

## **Winnipeg Free Press**

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2022/09/25/insights-from-a-meatless-loss>

### ***Insights from a meatless loss***

### ***Jets Dubois, Perfetti show chemistry, rough start for Stanley, youngsters show some nerves***

By: Jeff Hamilton

The Winnipeg Jets opened their six-game preseason schedule with a 4-0 loss to the Edmonton Oilers at Rogers Place Sunday night.

The Oilers wasted little time taking control in this one, with Markus Niemelainen finding a lane through traffic to beat David Rittich just 41 seconds after the opening faceoff. It would be a long break between goals, with Edmonton adding three more in the third frame, including the final two over a span of 27 seconds to prevent any chance of a Jets comeback.

James Hamblin, Ryan McLeod and Dylan Holloway were credited with the third-period goals, while Stuart Skinner (19 saves) and Calvin Pickard (10 saves) combined for the shutout. Rittich played all 60 minutes, finishing with 22 saves on 26 shots in his Jets debut.

Winnipeg will have the day off on Monday before returning Tuesday to take on the Ottawa Senators at Canada Life Centre. Puck drop is at 7 p.m.

But before we look too far ahead, here are some news, notes and analysis from Sunday's preseason defeat to the Oilers.

1) It was finally made public that Dan Robertson will be the new TV play-by-play voice of the Jets for regional games on TSN. Why it took so long to announce the news is still unclear. Whatever the reason, it didn't stop Robertson from making a solid first impression, even if he'll have to wait to call his first Jets goal. He's comes as advertised.

2) The Jets dressed an inexperienced lineup, with the only regulars from last year being forwards Pierre-Luc Dubois, Mason Appleton, Cole Perfetti, Jansen Harkins and Dominic Toninato, along with defencemen Dylan DeMelo and Logan Stanley. The Oilers also iced a young roster, with none of their superstars such as Connor McDavid or Leon Draisaitl getting the nod.

3) Head coach Rick Bowness selected three alternate captains, giving the As to Dubois, Appleton and DeMelo. It's noteworthy because the Jets are currently without a defined leadership group after Bowness stripped Blake Wheeler of his captaincy and is taking a wait-and-see approach before determining a team of – likely made up of four – alternates.

4) It was exactly the kind of game you'd expect from a preseason opener. Bowness used adjectives such as "ugly" and "scrambly" and that's exactly what it looked like through much of the game. Add in the fact that the Jets are installing completely new systems in all three zones and it's no surprise the game was mostly sloppy.

5) While it's important not to draw too many conclusions from a single preseason game, and especially the first one, it wasn't a great night for Stanley. He bungled a routine outlet pass to the side boards that led to the game's opening goal, was off on a few other passes and just didn't look comfortable throughout. Stanley is battling for one of the final spots on the blue line and he didn't make much of an argument for himself on this night.

6) The Jets offensive attack was inconsistent, with very few high-quality chances generated. When the Jets did get a good opportunity in close, it often led to a shot being fired wide or high of the net. Not even four power plays, including a 5-on-3 for 50 seconds, resulted in much more than shots from the perimeter. To be fair, the Jets had yet to spend any training camp time, at least on-ice, working on the man advantage. A video was shown to players in the morning.

7) While they didn't dominate by any stretch of the imagination, there seemed to be some chemistry brewing between Dubois and Perfetti. Perfetti is set to take on a top-6 role to start the year, playing alongside Dubois and Wheeler on the second line. At just 20 years old, Perfetti possesses a high IQ and vision well beyond his years. It will be interesting to see how he can create ice for his new line mates after recovering from shoulder and back injuries.

8) Bowness noted after the game that he felt a lot of the younger players seemed nervous. While true, there were a few that stood out for positive reasons, including the trio of forwards Mikey Eyssimont, Kevin Stenlund and Saku Maenalanen. Eyssimont, who led the Moose with 42 points last season, brought a lot of energy, and Stenlund, a former second-round pick for Columbus in 2015, was able to use his 6-4, 211-pound frame effectively. Stenlund had a Grade A chance in the slot but sailed the puck high – opportunities he and others need to capitalize on if they hope to get a long look from Bowness. An honourable mention goes to forward Jeff Malott for mucking it up with several Oilers, bringing a level of physicality that wasn't really seen from anyone else.

9) Something Bowness has preached all training camp is for the defence to be more active on the offensive rush – it's a significant part of the Jets new philosophy of becoming a more aggressive team. That happened several times Sunday, with mixed results. On Edmonton's third goal, defenceman Kyle Capobianco pinched deep, with forward Chaz Lucius covering for him. But as the puck moved up ice, Lucius had the puck chipped by him on the boards and then didn't stay on his man, the play resulting in a race with Rittich for the puck and eventual goal. Forwards need to be sound in their assignments for this to be successful, and that was an example of what can happen when things break down.

10) Rittich had a tough start with the goal on the first shift, but credit him for bouncing back until the wheels fell off late in the third period. It's easy to equate the string of third-period goals with Rittich's penchant for falling apart in games, a reputation he's garnered over the last few seasons. But I'm not ready to appoint much blame on him for this one, especially given how often he was hung out to dry in his own end while getting zero run support the other way.

### **Winnipeg Sun**

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/jets-shut-out-by-oilers-in-pre-season-opener>

### ***Jets shut out by Oilers in pre-season opener***

by Scott Billeck

It's not going to be perfect in the first pre-season game.

A Logan Stanley giveaway inside the first minute of the game allowed Oilers forward Markus Niemelainen to strike just 41 seconds in, and try as the Jets might, including a spell of 50 seconds of 5-on-3 action, a prospect-filled Jets roster couldn't find the back of the net in this one.

The Oilers had no such problems finding more offence, with prospects James Hamblin and Dylan Holloway bookending roster mainstay Ryan McLeod's marker in a three-goal third-period outburst to put this game out of its misery.

"The energy was there," head coach Rick Bowness told reporters in Edmonton following the game. "Look, the first exhibition game, it's always ugly, it's always scrumbly and tonight was a perfect example. Our puck management, we gave them a couple of goals and our inability to score goals when we had the opportunity. So, when that happens, you end up beating yourself, which we did. But the energy was good."

For Bowness's Jets, this training camp is a juggling act trying to balance both evaluations of some critical prospects trying to push for the opening night roster while trying to implement a brand new system for those who do make it to find regular-season success.

Sunday's final score means little in that pursuit. It's what transpired between the first drop of the puck and the final buzzer that counted.

#### *Stenlund stands out*

Standing 6-foot-4 and weighing in at 211 pounds, Swedish prospect Kevin Stenlund has little choice in the area of standing out.

He's a big boy. But his debut in Jets threads wasn't just about his size, but rather how he'd use it, coupled with his skill.

In that regard, the 26-year-old had a fine night. Perhaps a young Blake Wheeler-lite would be the best way to describe what he looks like and how he moves on the ice.

He was all over the offensive zone, narrowly missing high and wide on a third-period chance in the slot, while pushing the pace with linemates Saku Maenalanen and Kristian Reichel — both of whom also had solid outings. The trio hounded the front of the net, and nearly scored on a few occasions.

Stenlund also featured heavily on the power play, clocking in the third most time at 4:36, trailing only fellow power-play unit members Pierre-Luc Dubois and Cole Perfetti by just a few seconds.

"It was OK," Stenlund said of the man-advantage, which was 0-for-4 on the night. "We created a couple of chances. I should have scored one. It was OK because we haven't practiced it enough."

In fairness, Stenlund was predicted to look good. He has 71 NHL games and 20 points under his belt and is in the mix to be the team's 13th or 14th forward coming into the season.

Sunday was a good step in that direction, showing his ability to pick up on what Bowness has been putting down during the infancy of training camp.

If he keeps it up, he could push someone like Dominic Toninato for playing time. The latter's night wasn't as showy, for sure. It's also not Toninato's game.

#### *Capobianco capable*

He was one of Winnipeg's head-scratcher signings in the summer, seemingly another depth addition on a team stocked heavily in that department.

But Kyle Capobianco showed why the Jets had their eye on him on Sunday, creating several chances — especially on the power play — as Winnipeg went in search of offence.

"I thought we competed hard," the 25-year-old former third-round pick said. "I thought we got our legs under us. I thought the first period was a bit of a battle. We were trying to change quick. I thought as the game went on, we moved well and we started to get Grade-A chances."

Capobianco had a pair of one-time bombs from the point on Winnipeg's top power-play unit, which he anchored.

"The five-on-three, I might have to give it to better guys, give it to (Dubois) to shoot instead of me," he said. "The goalie made a good save. I thought we did our best."

He was also active from the blue line and seemed to know what Bowness was asking for.

"They're really detail-oriented, so we've been watching a lot of video," Capobianco said. "So that's helped. The guys have been really good just helping me out with where to go. We're all trying to figure it out together."

#### *Other observations*

- You could see the wheels turning with regards to Bowness's proclamation that his defence will be more involved this season. Several blue-liners stepped up into the play and carved out chances, including Declan Chisholm, who had a good game. Most notably, however, was that several forwards remembered to cover off the defender that jumped into the play. These seem like primitive parts of the game. See a defenceman push up into the play? Drop back and make sure you're not shorthanded going the other way. While it may seem like common sense, it hasn't been the case around these parts and Bowness made mention of it earlier this week. In an effort to increase the team's defensive goal tally to 40 this year, up from its basement total of 24 last season, it's going to require a team effort.

- David Gustafsson looked good. He drew a penalty simply by making it impossible for the Oilers to pry the puck off him, and he spent 2:29 on the penalty kill, which went 3-for-3 on the night. He broke up an Oilers chance in the second and made the clear. Winnipeg's 29th-ranked PK was atrocious last season. Gustafsson's calmness and composure should help improve that.

- Bowness and Co. felt goalie David Rittich got hung out to dry by defensive mishaps. Winnipeg's new backup made 22 saves off 26 shots faced.

**Sportsnet.ca**

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/david-gustafssons-smart-play-helps-him-stand-out-in-jets-loss-to-oilers/>

## ***David Gustafsson's smart play helps him stand out in Jets' loss to Oilers***

By Ken Wiebe

WINNIPEG — David Gustafsson knows the value of making a strong first impression.

So on a night when several Winnipeg Jets hopefuls either had mistakes lead directly to goals against or let nerves get the best of them, it was not surprising to see Gustafsson among those to stack up a series of smart plays.

That's what the Swedish centre has the ability to do: to make those around him better by making deft decisions and being in the right place at the right time.

Those are qualities that caught the attention of the Jets coaching staff before he was selected in the second round of the 2018 NHL Draft, and they're also the things that pushed Gustafsson onto the roster in the fall of 2019 — albeit momentarily, as he was sent to the Manitoba Moose of the American Hockey League after appearing in 22 games.

Gustafsson didn't put up eye-popping numbers in the minors, but he earned the trust of the coaching staff with his two-way game, which is enhanced by his hockey sense.

In what was the first of six pre-season games on Sunday night in Edmonton against the Oilers, Gustafsson didn't draw attention to himself by making a bunch of flashy, highlight-reel plays.

But he's constantly on the right side of the puck and running proper routes, things that help a player earn the trust of a coaching staff — especially one that isn't as familiar with your style of play.

"It's a battle out there every day for who wants to take it," Gustafsson said on Saturday. "If I want a place I've got to show the coaches I earn it more than some other guys. That's what I've got to do and it's nothing else than that.

"This coach (Rick Bowness) hasn't seen me play before, so I've got to go out there and show what kind of player I am. These first few days it's really important. He gets the first look of you and it tends to stick for a while."

Bowness made it clear earlier this weekend he wouldn't be racing to make a broad assessment on Gustafsson or any of the other young players trying to solidify their standing for that matter.

That was still the case on Sunday night, and Bowness has been around the block enough times to know he shouldn't overreact to the result of a game that didn't resemble anything close to what his opening-day lineup will be.

"Look, the first exhibition game, it's always ugly, it's always scrumbly and (Sunday) was a perfect example," Bowness told reporters in Edmonton. "Our puck management, we gave them a couple of goals and our inability to score goals when we had the opportunity. So, when that happens, you end up beating yourself, which we did. Yeah, a lot of young faces. They needed a

little more experience. We'll decide what we're going to do Tuesday night, tomorrow, but the young guys were a little nervous.

"When you're nervous and you're working, you're not always getting something done. For the first game, the energy was good. There are clearly areas we need to clean up and we'll continue to work on those."

The Jets plan to take Monday off before returning to action Tuesday night against the Ottawa Senators.

A defensive-zone turnover by blue-liner Logan Stanley led to a goal against just 41 seconds into the contest, but the Jets seemed to settle down after that — at least until things unravelled in the third period when the Oilers struck three times in just under five minutes to blow the game wide open.

It was a rough opening outing for Stanley, who entered training camp with the knowledge there are a number of guys on the left side who are trying to pass him on the depth chart.

Stanley needs to play an aggressive, assertive game while exerting himself physically and moving the puck efficiently in order to thwart some of the challengers.

He didn't check off many of those boxes against the Oilers on Sunday, though he was credited with 10 hits in just under 21 minutes of action.

Kyle Capobianco showed some nice mobility on the back end in his first pre-season action and was tasked with running the first power-play unit.

It's true the puck movement wasn't crisp enough during a two-man advantage in the second period — when the Jets were unable to draw even despite generating several opportunities — but Capobianco gave a glimpse that he might finish this competition higher than some folks predict he might be.

In just over 21 minutes of ice time — including 4:31 with the man-advantage — Capobianco had three shots on goal, five shot attempts, two blocked shots and a hit.

He was definitely involved and will warrant further looks as Bowness and associate coach Scott Arniel start to zone in on who fits best with whom on the D-pairings.

Whether Capobianco ends up being a guy who serves as a mentor to the young blue-liners in the minors or pushes for work in the seventh slot will be sorted out during the coming weeks.

When it comes to other guys looking to work their way into the equation up front, winger Saku Maenalanen had a solid outing.

Maenalanen, who signed a one-year deal with the Jets after spending two seasons with Jokerit in the KHL and another with Karpat in Liiga, showed off some of the skills that have stood out during the opening days of training camp.

For a team that wants to be tougher to play against, Maenalanen moves well (especially for someone who is 6-4, 207 pounds) and plays with some edge.

He drew a penalty against the Oilers on Sunday and clearly stood out in just under 12 minutes of work, generating four shots on goal, six shot attempts and delivering five hits.

Whether he ends up forcing his way onto the team immediately or ends up being close to the front of the line for call-ups, Maenalanen is a good bet to get NHL games this season.

Centre Kevin Stenlund is another forward who is new to the organization, and he's shown some early chemistry with Maenalanen, so it made sense they played on a line together in the first pre-season game.

Stenlund, 26, found himself filling in on the Jets' top power-play unit and saw his time on the penalty kill as well.

Now onto his second organization and coming back from a knee injury that impacted the pace that he played at, Stenlund seems to be relishing the opportunity to show he might end up being more than just a valuable depth guy.

Chaz Lucius, the Jets' 2021 first-rounder, had an interesting outing as he continues to work his way back from off-season ankle surgery.

Playing his natural position of centre, Lucius showed off his offensive instincts and quick release, but also got beaten to a loose puck by Oilers centre Ryan McLeod on the third goal.

Lucius gets credit for his initial read after Capobianco jumped down and joined the play in the offensive zone, but he was then caught flat-footed in the neutral zone and missed his assignment as McLeod raced in and scooped the puck past Jets goalie David Rittich, who finished with 22 saves.

This will end up being one of those valuable learning experiences for Lucius, who is one of the most talented prospects in the system and has the type of finishing ability that is hard to find and virtually impossible to teach.

### **Canadian Press**

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/oilers-net-shutout-goal-outburst-in-pre-season-win-over-jets/>

### ***Oilers net shutout, goal outburst in pre-season win over Jets***

By Canadian Press

EDMONTON — Stuart Skinner looks ready to make the permanent move up to the big leagues with the Edmonton Oilers.

Skinner and Calvin Pickard combined to make 29 saves for the shutout as the Oilers started what is anticipated to be a season packed with potential with a 4-0 victory over the Winnipeg Jets in NHL pre-season play Sunday.

"Once I got my legs under me, I felt pretty good," said the 23-year-old Skinner, who has been slotted in as the likely backup to Jack Campbell this season. "After any game you don't want to

get too high on yourself or too low. Especially the first game in pre-season. I thought it went well, but I still have a lot of work to do.

"It definitely felt like I moved a little better because I was working on my skating all summer. That's nice to feel."

Markus Niemelainen, James Hamblin, Ryan McLeod and Dylan Holloway scored for the Oilers, who are 1-0 in exhibition action.

Oilers head coach Jay Woodcroft said Holloway had a strong showing as he attempts to secure a starting job.

"I thought he was really good. The powerful stride in his ability to separate from his check, and I thought he was physical," he said. "He showed up in offensive chances for us and was a big reason the penalty kill had the success it did tonight."

"Dylan certainly had a good first pre-season game."

David Rittich made 22 saves for the Jets (0-1).

"The energy was there," said Jets head coach Rick Bowness. "Our puck management gave them a couple of goals and we had the inability to score goals when we had the opportunity. When that happens you end up beating yourself, which we did. But the energy was good."

It didn't take long for the Oilers to start the scoring as Niemelainen snuck in from the point and took a Brad Malone feed before blasting a puck past Jets goalie Rittich just 41 seconds into the opening period.

Edmonton had 13 shots in the first, with the Jets matching that total on Oilers starter Skinner.

Winnipeg had a great opportunity to pull even with a two-man advantage midway through the second period, but Skinner proved up to the challenge, including making a big glove save on a hard Kyle Capobianco shot.

Rittich also came up big in the middle frame, making a point-blank stop on Oilers' 2020 first-round draft pick Holloway, who was buzzing all over the ice.

Skinner made 19 saves before being replaced by Pickard late in the second.

Edmonton extended its lead midway through the third period as a huge rebound from a Jason Demers' shot came out to Hamblin who sent his shot home before Rittich could get back across. Demers is attending training camp on a PTO.

The Oilers then scored a pair of goals in the span of 27 seconds with five minutes to play.

A puck popped loose in front of the Winnipeg net and McLeod was able to chip it over the Jets goalie and then a rocket from the point from Evan Bouchard ticked off Holloway and in.

The Oilers are right back at it Monday against the Kraken in Seattle. The Jets return home to face the Ottawa Senators on Tuesday.

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

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/jets-drop-preseason-opener-in-edmonton/c-335789448>

### ***Jets drop preseason opener in Edmonton***

***"The first exhibition game, it's always ugly, it's always scrambly and tonight was a perfect example."***

by Mitchell Clinton @MitchellClinton / WinnipegJets.com

The first preseason game is in the books for the Winnipeg Jets, and while the final result wasn't what they were looking for, Sunday's 4-0 loss to the Edmonton Oilers gives the new coaching staff some video to work with.

"The first exhibition game, it's always ugly, it's always scrambly and tonight was a perfect example," said head coach Rick Bowness. "Our puck management, we gave them a couple of goals and our inability to score goals when we had the opportunity. So, when that happens, you end up beating yourself, which we did."

Edmonton scored in the opening minute and the game stayed at 1-0 until the midway mark of the third, when the Oilers rattled off three goals in 4:29 to seal it.

The Jets fired 29 shots at the Edmonton net, but were denied by Stuart Skinner and Calvin Pickard, who split the game in goal for the Oilers. David Rittich made 22 saves on 26 shots in the loss.

"There were some breakdowns where he was hung out to dry a little bit, so you can't fault him on those," said Bowness. "Sometimes, in these games, you get all of the young players and they're out of position, your goaltender, it kind of falls on him."

It was a less than ideal start for the Jets, as Markus Niemelainen beat Rittich just 41 seconds into the contest.

That 1-0 lead held through the opening 20 minutes, with Winnipeg's best chance coming on a two-on-one rush for Saku Maenalanen and Jansen Harkins, but Skinner kept it out, as well as the rebound chance from Kevin Stenlund.

Winnipeg also had four power play chances in the game, including 50 seconds of five-on-three time, but couldn't convert. The power play personnel that saw the most time together as a combination of Pierre-Luc Dubois, Cole Perfetti, Kevin Stenlund, Kristian Reichel, and Kyle Capobionco.

"It got better as the game went on," said Capobionco, who played 4:31 on the power play. "We got better shot attempts, we got Grade A chances. The five-on-three, I might have to give it to better guys, give it to (Dubois) to shoot instead of me. The goalie made a good save. I thought we did our best."

Special teams haven't been a focus over the first three days of training camp, as the Jets work to establish new systems at five-on-five.

The Jets had four total shots on the man advantage. On the penalty kill, they held the Oilers off the scoresheet on three opportunities, giving up just three shots.

"They had a video session this morning with Brad (Lauer) and (Scott Arniel). We'll start working on those things now," said Bowness. "The power play, five-on-three, you've got to score there. If you score there, you've got a whole new game. Give their goalie credit, he made a lot of good saves."

After a scoreless second, Edmonton doubled their lead when James Hamblin potted his first of the preseason, getting to a loose puck in the slot after Rittich made an initial save off Jason Demers.

Then, with two goals in 27 seconds, that Edmonton lead grew to 4-0. First, Ryan McLeod won a foot race against Rittich and chipped the puck into the top corner before the Jets goaltender could clear it away. The very next shift, Evan Bouchard's blast from the point deflected off the stick of Dylan Holloway on the way to the net, and sailed into the top corner.

"Our structure wasn't there," said Stenlund. "We didn't get the puck deep. Those small details wasn't there in the end. We got to focus on that."

It was a necessary step in the process for the Jets, who aim to be confident and comfortable with the new systems come opening night on October 14.

The Jets are off on Monday before getting back into preseason action on Tuesday against the Ottawa Senators at Canada Life Centre.

"We'll decide what we're going to do Tuesday night, tomorrow," said Bowness. "For the first game, the energy was good. There are clearly areas we need to clean up and we'll continue to work on those."