

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2022/09/22/chevy-i-believe-we-are-a-playoff-team>

***Chevy: "I believe we are a playoff team."  
Jets success depends on similar cast of characters***

By Mike McIntyre

Few outside the organization would consider the Winnipeg Jets contenders, especially after last year's underwhelming NHL campaign and a surprisingly sleepy summer. But general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff believes his hockey club has what it takes to make plenty of noise this season.

"I feel we have a playoff team," Cheveldayoff said Thursday as the 12th training camp in his tenure began at Bell MTS Iceplex. "But whether I feel it, or you feel it, (the players) have to feel it. They're the ones that have to play. We sat here 12 months ago and the general consensus about the team wasn't if we were going to make the playoffs, it was about how many rounds should this team win. Something got lost in translation along the way. You have to earn that right to make the playoffs. These guys feel that right now."

Time will tell, of course. And Cheveldayoff, fresh off signing a three-year extension, will have plenty of pointed questions to answer if maintaining the status quo leads to the same frustrating results. Winnipeg finished sixth in the Central Division, 11th in the Western Conference and 19th in the NHL last year, yet made no trades or major player signings during a longer-than-expected offseason.

"Certainly, it was an interesting summer in many respects," said Cheveldayoff. "There's lots of different nuances, different conversations that you do have. You look at a lot of different options. Sometimes things happen that you see a fit for, and sometimes you don't."

In other words, the Jets likely tried to be more active than they were, but clearly weren't persuaded to pull the trigger on anything of substance. The end result is what defenceman Josh Morrissey said amounts to "a vote of confidence," with the bulk of last year's roster remaining intact.

"I have confidence in this group is what I can certainly say," said Cheveldayoff. "It wasn't necessarily that I sit there in the summer and say, 'The master plan is that we're going to keep this guy, this guy, this guy, and not this guy.' Some things have to play themselves out as well. There is going to be opportunity here and competition, so things may change. You can't crystal ball things sitting here right now. I do know for a fact, this group knows it has something to prove."

Young forwards such as Cole Perfetti, Morgan Barron and David Gustafsson will be afforded the chance to take on bigger roles, and there could be a similar youth movement on the blue line with top prospects such as Ville Heinola, Dylan Samberg, Declan Chisholm and Johnathan Kovacevic waiting for opportunities.

"I think we're well-positioned with a strong core of veteran players and some good youth that's knocking at the door here that's really going to push those players," said Cheveldayoff.

More than anything, he points to the hiring of veteran head coach Rick Bowness and a new staff including Scott Arniel and Brad Lauer as reason for optimism.

"I think we had a seismic change on July 4 when we changed the coaching staff here, the philosophy," said Cheveldayoff. "I think if you just watched even the drills (Thursday), there's lots of teaching, there's lots of different systems, there's lots of different ways that things are going to be approached. So, that's a seismic change."

There is growing pressure to get this right, with four core players — Mark Scheifele, Pierre-Luc Dubois, Blake Wheeler and Connor Hellebuyck — all set to become unrestricted free agents in the summer of 2024. On top of that, the Jets are currently spending near the salary cap, and are coming off a year in which they failed to sell out a single game as demand for tickets begins to wane.

"I think we have to just focus on the now," said Cheveldayoff. "I don't think we're focusing on anything else other than what's right in front of us. We start trying to talk about two years from now, so much runway between now and then. Obviously, in the meetings (Wednesday) that we had, the kickoff meeting, we talked about setting a standard and pushing each other to uphold that standard."

That's an important step, considering last year ended on an extremely sour note with several players voicing displeasure at the state of affairs and questioning the direction.

"There were lots of emotions that were running high. We didn't achieve what we set out to achieve at the onset and there were lots of tough conversations that were had by lots of different players. I think everyone was just looking to see what the future holds here," said Cheveldayoff. "I think you probably saw the rawest emotion from some of the guys that deeply care the most."

This explains why players such as Wheeler (stripped last week of his captaincy) and Dubois (who has balked at signing a long-term extension) were suddenly being talked about as potential trade bait.

"When you don't achieve what you want, you have to take hard looks at everything," said Cheveldayoff. "I think I said it to some of you (last spring) that you might hear different names out there that you never heard in the past. Obviously, those conversations that we had privately remain private."

"But, obviously, when you have conversations with other general managers, things get out."

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2022/09/22/wheeler-still-a-respected-voice-as-jets-leadership-group-set-to-expand>

### ***Wheeler still a respected voice as Jets' leadership group set to expand***

By: Jeff Hamilton

Blake Wheeler is the only captain Josh Morrissey has ever played for during his NHL career. The Winnipeg Jets defenceman broke into the league in the fall of 2016, just a couple weeks before Wheeler was handed the C.

So, when news broke earlier this month the Jets would be shuffling the deck with the leadership group, resulting in Wheeler being stripped of his letter, Morrissey was stunned. Like any good teammate, he felt for Wheeler, while appreciating what he's done and will continue to do for the organization.

"He's been a great friend and a great teammate, so it was emotional for myself and for other guys around the room because I have a ton of respect for him. It was tough," Morrissey said Thursday, following the first on-ice session of training camp. "At the same time, I think (Wheeler), the way that he's handled everything has been just first class and we're not so concerned about all of that kind of stuff.

"We're concerned about bringing our best on the ice and trying to take a step forward from last season. You can read into whatever message that sends, but whether (Wheeler) is wearing the C or not, he's the leader of our team and he's a leader in our locker room. We're trying to have a great camp and really have a great season and become a playoff team again. I'm not really reading into anything too much."

Other players, such as goaltender Connor Hellebuyck, preferred to distance themselves from the move, claiming it's a management and coaching staff decision and not on the players. And while there might be a vacancy at captain, it doesn't change the focus heading into the season.

"I don't really want to answer any questions about that because that's on them. I think you can ask them their thoughts and their mindset behind it," Hellebuyck said. "I think we're coming in here with the same mindset. We all gotta be better and our details gotta be right and we all gotta be a team in here, and so far it feels great."

The decision to remove Wheeler as captain was made by new head coach Rick Bowness, who did so after spending part of the summer talking to players. Bowness, who was hired in early July, will also seek out new options for alternate captains, which will be determined over the next few weeks of training camp.

It's expected that Morrissey and Mark Scheifele will retain their roles as alternate captains, but will most likely be part of a rotation, with at least a couple of more players added to the mix. Bowness didn't give a timeline on when he plans to name the new leadership group, or whether there will be a captain this season, saying only that the process will take some time.

There is a chance he could wait until next year before appointing a new captain. Either way, the move was meant to give more opportunities to players that are interested in taking on a greater leadership role.

"I think everyone in here was a little surprised by it. But it gives a lot of guys a chance to step up," Jets forward Nikolaj Ehlers said. "I'm an older guy now. I'm 26. I don't feel like it, but I'm ready to take a little more responsibility and I think we have a lot of guys here that are ready to take that step. To be able to have 25 guys take ownership, I think that's going to go a long way."

As for Wheeler, an argument can be made that this might be his greatest test of leadership, being able to step aside for other voices after six seasons of being the pulse of the room. Wheeler spoke last week about being surprised by the move, while also reaffirming his commitment to being a leader in the room, with or without a letter.

How exactly that turns out, only time will tell, though the early signs are promising.

“He is someone that comes into training camp in unbelievable condition each and every year. He’s a consummate professional,” Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff said. “I expect him to have one of his best years. Certainly as a leader in that room right now, he is showing tremendous leadership. I think him and (Bowness) have a good relationship, a good solid understanding of what the expectations are. I know they’ve had many many conversations on roles and expectations.”

Injury update: Cheveldayoff gave a brief update on the health of his club, providing the status on a couple players missing Thursday.

Forward Morgan Barron suffered a minor upper-body injury during an informal team skate prior to training camp and is considered day-to-day. Forward Wyatt Bongiovanni is also expected to miss about a week following an injury while playing in the Young Stars Classic tournament in Penticton, B.C. last week.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2022/09/22/bowness-makes-immediate-impact>

### ***New Jets coach Rick Bowness makes immediate impact Demands accountability from entire roster***

By: Jeff Hamilton

He was the highlight of a sleepy summer for the Winnipeg Jets, his addition marking a “seismic change” to the organization as described by general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff.

On Thursday, as the calendar flipped to fall, new head coach Rick Bowness got his first opportunity to see his team hit the ice for Day 1 of training camp. His presence could be immediately felt, as Bowness barked orders alongside his staff — a group that includes assistants Scott Arniel, Brad Lauer and Marty Johnston — and kept an up-tempo pace between two groups that ran 90-minute sessions each.

Afterward, Bowness, who was hired on July 4, following the departures of Paul Maurice and then Dave Lowry, said he was happy with the first day of workouts. He admitted there’s still plenty of work to do over the next few weeks to get ready for the regular season, which kicks off at home against the New York Rangers on Oct. 14.

New head coach Rick Bowness got his first opportunity to see his team hit the ice on the first day of training camp. (Mike Deal / Winnipeg Free Press)

With new systems to install and a culture in need of revamping, there’s not a ton of time with which to work. The veteran NHL coach is committed to making his mark early by preaching accountability and competition up and down the roster.

“Listen, we missed the playoffs last year, so it’s wide-open. Everything goes, for me,” Bowness told the assembled media at Bell MTS Iceplex. “We’ve got a new coaching staff that hasn’t seen a lot of these guys, so anyone who comes in here thinking, ‘Oh, I’m going to do this, I’m going to do that, it’s a given,’ it’s not a given. We’re going to give everyone a good look.”

He added: "Three weeks and six (exhibition) games, that's what we have, and we'll make it work." To ensure a productive start, earlier this week Bowness provided all 50 players at camp with detailed film of the new systems he plans to deploy this year. Thursday had an emphasis on the neutral zone, with Friday's focus shifting to defensive responsibilities, before moving onto the forecheck on Saturday.

It's a lot to learn over a small amount of time, but the players seem eager to adapt and are motivated by the changes. Last season is being viewed as a collective failure, with this year, under Bowness, an opportunity for redemption and better results.

"We have a lot of guys in this room that want to get better. They want to learn. They want to come to the rink and work on something and have a purpose every day, and I think the coaches are doing a great job at that," Jets centre Mark Scheifele said. "These three weeks are going to be big. We're going to have to learn a lot; there's going to be a lot crammed in. But I think everyone's really excited for that. Just that energy going into it is a game changer."

The Jets finished last season sixth in the Central Division, eight points shy of a playoff spot, falling well short of their heady expectations. Many felt a year ago the Jets were built for a long playoff run; this season, expectations are being tempered or ignored all together, even if there's a palpable feeling of wanting to prove their critics wrong.

"In my experience, expectations are what kill teams," goaltender Connor Hellebuyck said. "You come in with expectations of great things and it's hard to live up to it. It's a mental grind. If you come in and you expect yourself to battle every single day and give yourself a chance at great things, that's when they happen."

Bowness referenced several times the Jets as a hard-skating team that needs to be constantly moving to be effective. That was clear in how he ran practice, with several battle drills and quick whistles.

He's got a good idea of what his top-nine forwards are going to look like, with Scheifele currently centering Kyle Connor and Nikolaj Ehlers, Pierre-Luc Dubois between Blake Wheeler and Cole Perfetti, as well as a checking line made up of centre Adam Lowry alongside wingers Mason Appleton and Jansen Harkins. As for the fourth line, Bowness has several options and will exercise them before finalizing the trio.

It's a different scenario for a crowded blue line. Bowness has opted to stick a veteran defender with a younger player, in order to get a proper evaluation of both.

Nikolaj Ehlers was his same old speedy self on the first day of training camp. (Mike Deal / Winnipeg Free Press)

The pairings will work themselves out over time, but one thing is for sure: Bowness wants to see more scoring from the defence.

"They only got 24 goals out of the D last year, we're going to do a lot more than that," he said. "Our D are coming."

With much of the same team returning this season, it will take more than Bowness barking and new systems for the Jets to get into the playoffs and fight for a shot at the Stanley Cup. It will be up to the players and their willingness to commit to change, for a coach they're still learning about.

"We talked about it until we were blue in the face, really, about being frustrated, disappointed in last season, feeling like we underachieved, and we could have achieved more, so now it's kind of on us," defenceman Josh Morrissey said. "We have a new staff that's excited, we're excited and we get another shot to show that we are a good team and we're a team that can make the playoffs in our minds. As a player, that's the confidence you want from your organization. Now it's time for us to buy into the systems, buy into our coaching staff and go to another level that we think we can have and get to."

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2022/09/22/daniels-hiring-a-major-victory-for-true-north>

### ***Daniels hiring a major victory for True North Scout hopes to be a role model for young women, Indigenous youth***

By: Mike McIntyre

It was an under-the-radar signing by the Winnipeg Jets, one that certainly won't show up on any stats sheets. But the hiring of Sydney Daniels to be the club's new college scout is nothing short of a major victory for the organization.

Daniels, 27, is the first woman to join the True North hockey operations department. The Saskatchewan product is also Indigenous and hopes her story can serve as an inspiration for others in an industry that has long been dominated by Caucasian men.

"It means so much to me, for so many different reasons," Daniels told the Free Press on Thursday afternoon as Jets training camp got underway at Bell MTS Iceplex. "It's such an incredible honour. I hope to be somewhat of a role model, just so young women can see that their options are more broadened now. And I just want Indigenous youth to see they can do anything they want to."

Daniels has been an assistant coach with the women's hockey program at Harvard since 2018 after wrapping up her own playing career earlier that year with the Boston Pride. She enjoyed great success behind the bench, especially last season when the Crimson Tide won the women's Beanpot, Ivy League and ECAC Hockey Regular Season Championship. Daniels also played four years at Harvard, scoring 59 goals and adding 27 assists in 126 games between 2013-17, serving as captain during her final campaign.

"I was ready to branch out and learn from some great hockey minds and challenge myself in terms of growing my knowledge of the game and being around different people who could bring me new perspectives and outlooks," Daniels said of how discussions with the Jets began earlier this summer.

General manager Kevin Cheveldayoff knew Daniels well, having played against her father in the Western Hockey League for several years. Cheveldayoff, who is from Saskatoon, skated for the Brandon Wheat Kings from 1986-90. Scott Daniels was a member of the Kamloops Blazers, New Westminster Bruins and Regina Pats during that time, eventually being drafted by the Hartford Whalers in 1989 and going on to play 149 NHL games over six seasons with three different teams (Hartford, Philadelphia, New Jersey).

“(Cheveldayoff and Daniels) have always stayed close friends. Growing up in Saskatchewan, it’s almost a little fraternity they have of being Sask boys,” Daniels said with a chuckle. It was Jets assistant GM Larry Simmons who ultimately interviewed and hired her.

“He has really taken me under his wing, and I’m so excited to learn from him,” she said.

Daniels is close with Manitoban Brigitte Lacquette, a true trailblazer in the sport who became the first First Nations woman to play hockey for Canada in a Winter Olympics (2018) and was hired last winter as a scout for the Chicago Blackhawks.

“She was the first Indigenous woman to break that barrier. We’re very close and constantly talking. She was a great resource for me to give me a sense of how her experience went which made me want this experience more,” said Daniels.

She’s seen the challenges of getting more diversity and inclusion in hockey up-close, having run hockey camps along with her father for youth in Saskatchewan for many years.

“Being Indigenous, it’s what I hold closest to my heart. I think there’s just not enough opportunity for our Indigenous youth to excel, unlike other people around them,” she said.

“One thing that drew me to the Winnipeg Jets was the work they do for Indigenous groups. The fact they have land acknowledgements at the beginning of their games, it’s incredible. I’ve already had some awesome conversations with members of True North in talking about what programs they have and learning more about that side as well. First and foremost, I’m here to be a hockey scout. If I can help or guide any way I can, given my knowledge and familiarity with Indigenous people, that would be an incredible added bonus for me.”

Cheveldayoff said bringing someone as talented as Daniels on board was a no-brainer.

“She’s been someone that I’ve watched over the course of time, grow as a player and grow on the coaching side. I have a little bit of history with her family. So it’s a great opportunity for her to get on the college scouting side of things,” he said Thursday.

Daniels will be based out of Boston — “which is an incredible perk” — and largely frequent NCAA games in the northeast. There will also be trips to Colorado, Minnesota and Michigan, among others, mixed in.

“We just want to make sure we have a pulse on everything,” she said.

The Jets have dipped into the college waters plenty of times with great success. From recent first-rounders such as Rutger McGroarty and Chaz Lucius, current stars such as Kyle Connor and Connor Hellebuyck, to previous core players such as Jacob Trouba and Andrew Copp, it’s been a major part of the draft-and-development mentality around here.

Daniels will work with current college scout Mark White, who will take on more pro scouting duties. The Jets have also added former Toronto Maple Leafs scout Tony Martino to handle the USHL ranks, and longtime Florida Panthers scout Jari Kekalainen as an additional European scout.

“I’m just trying to come into this and soak up and learn as much as I can,” said Daniels. “But also make sure that I’m always focused and dialed in on my own role and my own job and doing

the best I can within my role to help the team. First and foremost, I want to do my job, my role, and do it really well to help this organization.”

### **Winnipeg Sun**

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/jets-kevin-cheveldayoff-says-onus-is-on-players-but-heats-on-him-too>

### ***Jets' Kevin Cheveldayoff says onus is on players, but heat's on him, too***

By Paul Friesen

The situation would suggest he's a GM on the hot seat, presiding over a team that has lost its way and stumbled to a crossroads.

Yet instead of facing a professional make-or-break season, Cheveldayoff is operating under a contract extension with the ink still drying.

That doesn't mean there's no heat going his way.

Having hired his third head coach in Rick Bowness in July, Cheveldayoff is under the gun from his fan base, if not his owner.

From some of his players, too.

Taking questions from reporters as Camp Bowness opened on Thursday, the GM acknowledged he heard it from players and “different representatives” in the emotional aftermath of last season.

“Everyone was just looking to see what the future holds here,” he said.

We'd known Mark Scheifele needed some answers and reassurance there was a plan to get things back on track, but it seems there were more.

It's never a good sign when veterans and/or their agents are questioning the future of your team.

“It says to me they really care about what is going on here,” Cheveldayoff countered.

We now know ex-captain Blake Wheeler cared enough to agree it was time to consider a change of scenery.

Cheveldayoff explored a trade over the summer, an effort that proved unsuccessful.

Wheeler was rewarded by being asked to hand in his ‘C’ on the eve of camp.

Teammates continue to express their shock over that move.



“My only captain that I’ve ever had in the NHL,” defenceman Josh Morrissey said. “And I’ve looked up to a lot over the years and learned a lot from... so it was emotional for myself and for other guys around the room because I have a ton of respect for him.

“You can read into whatever message that sends, but whether Wheels is wearing the C or not, he’s the leader of our team and he’s a leader in our locker room.”

The leadership change, and reaction it’ll draw, is only one of many questions swirling, leading to unsure expectations compared with what this team faced a year ago.

Cheveldayoff had made some good moves the previous summer, setting the Jets up for another run like the one they had in 2018.

“We sat here 12 months ago and the general consensus about the team wasn’t if we were going to make the playoffs,” Cheveldayoff said. “It was about how many rounds should this team win. Something got lost in translation along the way.”

Instead of flourishing under the light, the Jets wilted.

“In my experience, expectations are what kill teams,” goalie Connor Hellebuyck said. “You come in with expectations of great things and it’s hard to live up to it. It’s a mental grind.”

Halfway through the year, one set of wheels already off the rails, Paul Maurice walked away as head coach, leaving the train teetering as it careened through the second half.

Interim coach Dave Lowry failed to regain control, leading to the inevitable derailment.

“It just felt confusing and messy,” is how Scheifele put it, looking back.

Which brings us to this: A training camp with miniscule and enormous expectations, at the same time.

A second chance for a group that’s largely unchanged.

Morrissey takes that as a vote of confidence.

“We have a good hockey team in this room,” he said. “It’s nice to see the faith from the management and ownership to not make a lot of changes of players. Last year, we talked about it until we were blue in the face, really, about being frustrated, disappointed... feeling like we underachieved.

“So now it’s on us.”

It’s on the new coach, too, the move Cheveldayoff appears to be hanging his hat on after an otherwise uneventful summer.

“We had a seismic change on July 4 when we changed the coaching staff here, the philosophy,” he said.

A new coach can make all the difference.

But the same players can also slip into the same bad habits in the long run.

Players are proud, so this group will feel like it has something to prove.

Bowness's job is finding the sweet spot between being the hard-ass and getting the players to hold themselves more accountable, something you may recall the departed Paul Stastny say was sorely lacking.

"In the kickoff meeting, we talked about setting a standard," Cheveldayoff said. "And pushing each other to uphold that standard."

That standard has to be reaching the post-season, at a minimum.

"I feel we have a playoff team," Cheveldayoff said. "But whether I feel it, or you feel it, they have to feel it. They're the ones that have to play."

If they don't, the day will inevitably come when the GM has to pay.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/snapshots-jets-d-getting-green-light-on-offence-forwards-more-or-less-set>

### ***SNAPSHOTS: Jets' D getting green light on offence; forwards more or less set?***

By Scott Billeck

If a red light spells danger, then Rick Bowness can't hold out much longer.

With sincere apologies to Billy Ocean and his 1970s hit record, this is why the new head coach of the Winnipeg Jets wants his blue line to see green.

You see, Bowness wasn't particularly fond of his squad's defencemen producing a paltry 24 goals last season.

Why would he be?

The lowly number was good for 29th in the NHL — a staggering 40-goal difference from first-place Colorado, who lifted the Stanley Cup last spring.

It's actually not the worst they've been, either. The 2020-21 season saw just 10 goals come from defencemen (albeit in 56 games), a league-low. They had 21 a year before, good for just 29th again.

You can go back even into the Dustin Byfuglien and Jacob Trouba years and you won't find a Jets blue-line that scored more than middle of the pack, but the view from the middle-of-the-pack looks a lot better than the one from the basement.

So in an attempt to correct the issue, Bowness is giving Josh Morrissey and Co. a green light heading into the season, one that will allow them to activate up the ice in hopes of lighting a different type of red light.

"We're going to do a lot more than that. Our D is coming," Bowness proclaimed to the assembled media on Thursday at BellMTS Iceplex.

"We're not going to hesitate. Our D can skate, they're mobile. Twenty-four goals from your defence in this league is not good enough – it's not."

Nowhere close, in fact.

It's one of several areas of deficiency the Jets need to correct this year if they're going to head back to the playoffs after a one-year reprieve, and this one, in particular, is going to take a collective effort on the ice.

"Part of the education process is for the forwards to understand that our D aren't going to sit here and wait for a forward to go," Bowness said. "If our D can go, they're going, and it's the forward's responsibility to play defence until that guy gets back."

Bowness didn't like the fact that the Jets ranked 31st in teams that carry the puck into the zone, either.

"We have to improve in those areas it's that simple," he said.

Trio of Jets' first-rounders shine as prospect tourney comes to a close

*Crowded blue-line...*

Speaking of Winnipeg's defensive corps... calling it a logjam seems an injustice.

There are 16 defencemen at training camp, and while some of them will head back to junior and others to the Manitoba Moose in the American Hockey League, there are still several with legitimate chances to make the club, and others that need will have to be treacherously moved through waivers if they hope not to lose them.

Bowness went with a veteran-youngster approach to his pairings as best he could during both sessions on Thursday, so it's too early to get a gauge on who may be favoured to be in the starting lineup in a few weeks' time.

The pairs, for reference:

Team Hawerchuk

Josh Morrissey-Johnathan Kovacevic

Logan Stanley-Leon Gawanke

Declan Chisholm-Dylan DeMelo

Ashton Saunter-Tyrel Bauer

Team Steen

Brenden Dillon-Ville Heinola

Kyle Capobianco-Neal Pionk

Dylan Samberg-Nate Schmidt

Dmitri Kuzmin-Simon Lundmark

Stanley toe-dragged Scheifele before putting a backhand shot five-hole on Connor Hellebuyck, so he won't be giving up his spot that easily, if at all.

Something has to give here at some point.

"Well, you can never have too many defencemen," general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff said. "Things happen very, very quickly in this game, where you think that you might have a surplus and things change. Reading some stories around the league here today on different players that aren't participating in training camp for one reason or another, we're on day one. There's lots of stories to unfold yet."

True. The Jets don't have a Ryan Ellis on their roster, however. Everyone is healthy through the first day, knock on wood.

It gets a lot more interesting if some of the young players make an undeniable case for a roster spot and there isn't one to be had.

Stay tuned.

*Forward lines already a done deal?*

Meanwhile, up front, Bowness had two lines in each group that could easily look identical on Oct. 14 against the New York Rangers.

For reference:

Kyle Connor-Mark Scheifele-Nikolaj Ehlers  
Cole Perfetti-Pierre-Luc Dubois-Blake Wheeler  
Jansen Harkins-Adam Lowry-Mason Appleton  
Dominic Toninato-David Gustafsson-Sam Gagner

First off, those clamouring for the Gus Bus to pull into the depot will be happy to see Gustafsson centring the fourth line. It's his job to lose this year.

Secondly, there isn't much surprise in the top six.

Morgan Barron is dealing with an upper-body injury he picked up during some of the pre-season skates here in Winnipeg, and is expected to miss a couple of days.

If he doesn't miss much time, he will give Harkins/Toninato a run for a roster spot.

For what it's worth, Bowness said he expects a significant roster cutdown after the third preseason game next Thursday in Montreal.

<https://winnipegssun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/its-only-day-1-but-jets-scheifele-appears-to-have-new-lease-on-life>

### ***It's only Day 1, but Jets' Scheifele appears to have new lease on life***

By Scott Billeck

Mark Scheifele was unsure of how many times he had proclaimed his excitement after the first day of training camp on Thursday, but was aware it was flying out of his mouth at a pretty decent rate as he spoke with the assembled media.

All tallied up, he uttered the word “excited” or “exciting” no fewer than 18 times as he answered a bevy of questions sent his way at BellMTS Iceplex.

“That’s how I feel,” he concluded, not long after his group, Team Hawerchuk, were put through the paces of a 90-minutes skate.

No one would argue how he felt. It was just as evident on his face as it was when he spoke about it.

The player who had, admittedly, closed up over the past couple of years in front of the mic, wasn’t the same as the one that stood before a throng of reporters inside the team’s dressing room.

“It’s definitely a nice fresh start for me going into this year,” he said. “I’m sure you guys can tell I’m pretty excited right now. I think I’m exuding positivity right now because I’m excited. It’s been an awesome start to the year, talking to the new coaches and talking to the guys and seeing the excitement on guys’ faces going this year. I think is very positive.”

It was a far cry from a few months ago, when Scheifele, clearly disgruntled, gave an honest assessment of where he was at. His words led to a lot of speculation, including if he’d even be standing in front of the whiteboard he was on Thursday.

If there was confusion last year, uncertainty about what was being asked of the players, and/or just lack of direction and purpose, that all appears to be in the rearview mirror.

Whatever conversations Scheifele has had with newly installed head coach Rick Bowness and his assistants, Scott Arniel and Brad Lauer, they’ve seemed to rejuvenate Scheifele.

Scheifele had already spoken of a quick call he had with Bowness while golfing during the summer. It wasn’t about hockey, but just about life. Just to see how Scheifele was doing.

The team had already been sending out videos earlier this week, detailed sessions on what they’re trying to achieve in all three zones as Bowness works to implement new systems.

“We’re learning something new, we’re going to become better players from it,” Scheifele said. “That’s exciting. We know what we’re doing. We know why we’re doing it.”

The ‘what’ and the ‘why’ were two things Scheifele had questioned in his exit interview. He wanted to know a vision for the future of the team, and where he fits in it.

Bowness has made it clear that his No. 1 centre will feature heavily in his plans. And when the 67-year-old caught wind of Scheifele’s end-of-season comments, he saw past the frustration.

“I’m sitting in Dallas, and I hear all about these comments — my first thought was this kid wants to win,” Bowness said Thursday. “Now, you’re not there to hear the tone, you don’t know all the exact details. Unless you’re right there in that conversation, you don’t know. But my first thought was, ‘Geez, there’s a kid who wants to win.’

Bowness said he never heard a player that wanted out of town. He also didn’t see any of it as a negative. If anything, he appreciated what he heard.

“His heart is in the right place,” Bowness said. “Now none of us are perfect, sometimes the tone is wrong, the words are wrong. But if your heart is in the right place, which his is, it’ll work.”

This may be prying between the lines, as opposed to reading between them, but you get a sense that Scheifele had lost a little bit of his love for the game over the past couple of seasons.

COVID threw a wrench in his off-season workout plans, with Scheifele joking Thursday about having to change in a parking lot after some skates back home in Kitchener with Jets defenceman Logan Stanley.

But there were tangible dilemmas, such as just finding ice to skate on or a gym to work out.

“It was definitely tough on me, and the people close to me,” he said. “And I think it was really nice to have a good, normal summer, so I’m definitely really happy with that.”

Scheifele still has his critics. There were times last season when he look disinterested on the ice. The two-way game he’s prided himself on in the past seemingly became a one-way game, with the defensive portion left behind.

More than one day at training camp will be needed to judge whether or not that’s changed.

For now, there’s a player that seems to be bought into what a new head coach is selling.

“I’m excited to learn right now,” Scheifele said. “It’s awesome to have new coaches, getting a new perspective. I’ve had awesome conversations with them all, they’re all very welcoming and want to talk hockey — so they speak my language.

“They want to talk hockey, they want to give me new thoughts to think about and my mind, Day 1 already, is swimming with new thoughts.”

### **Sportsnet.ca**

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/article/bowness-sends-clear-message-to-jets-on-first-day-of-training-camp/>

### ***Bowness sends clear message to Jets on first day of training camp***

By Ken Wiebe

WINNIPEG — “Seismic change?”

Rick Bowness was quick to joke that he’s been called worse when asked how Winnipeg Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff described the decision to overhaul the coaching staff this off-season.

But for a guy who concedes that he isn’t into labels, it’s clear that the new head coach of the Jets is going to need to have a big impact on his new team for Winnipeg to return to the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

“Listen, I’m a coach, that’s all I know how (to do), so whatever I’m called, I’m coming out and I’m just gonna do my thing,” said Bowness, whose enthusiasm was on full display during two sessions of teaching on Thursday. “The reasonable goal is we have no choice, we’ve got to get ready for the season. So like we talked to the players, every day you’re coming to the rink you’d better be ready to work, you better be ready to think, you better be ready to buy in.

“Because that’s what it’s all going to come down to on Oct. 14, who’s bought in the most, who’s worked the most, who’s paid attention the most and who’s on the page. It’s all in. It’s all in means paying attention every day.”

To the surprise of no one, the guy who has been involved in the NHL game as a player or coach for five decades (and counting) is up for the challenge.

No, this isn’t a stern, my-way-or-the-highway approach — Bowness is far too strong a communicator to come across that way — but on the first day of on-ice sessions at training camp, you didn’t need a road map to see the Jets are heading in a different direction.

When Bowness says players are entering the season with a clean slate, this isn’t just lip service.

Any previous hierarchy that existed is out the window, ice time is going to be doled out based on merit.

Whether you’re an experienced player looking for an enhanced role or a youngster trying to become an NHL regular, Bowness is looking for players to leave a lasting impression.

“We missed the playoffs last year, so it’s wide open,” said Bowness. “Everything goes for me. We’ve got a new coaching staff, I’ve seen a lot of these guys (as an opposing coach), so anyone comes in here thinking ‘oh, I’m going to do this, I’m going to do that, it’s a given,’ — that’s not a given.

“We missed the playoffs. We’ve got a new staff so we’re going to give everyone a good look. And the guys that we see and see good things in practice, we’re going to give them a good look.”

Just a week after the public announcement that veteran forward Blake Wheeler had been stripped of the captaincy, Jets players weighed in publicly on the topic. While the requisite amount of respect was paid for the job he’s done in that role, you also got the sense that some players were definitely looking forward to the opportunity to have a louder voice in this collective effort.

“I’m an older guy now. I’m 26. I’m ready to take a little more responsibility and I think we have a lot of guys here that are ready to take that step,” said Nikolaj Ehlers. “To be able to have 25 guys take ownership, I think that’s going to go a long way. I haven’t been the most loud guy in the room. I try to do my best out there and show it on the ice, but I do think that I’ve realized that I’ve got things I can say as well and I’m ready to take that step.”

A change with who wears the letters isn’t the only shift in philosophy to be implemented with the new coaching staff.

Not only do the Jets plan to play an aggressive style in all three zones, Bowness is expecting his blue-liners to be far more involved after combining for only 24 goals last season.

That doesn't mean the Jets plan to throw caution to the wind and raise the risk profile substantially — the forwards are going to need to do their part in terms of coverage in order for this plan to succeed.

Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck is eager to see this plan implemented and not just because it should help make life a bit easier on him when it comes to the volume and quality of shots he faces.

"I'll do whatever it takes to win games," said Hellebuyck. "When a new coach comes in with a proven philosophy, I'm buying into it, so I'm pretty excited about where we're going and this is just the start."

Finally, on a day when optimism is the prevailing mood and excitement is a word that gets thrown around by virtually everyone who steps in front of a microphone, Cheveldayoff basically let it be known to the rest of the NHL that he remains open for business.

Yes, the relative inactivity this offseason can be viewed as a vote of confidence to his core group — and in many ways it was — but that doesn't mean Cheveldayoff isn't still actively looking for ways to improve this team, perhaps even before the season opens on Oct. 14 against the New York Rangers.

"Some things have to play themselves out as well. There is going to be opportunity here and competition, so things may change," said Cheveldayoff. "You can't crystal ball things sitting here right now. I do know for a fact, this group knows it has something to prove."

This wasn't Cheveldayoff's effort to publicly put his players on notice, that's not his style, but the message he delivered was similar to the one Bowness authored later in the afternoon.

The results of last season were simply not good enough and things are going to need to change quickly.

"I feel we have a playoff team. But whether I feel it, or you feel it, they have to feel it," said Cheveldayoff. "We sat here 12 months ago and the general consensus about the team wasn't if we were going to make the playoffs, it was about how many rounds should this team win. Something got lost in translation along the way. You have to earn that right to make the playoffs. These guys feel that right now."

"There are lots of really great pieces on this team. To become a team, it's about putting those pieces together. It's about coming together as a team. It's about playing for each other. It's about all those kinds of things. You can have all the parts, but you have to bring it together."

As for the storyline surrounding this group and the swath of players with contracts that are set to expire in the summer of 2024, Cheveldayoff had no interest in going down that road.

"I don't think we're focusing on anything else other than what's right in front of us," said Cheveldayoff. "We start trying to talk about two years from now, (there is) so much runway between now and then. Obviously in the (kickoff) meetings, we talked about setting a standard and pushing each other to uphold that standard."



Reaching and upholding that standard is definitely on the minds of the players, since they don't want a repeat performance of last season when the Jets failed to meet both internal and external expectations.

"We talked about it until we were blue in the face, really, about being frustrated, disappointed in last season, feeling like we underachieved and we could have achieved more, so now it's kind of on us," said Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey. "We have a new staff that's excited, we're excited and we get another shot to show that we are a good team and we're a team that can make the playoffs in our minds.

"As a player, that's the confidence you want from your organization. Now it's time for us to buy into the systems, buy into our coaching staff and go to another level that we think we have and can get to."

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/video/camp-competition-creates-opportunity-jets-new-head-coach-bowness/>

### ***Camp competition creates opportunity for Jets under new head coach Bowness (VIDEO)***

Sean Reynolds and Ken Wiebe dig in on the first day of training camp for the Winnipeg Jets, including possible competition for ice time under new coach Rick Bowness and the state of the Jets' leadership after shakeups to the captaincy.

#### **Canadian Press**

<https://www.chrisd.ca/2022/09/23/winnipeg-jets-rick-bowness-coach-cheveldayoff/>

### ***'Seismic Change:' Jets GM Cheveldayoff Excited to Have Bowness Behind Bench***

By Judy Owen, The Canadian Press

WINNIPEG — Kevin Cheveldayoff knows he didn't make big changes to the Winnipeg Jets roster in the off-season, but the general manager believes hiring Rick Bowness as head coach was a "seismic" move that should pay off.

"I think we had a seismic change on July 4 when we changed the coaching staff here, the philosophy," Cheveldayoff told media Thursday after watching the former Dallas Stars head coach run Day 1 of training camp.

"I think if you just watched even the drills today and ... watched the practice today, there's lots of teaching, there's lots of different systems, there's lots of different ways that things are going to be approached, so that's a seismic change."

Bowness laughed when asked how he felt about being called a "seismic change."

"I've been called worse," he said with a smile. "I don't know. Listen, I'm a coach, that's all I know how, so whatever I'm called, I'm coming out and I'm just going to do my thing."

The Jets (39-32-11) missed the playoffs last season after making it to the post-season in four straight years, finishing eight points behind Nashville for the final NHL Western Conference wild-card spot.

It was a campaign that included head coach Paul Maurice resigning in mid-December and Dave Lowry taking over on an interim basis. After the season, players expressed frustration and pointed to problems with accountability.

Veteran defenceman Josh Morrissey viewed a lack of big roster moves as a vote of confidence.

"It's nice to see the faith from the management and ownership to not make a lot of changes of players," Morrissey said.

"I think last year, we talked about it until we were blue in the face, really, about being frustrated, disappointed in last season, feeling like we underachieved and we could have achieved more, so now it's kind of on us.

"We have a new staff that's excited, we're excited and we get another shot to show that we are a good team and we're a team that can make the playoffs in our minds. As a player, that's the confidence you want from your organization.

"Now it's time for us to buy into the systems, buy into our coaching staff and go to another level that we think we can have and get to."

The Jets didn't have a sellout last season and fans have expressed frustration about the team on social media.

Cheveldayoff was asked how fans can get excited about a squad that's basically remained the same.

"I think it comes down to the style of play that we're going to have," he replied. "I think it's going to come down to the emotion that I believe we'll play with under (Bowness). And I think that excitement level is there.

"It wasn't long ago that the fan base here would get excited for young players that do come into the lineup, like a Cole Perfetti, like a Morgan Barron. Those are things an organization grows with.

"It's not always about signing the big-name free agent that you might have to buy out two or three years down the road, it's about growth. I think we're well positioned with a strong core of veteran players and some good youth that's knocking at the door here that's really going to push those players."

Last season, the Jets were expected to make the playoffs and take a serious run at claiming the Stanley Cup.

Veteran goaltender Connor Hellebuyck seemed glad that's not the case this time around.

"In my experience, expectations are what kill teams," he said. "You come in with expectations of great things and it's hard to live up to it. It's a mental grind.

"If you come in and you expect yourself to battle every single day and give yourself a chance at great things, that's when they happen. So, that's kind of my mindset coming in."

One happy player Thursday was centre Mark Scheifele, who talked at the end of last season about wanting to know the direction the team was heading and whether it was a good fit for him.

"It's definitely a nice fresh start for me going into this year," he said. "I'm sure you guys can tell I'm pretty excited right now."

"I think I'm exuding positivity right now because I'm excited. It's been an awesome start to the year, talking to the new coaches and talking to the guys and seeing the excitement on guys' faces going into this year."

### **TSN.ca**

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/it-doesn-t-change-what-i-am-committed-to-wheeler-staying-positive-following-leadership-change~2527201>

### ***'It doesn't change what I am committed to': Wheeler staying positive following leadership change***

Winnipeg's Blake Wheeler sits down with TSN's Darren Dreger and shares how much positivity and support he has always received while out and about in the city. The former captain reveals his thoughts on the leadership change with the team, including the removal of his captaincy. Wheeler also discusses his thoughts on his future with the club and keeping open communication with management

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/i-made-that-decision-bowness-details-leadership-change~2527203>

### ***'I made that decision': Bowness details leadership change (VIDEO)***

New Jets' head coach Rick Bowness sits down with TSN's Darren Dreger to share the process of returning to Winnipeg after he spent time with the city years ago. Bowness also shares what kind of culture change will take place with the Jets, which included taking the captaincy from Blake Wheeler.

### **The Athletic**

<https://theathletic.com/3620648/2022/09/22/winnipeg-jets-training-camp-bowness-scheifele/?source=emp-shared-article>

### ***Winnipeg Jets training camp: Rick Bowness impressions, Mark Scheifele's excitement***

By Murat Ates

Day 1 of Jets camp was nothing if not an endorsement of Winnipeg's new head coach Rick Bowness.

The Jets finished last season questioning their commitment to each other and demonstrating a relative lack of commitment to defensive hockey. They didn't have the puck a lot and often tried to create offence out of nothing when they did get possession. Star players like Kyle Connor and Mark Scheifele scored a lot but defended very little. Connor Hellebuyck had a down year, facing far too much shot quality, while Winnipeg didn't play Nikolaj Ehlers enough or get enough offence out of its upgraded blue line.

Put simply, the team looked disconnected. It is Bowness' job to create those connections now and early returns look good.

He was bold enough to change Winnipeg's leadership group, removing the captaincy from Blake Wheeler. He spent his summer talking to Winnipeg's players, so much so that Scheifele recently told "32 Thoughts" he'd never had a coach check in with him as much as Bowness did.

On Day 1 of camp, Bowness showed a keen understanding of exactly the on-ice, systemic improvements that Winnipeg needs to make. An early focus on the neutral zone showed a commitment to speed and structure while line combinations showed a keen understanding of Winnipeg's most effective players. Bowness then spoke to Winnipeg's lack of activation by its defencemen — and lack of forwards covering for rushing teammates — in a way that suggests the Jets are about to modernize their game in an awful hurry.

The roster battles will sort themselves out. Winnipeg still has a long way to go. There hasn't been a single scrimmage, exhibition game or moment of adversity.

But Day 1 was exactly what the Jets needed it to be. Here is everything you need to know about the first day of camp, including line combinations, systems upgrades, quotes from Bowness, Scheifele and Josh Morrissey and what Bowness' style of play means for Jets players — especially defencemen — who are fighting for their jobs.

### *One part professor, one part rock icon*

I once heard Foo Fighters frontman Dave Grohl talk about '90s rock music in terms of the interplay between soft, sometimes whispered verses and louder, more aggressive, drummer-breaks-his-biggest-sweat-while-the-singer-wails choruses. The idea was that a song's chorus could hit your ears with an even bigger impact after the relative quiet of the verses which preceded them than if the whole song was a rager from front to back. The idea made perfect sense to me, especially because I tend to tune out repetitive, wall-of-sound type music and Grohl seemed to be saying that the Foo Fighters could feel heavier than they really were by only being loud when they really needed to be.

Bowness reminds me of the exact same concept.

When he stood in front of his whiteboard Thursday, diagramming the neutral zone systems which his team had seen on video prior to stepping onto the ice, he looked calm and composed like a teacher at the front of a highly attentive classroom. His movements were confident and controlled and conveyed an almost gentle instructive tone.

Then the puck dropped and the drills began. Winnipeg's skaters mostly ran their new 1-2-2, 2-1-2 and 2-3 forechecks with aggression and pace — truth be told, I'd be encouraged if I was a Jets fan — but the moment the pace dropped, out came Bowness as loud as a rock chorus.

“Too slow! Too slow!” he bellowed on one breakout when Kristian Reichel took his time before reversing to a defenceman behind the net. “Keep moving!” came his call on a different play as Scheifele and Connor established themselves as the first two forecheckers. One major first impression is that Bowness is a gentle teacher but a fierce motivator and reinforcer of his plans.

He’d sent out a video package earlier in the week which previewed the systems changes he wants to see in all three zones this year. Then, on Thursday morning, Winnipeg began its day with a neutral zone video session which Bowness reinforced with a steady stream of drills designed to teach the Jets a faster, more aggressive neutral zone defence.

“We think we’re a good-skating hockey team, and we’re going to use that,” Bowness explained when both on-ice sessions were done. “We like to use the term ‘play on our toes’ — we’re not big on sitting back and standing still. So we want to see them moving. If we’re a good-skating team then let’s use that to our advantage. Let’s use it to pressure the opposition. Let’s use it to make it a little harder for us to be played against.”

Early returns looked good to this reporter’s eyes. We broke down the failures of Winnipeg’s 1-1-3 forecheck last season — essentially, Dave Lowry and company couldn’t get Winnipeg to commit to it. That Day 1 of Bowness’ camp addressed this issue head-on — and that early returns looked fast, aggressive and structured — is a terrific sign.

Bowness himself was pleased with what he saw.

“The earlier they look at it the better, and it showed today because I thought they were picking up on it pretty quick.”

Here’s what I saw:

1. An early drill with five skaters defending the neutral zone from a pair of defencemen showed what I read as a 1-2-2 forecheck. The first Jets forward put pressure on the defenceman with the puck. If the defenceman tried to move the puck up ice, he might beat that first forward but Winnipeg’s other two forwards and its two D-men had the neutral zone covered. If the defenceman with the puck passed off to his partner, then Winnipeg’s first forechecker would drop back into the neutral zone while a second one pressured the puck. Speaking to Kevin Sawyer after this drill, he referred to it as a 2-2-1 because of how quickly the second forward jumped up. To me, it’s a 1-2-2 because the second forward only jumps up if the puck goes from D to D ... But Sawyer played over 100 games in the NHL and I think we can trust him on this one.

2. A version of this drill started with a simulated offensive zone turnover, meaning the team meant to protect the neutral zone had to recover from its attack and get into position with pace. This was a closer simulation of an actual game situation.

3. A later version of this drill involved five skaters on both teams. I saw Winnipeg run a 2-1-2 at times and Sawyer pointed out how the third forward sometimes dropped back to join his defenceman to make it a 2-3 when the team with the puck sent a forward up high.

4. There were also versions of this drill that began with a simulated lost battle in an offensive zone corner.

Forget about the details for a moment. The No. 1 takeaway should be that Winnipeg had a plan in the neutral zone and was executing it with purpose and pace. Players were aware of their roles, Bowness was on top of them yelling for speed, and if anything did slow down he channelled his inner rock singer with another “Too slow!” yelled at an impressive amount of decibels. These are good signs.

Day 1 lines

Team Hawerchuk

Connor — Scheifele — Ehlers

Toninato — Gustafsson — Gagner

Malott — Nikkanen — Reichel

Torgersson — Zhilkin — Lambert\*

\*with Evan Polei rotating in

Morrissey — Kovacevic

Stanley — Gawanke

Sautner — Bauer

Chisholm — DeMelo

Team Steen

Perfetti — Dubois — Wheeler

Harkins — Lowry — Appleton

Eyssimont — Stenlund — Maenalanen

Meier — Jones — Lucius\*

\*with Limoges rotating in

Dillon — Heinola

Capobianco — Pionk

Samberg — Schmidt

Kuzmin — Lundmark

Note that Morgan Barron and Wyatt Bongiovanni were absent. Barron was injured at a skate last week while Bongiovanni was hurt in Penticton. Neither is likely to be a long-term injury according to Kevin Cheveldayoff. Note as well that we essentially nailed the forward lines in our Jets camp preview.

Meanwhile, the defence pairs were split into combinations of veterans and youth.

There's a reason for that.

“We broke up the veteran Ds to get them with the younger Ds so we can get a better look at the younger Ds. Playing with the veterans we can get a better look at them,” Bowness said. “Up front, we’ll get to the forward lines probably quicker than the defence pairs, but right now we want to look at all our D and give the young guys a veteran to play with and see if we can help them out.”

Bowness also spoke to Cole Perfetti about getting to play with big, strong top-six forwards like Pierre-Luc Dubois and Wheeler. The theory is that all of them think the game at a high level while the two older, bigger players can create space for Perfetti with their bodies while Perfetti creates space for them to attack with his patience on the puck.

At first glance, the Connor, Scheifele and Ehlers line looks like an awful lot of offence and very little defence to speak of — but, then, that's what Adam Lowry, Jansen Harkins and Mason Appleton are for. My guess is that those three lines will emerge from camp largely unscathed, while David Gustafsson, Dominic Toninato, and Sam Gagner could see Barron fight for a spot from them if he gets back up to speed quickly.

Quick hits on individual players:

- Dylan Samberg stood out to me in a positive way, handling himself effectively in one-on-one situations and moving well. Right here, right now, he may be the best of Winnipeg's next wave of defencemen that includes Ville Heinola, Declan Chisholm and Logan Stanley.
- Stanley, for his part, was great with the puck. He walked around Scheifele in a one-on-one drill before scoring backhand five-hole, looking like a more offensively gifted player. Scheifele wasn't dogging it, either — I think he was upset to have been burned.
- There is a narrative that Brad Lambert needs more confidence. I saw him pull up on a rush and go top corner on David Rittich, drawing an "Oooh" from part of the crowd, and showing more than enough swagger for a 19-year-old rookie. I think he's a player that can help the Moose and who could benefit from the ups and downs of a full AHL season.
- Mikey Eyssimont has a Brandon Tanev-esque work ethic and complete lack of quit, proving himself to be a pain in the ass to players way above his pay grade. I don't think he'll make the Jets but I love the aggressive way he attacks every play.
- The veterans looked like veterans. Morrissey looked as fast as he did last season. Dubois looked tough to stop and Neal Pionk looked tough to beat. Morrissey dangled around rookie Daniel Zhilkin at one point, firing a cross-body forehand into the top right corner that showed a lot of confidence.
- I'm always curious as to who hangs out with who when the drills are done. Zhilkin and Lambert took one-timers from Scott Arniel during one stoppage while Johnathan Kovacevic, Jeff Malott and Declan Chisholm worked on their hand-eye coordination by flipping pucks to each other and batting them out of the air along the boards. Gustafsson and Toninato went head to head in a series of faceoffs (I think Gustafsson had the edge) and both Morrissey and Scheifele spent a lot of time talking to the coaching staff.
- Lowry, Harkins and Appleton looked like a line that had played together before, especially Lowry and Appleton.
- Kevin Stenlund and Saku Maenalanen impressed me, if nothing else, for their size. They look like professional hockey players, for whatever that's worth, and I suspect Stenlund in particular has an outside shot of earning a depth job.
- If Bowness uses Lowry in as heavy a checking capacity as we all expect, then at least one of Dubois or Scheifele's lines has to be able to outscore top competition, too (and if both get to that level, then we're looking at a playoff team).

Can they get it done? I asked Cheveldayoff very specifically about Scheifele and what the team is looking for from its clearly gifted, clearly optimistic, defensively flawed star centre.

Cheveldayoff sold promise.

"(Scheifele) can grow as a player," Cheveldayoff said. "He'd be the first one to tell you that. He's one of those guys that studies the game, understands the game, and knows it. I believe there are going to be some great conversations he has with (Scott Arniel) or Brad Lauer or Bones

himself. He loves to talk hockey and he loves to be part of the game. I think his all-around game is really going to grow under Bones.”

It may not be that Scheifele needs to channel Sean Couturier to be a boon to Winnipeg’s fortunes this season. The Jets are banking on improved systemic play being a tide that floats all boats. Scheifele remains an offensive wizard, has Winnipeg’s two best wingers on his line and is projecting an enormous amount of optimism as training camp begins.

A much-needed connection between offence and defence

Scheifele spoke to the media in one scrum at the same time as Morrissey. I spoke to Morrissey, who couldn’t help but comment on the pace, while Scheifele held court in a different group.

“I think this is my ninth or 10th training camp (and) you know that the first few days are going to be kind of almost out-of-control pace,” Morrissey said. “That’s what it feels like ... Everyone’s going a million miles an hour and so that’s kind of what you get used to. I think when I was younger, it was a bit of a shock, like holy smokes, guys are flying, coaches yelling and everything else. But I thought specifically today we had a good pace and the drills were designed where we were really moving out there so it was good.”

Pressed for comments on the Jets’ systemic play, Morrissey said that the changes were clear to him by the second or third drill.

“We’re making a lot of changes to our game, all over the ice,” he said. “Offensive zone, D-zone, neutral zone, defensively and from watching practice, we’re going to be playing at a high pace and we’re going to be using our skating. We’re a team with fast players up and down our lineup and on our back end and we’re going to be aggressive. So to answer your question, yeah, right away. Drill No. 2 or 3 was already into it. That’s exciting as a player because we’re really getting to work on something that’s going to be part of our team in crunch time during the season.”

This is where Scheifele’s enthusiasm from the other scrum kicks in.

“It’s a completely new system,” Scheifele said. “A lot of guys aren’t used to it, me especially. The first drill I messed up; there’s definitely going to be a learning curve and I think that’s what’s exciting. The biggest thing, from what Bones has talked to us about our system, is we’re fast, we skate well, we have really smart players, we have really intuitive players, and we’re a good skating team. What we’re going to implement is going to only enhance each and every one of us. What’s exciting for a guy like me is getting the most out of each and every player on this team — it’s an exciting thing.”

Scheifele went on to tease himself for the number of times he used the word “exciting” (Scott Billeck joked that it was 55 times, which is obviously an apt number). We’ve gone through his end-of-season comments to death at this point (and let me remind you, we commented on his love for Winnipeg at the same time as the open-ended discussion of his future).

So let’s take the time to focus on his positive vibes on Day 1 of camp.

Scheifele is one of a few players who can put a moment on his back, creating a goal out of nothing — a fact that made last season’s lack of defensive effort all the more frustrating to watch. We’ve discussed all of that at length but one item that may not get enough attention is Scheifele’s frustration with the way Winnipeg attacked last year. The forwards may not have done a good job tracking back to help their defencemen but last season’s Jets asked so very



little of their D-men offensively. You'd see Morrissey take over the game when the Jets trailed late — what a special season from No. 44 — but offence from Winnipeg's defence was absolutely not the norm. I've always had the sense that Scheifele hoped for a more connected, cohesive attack.

Offence from the blue line was one of Bowness' calling cards in Dallas. Miro Heiskanen and John Klingberg had an awful lot to do with that but Bowness' blue line helped the forwards create extra layers of attack, leading to more sustained offence for everybody. My sense is that this is more in line with how Scheifele sees the game.

Whether or not I'm right about that, it's clear that Bowness has Scheifele buying in to his vision of how Winnipeg should play hockey.

"It just felt confusing and messy," Scheifele said of Winnipeg's systems play last season. "(This season) we've already been sent video sessions from the neutral zone, D-zone, O-zone. We worked a little natural zone today and it's very different, but these coaches are very detailed, and I think a lot of the guys are excited. Talking to the guys through the skate, it's an exciting time. We're learning something new, we're going to become better players from it. That's exciting. We know what we're doing. We know why we're doing it. (Rick Bowness), (Scott Arniel) and (Brad Lauer) have been great at answering questions and telling us why we're doing it and what the purpose is and everything. That's kind of what everyone wants."

Bowness told us that one of the first things he identified about Winnipeg is that the Jets got just 24 goals from its defencemen last year. That's a number Bowness called "not good enough" and vowed to improve.

That's where the connection between Scheifele and Morrissey (and all forwards and defencemen) comes in.

"Part of the education process is for the forwards to understand that our D aren't going to sit here and wait for a forward to go," Bowness said. "If our D can go, they're going, and it's the forward's responsibility to play defence until that guy gets back."

It says a lot about the state of last season's Jets that this bit of "Hockey 101" is such a necessary teaching point but Bowness is promising big changes.

Where did this specific focus begin? Did it come from his summerlong conversations with players like Scheifele and Morrissey?

"It would have probably started with Chevy calling me about the job," Bowness said. "I did a little homework and learned about their team and then looked at areas this team has to improve in. We have to improve in those areas it's that simple. I don't like the fact this team was 31st in the league in teams that carry the puck into the zone. I don't like to look at that. I don't like to see 24 goals from the defence. We just got to get five guys on the ice working together ... Our D are going to have the green light to go."

This is good news for Morrissey, Pionk and Nate Schmidt in particular but could have job implications for the youth, too. Transition play is Heinola's bread and butter; at the AHL level, he was involved in nearly every Moose rush whether he kicked it off with a crisp breakout pass or jumped into it by attacking the lane. Samberg is also ahead of a player Stanley in this regard.

And if you want to keep your eyes on the future, Chisholm was a big game player off the rush for Manitoba; it's easy to see him becoming an early favourite of Winnipeg's new staff.

*What does it all really mean?*

It's Day 1, meaning that we should temper our optimism. We saw how Winnipeg fell apart when adversity struck last season and we should look through all of this through the lens of that old Mike Tyson quote, "Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth." Scheifele has sold two-way play in previous training camps before demonstrating elite offence and little else.

That said, everything I've seen and heard from the Jets to kick off the year is one more endorsement of Bowness' hiring as head coach.

We've discussed the way he transitioned Dallas' core from aging veterans to young stars. We've looked at his ice time deployment with a little bit of optimism — he didn't overtax his first line or abandon his fourth line in Dallas the way Dave Lowry and Paul Maurice did in Winnipeg. And certainly, it can't hurt his relationship with someone like Scheifele that Bowness is held in high esteem by Scheifele's skills coach, Adam Oates.

But watching Bowness put Winnipeg's Day 1 focus on the neutral zone — an area that cost the Jets so much last season — and then follow it up by talking about offence from Winnipeg's defencemen was a breath of fresh air. The Jets came out of last season with clear needs: generate buy-in, improve defensive commitment, create more variety on the attack and play Ehlers more.

Bowness hasn't won a single game for Winnipeg but his early work shows that he knows Winnipeg's needs and is willing to work to get those needs met.

So we'll modify what we wrote when he was hired.

Bowness is not the road to a playoff spot — and Winnipeg could do an awful lot of things right and still miss — but it looks like knows the way.

[www.winnipegjets.com](http://www.winnipegjets.com)

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/training-camp-notebook---september-22/c-335708112>

### ***Training Camp Notebook - September 22 New systems, line rushes, and more!***

by Mitchell Clinton @MitchellClinton / WinnipegJets.com

WINNIPEG - After a long wait, the first on-ice sessions of Winnipeg Jets training camp finally arrived on Thursday, and no time was wasted diving into the new systems.

"Drill number two or three we were already into it," said Josh Morrissey. "That's exciting as a player because we're really getting to work on something that's going to be part of our team in crunch time during the season."

The 27-year-old Morrissey had a career-high 12 goals last season, the first time he's hit double-digits in that category.

But it was also half of the total goal production from the Jets back end in 2021-22.

"They only got 24 goals out of the D last year, we're going to do a lot more than that. Our D is coming," said Bowness. "If our D can go, they're going, and it's the forward's responsibility to play defence until that guy gets back. But we're not going to hesitate; our D can skate, they're mobile."

The Jets have three weeks and six preseason games to iron out the new systems. In fact, the first preseason game on the schedule is on Sunday against the Edmonton Oilers. That's why the first three days of camp are critical.

"Today was mostly neutral zone, tomorrow we'll work on the D-zone and then Saturday we'll work on the forecheck," Bowness said. "We sent out a video earlier this week of all the three zones of the systems we're going to be implementing, to try to get at details of our deployment. So, the earlier they look at it the better."

As for Connor Hellebuyck, who has faced 5,286 shots since the 2019-20 season (the second most is the 4,710 seen by Tampa Bay's Andrei Vasilevskiy), he's willing to embrace any system change that goes on in front of him.

"I'll do whatever it takes to win games," said Hellebuyck. "When a new coach comes in with a proven philosophy, I'm buying into it, so I'm pretty excited about where we're going and this is just the start."

The message to the players from Bowness is simple.

"Every day you're coming to the rink you'd better be ready to work, you better be ready to think, you better be ready to buy in," Bowness said. "Because that's what it's all going to come down to on Oct. 14."

### *LINE RUSHES*

The Jets didn't exactly ease into training camp, with both sessions running 80 minutes.

While the forward lines perhaps offered a bit of a hint toward what they might look like when the season begins on October 14 against the New York Rangers, the defensive pairs were all a mix of a veteran and a younger player.

"We broke up the veteran Ds to get them with the younger Ds so we can get a better look at the younger Ds," Bowness said. "Right now we want to look at all our D and give the young guys a veteran to play with and see if we can help them out."

#### Group 1:

Connor-Scheifele-Ehlers  
Toninato-Gustafsson-Gagner  
Malott-Nikkanen-Reichel  
Torgersson-Zhilkin-Lambert

Morrissey-Kovacevic  
Sautner-Bauer  
Chisholm-DeMelo

Stanley-Gawanke  
Hellebuyck, Rittich

Group 2:  
Perfetti-Dubois-Wheeler  
Harkins-Lowry-Appleton  
Eyssimont-Stenlund-Maenalanen  
Limoges-Maier-Lucius

Samberg-Schmidt  
Capobionco-Pionk  
Dillon-Heinola  
Kuzmin-Lundmark

Berdin, Holm, Salminen

### *QUOTABLES*

Mark Scheifele was asked about the impact the pandemic had on his off-season training in the past two off-seasons. Specifically, how big of a wrench did the facility closures have on workout plans?

"A big wrench," Scheifele said. "I don't know much about wrenches but one of the biggest kinds."

Cue laughter.

Scheifele was one of many players who spoke about their excitement with the start of training camp. The Jets forward changed a number of aspects of his off-season training and is looking forward to seeing the results.

"It's been an awesome start to the year, you know, talking to the new coaches and talking to the guys and seeing the excitement on guys faces going this year," said Scheifele. "I'm excited to learn and that's the biggest thing that I'm taking out of it right now. I'm excited to learn from new guys."

"I think I've said exciting so many times, but that's how I feel."

### *CHEVY SPEAKS*

General manager Kevin Cheveldayoff met with the media on the opening day of training camp.

He said both Morgan Barron and Wyatt Bongiovanni will miss the first bit of camp due to injury.

"Barron is out for a brief period here. He suffered a minor upper-body injury in the couple captain's skates before," said Cheveldayoff. "(Wyatt) Bongiovanni got hurt in Penticton. I believe he's about a week maybe or so with an upper-body."

He also reflected on the expectations that the team came into the season with in the fall of 2021, and where the mindset is now after an off-season that included a coaching change.

"We sat here 12 months ago and the general consensus about the team wasn't if we were going to make the playoffs, it was about how many rounds should this team win," Cheveldayoff said.

"Something got lost in translation along the way. You have to earn that right to make the playoffs. These guys feel that right now."