

## **Winnipeg Free Press**

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2022/10/02/perfetti-making-a-point>

### ***Perfetti making a point Young winger turning some heads at Jets camp***

By: Jeff Hamilton

With just a week remaining in training camp, Cole Perfetti has certainly made a strong impression.

The Winnipeg Jets young forward, at just 20 years old, has played in three of his team's four preseason games so far, registering three points, including a pair of goals in a 3-2 shootout loss to the Edmonton Oilers on Saturday. He's been slotted in on the left wing on a line with centre Pierre-Luc Dubois and winger Blake Wheeler, a trio expected to be leaned on heavily when the regular season starts against the New York Rangers on Oct. 14.

Perfetti has liked his effort at camp and appreciates being grouped with a pair of veterans, which has only helped with his confidence. But with plenty of time between now and the start of a new season, he isn't taking anything for granted.

"I still got to go make the team. In my mind, I'm doing whatever I can to prepare to be on this team," Perfetti said after another up-tempo workout Sunday at the Jets training facility. "It's a brand new staff, brand new systems, brand new everything. I only played 18 games last year, it's not like I played the full season. I do feel really comfortable, I do feel happy with where I'm at, but at the same time, there are no guarantees in life, no guarantees in pro hockey."

Perfetti played 18 games for the Jets over the 2021-22 campaign, finishing with two goals and five assists while playing up and down the lineup. He had his season cut short in mid-February after suffering a shoulder injury following a heavy hit by Seattle Kraken defenceman Jamie Oleksiak.

He had already been playing with a nagging back injury, which only got worse while rehabbing his shoulder, setting him back in his recovery. It was Perfetti's first serious injury playing the game he loves, which made him admittedly a bit scared and then nervous for a return.

Fully recovered now, he looks no worse for wear, and is back to showcasing his playmaking abilities at camp. There will be some growing pains, to be sure, especially as Perfetti, who is listed generously at 5-foot-11 and 177 pounds, continues to grow into his body and gets more reps at the game's top level.

"He's a great player; everybody knows that," Jets forward Nikolaj Ehlers said. "So, it's just a matter of him getting more and more comfortable and making the right reads and all that, but I think everybody knows that comes. He's a young guy." Ehlers noted the jump from junior hockey – Perfetti starred for the OHL's Saginaw Spirit, scoring 111 points (37G, 74A) in his final season – isn't an easy one and what you bring to the table doesn't always translate to the NHL level. He added that he went through a similar process when he first started playing in the NHL, after dominating with the QMJHL's Halifax Mooseheads.

The best advice Ehlers had for Perfetti was to listen to the older players on the team and just be eager to learn, a trait he said Perfetti already possesses. Ehlers also spent hours going over his games, trying to pinpoint areas where he could improve and mistakes he could correct.

“He’s a smart guy, he’s a great player and he’s shown that already,” Ehlers said. “So, time will only help him.” Jets head coach Rick Bowness has liked what he’s seen from the 2020 first-round (10th overall) pick. He also appreciated Perfetti’s level of humility and understanding that he’s got to work for everything he gets, adding: “If you’re thinking you’ve got spots on this team, that would be your mistake.”

“As I told him today, on the ice, don’t worry about the details of the game, without the puck, we’ll teach you those. When you get the puck, man, do your thing. You’re creative, finding guys, hanging on to pucks and everything else, you keep doing those things,” Bowness added. “He’s a great kid, with a great attitude, and he wants to learn. I had a little video session with him last week and he was all eyes and all questions. I love that.”

With two more preseason games, Perfetti is expected to play at least once more, with a good chance of playing in both. Like much of the team after a disappointing season last year, he’s eager to prove he belongs and looks forward to building on what he’s done the last few weeks.

“I know I’m ready to make that jump and be a part of this and I’m really excited,” Perfetti said. “Hopefully everything goes to plan and I keep doing what I’m doing. But there’s still a team to make...it’s not set in stone.”

**MORE MOVES:** After trimming 16 players from the training camp roster on Saturday, the Jets announced Sunday they’ve reassigned goalie Arvid Holm to the Manitoba Moose. Holm, a Swedish netminder that was selected by Winnipeg in the sixth round of the 2017 NHL Draft, saw action in one preseason game, allowing two goals on 15 shots, both of which came while shorthanded. The 23-year-old is expected to get a lot of playing time with the Moose after dressing for 24 games last season, where he posted a 2.90 goals-against average and an .877 save percentage.

**HAWERCHUK MAKES BID FOR MOOSE:** The Moose announced their training camp roster on Sunday – a list that currently consists of 22 forwards, 12 defencemen and four goalies – and on it was the offspring of a former Jets superstar. Ben Hawerchuk, the son of Dale Hawerchuk, was one of 10 players to recently sign a tryout agreement. Ben Hawerchuk, 24, is coming off a five-game stint with Merano of the Alps Hockey League, in Italy, with stops as well in the ECHL and five years with the OHL’s Barrie Colts. Dale Hawerchuk was drafted first overall by Winnipeg in 1981 and spent nine seasons with the Jets. On Saturday, the Jets unveiled a statue of him to honour his legacy. Hawerchuk died from stomach cancer in August of 2020, at the age of 57.

## **Winnipeg Sun**

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/young-winger-cole-perfetti-not-taking-anything-for-granted-despite-strong-showing-in-pre-season-with-jets>

### ***Young winger Cole Perfetti not taking anything for granted, despite strong showing in pre-season with Jets***

By Ted Wyman

Cole Perfetti had to be feeling pretty good about himself a day after scoring two goals in an impressive pre-season performance for the Winnipeg Jets.

What he wasn't feeling was any kind of relief from the grind of an NHL training camp conducted by a whole new slate of coaches.

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"I still gotta go make the team," Perfetti said after the Jets held a spirited, high-tempo practice at the IcePlex on Sunday afternoon.

"It's not like I'm on the team yet. I've got to go and make the team in these last two pre-season games and these last couple weeks of practice. In my mind, I'm doing whatever I can to prepare to be on this team. I know I'm ready to make that jump and be a part of this and I'm really excited. Hopefully everything goes to plan and I keep doing what I'm doing. But it's not set in stone."

Perfetti, the Jets first-round draft pick (10th overall) in 2020, is clearly expected to play a big role with the team this season after getting an 18-game taste of the NHL in 2021-22, before suffering a season-ending injury.

He's highly likely to start the season as the second-line left-winger, but that doesn't mean he should get too comfortable.

"That's what I told (the players)," Jets head coach Rick Bowness said.

"If you're thinking you've got spots on this team, that would be your mistake."

That being said, Bowness likes what he has seen from Perfetti, who has established some nice chemistry with linemates Pierre-Luc Dubois and Blake Wheeler, and showed during Saturday's 3-2 shootout loss to the Edmonton Oilers that he can be a trigger man and a playmaker.

"Clearly he has done very well and we're very, very happy with what we're seeing," Bowness said. "As I told him today, on the ice, 'Don't worry about the details of the game, without the puck. We'll teach you those. When you get the puck, man, do your thing."

"'You're creative, finding guys, hanging on to pucks, and everything else ... you keep doing those things.' He's a great kid, with a great attitude, and he wants to learn. I had a little video session with him last week and he was all eyes and all questions. I love that."

Both Perfetti's goals on Saturday came on the power play and he was also involved in setting up a beautiful goal by Dubois, which was wiped out by an offside challenge from the Oilers.

Adam Lowry dug the puck out of the corner, centred for rookie Brad Lambert, who fed Perfetti, who one-touched a pass to a wide-open Dubois for the goal.

Though the goal was taken off the board, Perfetti scored 30 seconds later, on the same power play, and both markers were a sign of some good chemistry with Dubois and other players on that unit.

"That was a five-man unit goal," Perfetti said. "Great play by (Lowry) to find (Lambert) in the middle and obviously a good play by him to me. I knew Doobie was gonna be there and just one-touched it to him. It sucks that one came back but we showed good resilience coming back and scoring and I think that was really good for our team. That was great for the unit and for the power play."

Perfetti, who has two goals and seven points in 18 career NHL games, said the challenge for the Jets players this year is making an impression on a brand new coaching staff that is teaching brand new systems and doesn't have a lot of pre-conceived notions.

"I do feel really comfortable, I do feel happy with where I'm at, but at the same time, there are no guarantees in life, no guarantees in pro hockey," Perfetti said. "I'm not taking it for granted or anything. I'm going into every practice, every game, thinking I've got to make a team and prove myself every day and that's what I'm trying to do. Hopefully the coaches notice it and hopefully it ends up working out."

Veteran Jets winger Nikolaj Ehlers, who was in Perfetti's position not so long ago, is impressed by what the team's top prospect has done.

"Smart guy, super-skilled guy," the 26-year-old Ehlers said. "And obviously can score, you saw that (Saturday against the Oilers). For him, it's just a matter of coming in, first year, and knowing it's not going to be easy. It's not been easy for anyone."

"Some of us older guys — I'm an older guy now, that sounds weird — but we talk to him and he wants to listen, he wants to learn and that's the most important thing. He's a great player, everybody knows that. So, it's just a matter of him getting more and more comfortable and making the right reads and all that."

It sounds like Perfetti will be given every opportunity to play with Dubois and Wheeler during the regular season. Bowness said the line was conceived specifically to make it an easier transition for Perfetti, who is 5-foot-11, 177 pounds.

"Cole's not the biggest guy, so we're looking at giving him some size at centre and on the wing to help him with the physical battles," Bowness said. "You're not gonna put 30 pounds on, you're not gonna make him grow three inches. That's what he is. He has his strengths and we're going to surround him with some size and experience to help him out."

Perfetti said the chemistry, particularly with Dubois, is coming naturally.

"Playing 10-12 games last year with PLD was great and we were starting to build a bit of chemistry," Perfetti said. "Obviously, with my injury, that came to an end quickly but I feel like we're slowly building, we're slowly taking a step forward each day."

"I've just got to get to an open area and he's gonna find me. That's what happens when you play with skilled players like him. You just find the right spot and the puck's gonna get to you."

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/jets-snapshots-winger-morgan-barron-returns-to-jets-training-camp-hopes-to-make-up-for-lost-time>

## ***JETS SNAPSHOTS: Winger Morgan Barron returns to Jets training camp, hopes to make up for lost time***

By Ted Wyman

The good news for Morgan Barron is he is healthy and was able to practice with the Winnipeg Jets for the first time in 10 days on Sunday.

The bad news is he's got a lot of catching up to do with just a week left in training camp.

The 23-year-old winger was pencilled in to a spot on the third line, heading into training camp, and now he's got a limited opportunity to make sure no other name gets written in pen when the season starts.

"There's definitely a temptation to (try to play catch-up)," Barron said after the Jets practised at the IcePlex.

"But I've been around. I've been lucky, I've been able to skate for a week and a half, so I look at it that way. I feel like all my conditioning, all the work I've done over the summer, I don't feel like I've lost any of that because I haven't been off the ice long at all. It was good. It was easy. The guys did a good job of keeping me up. Everything worked smoothy and I'm glad I'm able to get back with the guys for the last week of camp."

Barron made a strong impression with the Jets late last season after coming over from the New York Rangers in a trade for versatile forward Andrew Copp.

He had two goals and two assists in 14 games with the Jets and there's no doubt new coach Rick Bowness is intrigued by the 6-foot-4, 220-pound winger.

"We're finally gonna get a good look at him," Bowness said. "I'm excited to get him back. I've always wanted to have a look at him with (Adam) Lowry and (Mason) Appleton. We're gonna take a look at that for the next two games. He's a little bit behind, because of the injury, which is very unfortunate, because he's one of the guys we had pencilled in and we've got to take a real good look at him. But hey, you deal with the way it is and he'll get a good look the next two games."

The Jets will host the Calgary Flames on Wednesday at Canada Life Centre and will play the Flames in Calgary next Friday to close out the pre-season. They then have a full week before they open the regular season at home on Oct. 14 against the Rangers.

### ***NO EASY PRACTICES***

Nikolaj Ehlers is participating in his eighth training camp with the Winnipeg Jets and the 26-year-old admits this one has been different in terms of physical expectations.

The Jets skated for almost 90 minutes on Sunday and Bowness set a fast pace, with a variety of drills, three-on-three work, four-on-four work, power-play practice and even some old fashioned bag skating.

"Today was pretty hard," Ehlers said. "My legs are a little shaky right now, I'm not going to lie. But it's great. It's what we need. We've gone through a bunch of systems stuff that we still need to learn on, but you can see in our games that it's getting better and better. So, we're happy with where we're at, but we've still got a ways to go."

Ehlers joked about how "weird" it is for him to be considered one of the "older" players on the Jets now. He's one of the players Bowness wants to see take a larger leadership role now that he's entering his eighth NHL season.

"All those guys that I've talked to, I've said 'Yeah, you are a veteran now,' we expect more from you in terms of those things," Bowness said.

"Some of these guys are at the prime of their career and they've got to take advantage of it and we've got to take advantage of it. A guy like Ehlers, and Kyle Connor, are good examples. They've been here a few years and it's time to take a little more responsibility on what's going on with the team, on and off the ice."

Bowness stripped Blake Wheeler of his captaincy at the beginning of training camp and the Jets are planning to have a few players wear "A's" on their jerseys this year.

Ehlers and Connor are among the players who could be in that mix.

### *SERIOUS SKILL ON TOP LINE*

The line of Mark Scheifele, with Ehlers and Connor on his wings, has been buzzing throughout training camp and was looking especially sharp on Sunday.

It looks like Bowness likes the idea of having his three most productive forwards all on one line and there's no doubt the highly skilled trio could put fear into the opposition for as long as its together.

"I love the way they find each other," Bowness said. "They're making plays, putting passes through defencemen's skates and sticks, all the little details that elite players have. They know where to put the puck and the timing of where to put it and when to put it. They can put pucks in feet, under the sticks, in that little triangle between the defenceman's feet and sticks, over sticks. They have that innate ability to do that and that's what we're seeing."

Bowness quickly turned his focus to the other major part of the game, something that has not necessarily been a strong suit for Scheifele, Connor and Ehlers in the past.

"We want them to be creative, we want them to do all those things on the rush, because they're hard to defend," Bowness said.

"But we have the same expectations for them as the rest of the team. Without the puck you've got to bear down, you've got to back-check, you've got to make the right reads, just like everybody else. With elite players, you're always giving them a little more freedom because they're difference-makers. But in terms of when we don't have the puck, there are no double standards. Everybody has to work hard, back check and make the right reads."

Ehlers is loving the chemistry with Connor and Scheifele. All three players can make plays at high speed, all three can shoot the puck and all three have veteran savvy.

"We haven't played that much together over the last six, seven years, but they're two easy guys to play with, got a lot of speed, and they're smart guys so they get into the right spots," Ehlers said.

"We've just got to keep creating some chemistry and it's going the right way."

**NHL.com**

[https://www.nhl.com/news/dale-hawerchuk-statue-unveiled-by-winnipeg-jets/c-335977904?tcid=tw\\_news\\_content\\_id](https://www.nhl.com/news/dale-hawerchuk-statue-unveiled-by-winnipeg-jets/c-335977904?tcid=tw_news_content_id)

***Hawerchuk honored by Jets with bronze statue in True North Square Hall of Fame forward, who died in 2020, played nine of 16 NHL seasons in Winnipeg***

by Darrin Bauming / NHL.com Independent Correspondent

WINNIPEG -- The late Dale Hawerchuk was honored by the Winnipeg Jets on Saturday with a bronze statue in True North Square at the corner of Honourary Dale Hawerchuk Way and Hargrave Street.

"When you're preparing these things, the thought that just kept coming back is, 'I wish he was here,'" Jets executive chairman Mark Chipman said. "That's the difficult part of this. I wish he had been able to be here and see all of the love that this community has for him."

Hawerchuk died of stomach cancer in 2020 at the age of 57.

"He was a special player. He was a special person," said Jets associate coach Scott Arniel, who was a lifelong friend of Hawerchuk. "He loved this city. He loved this province (of Manitoba)."

Widely regarded as the greatest Jets player of all time, Hawerchuk was selected with the No. 1 pick in the 1981 NHL Draft by the original iteration of the Jets franchise, which moved to Arizona and became the Phoenix Coyotes in 1996.

Hawerchuk was voted the Calder Trophy winner as NHL rookie of the year in 1981-82 after scoring 45 goals and 103 points, becoming the first player to reach 100 points as an 18-year-old. He finished his 16-year NHL career with 1,409 points (518 goals, 891 assists) in 1,188 games for the Jets, Buffalo Sabres, St. Louis Blues and Philadelphia Flyers.

"This statue is a testament to the giving life he lived," Crystal Hawerchuk, his widow, said as she spoke to thousands in attendance at the unveiling. "Now, he is home. Here again in Winnipeg."

A six-time 100-point scorer for the Jets, he helped make the team a consistent Stanley Cup Playoff team during the 1980s and held the franchise career records for goals (379) and points (929) until Shane Doan surpassed them during the 2015-16 season. Hawerchuk was elected to the Hall of Fame in 2001.

"He wasn't just your captain, he was one of you," NHL senior vice president of hockey operations Kris King, who played with Hawerchuk in Winnipeg, told the crowd. "He loved playing for the Winnipeg Jets, and he loved saying he was from Winnipeg."

The bronze statue was sculpted by renowned artist Erik Blome of Figurative Art Studio, who was also the sculptor for Wayne Gretzky's Los Angeles Kings statue that is installed outside Crypto.com Arena.

"This was so incredible," Eric Hawerchuk, his son, said following the statue's unveiling. "... It was very emotional. I kind of prepared for it but just to see the sheer size of it and the attention to details is kinda hard to put it into words. But I'm so proud of him and to see this here and to see all of the people here is just so amazing. It still shocks me every time I see it."

Jets forward Mark Scheifele played three seasons (2010-13) for Barrie of the Ontario Hockey League when Hawerchuk was its coach. Hawerchuk joined Barrie in 2010 and remained there until taking a leave of absence for health reasons in September 2019.

"He was the best coach I've ever had," Scheifele said. "I don't think there's many out there like him. He was a guy that just wanted to teach guys, no matter if you were a first-line or a fourth liner, whoever it was, he wanted to teach you about how to get better or what to do it on the ice [and] he would be on the ice showing you how to do it. Whether it was about school, whether it was about being at home, whatever it was, he always had lessons to be taught, and that was one thing that I was so lucky that [he] taught me a lesson every single day."

"Like I said in my speech (at the unveiling), I get to drive by this statue every day and remember all those lessons, and that's a pretty amazing thing for me to now experience."

### **Sportsnet.ca**

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/he-inspired-us-all-to-be-better-people-jets-pay-tribute-to-hawerchuk/>

### ***'He inspired us all to be better people': Jets pay tribute to Hawerchuk***

By Ken Wiebe

WINNIPEG — Somewhere, Dale Hawerchuk was smiling.

The man who served as the perfect bridge from the original Winnipeg Jets to the current edition was honoured Saturday afternoon with the unveiling of a statue of his likeness at the heart of True North Square, just outside the downtown arena.

The ceremony featured comments from a number of players from the Jets 1.0 era and a cameo from Edmonton Oilers great and fellow Hall of Famer Paul Coffey, who played with Hawerchuk in the 1987 Canada Cup and became a close friend.

Hawerchuk's family was well represented, with those in attendance including his parents and his three children — Eric, Ben and Alexis.



Dale's wife Crystal received a standing ovation for her poignant words about the life he lived and the impact the community had on him.

"He inspired us all to be better people. Everyone loved to be around him. He was special," said Crystal. "The talent that we saw on the ice shone through his heart. He was generous with his time. He made a difference in the lives of many, and this is why we will not forget him.

"This statue is a testament to the giving life he lived."

Jets co-owner and governor Mark Chipman lamented the fact Hawerchuk — who died of stomach cancer in August of 2020 — wasn't in attendance to see the love and adulation from the thousands of fans on the scene or to hear the words of his teammates and friends.

"Honestly the emotion that always comes to mind when I take time to process all this is just gratitude," Chipman said. "Just gratitude to be part of this, to have gotten to know him the way I did, for the way he embraced us, the support of this community that we have for this team — which I experienced the day he signed here.

"That pride welled up in me in 1981. I'll never forget it. I've never lost that sense of pride for our community and what this team means to it. No one epitomized that, or created that sense of pride, in my lifetime more than Dale."

Chipman took some solace in being able to relay the news of the plan for the statue with Hawerchuk before his passing.

"It was our hope that he'd be here today when we did this," Chipman said. "His health declined very rapidly and we were advised of that. We thought the least we could do is tell him.

"I remember the emotion from Dale and how thankful he was."

Those words were well received, according to Hawerchuk's oldest son Eric, who was in the room when the news was delivered over the phone.

"I didn't know that's what they were calling about," Eric recalled on Saturday after the ceremony. "I remember when they told him, that was probably the most emotional I had seen my dad through his whole battle. It really meant so much to him.

"I don't think he had ever considered the thought that they would do something like that for him because he's a humble guy. I'll never forget that phone call. That's five minutes I will never forget."

Speaking of gratitude, Jets centre Mark Scheifele shared his thoughts about their strong relationship, which began during a conversation when Hawerchuk convinced him to join the Barrie Colts of the Ontario Hockey League after he had committed to going to Cornell of the NCAA.

"Just, a teacher. He was the best coach I've ever had. I don't think there's many out there like him," Scheifele said. "He was a guy that just wanted to teach guys, no matter if you were a first-line or a fourth-liner, whoever it was he wanted to teach you about how to get better or what to do on the ice. He would be on the ice showing you how to do it.

"Whether it was about school, whether it was about being at home, whatever it was, he always had lessons to be taught, and that was one thing that I was so lucky that taught me a lesson every single day. Like I said in my speech, I get to drive by this statue every day and remember all those lessons, and that's a pretty amazing thing for me to now experience."

Scheifele was excited to be able to swap stories with several of Hawerchuk's teammates during the weekend.

"It's amazing. Hearing the stories and hearing people talk about Dale, it gives you the chills," Scheifele said. "Obviously I knew he meant a big deal to the city, but then to see a statue and hear all of his ex-teammates talk about him and reminisce about the days that they had with them, me being able to talk about the days I had with him. It's one of those things, you wish he was still here. We all know he's watching over us right now and that's a pretty peaceful thing to think about."

Just as the moment is etched in time for Eric, the statue will be something that catches the attention of folks who stop by to see it and sparks a variety of memories.

Whether you saw Hawerchuk play live, watched a highlight on TV or perhaps on YouTube or have been regaled with stories of his greatness, he was known as an even better person — which is high praise for someone who is in the Hall of Fame.

Jets head coach Rick Bowness remembers what it was like when Hawerchuk came onto the scene as the first overall pick in the 1981 NHL Draft.

"He steps on the ice and we're like, 'Here's our first-round pick, he's the first pick overall,' and you could tell then. Wow. This kid just took our franchise to a whole other level," said Bowness, who played with and later coached Hawerchuk. "His playmaking, his skills, his vision, everything you saw as an 18-year-old kid before training camp. You go into training camp and he was clearly the best player. That was as an 18-year-old kid. You watch him grow as a man and a player, that was a lot of fun."

Jets associate coach Scott Arniel first met Hawerchuk at training camp when the two were teenagers who would become teammates with the Cornwall Royals.

Not only would they capture a pair of Memorial Cups together, but they were also both drafted by the Jets in 1981 and would remain lifelong friends.

"I don't know if there's enough words," said Arniel, asked what he thinks of when Hawerchuk's name is brought up. "I don't know if people on the outside (know) how much he cared about his family, about his friends, about his teammates. He was a superstar. He maybe didn't get the recognition that other players got around the league at that time. But you wouldn't have known it every day in the way he carried himself."

"He was just like everyone else. He was a humble guy and he was that way his whole career."

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/jets-heinola-samberg-making-cases-for-sixth-spot-on-defence-in-loss-to-oilers/>

***Jets' Heinola, Samberg making cases for sixth spot on defence in loss to Oilers***

By Ken Wiebe

WINNIPEG — Numbers are dwindling and opportunities to nail down spots on the periphery of the roster are about to become fewer and farther between.

As the Winnipeg Jets reached the three-quarter point of the pre-season schedule, several decisions remain open for debate.

With Rick Bowness and the coaching staff looking for some separation in the competition for roster spots, it says here that several jobs still have a vacancy sign attached to them heading into the final two exhibition games — a home-and-home series with the Calgary Flames left on the docket Wednesday in Winnipeg and Friday in Alberta.

A 3-2 shootout loss to the Edmonton Oilers strengthened the bids of several players on the bubble, but the positional battle that drew the most interest heading into training camp remains mostly wide open.

The logjam on the blue line remains, even after the Jets reduced the roster by 16 players on Saturday afternoon, getting the number of defencemen down to 10.

It would appear five of the six jobs available for the opening-night roster are spoken for: with incumbents Josh Morrissey, Dylan DeMelo, Neal Pionk, Brenden Dillon and Nate Schmidt all locked in.

The sixth spot has yet to be nailed down, with Ville Heinola and Dylan Samberg appearing to have established a leg up on Logan Stanley, and Johnny Kovacevic and Kyle Capobianco also surviving Saturday's deep trimming. Prospect Declan Chisholm did not, though he's going to be given top-pairing minutes with the Manitoba Moose and should re-enter the equation before long.

Heinola clearly had his best showing of three pre-season games on Saturday, as he did an outstanding job of distributing the puck on a top power-play unit that struck twice in six opportunities.

Heinola's puck-movement and ability to create seams is an obvious strength for a man-advantage that is looking for a boost this season.

But Heinola turned the puck over on the Oilers' first goal and, even though Bowness laid some of the blame for that miscue on the forwards for not being in a proper position, he also took a minor penalty for tripping.

Despite a few hiccups, Heinola played with more confidence and showed far more signs of a guy who could make an impact this season if given the opportunity.

Samberg meanwhile was paired on his off side with Heinola and was used again to kill penalties, logging just under 17 minutes despite taking a minor penalty of his own.

Samberg isn't flashy and doesn't have the same offensive upside as Heinola, but he's a more consistent defender and still can move the puck effectively while bringing a bit more of an edge to the defence corps.

So, Mr. Bowness, what's it going to take for one of these D-men to pull away from the competition and make your job a bit easier?

"It's different roles. It will come down to that, the role we're looking for from the third pairing D," said Bowness. "Do we need a power-play guy, do we need a penalty-killing guy, do we need a physical guy? It's really going to come down to the needs of the team at the time."

"We'll have to make those determinations over the next week."

Some clues may begin to emerge since the Jets have three full practice days scheduled before the next game action, but the reality of the situation is that the final decision might not be made until after the sixth pre-season game.

So, as the defensive decision attracts the most attention, 2022 first-rounder Brad Lambert seems to have vaulted himself into the middle of the forward competition after a second straight strong outing.

Lambert had an assist wiped out by a successful coach's challenge for offside, but once again provided a glimpse of his vast potential, finishing with four shots on goal and five shot attempts in just over 16 minutes of action.

Bowness was so impressed by Lambert that he gave him three shifts during the five minute three-on-three overtime session — where Lambert nearly ended the game with an explosive individual effort that was turned aside by Oilers goalie Stuart Skinner.

Lambert also got a shot with the Jets' first power-play unit, when Blake Wheeler was in the box serving a fighting major for coming to the aid of Schmidt, and later was tapped on the shoulder for the shootout, where he made a slick move to the backhand before his shot rattled off the post.

Bowness went to his trademark answer of 'we'll see' — which means he knows but he's not yet ready to share publicly when asked if Lambert was working his way into the equation?

"In open ice, he's going to make something happen," said Bowness. "I love the way that he gets the puck and just goes. For an 18 year old kid, he's confident with the puck."

Is he ever.

Now that Lambert has stacked consecutive games together, his next challenge is to make an impact against what should be closer to a full NHL roster when the Flames come to town.

Speaking of forwards who are confident with the puck on their stick, it was another solid showing for Cole Perfetti.

The 10th-overall pick in the 2020 NHL Draft chipped in a pair of goals — his first two of the pre-season — while having an assist wiped out by the aforementioned coach's challenge.

Perfetti looks right at home on a line with Pierre-Luc Dubois and Wheeler and is showing no signs of the shoulder and back injuries that ended last season prematurely.

"Great hockey sense. He's a real smart player and can make plays and can go to the right spots," said Wheeler. "He thinks the game at an NHL level. He's going to be a guy that's going to be a lot of fun to watch here for a long time."

Earlier in the day, Jets associate coach Scott Arniel said Perfetti was likely to play in five pre-season games to help him get ready for the regular season.

"I need to get up to speed and to make sure everything is good with the injury," said Perfetti. "My health and all that is the most important thing. It's been great. Each game I've felt better and better. That's kind of my focus, for each game to find something and take that next step forward."

Perfetti has clearly shown he's ready for a spot on one of the top two lines, though the competition for the fourth-line spots is going down to the wire. Plus, the left-wing position with Adam Lowry and Mason Appleton remains very much up for grabs.

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### ***Training Camp Notebook - October 2 Barron returns, three-on-three, and injury updates!***

by Mitchell Clinton @MitchellClinton / WinnipegJets.com

WINNIPEG - Sunday's practice at Bell MTS Iceplex was a fast-paced, 75-minute session that kept the players flying up-and-down the ice surface before ending with a bit of a conditioning skate.

And Morgan Barron loved every second of it.

The 23-year-old finally shed his non-contact red jersey and was a full participant for the first time in training camp.

"I don't really have a gauge for what's a hard practice and what's not right now just because I haven't been in enough full ones," Barron smiled. "It was good for me to jump back in. There is a lot of game situation drills, two-on-twos and things like that. That's the part of the game I'm going to get back here in these next few skates."

Barron has been dealing with a minor upper-body injury he sustained during the skates the players held prior to training camp. While he wasn't able to immediately get back on the ice with the team, Barron did skate on his own sheet (with other injured players at the time - Brad Lambert and Wyatt Bongiovanni), before returning to the full group in a red contact jersey late last week.

He's sat in every meeting throughout camp, trying to soak up as much of the new system as he could.

"It was good because we had two groups a lot. So if one group was on the ice, I was able to sit in the meetings and then when they would flip and the other group would go on the ice, I'd be

able to watch practice and follow along," Barron said. "It's tough when you're not actually doing it, so that's what I'm hoping to get in these few skates. Hopefully it comes pretty quick when I'm actually doing it on the ice."

The product of Halifax, NS came to the Jets at the trade deadline last season and had two goals and four points in 14 games. He was also a big part of a Manitoba Moose team that nearly rallied from two games down to Milwaukee in the AHL playoffs last spring, before ultimately falling in the fifth and deciding game.

Barron's four goals and six points in that series were behind only Declan Chisholm for the team lead.

"I felt I strung together a good couple weeks of hockey after the trade. I was playing and not thinking that much, and the results were there," said Barron. "I still felt like there was another level I could have got to, and I will get to, so it left me in a good place."

He's a player that has intrigued head coach Rick Bowness and the coaching staff for a while, and now they'll get to see him in action with two games left on the preseason schedule.

"I've wanted to look what (Adam) Lowry, and Mason (Appleton), and Barron would look like. We're going to take a look at that the next two games," Bowness said. "He's a little bit behind because of the injury which is a little bit unfortunate, because he's one of the guys we had pencilled in as one to take a really good look at. You deal with the way it is. He'll get a real good look the next two games."

Bowness' message for Barron is simple. Go play. Don't get bogged down in trying to be perfect systematically right away.

"It's go play as hard as you can and the details of the game - and the timing of the game because he's way behind at that - you have to play the games," Bowness said. "It's one thing to watch video on what we're doing, and it's another when bodies are flying all over the place at a much higher speed than what you're used to. He just has to play, it's as simple as that."

#### *MIXING IT UP*

The majority of camp to this point has been focused on implementing systems at five-on-five.

That changed on Sunday, as there was a particular focus on four-on-four, as well as three-on-three.

"We had some Grade As last night in overtime. We had some good chances, so that was good to see," said Bowness. "But there are also some principles that we want to put in place in the three-on-three off hanging onto pucks and when to change, and things like that, and how to hem them in their zone. Same with four-on-4 with face-off assignments, we have to know what we're doing."

Brad Lambert generated a glorious chance on his own in the opening minute, while Nate Schmidt had a partial breakaway, and Dominic Toninato had a good look in tight after a pass from Blake Wheeler.

Three-on-three is usually a time where Nikolaj Ehlers' speed really stands out - even more than at five-on-five - but with him out of the line-up last night against Edmonton, he got his reps in on Sunday.

"You want to try and keep possession of the puck, especially in three-on-three in overtime," Ehlers said. "You're not going to get a chance every single time, but as long as you hold possession of the puck, they don't get a chance. Three-on-three is a lot easier than five-on-five. I think we've done pretty well in the last couple of years, but you can always get better. That's why we're working on it."

Monday's practice will see some different situations as well, including six-on-five and five-on-six.

"We have to make sure going into these last two games that we've touched on everything we can," Bowness said.

#### *MISSING IN ACTION*

Pierre-Luc Dubois, Mason Appleton, and Jansen Harkins didn't participate in practice on Sunday.

Bowness wasn't concerned, saying that if there was a regular season game instead of a practice, all three would have been available to play.

He expects them all on the ice on Monday.