

***THREE THINGS: Vilardi reaches 20 goal mark in Jets win
Vilardi reunites with Scheifele and Connor, trio combines for six points vs. Devils***

By Jamie Thomas

The Winnipeg Jets scored three times in the second period on route to a 4-3 win over the New Jersey Devils to start their four-game road trip on a positive note. Gabe Vilardi (1G, 1A), Mark Scheifele (1G, 1A) and Kyle Connor (2A) had multi-point nights to lead the Jets to their second win in their last six games (2-2-2). Per NHL Stats, Vilardi became the fifth player in Jets/Thrashers history to begin his tenure with the franchise with three consecutive 20-goal seasons. The others: Ilya Kovalchuk (8), Patrik Laine (4), Vyacheslav Kozlov (4) and Marian Hossa (3). Winnipeg will head to Tampa Bay next to face the Lightning on Thursday.

LOOKED GOOD, THEN IT DIDN'T

The top line had been quiet recently as Mark Scheifele had three points in his last five games), Kyle Connor (three points in his last five) and Alex Lafallo (one point in his last five). The offence came quickly in Newark tonight as the Jets scored 1:33 into the game with some beautiful passing between Scheifele, Connor and Gabe Vilardi.

After that goal the Jets struggled with their decision making with the puck and the Devils had the majority of the quality scoring chances for the rest of the period including the tying goal at 8:02.

"In the first, we found ourselves flat footed and trying to make a play," said Kyle Connor.

"And that's where we turned it over, and led to a lot of their chances."

MIXING THINGS UP

With the game tied at one to start the second, Scott Arniel changed three of his four lines moving Lafallo to the fourth line with Cole Koepke and Morgan Barron, Tanner Pearson went up with Jonathan Toews and Cole Perfetti and Gabe Vilardi reunited with Connor and Scheifele. It was the top line that went to work at 3:23 to give the Jets the lead again and it was Vilardi with his 20th.

The new look fourth line capitalized off the rush again with Koepke banging in a rebound past Jake Allen at 7:51.

The only line that Arniel didn't touch was his third line of Adam Lowry, Nino Niederreiter and Vlad Namestnikov. The trio scored on another odd-man rush to give the Jets a three-goal lead at 16:42 which turned out to be the game winning goal.

"Yeah it was a good second, we played with a lot of jump, it seemed like we were able to roll shifts over and hem them in their own zone and capitalize on the chances that we did," said Connor.

"We had the two-on-one, Nino and Vladdy. It's a great play and finish, and then we were just keep it simple in our own zone and get out."

HELLE MOVING UP

Connor Hellebuyck made 26 saves and has now won his last six starts against the Devils and has a 12-2-1 career record vs. New Jersey. Hellebuyck's win tonight was his 335th of his career, passing Cam Ward to move him into 27th place in NHL history.

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/blog-view-from-the-booth-x7202>

BLOG: View From the Booth

The voice of the Jets, Paul Edmonds, takes you around the world of hockey.

By Paul Edmonds

How "cool" is it for Cole Perfetti to be playing on a line with Jonathan Toews? In a recent interview on the 680 CJOB pregame show, Perfetti admitted as an eight-year-old growing up in Whitby, Ont., one of the most exciting moments that year was getting the video game EA Sports NHL 11, which featured Toews on the front cover. And now 15 or so years later the two are playing on a line together, prompting Perfetti to speak nostalgically: "Sometimes it doesn't even feel real to talk with him on the bench. I look back and eight-year-old me would be freaking out right now."

Based on where the Jets currently sit in the standings and their realistic play for a wild card spot in the Western Conference, one wonders how important their final two games of the regular season will be to determine a berth in the Stanley Cup playoffs. Entering the final week of January, both the Utah Mammoth and San Jose Sharks occupy the two wild card positions in the conference. Winnipeg's final two games (Game 81 & 82) will be played against.....wait for it.....Utah (road) and San Jose (home), respectively.

Mason Appleton played 351 games for the Winnipeg Jets over two different stints. He is undoubtedly the most recognizable "ginger" to suit up for the team, a distinction he wears with pride based on his red hair. When the Jets traveled recently to Detroit to play Appleton's new team, the Red Wings, one member of the local media mused to the Green Bay product that he looked good in red, a reference to the Red Wings home colours. In true Appleton character, he deadpanned back by saying with a chuckle, "I didn't know red would be my colour!"

On the same trip, it was fascinating to listen to Red Wings head coach Todd McClellan talk about special teams. McClellan, a veteran of over 1,200 NHL games behind the bench, spoke specifically about improving a team's penalty killing. He indicated most – if any - alterations to that specialty are done in training camp because replicating that environment in practice or morning skates in-season is a difficult task and comes with an injury risk. "It's one of the hardest aspects of the game to practice because it takes a lot of sacrifice to really make a penalty kill happen. You're thinking about shot blocking especially. There are things you just can't do in practice."

Still behind the bench, it's amazing the lengths coaches will go to find something to inspire their team. During the Jets' recent scuffles head coach Scott Arniel used an inspirational and profound quote from British author C.S. Lewis. He wrote the axiom on the dry-erase board in the dressing room before one road game and while the team didn't win that night, a few of the players indicated it helped them to refocus. It read: "You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending."

For the second straight year Dallas Stars head coach Glen Gulutzan will be spending a chunk of the NHL's February break in Manitoba. As a result of his son, Landen, playing for the University of Regina Cougars, Gulutzan will venture to Winnipeg during the Olympic respite to watch the 21-year-old play a two-game USports series with the University of Manitoba Bisons (Feb. 6 & 7). Last year during the league shutdown for the 4 Nations Face Off, Gulutzan spent time in Swan River watching Landen play for the MJHL's Stampeders while he was an assistant coach with the Edmonton Oilers.

Good on the Manitoba Moose for allowing captain Mason Shaw to be part of Team Canada at the recent Spengler Cup. Although the Canadians were eliminated in the quarter finals, the experience is undoubtedly one of that will be a top tier moment in his career. For many hockey fans, attending that tournament over the Holidays is also a bucket list destination.

If you've ever wondered how small the hockey world is then this anecdote might illustrate it. When the Jets last visited Seattle, centre Chandler Stephenson mused that he and two of his Kraken teammates are all alumni of the WHL's Regina Pats. Not only that, but they all had the same billet family during different periods of their careers while playing for the storied major junior franchise. Ryker Evans and Cale Fleury are the other two Kraken players to share the same distinction with Stephenson.

By now you probably know the great story of the Pionk Brothers growing up in Hermantown, Minnesota. The five boys played hockey, baseball, golf and anything else that involved a stick, club or ball. Along the way three of them, including Jets' d-man Neal, were good enough to combine school and hockey at college. One of the younger brothers, Joe, is also involved in hockey but not as a player. He recently accepted a job with Clarkson University as the men's hockey team's head equipment manager. Previously, he was the equipment manager of the AHL's Colorado Eagles for three years and the USHL's Omaha Lancers for three more.

Short Shifts: After waiting 12 years for NHL players to return to the Olympics, let's hope the hockey tournament is so entertaining we quickly forget about all of the construction issues surrounding the venue leading up to the games.... With both the NBA and NFL competing for viewership on Christmas Day, it's certainly important to note the NHL has traditionally used the Holidays to be an important break in their schedule. Not since 1971 has the league played on Christmas Day/Night, thanks to an agreement between the NHL and NHLPA. For the record, the NHL reports that Gordie Howe holds the record for most games played on Christmas with 21...It shouldn't come as a surprise, but Kyle Connor leads the Jets in scoring the game's first goal overall in the last two seasons. His current total sits at nine, including six last season....The Utah Mammoth remain the NHL's only team without a game decided by a shootout....Did you know that Dean Chynoweth, the Jets assistant coach, once recruited Adam Lowry to play for the Swift Current Broncos? Chynoweth at the time was the head coach/GM of the Broncos....Let's hope that after this summer's 2026 NHL Draft in Buffalo the league decides that the decentralized format is a missed opportunity to create a destination event for fans instead of just another made-for-TV affair. If so, it would be great to see it come to Winnipeg...And finally, can someone please explain why a team is charged with a goal-against when they lose in a shootout? Or for that matter gets credit for a goal-for? If shootout goals don't count for the players scoring them, then why is the winning goal charged as a goal-for or against to the team's involved?...Enjoy the Olympics everybody!

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/winnipeg-jets-new-jersey-devils-game-recap-january-27-2026>

***Compher scores twice, Red Wings surge past Jets
Scheifele, Vilardi each gets 2 points, Jets hold off Devils
Connor has 2 assists for Winnipeg; Bratt gets goal, assist for New Jersey***

By Mike G. Morreale

NEWARK, N.J. -- Mark Scheifele and Gabriel Vilardi each had a goal and an assist, and the Winnipeg Jets held on for a 4-3 victory against the New Jersey Devils at Prudential Center on Tuesday.

Kyle Connor had two assists, and Cole Koepke and Nino Niederreiter each scored for the Jets (21-24-7), who are 2-2-2 in their past six games. Connor Hellebuyck made 26 saves.

"We were playing quick," Connor said. "They're obviously a very skilled team and take away your time with the puck. You got to be quick and I thought we made good adjustments just playing quick and making the first option.

"We capitalized on a couple of our chances and [Hellebuyck] made some big saves too. There was a great response and a good effort and a big two points that we needed."

Jesper Bratt had a goal and an assist, Jack Hughes had two assists, and Jake Allen made 22 saves for the Devils (27-24-2), who have lost two straight after winning three in a row.

"This game was going to require extreme focus, commitment, discipline, structure ... all those kinds of things coming off a [four-game] road trip," New Jersey coach Sheldon Keefe said. "All the things that were setting the foundation for us to win on the road, they just weren't there today. It was evident from the first goal.

"You can't chase the game and can't outscore your problems."

During the game, the Devils acquired forward Maxim Tsyplov in a trade with the New York Islanders in exchange for forward Ondrej Palat, a third-round pick in the 2026 NHL Draft and a sixth-round pick in the 2027 NHL Draft.

"Definitely not easy," New Jersey captain Nico Hischier said. "I think everybody in here knows what 'Pally' meant to this team, to this organization. He's a guy that taught us a lot."

Scheifele gave Winnipeg a 1-0 lead at 1:33 of the first period when he took a pass from Connor and scored on a wrist shot from the edge of the right face-off circle.

Lenni Hameenaho tied the game 1-1 on a snap shot from the bottom of the left circle at 8:02. The 21-year-old rookie scored his second goal in his fifth NHL game and first at Prudential Center.

Vilardi made it 2-1 for the Jets at 3:23 of the second period on a snap shot from the left circle off a cross-ice pass from Scheifele.

"His biggest thing is when he hounds pucks and when he gets into puck battles, he usually wins them," Koepke said of Vilardi. "You watch him on the power play; he's a dog on a bone. His puck possession, his playmaking, his getting pucks back. He carried that over to 5-on-5 and tonight he did that to a T. I thought he was one of our best forwards."

Koepke pushed the lead to 3-1 when he knocked in a rebound at the right post at 7:51.

Niederreiter extended it to 4-1, converting a 2-on-1 with Vladislav Namestnikov on a one-timer from the right circle at 16:42.

"I was just hoping [the puck] comes over," Niederreiter said. "I closed my eyes and shot the puck. I'm glad it went in."

"Obviously it was a big win for us. We came here to do that and we found a way to do that. It wasn't pretty but we found a way and that's the most important thing."

Bratt pulled the Devils to within 4-2 with a power-play goal at 19:24 when he redirected a Hughes shot-pass at the top of the crease.

Hischier scored on a deflection from the slot with Allen pulled for an extra attacker at 18:14 of the third period for the 4-3 final.

"In the second period, we played a lot quicker and got out of our end, one or two passes, and were gone," Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel said. "Obviously we got some odd-man rushes off it and did a better job of forcing New Jersey back to their goal line to get pucks and the forecheck got working."

"In the third period, we knew the push was coming and, at the end of the day, that was a big two points for us."

NOTES: Niederreiter has 499 points (248 goals, 251 assists) in 1,020 NHL games ... New Jersey defenseman Dougie Hamilton had an assist to extend his point streak to eight games (one goal, nine assists). His eight-game assist streak is tied with Brian Rafalski (2006-07) and Barry Beck (1977-78) for the longest run by a defenseman in franchise history. ... Devils forward Cody Glass left in the second period after blocking a shot from Jets defenseman Josh Morrissey. He returned at the end of the period, but Keefe elected not to play him, and he did not return for the third. "He wanted to kind of give it a go there at the end of the second, so close to the intermission, but I didn't bother putting him out," Keefe said. "He did a test and it didn't get any better during the intermission, so he'll get further tests before we move on."

Associated Press

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/scheifele-scores-26th-goal-as-jets-hold-on-to-beat-devils/>

Scheifele scores 26th goal as Jets hold on to beat Devils

By Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. — Mark Scheifele scored his 26th goal of the season, reigning MVP Connor Hellebuyck stopped 26 of the 29 shots he faced and the Winnipeg Jets ended their two-game skid by beating the New Jersey Devils 4-3 on Tuesday night.

The Devils have lost back-to-back games after winning three in a row at the start of their Western Conference road trip. They traded veteran winger Ondrej Palat to the New York Islanders in a deal that was consummated before he left the arena prior to warmups and finalized during the first period.

Winnipeg, which entered the night eight points back of the second and final wild-card spot in the West, won for just the second time in five games. Scheifele got the Jets on the board 1:33 in, then Gabriel Vilardi, Cole Koepke and Nino Niederreiter scored in the second.

Hellebuyck, who is in line to be the U.S. starter at the upcoming Olympics, was sharp in bouncing back from allowing four goals in a 5-1 home loss to Detroit on Saturday.

New Jersey got goals from rookie Lenni Hameenaho and Swedish Olympian Jesper Bratt, and captain Nico Hischier scored with 1:46 left to make things interesting, but the offence couldn't quite make up for a series of mistakes. Hours after coach Sheldon Keefe credited defensive commitment and "giving up way less on the rush" for his team's recent success, all four goals against came on odd-man rushes.

That made life much more difficult for goaltender Jake Allen, who made some big saves among his 22 to keep the deficit from getting out of hand. There was little he could do when his teammates were repeatedly outnumbered skating back down the ice into their defensive zone by the opportunistic Jets.

Devils forward Cody Glass left with an undisclosed injury early in the second.

Up next

Jets: Visit Tampa Bay on Thursday night.

Devils: Host Nashville on Thursday night.

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/01/27/reunited-top-line-cashes-in>

Reunited top line cashes in Vilardi rejoins Scheifele, Connor to help down Devils

By: Ken Wiebe

NEWARK, N.J. – Message received, response delivered.

The Winnipeg Jets were able to regroup from a lethargic outing to earn a 4-3 victory over the New Jersey Devils on Tuesday night at Prudential Center to open a four-game road trip.

While the Jets can't afford too many missteps during the final 30 games, this might end up being an example of incremental growth in the quest to stay relevant down the stretch.

The top guns were firing on all cylinders, the Jets didn't give up much defensively at even strength and they didn't sit back after building a 4-1 lead with an excellent second period that included three five-on-five goals.

Yet, the Jets gave up a power-play goal late in the second period that gave their opponent life, allowed an extra-attacker marker and then had to survive a few hair-on-fire moments during the final one minute and 46 seconds to hang on for the win.

“Obviously, it wasn’t pretty,” said Jets winger Nino Niederreiter, whose goal gave him 499 NHL points. “We knew we had to play fast and that’s what we did in the second period or for most of the second. The third was a little sloppy again, but we found a way to win and that’s all that matters.”

The Jets, who improved to 21-24-7 and remain eight points behind the second wild-card spot, continue this four-game road trip on Thursday against the Tampa Bay Lightning, who are battling for top spot in the Atlantic Division and on a roll, posting a 15-1-1 record over the past 17 games.

“(We needed) that badly,” said Jets head coach Scott Arniel, who took his team to task after a disappointing 5-1 loss to the Detroit Red Wings on Saturday. “I thought in the first period, we were turning pucks over and not playing fast and weren’t getting through the neutral zone. Jersey was hard on us, but I thought our second period was the exact opposite. We played a lot quicker and got out of our end.

“And obviously we got some odd-man (rushes) off it and did a better job of forcing Jersey back to their goal line to get pucks and the forecheck got working. Certainly, in the third period, we knew the push was coming and, at the end of the day, that was a big two points for us.”

Let’s take a closer look at what transpired:

The Reunion

Although the trio connected on a blended shift to open the scoring, Arniel chose to reunite his top unit to open the second period and it didn’t take long for them to cash in.

After generating a pair of scoring chances on their first shift back together, Scheifele used his elite vision and passing ability to find Vilardi with a cross-ice pass and Vilardi took care of the rest, firing home a wrist shot that made it 2-1 for the Jets.

Vilardi scored his first goal in six games and moved to 20 for the season, marking the fourth consecutive campaign he’s hit that mark.

What made it the right time to put the trio back together?

“I wasn’t real big on our first period by everybody,” said Arniel. “That line, when they are together, there is some chemistry. And you saw it on the first goal. I really liked Gabe’s game. I thought he kind of gave us a spark with his work ethic and puck possession. I tinkered things around.... and it worked itself out.”

Scheifele opened the scoring, finishing off a perfect tic-tac-toe sequence with Kyle Connor and Vilardi.

“We obviously love playing with him,” said Connor, who is up to 60 points in 52 games. “He’s been playing great, and he obviously gave us a boost.”

Scheifele and Connor had gone two games without a point going into the evening, but neither had reached three games without a point this season — and that streak remains intact.

Fourth line strike

At a time when secondary scoring has been at a premium, the Jets were able to deliver another fourth-line goal, this one coming off the rush on a rare two-on-zero situation.

Alex Iafallo found Cole Koepke for the initial shot and Koepke stuck with the rebound to give him five goals on the season.

“We need the secondary scoring. We’ve talked about it all year long,” said Arniel. “We’ve gone through stretches where we haven’t been getting it. If you’re going to win on the road, everybody’s got to contribute and that was kind of what we got from everyone.”

After going 17 games without a goal to start the season, Koepke has found his groove, scoring five times the past 19 contests.

That’s the type of production the Jets were hoping for after Koepke produced a career-high 10 goals and 17 points in 73 games with the Boston Bruins last season.

“When he puts his speed on display like that, he’s a hard player to defend,” said Arniel. “We’re trying to get him in positions where we can get him in foot races against people. He’s also a good penalty killer. He closes quickly and does a good job that way. There’s a role to play, and he recognizes it and does the (best) he can.”

Glass more than half full

Winnipegger Cody Glass is having a fantastic season with the Devils.

Although he was held off the scoresheet on Tuesday, Glass is tied for second on the Devils in goals with 13.

The only player on the Devils with more is captain Nico Hischier, who has 17.

Unfortunately for Glass, he’s been bitten by the injury bug on multiple occasions in his NHL career and on Tuesday, he went down after blocking a shot in the second period and didn’t return to the game.

Devils head coach Sheldon Keefe told reporters after the game that further evaluation is required before the severity of the injury is known.

The key play

Niederreiter buried a feed from Vladislav Namestnikov on a two-on-one rush for the game-winner.

THE THREE STARS

Gabe Vilardi, Jets, Scored a goal, added an assist.

Mark Scheifele, Jets, Scored once, chipped in a helper.

Jesper Bratt, Devils, Scored a pair of goals.

Extra, extra

Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck made his 33rd start of the season and finished with 26 saves.

The Jets healthy scratches were defenceman Isaak Phillips and forward Gustav Nyquist, who was out of the lineup for the 11th time in the past 13 games. Nyquist has zero goals and eight assists in 32 games this season.

Prior to the game, the Devils inducted long-time right-winger John MacLean into their ring of honour. MacLean, who played 1,194 NHL games, spent the bulk of his career with the Devils and helped the franchise capture the Stanley Cup in 1994-95, producing five goals and 18 points in 20 post-season games. MacLean appeared in 32 games with the Manitoba Moose during the the 2000-01 season and he referenced his pit stop in the International Hockey League during his induction speech, noting how much he enjoyed his time in Manitoba.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/01/28/hes-becoming-a-leader-for-us>

***'He's becoming a leader for us'
Jets' Vilardi has cemented his role as a top-line winger***

By: Ken Wiebe

TAMPA — Gabe Vilardi is proving to be adept at adapting.

At a time when the Winnipeg Jets were looking to stretch out the lineup and create a more balanced attack, it was Vilardi who was moved to the second line with Jonathan Toews and Cole Perfetti.

The trio clicked almost immediately and the Jets put together a four-game winning streak, with Vilardi showing he had the ability to drive his own line when he was on top of his game.

The line had cooled a bit during a recent 1-2-2 stretch, so it came as little surprise that head coach Scott Arniel reunited Vilardi with the top trio for the second period against the New Jersey Devils on Tuesday.

After getting on the ice together for a blended shift during the first period when Alex Lafallo had already gone to the bench for a change, Vilardi, Kyle Connor and Mark Scheifele connected for a perfect tick-tack-toe play that concluded with Scheifele's team-leading 26th goal of the campaign.

In getting back together for the middle period, it was Vilardi playing the role of triggerman after a crisp, cross-ice feed from Scheifele.

"I need to contribute a little more," Vilardi had said during a one-on-one conversation after the morning skate. "I just need to do a better job of capitalizing on my chances. The past 10 to 15 games, I'm getting chances, I'm just not as deadly as I have been.

"I'm not someone who shoots a lot of pucks. Obviously, I score a lot in tight, but I have a high shooting percentage and that gets me to 20 or 30 goals or whatever it is each year. I bury on the good looks that I get."

Sure enough, there was Vilardi burying a shot to the top corner to hit the 20-goal plateau for a fourth consecutive season — the past three with the Jets and the other with the Los Angeles Kings back in 2022-23.

Vilardi, Scheifele and Connor all had two-point outings, while the Jets also got goals from Cole Koepke and Nino Niederreiter to earn a 4-3 victory over the New Jersey Devils on Tuesday.

The Jets, who improved to 21-24-7, continue this four-game road trip on Thursday against the Tampa Bay Lightning, who are on a remarkable heater, going 15-1-1 over the last 17 games.

Vilardi arrived on the scene as the centrepiece of the trade for Pierre-Luc Dubois in the summer of 2023 as someone who oozed potential, provided he could stay healthy.

He's grown into a consistent point producer and has cemented himself as a top-line winger, finding chemistry with Scheifele and Connor.

"Ever since I've been in Winnipeg, I've only played with (Connor) and (Scheifele)," said Vilardi. "With (them), I'm more of a retriever, puck protection guy and (work) to get it back to them and, then, we create that way."

Vilardi takes pride in growing into a first-line player, which isn't surprising when you consider the bulk of his minutes with the Kings came in more of a bottom-six role along with some time on the power play — where he was able to show off his soft hands in tight.

That skill has only become more apparent since Vilardi took on an expanded role with the Jets.

"When you watch him in situations, it's almost like he can stickhandle in a phone booth. He's a heck of a player," said Jets winger Tanner Pearson, who was with the Kings when they selected Vilardi with the 11th pick in the 2017 NHL draft. "I never played with him there, but you could see it back then (in training camp) too."

Prior to being promoted back to the top line, Vilardi was enjoying the challenge of trying to mesh with new linemates.

"When you play with different guys, you've got to know how your role within the line changes," said Vilardi. "With (Toews) and (Perfetti), none of us are really dynamic one-on-one, where we're going to create (much) separation. We need to be more supportive of each other, to beat guys or beat D-zone systems through passing and close support."

"When I say that, I mean create the two-on-ones in the corners, the three-on-twos in the zone down low."

After two strong seasons with the Jets on a bridge contract, including a career-best 28 goals and 65 points in 80 games last season (including the playoffs), Vilardi cashed in as a restricted free agent last summer, inking a six-year extension that carries an annual average value of US\$7.5 million.

By going seven games without a goal to open the campaign, Vilardi concedes that he had put some additional pressure on himself to perform after signing the most lucrative contract of his career.

But several conversations with teammates, including Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey, helped Vilardi leave those concerns behind him.

"It definitely did. I did feel there was added pressure to produce. That's behind me now and I haven't thought about it in a while," said Vilardi. "But yeah, there was some coming into the season. You don't try to think about it, but at the end of the day, it is something that matters. If you make more money, you're expected to produce, obviously."

"Just the self pressure that you put on yourself. The 'I need to do more here.' If you sign a big contract or whatever it is, you want to produce for the team. But at the end of the day, if I'm making \$7.5 million or I'm making \$2 or \$3 million, the goal is to help the team win hockey games."

Vilardi has done his part on that front, sitting third in both points (46) and goals (20) on the Jets this season in 52 games — which leaves him on pace for career highs in both categories.

"His biggest thing is when he hounds pucks and when he gets into puck battles, he usually wins them," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. "And when he's off (his game), he doesn't have the puck and he's getting his stick popped."

"(When) you watch him on the power play, he's a dog on a bone: (with) his puck possession, his playmaking, his (ability) to get pucks back, and it's just (about) carrying that over to five-on-five (play)."

Arniel felt that Vilardi was one of the most effective forwards for the Jets on Tuesday and is hoping that he'll be looking to carry that over into the final four games before the Olympic break.

"He's just got those intangibles that, when you get him time and space, he's got great hands," said Connor, who was also asked about Vilardi's growth during these past three seasons.

"I mean, the raw talent is there, I would say, just consistency and confidence in stringing it together. And not wavering or having (as many) ups and downs in games. He's rock solid out there — and he's becoming a leader for us."

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2026/01/27/let-that-be-your-welcome-to-the-nhl-moment>

'Let that be your welcome to the NHL moment'

Former Jet Dillon talks twists and turns on road to 1,000-plus game career

By: Ken Wiebe

NEWARK, N.J. — Brenden Dillon was almost a member of the Manitoba Bisons men's hockey team.

The New Jersey Devils defenceman shared the turn-back-the-clock confession when talking about his hockey journey toward 1,000 NHL games and beyond, before facing the Winnipeg Jets on Tuesday night.

"For me, not getting drafted into the WHL draft or the NHL draft, you start to doubt every once in a while," said Dillon. "That season (2010-11), I was starting to have UBC (University of British Columbia) and U of A (Alberta) and even University of Manitoba reaching out asking, 'what are you thinking next year for college and university?'"

“That was my reality at the time.”

Dillon never got around to having to make the choice about which U Sports program to join or what faculty he might prefer.

That’s because fate intervened during his 20-year-old season with the Seattle Thunderbirds of the Western Hockey League.

One December day, near the Christmas break, Thunderbirds general manager Russ Farwell let Dillon know that a couple of NHL executives from the Dallas Stars were interested in a meeting with him.

After hearing who the meeting was with, Dillon did some research on Les Jackson and Shane Churla.

Dillon wasn’t going to leave anything to chance. He pulled out all the stops and was dressed to impress.

“I wore a suit and a tie. I had my hair done,” said Dillon. “At the time, it was the biggest meeting I had ever had. I had never talked to that level of an NHL executive.”

Jackson and Churla were already familiar with the player, the meeting with Dillon was about getting to know the person — to see what made him tick.

Dillon came away from that meeting encouraged about what the future could bring.

“I met them at a Kent Station Panera Bread, right across the street from where the Thunderbirds play,” said Dillon. “It was my overage year and I was fortunate to be named captain that year and have things go well for me. The (Stars) were the first team that talked to me.

“When Shane and Les talked to me about my skillset and how it could translate into pro hockey, it started to click with me, that, ‘wow, this could be a possibility.’ As the year transpired, it turned into an NHL contract which, at the time, was the biggest deal ever for me in my hockey career. I owe those guys a lot.”

Dillon, now 35, didn’t need long to give the Stars some valuable return on their investment as an undrafted free agent signing.

Near the end of his first full professional season, Dillon was recalled by the Stars and made his debut at American Airlines Center against the St. Louis Blues.

“At home, in Dallas, on the first shift of the game, I came around the net on a breakout and David Backes absolutely blew me up and he knocked the wind out of me,” said Dillon. “When I got back to the bench, (Stars assistant coach, the late) Paul Jerrard, the defensive coach and Winnipegger, he kind of leaned over and he said, ‘hey, let’s let that be your welcome to the NHL moment.’”

That welcome to the NHL moment was the first of many memories for Dillon on the road to hitting and eclipsing 1,000 games — which is an outstanding accomplishment — and would go on to knock the wind out of many opponents, given his hard-nosed and hard-hitting nature.

"It's just incredible," said Dillon, taking a moment to reflect on the journey. "The clip that seemed to go viral a little bit was that I just wanted to play one, which was the truth. I grew up playing minor hockey for my hometown and then going off to junior hockey and playing in the Western Hockey League. With how crazy the schedule is in the NHL, I haven't really had a chance to sit back and be like, 'wow, I've played 1,000 games.' But then again, I've been fortunate. I think I was the 17th undrafted D-man to do it.

"Looking back at the journey, all of the teammates and all of the places I got to play and then to play in Canada and to have my family see a good chunk of those 1,000. All of it, it's just amazing."

When Dillon was presented with his silver stick to capture the milestone, one of the logos he saw belonged to the Jets, where he played 246 of those games over three seasons.

"To be able to be closer to home and to be able to get to go play in Canada, in Winnipeg, where I still talk to and consider a lot of those guys still on the team to be very good friends," said Dillon, noting that his daughter was born in Winnipeg. "To be part of the Whiteouts. I still remember the goose bumps from when we played Vegas (in the Stanley Cup playoffs), that stuff that just sticks with me."

In signing a three-year deal with the Devils in the summer of 2024, Dillon joined his fifth NHL organization.

He's loved every one of his stops, but has also been subjected to the business side of the game, getting traded on three separate occasions: from the Washington Capitals to the Jets, from the San Jose Sharks to the Capitals and that first deal that sent him from the Stars to the Sharks.

"At the time, getting traded to San Jose, it felt like my life was over," said Dillon. "The tears, the emotion, I had never been traded before. I didn't know what that looked like, as a young, single guy who had grown up together with those guys in the AHL. First games, first goal. You think I'm going to play 10 or 15 years and I'll retire in Dallas and life will be good. That's just not the way that the book was scripted for me."

That script included a few more twists and turns, whether it was working with Hall of Famer Larry Robinson, who coached the defence with the Sharks when he arrived, skating alongside Alex Ovechkin (who would become the greatest goal scorer in NHL history) or playing with a future Hart Trophy winner in Connor Hellebuyck.

Making Dillon's ride even more impressive is how he's done everything the hard way and earned every shift that he's taken.

"I love the way he plays, I really admire his game," said Jets defenceman Luke Schenn. "He just competes every single night, does a lot of hard things that probably don't get noticed all the time, whether it's blocking shots, sticking up for teammates, playing physical, obviously solid defensively and he makes a good outlet pass, too.

"He's just a total pro. The first thing that comes to mind is whether you've got a veteran team or a young team, that's the type of guy that you want to have on your team. He does everything the correct way."

Winnipeg Sun

https://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/jets-dancing-with-the-devils-for-a-much-needed-4-3-road-win/article_9722d382-1624-4c64-bbb9-e73e88950725.html

Jets dancing with the Devils for a much-needed 4-3 road win

By Gordon Anderson

Mark Scheifele and Gabe Vilardi each had a goal and an assist as the Jets beat the New Jersey Devils 4-3 on Tuesday night at the Prudential Center in Newark on Tuesday night.

After a late power-play goal by Jesper Bratt, the Jets held a 4-2 lead after 40 minutes of action.

Nico Hischier's goal at 18:14 of the third sliced the deficit to one, but the Jets managed to hang on to win the first of a four-game road trip.

"Certainly, in the third period, we knew the push was coming and, at the end of the day, that was a big two points for us," Jets head coach Scott Arniel told reporters in Newark.

And push they did as the Devils outshot the Jets 15-4 in the final period and 29-26 for the game. According to Natural Stat Trick, chances were 7-2 for the Devils in the third. High danger chances for were charted 3-0 for the Devils.

Vlad Namestnikov missed an open net goal from near the right face-off circle with eight seconds remaining in the game. Scheifele grabbed the puck after the miss and held possession in the corner as time ran out.

"(It was) a good effort and big two points that we needed," Kyle Connor said. Connor picked up two assists. He now has 37 helpers this season.

Cole Koepke and Nino Niederreiter scored for the Jets. After not scoring in his first 17 games, Koepke has five in his last 19 games.

"When he puts his speed on display, he's a hard player to defend," Arniel said. "We're trying to get him in positions where we can get him in foot races against people. He's also a good penalty killer. He closes quickly and does a good job that way. There's a role to play, and he recognizes it and does the most he can."

The Jets won both games in the season series. The previous triumph was a 4-3 scoreline on Jan. 11.

Connor Hellebuyck (13-14-6) made 26 saves the victory.

Lenni Hameenaho and Jesper Bratt also scored for the Devils. Jake Allen (12-12-1) stopped 21 of 26 shots.

The Jets are in Tampa Bay to play the Lightning on Thursday night.

Ice Chips

Issak Philips and Gustav Nyquist were scratched. The Jets recalled Philips from the Moose on Monday.

Arniel was asked for injury updates on Neal Pionk, Haydn Fleury and Colin Miller. Pionk skated at the team's workout on Tuesday morning.

"I don't see anybody coming before the break," Arniel said.

The Olympic break begins on Feb. 6. The last game for Winnipeg prior to the break is a Jan. 4 home game against the Montreal Canadiens.

Erase the tape, please

Jets defenceman Logan Stanley has spent the season raising his trade value and increasing the cost for his services going into next season, but the towering d-man should be buying Hellebuyck a 34-ounce ranch porterhouse steak at La Tête d'Or in New York City following two egregious turnovers in the first period. According to the menu, the cost is US \$260 per steak.

The first turnover occurred when Stanley tried to make a pass to Morgan Barron, but Jack Hughes intercepted the attempt in the right face-off circle and forced Hellebuyck into making a pad save. After the save, Hellebuyck gave the puck back to the d-man, but Hughes lifted Stanley's stick before he could make a pass to Barron. Hughes went in alone on Hellebuyck, forcing the netminder into another save.

Welcome back

Vilardi returned to the right-wing position on the top line with Scheifele and Connor. The trio opened the scoring when Scheifele bagged his 26th of the season at 1:33 of the first period. Connor and Vilardi picked up assists. Vilardi's 20th goal of the season gave the Jets a 2-1 lead at 3:23 of the second. Scheifele and Connor earned the helpers.

Tanner Pearson took the place of Vilardi on the right wing with Jonathan Toews and Cole Perfetti.

Ring night

In a pre-game ceremony, former Devils forward John MacLean was inducted into the club's ring of honour.

MacLean won two Stanley Cups in 11 seasons—one as a player and one as a coach—with the Devils. Perhaps his most memorable goal was his OT winner against the Chicago Blackhawks in 1988. The goal secured the franchise's first trip to the post-season.

"I remember watching it on TV when they finally got themselves in the playoffs, and it kind of spurred this organization. on to great things," Arniel said. "Mac's a great guy and obviously well-deserving of that recognition."

Later in his career, MacLean played 32 games with the Manitoba Moose. He scored 18 points (six goals and 12 assists) during the 2000-01 season.

Arniel was an assistant coach when MacLean was a member of the team.

“It was great to see Johnny Mac,” Arniel said. “It was great to see what they did. Such a well-deserving guy. I remember when him and Kirk Muller first came here, playing in an empty building and going through all the tough times early on.”

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11640700/winnipeg-jets-score-three-times-in-2nd-period-hold-on-for-4-3-win-in-new-jersey/>

Winnipeg Jets score three times in 2nd period, hold on for 4-3 win in New Jersey

By Christian Aumell & Russ Hobson Global News

Heading out on their final road trip before the Olympic break, the Winnipeg Jets have no room for error.

Step one was beating the New Jersey Devils, and they did, scoring three times in the second period of an eventual 4-3 win Tuesday night.

Mark Scheifele and Gabriel Vilardi each had a goal and an assist as the Jets built up a three-goal lead, and they just held off the Devils for the one-goal win to start the four-game trip.

The Jets really struggled with their puck management in the early going and ended up committing 20 giveaways.

“Thought in the first period we were kinda turning pucks over,” said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. “Not playing very fast, weren’t getting through the neutral zone, and Jersey was hard on us. But thought our second period was the exact opposite. We played a lot quicker. We got out of our own end; one-two passes we were gone and obviously got some odd mans off it.

“Did a better job of forcing Jersey to go back to their goal line to get pucks and our forecheck got working. We got out in front of them. Certainly, the third period we knew the push was coming. At the end of the day, that’s a big two points for us.”

The Jets had lost 10 of their previous 11 road games.

The win gives Winnipeg the sweep of the two-game season series. The Jets haven’t lost to the Devils since the 2023-2024 season.

Arniel moved Vilardi back to the top line at the start of the second period and his hunch paid off immediately when Vilardi scored his 20th goal of the season just three minutes into the frame.

“I wasn’t real big on our first period by sorta everybody,” Arniel said. “I know that line. I know when they’re together there’s some chemistry. You saw it on the first goal, and I really liked Gabe’s game tonight. I thought that he kinda gave us a spark with his work ethic, puck possession and just sorta tinkered things around to give a little bit of a mix and then it worked itself out.”

The Jets outshot the Devils 14-5 in a lopsided second period.

“We played with a lot of jump it seemed like,” said Jets forward Kyle Connor. “And we were able to roll shifts over and hem them in their own zone and capitalize on the chances that we did.”

It didn't take long for Winnipeg to break the ice, getting on the board just 93 seconds into the contest.

Dylan Samberg sent a stretch pass to Vilardi in the neutral zone before Vilardi walked into the Devils end while a New Jersey blueliner inexplicably changed right in front of him.

This created a 3-on-2 with Vilardi sending a cross-ice pass to Connor before Connor dropped it to Scheifele, who ripped a shot high over the shoulder of Jake Allen for his 26th of the season.

New Jersey responded just over eight minutes into the period thanks to some sloppy puck-handling by the Jets.

Alex Iafallo flubbed a pass from his own blueline that drifted aimlessly into the neutral zone. Scheifele and Connor tried to get to it, but Arseni Gritsyuk beat them to it, steering it to Lenni Hameenaho for a breakaway. He walked in and beat Connor Hellebuyck five-hole to level the score.

Both teams had multiple chances to add to their goal totals but couldn't convert.

For Winnipeg, their best chances came off the stick of the snake-bitten Vladislav Namestnikov. His first look came off a funky bounce that resulted in the puck landing in front of a gaping net, but right as Namestnikov tried to get a stick on it, Jack Hughes got to it and helped deflect it to safety.

Later, on a delayed penalty call, Namestnikov had a one-timer that was denied by a sprawling Allen.

For the Devils, Hughes had two great looks right at the end of the period. After Logan Stanley turned the puck over, Hughes took a shot that went off Hellebuyck before grazing off the post. Seconds later, Hughes pickpocketed Stanley in the slot and had a tiny bit of daylight to put a deke on Hellebuyck but he lost the handle in close before he could get a shot away.

Both teams managed to get nine shots on goal in the first though the Devils appeared to be the better team.

That changed in the second as Winnipeg dominated most of the period, building a three-goal lead at one point.

Much like the first goal, the top line combined on Winnipeg's second tally of the night. With Cody Glass hobbling to the bench well after blocking a shot in his own end, Connor rushed the puck up the ice to create a 3-on-2. He slid it to Scheifele who then sent a cross-ice pass that Vilardi collected before ripping a shot top-shelf on Allen at the 3:23 mark.

Just over four minutes later, the fourth line added to the lead. Morgan Barron slid the puck up the boards and out of his own end, creating an odd-man rush as again the Devils made a questionable line change.

lafallo caught up to the puck in the New Jersey end and tried to pass it to Cole Koepke in front of the net. A backchecking Hughes broke up the pass, steering it into Allen's pads but Koepke showed quick reflexes as he banged the rebound home for his second goal in as many games.

It became 4-1 Winnipeg with just over three minutes left in the period. A pair of Devils collided on the boards in the Jets' end before Adam Lowry kicked the puck out of the zone, springing another odd-man rush. Namestnikov carried it deep into Devils' territory before sending a pass to Nino Niederreiter that was one-timed through Allen's five-hole for just his second goal since late November.

It also led to a helping of boos from the New Jersey fans.

But the boos turned to cheers when the Devils cut into the lead on the power play in the final minute. Jesper Bratt, parked in front of Hellebuyck, steered a slap-pass from Hughes into the net with 36 seconds to go to make it 4-2 Winnipeg after two.

The Devils controlled play for much of the third as they pushed to get back into the game, but Winnipeg stood their ground defensively.

New Jersey came close on a power play with six minutes left, getting four shots on net but could not beat Hellebuyck.

They finally did with 1:46 left on the clock when Nico Hischier tapped one home from in close with the goalie pulled. The Devils got two more shots on goal before the final horn sounded but neither beat Hellebuyck as the Jets held on for the win.

Winnipeg's netminder turned aside 26 shots in the win, including 14 in the third period as New Jersey outshot the Jets 15-4 in the final stanza.

The Jets will continue this four-game road trip Thursday in Tampa Bay. Pregame coverage on 680 CJOB begins at 4 p.m. with the puck dropping just after 6.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11641199/winnipeg-jets-rebound-detroit-debacle/>

ANALYSIS: Winnipeg Jets rebound from Detroit debacle

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

For as disillusioned with his team as head coach Scott Arniel was after Saturday's loss to Detroit, his Winnipeg Jets certainly provided an appropriate response on Tuesday.

And frankly, there was no other choice for the club but to bounce back, as their season is getting very close to running out of racetrack and teetering on a forced implosion by management.

Sure, Winnipeg's 4-3 win over New Jersey Tuesday night is a welcome result for a squad still sitting eight points below the playoff line, and may have delayed the inevitable by kicking the can down the road for at least another couple of nights.

But what it also presented was a testament to everyone at this stage of this baffling season that there is no quit in a group that knows it has underachieved, underdelivered and underperformed for 52 games thus far.

Again, there is no other way to put it than that their playoff lifeline is on mechanical assistance with four games to go before the Olympic break and only five weeks away from the trade deadline.

And while it wasn't pretty against the Devils, the Jets found a way to deliver a timely victory — a necessary injunction, if you will — before the team's brass is truly forced to add a fresh coat of paint and some new furniture to the team's roster.

Of course, the next challenge for the Jets is simply their next game – a massive test Thursday night against the Tampa Bay Lightning, one of the league's hottest teams – leaving Winnipeg little time to enjoy their most recent two-point bounty.

And should the Jets rise to submit another appropriate response in that game too, they'll again kick the can down the road for at least another couple of nights – because frankly, they have no other choice.

TSN.ca

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

Insider Trading: Jets focused on winning amid speculation on change (VIDEO)

TSN's Hockey Insiders on the Winnipeg Jets, Montreal's trade deadline approach, Team Canada holding out hope for Brayden Point's return from injury.