as the Jets are on their top blue-line prospect, they still have to try to get him the best possible matchups.

In Washington, that usually means not having him out against Alex Ovechkin all the time.

Bring it on, the kid seemed to say.

"Should be awesome," he said. "Something to dream of. Should be fun, if that happens."

Salomonsson was a one-year-old when Ovechkin embarked on his rookie NHL season, ending it with 52 goals on his way to becoming the all-time leader.

In those childhood dreams, the Swede's first game would start with a similar bang, heard all the way back home.

"Score a goal," he said, with a wink.

The Jets, 12-9-0 and below the playoff line, are coming off their third shutout loss of the season. They hope to put together a much better record on this five-game trip than they did on a six-game trip that saw them lose four earlier this month.

"We have a bad taste in our mouth from the results of the last trip," forward Morgan Barron said. "So it's a good opportunity to go into some great buildings and some tough atmospheres and really come together."

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/jets-record-not-the-whole-story-arniel>

Jets' record not the whole story: Arniel

By Paul Friesen

They say you are what your record says you are, but the Winnipeg Jets feel like their 12-9 mark sells them a bit short.

"We don't feel like we've really played – maybe one or two – but complete 60-minute efforts," forward Morgan Barron said, Tuesday. "That's more a philosophical question... we have to prove we can do that. Internally, we have that belief."

While the Jets got out of the gate quickly, winning nine of their first 12, they're 3-6, since.

Head coach Scott Arniel says those trends don't tell the real story.

"It's funny, because the first 10 games... our record was real good, but it wasn't a recipe that was going to have success for 82 games," he said. "Our last 10 games have been way better, and the numbers have really improved defensively."

Forward Gustav Nyquist agrees.

"We had a great start... record-wise," Nyquist said. "But honestly, we've probably been playing a little better the last 10 games, where the record hasn't been as good. Sometimes that happens. The positive we take from that is we're trending in the right direction. That'll turn into wins eventually."

Arniel is hoping more consistent line combinations will help produce more offence, although he's reluctant to even talk about more scoring.

"I don't want to say it, because then you know what happens – it tilts the other way again. So I like a lot more of what we're doing this last 10."

Dodging a bullet

Defenceman Neal Pionk joined the team for its five-game road trip beginning in Washington, Wednesday, something Arniel wouldn't have predicted when Pionk was hurt in Sunday's 3-0 loss to Minnesota.

"We thought it was a lot more severe," the coach said. "I thought I'd be giving you the old 'week-to-week.' But now I've got the 'day-to-day,' which is really good news. He'll obviously have to see how it feels after skating. But... (Monday) it felt a lot better than it did during the game, so that's a good sign."

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/feast-famine-jets-nyquist-starving-for-first-goal-with-new-team>

Feast, famine: Jets' Nyquist starving for first goal with new team

By Paul Friesen

Ask Gustav Nyquist if anything has surprised him about Winnipeg and the first-year Jet goes culinary.

"The restaurant scene," Nyquist said, Tuesday. "It's very good. Much better than I thought it would be."

He could have said the same thing about the weather, specifically the lack of a single snowflake just a month out from Christmas.

"I don't think I know what I'm in for, yet," the 36-year-old Swede said.

If only the end of his goal-scoring drought was as predictable.

Nyquist goes into Wednesday's tilt in Washington still looking for his first of the season, his 16-game famine the longest season-opening dry spell of his NHL career.

Fourteen years and six teams into it, the lack of finish probably wouldn't bother him like it would have, say, 10 years ago, if it weren't for the circumstance.

"You want to score that first goal and get it out of the way, especially with a new team," Nyquist said. "You've just got to try your hardest to not be frustrated. And it's easier to say than do. It just doesn't help to be frustrated."

He's learned that over the years, when 10- or 11-game droughts would come and go.

Last season provided a similar test, maybe even a tougher one than his current one: he took a 10-game drought from Nashville to Minnesota and went another another 15 games after the trade to the Wild.

He ended the year with just 11 goals, the least productive of his career, given the 79 games he played.

The Jets hoped that was a mirage, putting their free-agent stock in the guy who popped 23 and a career-high 75 points a year earlier.

Not rewarding that faith is what can drive players nuts.

“He’s not frustrated and breaking sticks and going crazy,” head coach Scott Arniel said.

Maybe not. But there’s always something bubbling under the surface when these slumps reach a certain point.

We’ve heard the squeezing-the-stick analogy, but this is probably more mental than physical.

“I wouldn’t put a number of games on it,” Nyquist said. “It’s hard to describe, hard to put into words. Sometimes when you’re hot the puck just keeps finding you in good spots, the puck squirts out on the backside for an easy goal. And when it’s going hard, it’s going hard.”

Seems it’s feast or famine, for some.

“I’ve been through it,” teammate Morgan Barron added, recalling how last year around this time he finally scored his first non-empty-netter of the season. “Sometimes it feels like you’re putting pucks on net and nothing’s going in. It’s funny, it always seems to come in ebbs and flows. I have no doubt that once he gets one, the floodgates will open for him.”

Nyquist isn’t worried about floodgates opening. A simple crack in the gate would be fine.

“I’m starting to play a lot better here, as of late,” he said. “Hopefully it’ll come here soon and get the gates open a little bit. Everyone’s going to go through it if you play long enough. It does help, having been through it. I look at clips and I see the chances the last couple, three games, chances that could have gone home.

“Just keep doing those and one will pop.”

Arniel says there have been things to like about Nyquist’s game, patience with the puck being one of them.

Acknowledging he’s a passer first, he’d like to see him get inside a little more – and shoot.

“He is getting some looks and I’d like to see him try to bury those,” the coach said.

A lineup often in flux, not to mention an injury that cost Nyquist five games, hasn’t helped.

He’s pegged to start Wednesday’s game on a line with Barron and Jonathan Toews.

Maybe the weather provided a good omen as the Jets left home: the forecast called for a chance of snow.

When it comes to this new Winnipegger, maybe we, too, still don’t know what we’re in for.

Jets quarter-mark report: Recent skid spoils hot start

By Ryan Dixon

With the Winnipeg Jets having played 21 games this year, it's time for a quarter-mark report. Quite frankly, had this examination occurred after game No. 19 — a 5-2 win over the Columbus Blue Jackets — the tenor would likely be much different. As it stands, though, the past handful of days have been rough enough in Jetsland to shift the vibes around the team and introduce the idea that there's some cause for concern.

On Friday, the team announced Connor Hellebuyck — also known as the reigning league MVP — would miss four to six weeks thanks to arthroscopic knee surgery. Since then, Eric Comrie has started two home games and lost them both. In fairness to Comrie, the Jets failed to score a goal in the second of those contests, a 3-0 loss to a Minnesota Wild team that has now jumped Winnipeg in the Central Division standings.

That pair of defeats emphasizes the point that the first quarter of Winnipeg's season is really a tale of two halves. Through 12 games, the Jets posted a 9-3-0 record. Since then, however, the club has scuffled through a 3-6-0 stretch that has made November a much less fun month than October.

Throw in Hellebuyck's injury and a Central Division that's living up to its pre-season billing as the NHL's Group of Death and you understand why there could be low-to-mid-level handwringing in Manitoba.

Somewhat perplexingly, the Jets managed better out of the gates while three key players — captain Adam Lowry, second-liner Cole Perfetti and second-pair defenceman Dylan Samberg — were out of the lineup. While the team's fortunes have actually dipped with those three guys debuting in November, you must think Winnipeg is better positioned to handle Hellebuyck's absence with that trio of players in the lineup.

Still, with their star goalie on the shelf, it figures to be a grind for Winnipeg between here and the point in January when it's time to do the mid-season report.

Most encouraging development: The stars are delivering

Mark Scheifele's 1.33 points per game is a bigger number than all but six NHLers; Kyle Connor is tied for 16th in that category with 1.19, and the only defenceman with more points than Josh Morrissey's 22 is Cale Makar with 29. Even Hellebuyck, before he had surgery, has the sixth-highest goals save above expected/60 minutes in the league. Say what you will about Winnipeg, its big boys lead the way.

It should also be pointed out that the Jets entered camp with two huge pending UFAs in the form of Connor and Lowry. Connor re-upped for eight years on the eve of the regular season, while Lowry returned from hip surgery and put pen to paper on a five-year extension soon thereafter.

Most concerning development: Trouble under the hood?

The Jets' underlying numbers are not flattering. A team that's supposed to be defined by solid structure is 27th in Money puck's expected goals for percentage metric. Last season, Winnipeg finished seventh in that category.

According to the site Power Rankings Guru, the Jets have also had the second-easiest strength of schedule so far. The power play, while still formidable at 23.9 per cent (ninth in the league), is not quite the lethal weapon it was last year, when the Jets finished first in the NHL at 28.9 per cent.

Now, all of this is happening against the backdrop of Helleybuck being unavailable for up to six weeks.

Top-six forwards: B

This is really a conversation about the top line versus everybody else in the forward group. Mark Scheifele (11), Kyle Connor (11) and Gabe Vilardi (eight) have combined to score 30 goals for Winnipeg this year; the rest of the forwards, combined, have 26.

The top trio would likely earn an A-plus on its own, but the second line — for a variety of reasons — has been in a bit of flux all year. After two years away from the NHL, Jonathan Toews has eight points and is minus-11 in 21 games. Cole Perfetti was hurt in the final pre-season game and sustained a lower-body injury. He returned on Nov. 9 and has one goal in seven games. Vlad Namestnikov had six goals through 12 games, but has not found the back of the net in nine.

The next quarter of the season really needs to be about establishing a second wave of scoring for Winnipeg.

Bottom-six forwards: C

The return of Adam Lowry on Nov. 4 was a boon for the bottom/middle-six forward crew. Jets coach Scott Arniel now has options in terms of running Lowry out as a 2C with Toews underneath him, or vice-versa.

A couple of winger situations are pretty grim right now, with Gustav Nyquist — signed in the summer to provide secondary offence — still without a goal through 16 contests. Meanwhile, Brad Lambert — the 30th pick in the 2022 draft — has been told by the club that his representation can explore trade options with other teams.

The good news? Morgan Barron has emerged as a large, steady force in the middle of the fourth line.

Defence: B

Josh Morrissey is certainly the headliner here, as he is having the kind of showing that might make him a Norris finalist when all is said and done. Getting Dylan Samberg back from his broken wrist on Nov. 13 should help settle the top four, though suddenly Samberg's playing partner, Neal Pionk, is listed as day-to-day.

Winnipeg really relies on the duos of Morrissey-Dylan DeMelo, and Samberg-Pionk to carry the mail, so the club needs good health there and for everybody to find their rhythm now that Samberg is back.

Logan Stanley, a frequent scratch last year, has dressed for every game, is averaging a career-high 17:07 per night and — after entering the season with five goals in 201 career games — already has three tallies this year.

Goaltending: A-minus

When Hellebuyck finished his most recent start, the Jets still ranked fifth in the NHL with a team save percentage of .905. He may not have been posting a Hart Trophy-type season, but the big man was still pulling his weight. Behind him, Eric Comrie had a sturdy .908 save percentage in five games.

The dynamic is totally different now, with Comrie being counted on to start.

Joining Comrie in the current battery is 22-year-old Thomas Milic, who figures to get the first NHL action of his career any minute now. A fifth-round pick in 2023, Milic had strong numbers in last spring's AHL playoffs with the Manitoba Moose and was off to a good start this year with a .921 mark in nine AHL games. That said, we're talking about a goalie who played 18 ECHL games last year.

One way or another, the Jets will have to make do without their security blanket for a while.

Quarter-mark Awards

MVP: Mark Scheifele

Most Improved Player: Morgan Barron

Best Defensive Player: Josh Morrissey