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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/jets-back-to-work-olympic-qf-matchups-set>

Jets back to work, Olympic QF matchups set Jets got back on the ice on Tuesday, will face Vancouver on Feb. 25

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – Minus the four Olympians, the Winnipeg Jets got back on the ice on Tuesday afternoon in preparation for the stretch run of the NHL season.

Josh Morrissey, Kyle Connor, Connor Hellebuyck and Nino Niederreiter all will be playing in the quarterfinals on Wednesday, and their Jets teammates have been watching.

“To finally see NHL players back in the Olympics, with best on best, and to see the game in that form, at that speed, with that intensity, it’s been great to watch,” said Adam Lowry.

“And I’m looking forward to watching the qualification rounds and the next few games coming up here.”

Some good news came from Italy as Morrissey, who has missed the last two games with an unspecified injury, skated with Colton Parayko at Canada’s practice a sign that he could be good to go against Czechia. His normal defence partner, Dylan DeMelo says he feels bad for Morrissey having to miss time.

“Yeah, it sucks, for sure. I know how much it’s meant to him to be on that team and to be to be playing,” said DeMelo.

“He’s a big part of that team, too. So, I hope he’s back next game and can do his thing out there.”

It’s because of the Olympics that the NHL has had to jam a lot of hockey in a small pocket of time. Winnipeg has been fortunate as they had a five-day break at Christmas and now this extended time away.

“It was great, nice mental reset. Wasn’t really a physical reset for me with the two kiddos trying to chase them around, but it was. It was great for just to get away,” said DeMelo.

“It’s been a crazy year with the schedule and the volume we’ve had to deal with, obviously, to be able to get a chance to recharge the mind, I think it’s probably more important than the body, unless you’re obviously dealing with something.”

Jets captain Adam Lowry has spent the entire season trying to get back to form after he had hip surgery in the summer. Lowry has three consecutive seasons of 30 plus points and that streak is obviously in jeopardy, but the Olympic break will be beneficial to him.

“Getting back and having some practice time, coming off the surgery and going into the schedule, there wasn’t a lot of practice time, there weren’t a lot of days off to get in the gym and strengthen (the hip). To be able to give it some rest and get some good workouts in and to get a

full week of practice before we're back, I'm just looking forward to getting back and trying to build on my game," said Lowry.

"I felt like coming out of the Christmas break that my game was starting to come. The last month, I felt like I've been able to build it a little more each game and things like that. It's going to be important to keep doing that and try and play my best hockey down the stretch."

Neal Pionk and Haydn Fleury took part of practice today, but both were in non-contact jerseys. Colin Miller skated on Monday and Scott Arniel said he took today off and is hoping to have Miller back on Wednesday.

Scott Arniel and the coaching staff are used to this type of compressed schedule thanks to the 4 Nations Face-Off last year. The Jets are 11 points out of a playoff spot and the three-game road west coast road trip will be huge in terms of their chances to make a big push.

"So, being able to do this this week (of practice) is important for us. This is not a luxury like we had last year, we are running into this last 26 game chasing and every point matters, obviously, it has the last couple of months but this is going to be big for us coming out of the gate going on a three game road trip," said Arniel.

"And to be able to get out and work on specific things right now, after game 56, is a rarity. We have to take advantage of it and that is what we talked about."

OLYMPIC UPDATE

Canada as the top seed will have a rematch with Czechia in the quarterfinals, the Canadians shut out Czechia 5-0 to start the tournament.

"I'm really hoping that Josh is back. I think he'd really help their back end. There are a lot of really good teams. Czechia has got some really dangerous pieces up front, (David) Pastrnak, (Martin) Necas, (Tomas) Hertl, a lot of guys that can hurt you if you give them opportunities," said Lowry.

"Canada looked good against them in the preliminary game, but it's important that they play a similar style as they did in that first one."

Nino Niederreiter and Switzerland dominated the Italians today outshooting them 51-20 and ended up winning 3-0. The Swiss will now face Finland in the quarters.

The best matchup of the quarterfinals will have Connor Hellebuyck and the Americans facing Sweden, the Swedes beat Latvia 5-1 in the qualification round.

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/02/17/jets-thrilled-to-see-teammates-on-world-stage>

Jets thrilled to see teammates on world stage Club hits the ice for the first time since the start of the Olympic break

By: Ken Wiebe

Jonathan Toews knows exactly what it's like to be on this massive world stage.

So as Canada prepares to face Czechia in men's hockey on Wednesday morning in the first of four quarterfinals at the 2026 Olympics in Milan, the Winnipeg Jets centre was more than happy to weigh in on what he's seen so far.

"It's awesome. It's why we, as players, want to have NHLers in the Olympics," said Toews, who helped Canada win gold in both 2010 and 2014. "For the best on best (element). It's good for our sport and it's good for people around the world that aren't traditional hockey fans, to see how special these guys are as athletes."

The Jets — other than the four players still competing at the Olympics — were back on the ice on Tuesday afternoon in the first workout since a 5-1 loss to the Montreal Canadiens left them staring at an 11-point deficit behind the Anaheim Ducks, who currently hold the second wild-card spot in the Western Conference.

There's still a full week to go before the Jets return to action against the Vancouver Canucks to open a three-game road trip that also includes games against the Anaheim Ducks and San Jose Sharks, so there's going to be ample time to discuss the frenetic sprint to the end of the regular season.

That's why most of the interviews taking place on Tuesday focused on the return of NHLers to the Olympics for the first time since 2014.

People of a certain vintage remember what it was like for Wayne Gretzky, Mark Messier and Mario Lemieux to wear the Maple Leaf along with 1.0 Jets star Dale Hawerchuk at the Canada Cup in 1987.

It's a similar feeling for the current generation of NHLers to see Sidney Crosby at his third Olympics and skating alongside the likes of Connor McDavid, Nathan MacKinnon and Cale Makar, among others, for the first time on this platform.

"It sheds a great light on hockey and the state of where the NHL game is," said Jets captain Adam Lowry. "To finally see our best players play on the world stage and have an opportunity to play for their country and showcase their abilities and to get them to all play together, it's great for the sport of hockey and it's great for hockey fans in general."

"There are so many great players from so many countries. To finally get to see teams in their best form and competing against each other, it's been great to watch."

Toews was 21 when he recorded eight points and was named the top forward in the 2010 Olympics, but he marvels at what Macklin Celebriani has been doing at the ripe age of 19 at this showcase event.

"He's a special player. He's definitely a talent and he's got that elite mentality," said Toews. "You can see that he's going to be a big-game player, he's a leader and he's going to be the kind of guy who drives the game for his team at both ends of the rink."

"When you're trying to build a Stanley Cup team, aside from all of the points, he's going to influence the game and make everyone on the ice better, every time that he's out there. It's cool to see him get the opportunity to do what he's doing right now."

Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey has been sidelined for the past two games with an injury, but he's tracking to return for Wednesday's game.

"It sucks, for sure," said Jets blue-liner Dylan DeMelo, who is Morrissey's regular defence partner with the Jets. "I know how much it has meant to him to be on that team and to be playing. He's a big part of that team, too. So I hope he's back next game and can do his thing out there."

Jets winger Nino Niederreiter got his Olympics off to a great start as he was one of the flag bearers for Switzerland during the opening ceremonies and now he's trying to help them get past Finland on Wednesday and earn a date with Canada.

"What an unbelievable experience for him, just to see him on the television, with the pride he has for his country," Lowry said of his linemate. "It's a once in a lifetime experience. To see him leading the Swiss out there, that was really cool."

While Jets forward Kyle Connor looks like a healthy scratch for Team USA on Wednesday, goalie Connor Hellebuyck has cemented himself as the clear-cut No. 1 guy for the Americans and is ready to face Sweden.

"The way the setup is with this tournament, it starts to build and every game, obviously, it ramps up," said Jets head coach Arniel. "To see him getting comfortable and making things look easy, not allowing anyone to see the net, controlling his rebounds, all those things, he seems to be dialed in."

"Now, from this point forward, it usually is great goaltending that gets you the gold medal."

The Jets recalled four players from the Manitoba Moose of the American Hockey League on Tuesday to help get them to full numbers for the on-ice workout, including goalie Dom DiVincenzi, defencemen Elias Salomonsson and Ville Heinola and forward Walker Duehr.

All four players are having excellent seasons in the AHL, prompting some folks to wonder if any or all of the players could stick around after the NHL roster freeze is lifted at 10:59 p.m. CT on Feb. 22.

But it's too early to speculate on that subject, though Salomonsson's play with the Jets during his second stint in the NHL suggested he's ready for more during the stretch run.

The status of the three other recalled players is likely to be determined by possible trades that could be made prior to the Mar. 7 deadline.

Arniel also provided a quick injury update on the trio of blue-liners that were sidelined prior to the break and the most encouraging news revolves around Neal Pionk, who remained in a non-contact jersey but sounds like an option to return to action at some point during the upcoming road trip.

Haydn Fleury continues to progress after his awkward fall into the end boards on Jan. 6 left him with a variety of ailments to sort through.

Fleury was back on the ice as a full participant, though he also remains in a non-contact jersey and will need some additional time to get his conditioning back up after missing more than a month of game action.

Colin Miller, who suffered a knee injury on Jan. 11, skated on his own on Monday and is expected to be back on the ice with strength and conditioning coach Jake Wolff on Wednesday, though there is no timetable for his return yet.

Arniel said the Jets plan to use the next few days as a mini-training camp, digging into some of the finer details that have been challenging to work on due to the compressed nature of the schedule.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/02/17/getting-the-team-canada-band-back-together>

***Getting the Team Canada band back together
Morrissey, Marchand poised to return from injury for quarterfinal rumble***

By: Mike McIntyre

MILAN — Josh Morrissey is raring to go. Which is perfectly understandable given the way recent international hockey events have played out for the Winnipeg Jets defenceman.

There was the severe stomach virus that sidelined him last February for the gold medal final of the 4 Nations Face-Off. And now, a lower-body injury suffered in his Winter Olympics debut last week which has kept him out of Canada's last two games.

If it weren't for bad luck, he'd have no luck at all.

But hope springs eternal, and there was Morrissey flying around the ice on Tuesday afternoon as he practiced with his No. 1 ranked teammates ahead of Wednesday's win-or-go-home quarterfinal game against No. 8 Czechia — which downed Denmark 3-2 in a qualifying round elimination game.

Could Morrissey be ready to return?

"Just taking it day-by-day. A good practice here. Just trying to get ready for the rest of the tournament the best I can," he told reporters.

Canadian head coach Jon Cooper liked what he saw from Morrissey, who was back to his usual blue-line pairing beside Colton Parayko.

“That was a big thing for him to get out here today. In my opinion he looked great. But (no decision) until after I talk to him,” said Cooper.

We’ll mark that down as a “likely.”

Canada took care of business against Switzerland and France to finish off group play while Morrissey watched from the crowd, but they could use his puck-moving ability and offensive instincts as they move into elimination games.

A win Wednesday would send Canada to the semifinals on Friday. Bronze and gold medal games go Saturday and Sunday.

“You just try and be a great teammate in whatever way I can.”

“Not being out there but watching, defensively, guys have been sharp. I feel really confident in our defensive game,” said Morrissey.

“It’s a short tournament and you’re coming together with the systems, trying to put everything into play. But I think it is rounding into form. I feel guys were sharp today.”

Forward Brad Marchand has also missed the last two games with a nagging injury but was a full participant on Tuesday. Cooper wouldn’t commit to him being in the lineup, only saying he’s “available.”

Nathan MacKinnon and Sam Bennett missed the practice for what the team called maintenance, but both are expected to play on Wednesday.

“It’s pretty clear. We understand the circumstances, and what we need to do, and obviously what got us to this point, as far as our identity and things like that,” said captain Sidney Crosby. “We gotta keep getting better. But obviously, stakes are a little higher now.”

The fate of a couple Manitobans could be impacted by whether Morrissey and/or Marchand return. On the blue line, Elkhorn’s Travis Sanheim could potentially be the odd man out. He was on the fourth pairing Tuesday with Shea Theodore, who would likely remain in the lineup as a seventh defenceman.

Up front, Winnipeg’s Seth Jarvis played the past two games in Marchand’s absence, so you figure he could be the one going out. For what it’s worth, he skated on the fourth line Tuesday with Marchand and Bo Horvat.

“If you get intimidated, you don’t have anything (and) you shouldn’t be playing pro hockey.”

Canadian players have repeatedly talked about putting ego aside for the greater good, even if it means taking a reduced role or, in Morrissey’s case, have to cheer from the sidelines due to circumstances beyond your control.

“You just try and be a great teammate in whatever way I can,” Morrissey said of still trying to contribute despite not playing.

"Every single guy here is a fantastic hockey player, so just try and watch the game yourself, stay sharp on what the team's doing, systems. It's a short tournament, but like Marchy said, being vocal, being around the group and contributing any way you can."

Canada is obviously the heavy favourites over Czechia, who they beat 5-0 in first round-robin game where Morrissey got hurt. But you won't catch them counting the proverbial chickens before they hatch.

"We try to match anybody that we play. They came out hard and they came out strong and I thought we matched that really well," said Horvat.

"So we expect them to come out harder. Playing us hard again. So we got to match that again."

Czechia rebounded from that loss to Canada by beating France 6-3 and falling to Switzerland 4-3 in overtime to finish off group play before squeezing past Denmark.

"We need to play our best game of the tournament to have a chance to beat (Canada)," Czech forward Ondrej Palat said Tuesday. "Obviously an unbelievable team, so that's a huge challenge in front of us."

Czech defencemen Radko Gudas said one thing his team won't do is play scared.

"If you get intimidated, you don't have anything (and) you shouldn't be playing pro hockey," he said.

"They're one of the best teams put together in a long time. They have some stars playing even on the fourth line. They're a very skilled, very fast team. We've got to have 120 per cent of our effort and be on top of our game throughout the whole game."

Back on the Canadian side, Cooper was asked what his message to the team is? Does he have some big rah-rah speech planned?

"I hate looking at it like that," he said. "You don't want to put any stress on yourself. You don't want players playing the game not to make mistakes. I like our mentality. It's not qualification or quarterfinal or whatever. You gotta win six. This is game four. Let's go make the best."

Puck drops on the quarterfinal game Wednesday at 9:40 a.m. CT.

Here's a quick look at the three other quarterfinal games:

No. 3 SLOVAKIA VS No. 6 GERMANY (5:10 a.m. CT)

While Slovakia may be the higher seed, don't discount the odds of a German upset here.

Led by Winnipeg-born head coach Harold Kreis and former Jets associate coach and current Florida Panthers assistant Jamie Kompon, Germany has the likes of Leon Draisaitl, Tim Stutzle and JJ Peterka, who sparked Tuesday's 5-1 qualifying round win over France. Meanwhile, Slovakia is being led by the scorching hot Juraj Slafkovsky.

No. 4 FINLAND VS No. 5 SWITZERLAND (11:10 a.m. CT)

Can Jets forward Nino Niederreiter and his Swiss teammates pull off the upset? They'll face a daunting task against a NHL-heavy roster that includes the likes of Mikko Rantanen, Sebastian Aho and Miro Heiskanen. Switzerland beat Italy 3-0 Tuesday to get to this stage.

No. 2 UNITED STATES VS No. 7 SWEDEN (2:10 p.m. CT)

It's hard to believe one of these teams is not even going to get to play for a medal. A heavyweight battle between two of the three most star-studded rosters in the tournament, with Canada being the other.

Jets goaltender Connor Hellebuyck will lead his team into battle, while winger Kyle Connor is expected to be a healthy scratch for a second straight game.

"This is exciting. This is why I play the game," Hellebuyck said following Tuesday's practice.

"I don't chase the money, I don't chase the fame, I play for fun. And these are those moments that I really enjoy."

One potential benefit for Team USA is that Sweden had to play Tuesday night by virtue of losing a three-way tiebreak in their pool and ultimately finishing third with a 2-1 record. They easily took care of Latvia by a 5-1 score.

The four remaining teams will be re-seeded for the semifinals. That means Canada would play Finland and the United States would meet Slovakia if there were no upsets.

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/7052839/2026/02/18/connor-hellebuyck-olympics-mens-hockey-usa/?redirected=1>

Can an Olympic gold medal change Connor Hellebuyck's big-game reputation?

By Mark Lazerus

MILAN — Connor Hellebuyck looks angry. Like, all the time. There's just something about that steely glare, the way his eyebrows dip in the middle, the way the tiny muscles at the corners of his mouth don't seem capable of going up. This is a very serious man.

So it's almost jarring to hear Hellebuyck use a word like "fun." It's akin to someone rapidly speaking in an unfamiliar language dropping in a name you recognize. Wait, did I just hear that right?

But believe it or not, Connor Hellebuyck is having fun in Milan.

"This is exciting," he said, with absolutely zero excitement in his voice. "This is why I play the game. I don't chase the money, I don't chase the fame. I play for fun. And these are those moments that I really enjoy."

Strange cat, this Hellebuyck. His Zen-like calmness in net is part of what makes him arguably the best goaltender on the planet. He never flails, never panics, never seems to scramble. He's

always in the right place, always making the difficult look routine through savvy anticipation and flawless mechanics.

"I just love his confidence, I love his calmness," said United States teammate Matthew Tkachuk. "It's exactly what you want in a No. 1 goalie."

But the stillness masks a competitive ferocity that drives him to almost fanatical levels. He doesn't smolder, he burns. Hellebuyck elicited chuckles last spring when he said, without a trace of irony in his voice, that he has probably studied the art and science of goaltending more than any person "in this world." But he wasn't kidding. He really does take his job that seriously. What he defines as "fun" is that pursuit of perfection.

And he's come pretty darn close to finding it.

At 32 years old, Hellebuyck has already cemented his place as one of the most talented goalies the league has ever seen. He's one of just 13 goalies in NHL history with three Vezina trophies, tied with the likes of Patrick Roy, Glenn Hall and Tony Esposito. He's one of just eight who have won the Hart Trophy as the league's most valuable player, and one of just three this century. He has saved 122 more goals than expected over the last three full seasons — 41 more than second-place Ilya Sorokin of the New York Islanders, per Evolving Hockey.

Hellebuyck's resume and reputation from October through early April is unimpeachable. It's those pesky spring months that have been the issue. His playoff performance over those same three seasons is rather ghastly. In 23 playoff games, he's given up 13 more goals than expected, 47th out of 47 goalies who appeared in the 2023, 2024 and 2025 postseasons. His .922 save percentage from 2022-2025 is tied for best in the league, but in the playoffs, it dropped to .872, bad enough for 39th place. The Winnipeg Jets won just one series over those three postseasons, and Hellebuyck understandably drew the most scrutiny as the team's best player.

Hellebuyck's inability (so far) to win the big one has been as much a part of his story as his regular-season dominance. An injury this season cost him a month, and the Jets look like they're going to miss the playoffs, meaning he'll have to wait another year to shed that label as a big-game failure.

Unless he can do it in Milan.

Would the image of Hellebuyck with an Olympic gold medal slung around his neck — having conquered Sweden, having conquered Canada — be enough to change the narrative, to rewrite his legacy, to prove him a winner?

As the Olympic tournament enters the quarterfinal round on Wednesday, that's the kind of rarefied air the eight teams left have reached. This is legacy stuff, the kind of thing they put in the first line of your obituary — or the first line of your Hockey Hall of Fame plaque. It's a lot to wrap your brain around, and some players choose not to try. That mental burden can motivate you or crush you, and all athletes — from figure skater Ilia Malinin to snowboarder Eileen Gu to every NHL player on the United States, Canada and Sweden rosters — feel it.

How they handle it varies. Germany's Nico Sturm tries to ignore it.

“We all deal with the pressure a little different,” Sturm said. “I always like to not let the moment get too big. You’re at the Olympics and you’re one win away from having a chance to play for a medal. But there’s no point in (spending) the next 20 hours telling yourself that, because you’re going to go crazy.”

Sweden coach Sam Hallam tries to use it.

“It’s important that you remind yourself at times where you are,” he said. “This isn’t Game 63 in the regular season. This is once every four years. Just embrace that as motivation.”

American Vincent Trocheck tries to focus it.

“The next game is part of that,” he said. “We have to worry about that one. You can’t get to the semifinal game without winning the quarterfinal game.”

Hellebuyck? He’s, well, calm about it. If the burden of history — and of his reputation — weighs on him at all, he certainly isn’t showing it. When discussing Wednesday’s quarterfinal against Sweden, he very much sounds like he’s discussing Game 63 of the regular season.

“No, it’s one day at a time,” he said when asked about it. “I’m enjoying myself and trying to get better. All I can do is put my best foot forward every day.”

That chill confidence is why his teammates, both in Winnipeg and in Milan, like playing in front of him so much. Asked what he learned about Hellebuyck at the 4 Nations Face-Off last February, Dylan Larkin said that he’s “a gamer,” adding there’s no one else he’d rather have in net. And Hellebuyck was excellent at the 4 Nations, posting a tournament-best .932 save percentage and allowing just five goals in three starts.

But he didn’t win. Jordan Binnington and Canada did. And while that blame hardly lies at Hellebuyck’s feet, the fact is Binnington made one more big save than he did. Binnington stopped Auston Matthews in overtime, Hellebuyck didn’t stop Connor McDavid. Three months later, he gave up five or more goals in four of his 13 playoff starts, losing to the Dallas Stars in Round 2 after barely escaping the St. Louis Blues in Round 1. The talk of Hellebuyck’s big-game struggles was never louder.

And it’s all fair. Hellebuyck’s trophy room is as impressive as any player’s in the NHL. But they’re all individual, all for the regular season. There’s no Stanley Cup. And there’s no gold medal. Not yet, at least.

No label is more offensive to a professional athlete than that of “choker.” It’s a term that’s probably too harsh for Hellebuyck, who is not solely to blame for the Jets’ inability to get past the second round of the Stanley Cup playoffs. But it’s not far off, either. Sports fans traffic in hyperbole the way Hellebuyck traffics in monotone clichés. So the label will follow him until he rips it off in triumph.

Would a gold medal be enough, or would the skepticism follow him into Winnipeg’s next playoff series, whenever that may be? Probably the latter, if we’re being honest. In the hockey world, the silver of Lord Stanley still trumps the gold of the Olympic Games. But it certainly wouldn’t hurt the public perception. It could, at the very least, nudge the narrative.

Internally? Hellebuyck doesn't seem to feel any of it — the weight, the pressure, the stress. This is not a man who needs more confidence. To steal a phrase from him, perhaps no one in this world has as much confidence as Hellebuyck does. But a coronation in Milan might give the rest of the hockey world some confidence in him the next time the stakes are raised.

And who knows? It might even make him smile.

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11672300/analysis-winnipeg-jets-post-olympic-schedule/>

ANALYSIS: Winnipeg Jets don't plan to ease back into post-Olympic schedule

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

Leading up to the Olympic break, Winnipeg Jets head coach Scott Arniel was already plotting what his team's return to the ice would look like after 12 days off.

So, when they assembled on Tuesday afternoon for the first time since a Feb. 4 loss to Montreal — save for the four players still at the Winter Games — everyone knew what was coming this week.

Which is to say a format similar to training camp, although as defenceman Dylan DeMelo put it, "with different weather."

And judging by the way the skate was conducted, which included a practice plan with high-paced flow drills and rushes up and down the ice and concluded with a three-on-three game between the blue lines, the intent was to get the RPMs back up and redlining as soon as possible.

Moreover, Arniel also mentioned that as the week progresses into the weekend, they'll tailor their workouts to defensive and offensive zone coverage and finish with a special teams focus before their next game — a week from Wednesday in Vancouver.

It's a strategy of preparation the Jets coaching staff hopes will allow the team to hear the starter's pistol and begin a sprint to the finish with 26 games in 51 days and an 11-point deficit to make up in a desperate playoff push.

Or as Arniel said more succinctly after Tuesday's skate, "we're not working our way into the 26 games; we have to be up and running at full speed."

The Olympics this year and previously the 4 Nations Face-Off last February have created an oddity in NHL scheduling, as the 20-day break between games for the Jets will attest.

But as they look to burst out of the blocks next week in full pursuit of making up some serious ground, perhaps this mid-season training camp will indeed help the Jets come out of the Olympic break better than the way they went into it.

Winnipeg Sun

https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/jets-hopeful-status-of-canada-s-josh-morrissey-a-mystery/article_e11f6694-a98c-4f6b-86ad-f48175adfb1c.html

Jets hopeful, status of Canada's Josh Morrissey a mystery

By Gordon Anderson

Even Scott Arniel is on the outside looking in when it comes to the status of his primary defenceman currently wearing the colours of Canada.

"We have been in contact," the Jets head coach said about Josh Morrissey. "He kinda just banged himself up and hopefully he will be good to go."

Morrissey practiced with Team Canada on Tuesday but hasn't been officially green-lighted to join his mates for the quarterfinal matchup with Czechia on Wednesday morning. After playing 7:10 in the 5-0 win over Czechia, Morrissey was in the stands with an undisclosed injury against Switzerland and France in Group A action.

In his meeting with the media in Milan after practice on Tuesday, national team head coach Jon Cooper shed zero light on the status of Morrissey. Cooper was also tight-lipped about Nathan MacKinnon and Sam Bennett, both players skipping the workout for maintenance reasons.

The Jets No. 4 has had some unfortunate luck with the national team. He was a late scratch against the U.S. for the 4 Nations championship game in Boston last February. He picked up an illness on game day, the symptoms worsening as game time drew closer.

Arniel can see both sides of the Morrissey situation. He is caught between a rock and a hard place.

"It is just unfortunate," he said. "I would love to see him get a chance to get back in and play and get the experience but the other side for me, I am on the selfish side where I want him healthy for us, for our stretch run too. It sounds like he is doing better and hopefully he is good to go on Wednesday."

Jets captain Adam Lowry says Morrissey could help tip the scales in Canada's favour.

"I'm really hoping that Josh is back," Lowry said. "He'd really help their back end. There are a lot of really good teams. Czechia has got some really dangerous pieces up front, David Pastrnak, Martin Necas, Tomas Hertl, a lot of guys that can hurt you if you give them opportunities. Canada looked good against them in the preliminary game, but it's important that they play a similar style as they did in that first one."

Lowry is in awe of the Canadian talent, especially with the forward combos.

"With Canada, it's their speed and their depth up front," Lowry said. "Whenever you're able to throw some of the best players in the world on the ice at the same time, you get dominant shifts. That Connor McDavid-Macklin Celebrini line, whether it's with (Tom) Wilson or MacKinnon, they've looked unbelievable."

While Lowry is playing the role of a coy, fence sitter, Dylan DeMelo is most assuredly not.

"When you get top end players like that, playing with each other, it just looks like a lot of fun for those guys," the Jets defender said. "We know they're a gold medal favorite, and they're playing like it right now. I am rooting for them to do well."

https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/the-winnipeg-jets-have-landed-for-the-nhl-stretch-drive/article_468928e1-784b-4001-ab34-35fe3f6a4f2b.html

The Winnipeg Jets have landed for the NHL stretch drive

By Gordon Anderson

Let's welcome back the boys of winter, no doubt fresh and ready to chase down a certifiably daunting task.

"It was nice to get away, to clear the head a little bit and not think (too much) about hockey for a few days," Jets head coach Scott Arniel said. "Hopefully, that is what all the players did as well. (We have) a big push coming with 26 games in 51 days."

The Jets held their first team practice on Wednesday afternoon at the Hockey For All Centre. As per NHL rules regarding the Olympic break and the startup of league activities after a 10-day break, every team in the league was allowed to begin practice on Tuesday at 2 p.m. local time.

"It was great just to get away," Dylan DeMelo said. "It's been a crazy year with the schedule and the volume we've had to deal with, obviously, to be able to get a chance to recharge the mind."

Captain Adam Lowry also had a chance to further recover from his hip surgery last May.

"I had a great time," Lowry said. "It will be good getting back and having some practice time, coming off the surgery and going into the schedule, there wasn't a lot of practice time, there weren't a lot of days off to get in the gym and strengthen (the hip)."

Perhaps the performance of both the men's and women's national teams, combined with the spectacle that is the Olympic games, has dulled the collective sense of panic/anger as to the predicament the Jets currently find themselves entrenched in.

The club is seventh in the Western Conference with 52 points gathered from 56 games. They are 11 points behind Anaheim for the second wildcard. Four teams stand between the Jets and the Ducks.

"This is not a luxury like we had last year, we are running into this last 26 game chasing and every point matters, obviously (every point) has the last couple of months, but this is going to be big for us coming out of the gate, going on a three-game road trip," Arniel said.

At the 4 Nations break last February, the Jets held the top spot in the league with a 38-14-3 record. That international best-on-best tournament began on Feb. 12. This year, the Jets entered the Olympic break on Feb. 6 with a 22-26-8 record.

The Jets kick off the unofficial second half of the schedule with three games in five nights, starting in Vancouver next Wednesday night. The trip includes games against the Ducks and the San Jose Sharks.

Coming out of the break, Arniel hopes the competition hits the snooze button before turning over to grab an extra, say 26 minutes of shut eye.

"We are not working our way into the 26 games (we have remaining)," the coach said. "We have to be up and running at full speed. Hopefully, maybe those teams don't come out of the break as sharp, but we need to be sharp. It is very important for us."

In between now and then, the Jets will treat the coming week like training camp all over again.

"The practices are going to turn more into a training camp kind of look as Tuesday was skate, pass and shoot, get the conditioning side of it," Arniel said. "Wednesday is going to be more defending, breakouts, and neutral zone. On Thursday and Saturday, we will do a lot more of the offensive zone with specialty teams (scheduled for) next week."

Three on the mend

Haydn Fleury and Neal Pionk returned to practice on Tuesday in the yellow caution jerseys. Colin Miller had the day off as he skated on Monday.

"We will get Miller back out on Wednesday," Arniel said. "(Fleury and Pionk), I put them both in yellow jerseys to get them out there. Both feel good, though Fleury is a lot further behind in the conditioning, but it was great to see him and Pionk. Hopefully, Pionk, for sure, maybe when we go out on the road trip, I am not sure where Fleury is at. We will take that day by day."

Fleury has been out since Jan. 6. He was injured during the first period against the Vegas Golden Knights. He was taken off the ice on a stretcher. He suffered a sore back and neck and a broken nose in the incident with Keegan Kolesar; Miller left during the first period of a 4-3 win against the New Jersey Devils on Jan. 11 and Pionk was placed on injured reserve after he reaggravated an injury during a 5-4 win against the New York Islanders on Jan 13.