

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/04/01/jets-no-quit-mentality-good-enough-for-post-season-berth-striking-distance>

Jets' 'no quit' mentality good enough for post-season berth striking distance The club doesn't concern itself with other teams jockeying for position

By: Ken Wiebe

DALLAS — The Winnipeg Jets have reached that crowded intersection where they will attempt to turn an unwavering belief into reality.

Although the road ahead during the final eight games of the regular season is sure to provide a few more turbulent stretches, a 4-3 overtime victory over the Chicago Blackhawks on Tuesday meant the Jets have almost completely erased the 11-point deficit they faced coming out of the Olympic break.

Yes, there are still two teams to attempt to leapfrog and several others hot in pursuit going into Thursday's game against the Dallas Stars, but the Jets have put themselves in a position few outside the organization thought was even remotely possible.

By going 10-4-4 since Feb. 4, the Jets have put together a stretch that has them well within striking distance — trailing the Nashville Predators by a single point going into Wednesday's action.

"We were saying it all year, but even when we were struggling, that this is a team that knows how to win hockey games and has won a lot of games in the regular season in the last number of years," said Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey. "Of course, there are always new faces, but a large part of this group has been together and has had success in the regular season and in the stretch when the games tighten up and matter most.

"To be honest, I think that is when the makeup of our team is best (suited), for those tight games, as we pride ourselves on being a good defensive team and that is so much more important down the stretch as the games get closer and closer. There is a lot of confidence in our group. We are coming from behind and maybe teams in front of us feel the pressure, but we feel no pressure. We are just going out there and playing and competing and trying to show the group we can get back into the playoffs."

The Jets season has been a tale of two tapes — as head coach Scott Arniel occasionally references.

A crisp 9-3 start was followed by a woeful stretch of 6-19-5 that included an 11-game winless skid that left the Jets on the precipice of a high pick in the draft lottery.

Since that time, the Jets are now 17-8-7, a stark turnaround that has them squarely in the mix to squeak into the playoffs.

"There is a lot of confidence in our group. We are coming from behind and maybe teams in front of us feel the pressure, but we feel no pressure."

Rather than punt on the season, the Jets' necessary changes after the Olympic break have allowed them to play faster on a more consistent basis.

"We had a good start and then had a large stretch of the year where it didn't really feel like it was our group and we just couldn't get any traction," said Morrissey.

"We are not even close to being there yet but we have erased a pretty big deficit and that is kudos to every single guy in this room, and the staff. There is no quit in here and we are going to fight right until the end. We are a proud group, and we will show that all the way."

Experience is something that is tough to quantify with a mathematical equation or to fully pinpoint, but one thing that can't be disputed is that the Jets' core group has not only done a lot of winning during the regular season these past years, they've built up plenty of scar tissue along the way as well.

Learning from past disappointments is just as an important part of the process, and that is something the club can certainly lean on.

"You've got to perform under pressure. That's the biggest thing," said Jets captain Adam Lowry. "We know every game is important. We don't have time to just squander points. We can't have these letdowns where we play one great game and then come down and take a breath.

"We still have an internal optimism and a belief in this group that when we play the right way, when we have all hands on deck, we're a tough team to beat."

"It's obviously disappointing where we found ourselves (in the standings), but we've talked about it all year. We still have an internal optimism and a belief in this group that when we play the right way, when we have all hands on deck, we're a tough team to beat. We've proven it over the last month. We can beat some of the best teams in the league, and it's just going to take more of that moving forward."

The next test comes against a Stars team that's been one of the league's best this season and pulled within two points of the Colorado Avalanche for top spot in the NHL recently, but has stumbled of late as they've dealt with some key injuries, posting just two wins during the past nine games (2-4-3).

With that in mind, it's natural to wonder if the Jets might be catching the Stars at a good time — but that doesn't make the Stars any less dangerous.

In fact, it probably makes them even hungrier to try and find their standard in a game against a Central Division rival, especially when you consider the Stars are still in the middle of a battle for second spot in the division with the Minnesota Wild, even if the Avalanche appear to be out of reach.

The Jets can't afford to concern themselves with who else might be jockeying for position in their own races. Instead, the club's mission is abundantly clear: keep applying pressure to the teams above them in the standings and continue to meet the next moment in front of them.

"We just said to take care of our own business and that's what we're trying to do. We got ourselves here, but we can't take our foot off the gas," said Arniel, asked about the mindset that

was required to go on this recent run. “It doesn’t get any easier in going into Dallas and then Columbus, so a lot of heavy lifting still to go.

“We have got to make sure that we continue to do those things that keep us in games and that gives us a chance to win.”

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/04/02/three-ncaa-captains-playing-with-manitoba-moose>

***Three NCAA captains playing with Manitoba Moose
Now, the undrafted trio will finish the year with the Manitoba Moose.***

By: Mike McIntyre

Winnipeg is quickly becoming a hockey haven for college captains.

Lucas Wahlin, Davis Burnside and Lukas Gustafsson all wore letters for their respective NCAA programs this past season. Now, the undrafted trio will finish the year with the Manitoba Moose.

Burnside and Gustafsson signed one-year American Hockey League deals for 2026-27 on Thursday, along with professional tryouts that allow them to join the Moose immediately. Wahlin inked a one-year, two-way contract with the Winnipeg Jets last week, along with an amateur tryout that also takes effect right away.

So, does the organization have a type?

Winnipeg has gone this route before, signing players like Brandon Tanev (Providence), Jeff Malott (Cornell) and Parker Ford (Providence) as undrafted free agents. All three worked their way through the Moose and are now NHL players. Malott and Ford were captains at the NCAA level, as was current Moose defenceman Dylan Anhorn (St. Cloud State).

It’s a strategy that makes plenty of sense.

The Jets have moved out significant draft capital in recent years to acquire immediate help. Targeting undrafted college free agents offers a low-risk, potentially high-reward way to replenish the prospect pipeline — often with players who bring maturity, leadership and a proven competitive edge.

There’s little doubt this latest group fits that mold.

Burnside, 22, recorded 32 points (12 goals, 20 assists) in 37 games with Ohio State this season. The 6-foot, 185-pound right-shot forward from Illinois finished his NCAA career with 112 points (49 goals, 63 assists) in 155 games. He previously played in the USHL with the Tri-City Storm, Des Moines Buccaneers and Dubuque Fighting Saints.

“Just excited to be here and get going,” he told reporters following Thursday’s Moose practice at the downtown rink. “I think Ohio State did a really good job preparing me for this next level.”

Burnside described himself as a “high-energy player, playmaker, not afraid to get into the dirty areas. I’m not the biggest guy, but I like to use my speed and make plays off the rush.”

Gustafsson, 23, had 22 points (six goals, 16 assists) in 36 games with a Boston College that had their championship dreams come to an unexpectedly early end. The 5-foot-11, 194-pound left-shot defenceman from Georgia totaled 72 points (14 goals, 58 assists) in 147 NCAA games. He also won a USHL championship with the Chicago Steel in 2021.

“Things happened fast and got a good opportunity to come here. I’m very excited. The boys have been very welcoming.”

“Obviously it wasn’t the end of the season that we wanted. We had high hopes, we had a good team,” Gustafsson told reporters. “Things happened fast and got a good opportunity to come here. I’m very excited. The boys have been very welcoming.”

Gustafsson described himself as “an offensive defenceman. I like to make plays, but also reliable on the defensive side. Not the tallest defenceman, but like to play hard, like to play physical. Just make simple plays, get up the ice, join the play. Hopefully score a few goals here and there.”

Wahlin, 24, produced 39 points (21 goals, 18 assists) in 36 games with the University of St. Thomas. The 5-foot-11, 160-pound right-shot forward from Minnesota finished with 131 points (56 goals, 75 assists) in 137 NCAA games. He was recently named the CCHA Student-Athlete of the Year and Defensive Forward of the Year.

“It was definitely a long process. Kind of waited, talked to a bunch of teams, talked to my family and kind of figured what was the best opportunity and the best decision for my future. It ended up being Winnipeg,” Wahlin told reporters.

Wahlin described himself as “a hard-working, two-way forward that’s not afraid to provide some offence. Get gritty in the corners and get physical.”

All three arrive as the Moose enter the stretch drive, looking to lock down a playoff spot.

Manitoba (31-26-6) sits fourth in the Central Division with nine games remaining. The club opens a six-game homestand Friday afternoon at Canada Life Centre against the first-place Grand Rapids Griffins (47-13-5).

The Moose roster has been thinned in recent weeks, with Ford, Brad Lambert, Danny Zhilkin and Elias Salomonsson all earning call-ups to the Jets. Forward David Gustafsson (injury) and defenceman Alfons Freij (illness) — who recently arrived from Sweden — are also sidelined.

“Obviously they’ve done the right things so far this year to put themselves in a position to be in a playoff spot. I just want to do whatever I can to help the team win,” said Burnside.

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11754984/analysis-winnipeg-jets-breaking-good-post-olympics/>

ANALYSIS: Winnipeg Jets have been 'Breaking Good' post-Olympics

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

Let's examine where the Winnipeg Jets have come from over the past several months. Before the Olympics, they were 11 points out of a playoff spot, floundering and, frankly, left for dead.

In fact, as you might expect, they went into the break talking about being better on the other side. They came out of it determined to prove they could be. And the results – simply – have been impressive.

Following Tuesday's overtime victory in Chicago, the Jets are now one point out of a playoff spot in the NHL's Western Conference. It's a remarkable pivot that has seen the team rally from seven games below NHL .500 to two games above.

It's the type of comeback that struggling teams and their fan bases whimsically dream about, but rarely experience.

For Winnipeg, their performance over the last 18 games has mirrored the type of hockey they played for most of last season: inspired, gritty, skilled and determined.

They've amassed 10 wins and produced points in another four of those 18 games to close the distance on a wild-card berth that, if they fell short of securing now, would only add to the frustration of what's been a curious season.

But what's also impressive about this surge has been who's leading the charge.

Players like Mark Scheifele and Gabe Vilardi are enjoying career offensive seasons and their efforts, along with other stars, have guided the group on a nightly basis, but the healthy sprinkling of organizational youth in the lineup has helped make Winnipeg faster, quicker and much more competitive.

Remember, the Jets were sellers at the trade deadline, not buyers.

Now let's be clear, sitting one back of a playoff spot isn't sitting in a playoff spot.

But when you examine where the Jets have come from over the last several months, they may have been left for dead in early February, but fortunately for them, the rest of the NHL didn't read them their last rites.

How the Winnipeg Jets got back in the playoff race

By Adam Vingan

The race for the second wild-card spot in the Western Conference — a.k.a. “The Colorado Avalanche Sacrificial Lamb Invitational” — is wide open with two weeks left in the regular season.

Five teams are within four points of the final playoff spot held by the Los Angeles Kings. That includes the Winnipeg Jets, who were 11 points behind at the Olympic break but have points in 14 of their past 18 games (10-4-4). Winnipeg qualifying for the playoffs would represent a remarkable turnaround after sitting in last place in the NHL as recently as Jan. 8.

“We just said, ‘Take care of our own business,’ and that’s what we’re trying to do,” Jets coach Scott Arniel told reporters after Winnipeg’s 4-3 overtime win against the Chicago Blackhawks on Tuesday. “We got ourselves here, but we can’t take our foot off the gas.”

So how have the Jets pulled this off? Naturally, Connor Hellebuyck comes to mind first. But the reigning MVP has just been solid since starring at the Olympics for Team USA, saving 6.24 goals above expected in 15 games. Hellebuyck ranks 18th in that category out of 31 goaltenders who have made at least 10 appearances since Feb. 25. He has stolen one win and made 10 quality starts in 15 tries (66.7 per cent) since winning gold in Italy.

Neither special-teams unit is firing on all cylinders. The Jets’ power play is second worst in the league since the Olympic break at 12.5 per cent, and their penalty kill is performing at a 76.3 per cent clip (22nd). Even at five-on-five, the Jets have not been threatening offensively. Their shot quality per 60 minutes ranks 25th over the past five weeks.

Which again begs the question: How have the Jets pulled this off? Perhaps the answer is simple: The other teams in the wild-card race — Los Angeles, San Jose, Nashville, Seattle and St. Louis — are all decidedly average. That is true, but the Jets must be doing something right if they have the seventh-best points percentage (.667) since the league resumed play.

As usual, top-line forwards Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor are driving Winnipeg’s offence, having been on the ice for 13 of the team’s 32 goals at five-on-five across the past 18 games. Secondary sources of offence, however, have recently emerged. Forward Cole Perfetti has recorded points in five consecutive games and 12 of his past 18 for a total of six goals and seven assists. The Jets have been winning Perfetti’s minutes on the scoreboard (9-6) and under the surface (55.0 xGF%).

Perfetti has been part of an ice-tilting second line with forward Gabriel Vilardi and captain Adam Lowry that has out-chanced opponents 67-41 at five-on-five, including 28-16 off the cycle.

“We’ve had a lot of good looks,” Vilardi told reporters last month. “We’re not necessarily scoring as much as we’d like, especially since after the break. I felt like before the break, we kind of got in a groove there. And then coming out of the break, we weren’t together for a bit, then we were together. We’ve had a lot of good opportunities.”

Injuries to defencemen Josh Morrissey and Neal Pionk, plus the departures of Logan Stanley and Luke Schenn at the trade deadline, forced the Jets to get creative on the back end. That presented an opportunity for rookie Elias Salomonsson, who has helped the Jets generate 57 per cent of the expected goals at five-on-five during the team's surge up the standings. Overall, Winnipeg has played great team defence, ranking ninth since Feb. 25 in shot quality against per 60 minutes at five-on-five.

In two weeks, the Jets could become the fifth reigning Presidents' Trophy winner to miss the playoffs and the second in as many years, joining last season's New York Rangers. All of Winnipeg's remaining opponents are either in a playoff position or within four points of the final spot in their conferences. But with two of the league's most dynamic forwards and a big-game goaltender on their side, you can't count out the Jets quite yet.

"We were saying it all year when we were struggling, but this is a team that knows how to win hockey games and has won a lot of games in the regular season the last number of years," Morrissey told reporters Tuesday. "Of course, there's always new faces, but a large part of this group has been together and has had success in the regular season (and) down the stretch when the games tighten up and when it matters most."

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/road-to-the-playoffs-a-case-for-each-bubble-team/>

Road to the Playoffs: A case for each bubble team

By Rory Boylen

This year's road to the playoffs is no joke, with much more traffic on it than in 2025. Looking back to April 1 last season, just two non-playoff teams in the East were three points or less out, while ninth place in the East was six points out of the race.

This year, there are 12 teams we'd consider on the "bubble," within striking distance of the playoffs and some reason to be optimistic they can do it.

So, as we head into the final two weeks of the regular season, we continue looking into the tight races by making a case for how each of these teams battling for one of the precious few remaining spots up for grabs could find their way into the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

Winnipeg: Of the six western teams on the bubble, none has more players capable of stealing games and willing the roster to victory than Winnipeg. Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor and Josh Morrissey play huge minutes and roles, and the entire offence is formed around them while, of course, Connor Hellebuyck is one of the best goalies in the world who can run hot at the drop of a hat. When we wrote about the Jets in this space two weeks ago, we identified secondary scoring and, specifically, Cole Perfetti as their playoff push X-Factor, and he has three goals in Winnipeg's past four games — all in wins.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/article/jets-not-feeling-any-pressure-in-push-for-the-playoffs/>

Jets not feeling any pressure in push for the playoffs

By Danielle Bain

WINNIPEG — The Winnipeg Jets have been on the outside looking in for months.

A team that won the Presidents' Trophy just one year ago has struggled to find traction throughout the season. But a strong week of practices towards the end of the Olympic break, paired with a deep drive to prove who they really are, has propelled the group forward and kept this team in the fight.

"We've talked about it all year – we still have an internal optimism and a belief in this group that, when we play the right way, when we have all hands on deck, we're a tough team to beat," Jets captain Adam Lowry said following the team's 4-3 overtime win against Chicago on Tuesday. "I think we've proved it over the last month. We can beat some of the best teams in the league, and it's just going to take more of that moving forward."

Coming out of the Olympic break, the Jets were 11 points outside the second wild-card spot in the Western Conference. Since then, they have gone 10-4-4, picking up 24 of a possible 36 points.

As a result, they now sit just two points back of the Los Angeles Kings, who currently occupy the second wild-card spot.

"Obviously, we are not even close to being there yet, but we have erased a pretty big deficit, and that is a credit to every single guy in this room and the staff," defenceman Josh Morrissey said after the win against the Blackhawks. "There is no quit in here, and we are going to fight right until the end."

There hasn't been just one player stepping up during this push, either.

The team's top players have led the way. Kyle Connor and Morrissey are riding five-game point streaks, while Mark Scheifele has nine points in his past four games.

"We have been fighting, clawing, scratching to try to get closer and closer to the playoff line, and when it is all said and done, I think it is going to come right down to the wire," Morrissey said.

There has also been a steadiness on the blueline through some turbulence.

Losing both Logan Stanley and Luke Schenn to the Buffalo Sabres at the trade deadline, along with injuries to Morrissey and Neal Pionk that kept them out for weeks, could have derailed the season even more. Instead, rookie defenceman Elias Salomonsson has emerged as a bright spot, stepping in and looking comfortable in an expanded role.

"We knew we had a young defenceman coming – we knew there was a player there," Jets head coach Scott Arniel said after morning skate on March 26. "It had to happen a lot faster this year than we thought, but credit to him. He's the one who has taken advantage of it."

Paired with Dylan Samberg for much of his time, the duo has been matched against some of the opposition's top lines. Salomonsson is already averaging 18:15 of ice time through his first 31 NHL games.

"We knew his skill set was there – the hockey IQ, the skating, all of that," added Arniel. "Like you see around the league, some young guys get an opportunity and take advantage of it. He's done that."

The race is tight, and the Jets need points just as badly as they need their opponents to lose.

Six teams remain in contention for the final playoff spot in the West. Los Angeles (78 points), San Jose (77), Nashville (77), Winnipeg (76), Seattle (75) and St. Louis (74) have traded positions in the standings on a nightly basis.

With just eight games remaining in the regular season for the Jets, it is truly anyone's spot for the taking. Not to mention three of those eight games are against teams they're battling with for playoff positioning – the Kraken on April 6, the Blues on April 9, and the Sharks to close out the regular season on April 16.

"We don't have time to just squander points," Lowry said. "We can't have these letdowns where we play one great game and then come down and take a breath."

"We are coming from behind – maybe teams in front of us feel the pressure, but we feel no pressure," Morrissey added. "We are just going out there, competing and trying to show who we are and get back into the playoffs."

The Jets face a Central Division opponent Thursday when they visit Dallas to take on the Stars. Puck drop is set for 7 p.m. CT on TSN3.

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

The Talking Point: Are the Winnipeg Jets playoff bound? (VIDEO)

Winnipeg's playoff chances looked down and out just over two weeks ago when they lost three straight, but four wins in the last five, TSN's Cheryl Pounder examines whether the Jets are indeed playoff bound.

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

Are Jets' playoff chances better than math suggests? (VIDEO)

The Jets are in an intense battle for a wild card spot with a few teams in the mix having a game in hand against Winnipeg. Despite being 11 points out at the Olympic break, the Jets are now one point back.

Daily Faceoff

<https://www.dailyfaceoff.com/news/winnipeg-jets-tough-playoff-matchup-colorado-avalanche-connor-hellebuyck-nhl-playoffs>

The Jets would be a tough playoff matchup for the Avalanche

By Ryan Cuneo

For as frustrating as the Winnipeg Jets' regular season has been, they've nearly got themselves back into playoff position. After having won four of their last five games, the Jets are currently just a point back of the second wild card spot in the Western Conference.

If Winnipeg does make it in, they'd most likely have to play the top-seeded Colorado Avalanche in the first round. While that would obviously be a tough matchup for the Jets, it wouldn't exactly be an ideal one for the Avalanche, either. Having to take on last season's Presidents' Trophy winners, playing their best hockey of the year with Hart Trophy-winning goaltender Connor Hellebuyck between the pipes is hardly the reward Colorado would want for winning the ultra-competitive Central Division.

On Wednesday's episode of Daily Faceoff LIVE, hosts Tyler Yaremchuk and former NHL goaltender Carter Hutton were joined by former NHL video coach Steve Peters to discuss how the Jets could pose problems for the Avalanche in the first round.

Carter Hutton: We talked about the Jets maybe sneaking in as that second wild card, but the Colorado Avalanche look like they're going to get that matchup. Who don't they want to play?

Steve Peters: It's funny, because of the teams that are there, you're talking about Nashville, L.A., and Winnipeg. I don't think San Jose is going to be there for real, sorry San Jose Sharks fans. I just don't think they're going to have that push late, and I think their schedule on the way out is too tough.

The team you don't want to play is Winnipeg, and it is because of Connor Hellebuyck. When he's at his best, he gives his team a chance to win, period. We were talking about this team two weeks ago having no chance, they're playing for next year, Hellebuyck was hurt most of the season. But since the Olympics, this team has been real. I don't think they're going to sneak in. I still think it's the Los Angeles Kings, and the reason I think it's the Kings is they have two home games against the Nashville Predators in the next six days.

Winnipeg Sun

https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/winnipeg/pressure-what-pressure-jets-so-close-to-playoffs-they-can-almost-taste-it/article_e0e27d5a-4e61-41ed-8ff4-db29f8ed9f41.html

Pressure? What pressure? Jets so close to playoffs they can almost taste it

By Paul Friesen

Winnipeg Jets fans woke up Wednesday morning to something they hadn't seen in nearly four months: their team just one point below the playoff line in the NHL West.

A cruel April Fool's joke?

That depends on what happens next.

Tuesday night's overtime win in Chicago lifted this puzzling team to 76 points, tied with the L.A. Kings, who were to play on Wednesday night, and just behind Nashville, who were not.

You have to go back to Dec. 5th to see the Jets that close to a postseason spot. That's when a win over Buffalo lifted them to 29 points, just one behind Chicago, which held the second wildcard playoff position at the time.

Back then, Scott Arniel's team wasn't exactly buoyed by the tantalizing position – they proceeded to lose 10 of their next 11 games.

That the Jets are even in this position again is a minor miracle, a combination of their 10-5-3 mark since the Olympic break and a more recent slide by their rivals, not one of which has won even half of its last 10 games.

This team isn't that far removed from a more major miracle – that Game 7 win over St. Louis in the playoffs last year.

Perhaps that helps explain this post-game comment from Josh Morrissey in Chicago on Tuesday.

“Maybe teams in front of us feel the pressure,” the defenceman said. “But we feel no pressure.”

The way Morrissey sees it, the Jets are best suited to the type of hockey being played right now: stifling, urgent and seemingly within a goal or tied all the time.

“We said when we were struggling that this is a team that knows how to win hockey games,” Morrissey said. “Of course, there are always new faces, but a large part of this group has been together and has had success in the regular season and in the stretch when the games tighten up and matter most.”

None matters more than the last eight on their schedule, beginning in Dallas on Thursday.

The Stars have 100 points, 24 more than Winnipeg. They've outscored their opponents by 45 goals, where the Jets are minus-13. They have the league's No. 2 power play, while Winnipeg's is 27th.

Perhaps the Jets are due, though, as they've lost all three previous meetings this season.

Then it's off to Columbus, where Rick Bowness's Blue Jackets are in their own precarious state in the NHL East.

It's not just the teams ahead of them that are of concern to the Jets, either.

Lurking just a single point back are the San Jose Sharks, who have a critical two games in hand, and the Seattle Kraken, who have one.

The good news: they return home to face the Kraken on Monday, while the Sharks visit Winnipeg 10 days later in the Jets' regular-season finale.

"We have been fighting, clawing, scratching to try and get closer and closer to the playoff line," Morrissey said. "I think it is going to come right down to the wire."

Wouldn't that be something, the Jets and Sharks squaring off for a playoff spot in Game 82?

Crazier things have happened.

Like captain Adam Lowry scoring the double-overtime goal that capped the playoff comeback last spring, after Cole Perfetti's goal with three seconds left tied it.

"You've got to perform under pressure," Lowry said Sunday in Chicago. "We've talked about all year, we still have an internal optimism and a belief in this group, that when we play the right way, when we have all hands on deck, we're a tough team to beat. We've proved it over the last month."

They've got two more weeks to prove they deserve more.