

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2022/10/05/jets-power-play-leads-the-way>

Jets power play leads the way Scores trio of extra-man markers while Rittich makes 37 saves to earn shutout

By: Jeff Hamilton

The Winnipeg Jets are going to play a lot of team defence this season as they push for a return to the playoffs under new head coach Rick Bowness. While it's a good bet there will be more low-scoring affairs than many in these parts are used to seeing, Wednesday's game against the Calgary Flames was a good reminder the Jets still pack an offensive punch.

Led by the new-look No. 1 forward line of Kyle Connor, Mark Scheifele and Nikolaj Ehlers, and backed by a stellar performance from No. 2 goalie David Rittich, Winnipeg turned a solid effort in all three zones of the ice into a convincing 5-0 win over the Calgary Flames at Canada Life Centre.

Connor scored twice, Ehlers had a goal and a pair of assists and Scheifele added a goal to pave the way for the Jets, who improved to 3-1-1 in the pre-season. The Flames dropped to 2-3-0 with the loss.

"They're all very creative offensively. They see the ice, they see each other, they know where they are. That's how you play fast," Bowness said after the game of his top line. "You get the speed out there, you get the skill out there and the ability to read off each other and make plays. They were very good tonight."

The Jets dressed their most-veteran laden roster so far in this exhibition series, with only a few notable regulars not dressing, including forwards Pierre-Luc Dubois and Blake Wheeler, defenceman Brendan Dillon and Nate Schmidt, and goaltender Connor Hellebuyck. The Flames countered with a group very similar to what they'll dress once the regular season starts, minus forward Mikael Backlund and netminder Jacob Markstrom.

Much like Saturday's 3-2 shootout loss to the Edmonton Oilers, where there were a combined 11 penalties, another 11 man-advantages were handed out on Wednesday. If the week has offered any early indications, it's that the Jets' power play run by new assistant head coach Brad Lauer is shaping up to be a lethal one.

Following a scoreless opening period, the Jets exploded for four goals in the second frame, with the first two coming on the power play. They would add another marker on the man-advantage in the third to end the night three-for-five on the PP.

Connor scored his second of the pre-season, finishing off a two-on-one with Sam Gagner with a shot over the blocker of Calgary goalie Dan Vladar, with Scheifele following that up just 44 seconds later by tipping an Ehlers' pass that found the net high glove-side. Ehlers added a third power-play goal in the final frame, taking a pass from Gagner at the right side of the net before firing it past a scrambling Dustin Wolf, who replaced Vladar midway through the game.

“There’s a lot of potential there. All three of us play at such a high pace and got a lot of skill to make plays. We turn a lot of pucks over on the forecheck, too,” Connor said. “We’re very underrated forecheckers. Just get the puck back in our hands and make plays. I think we’re still learning tendencies and I think we’re only going to get better.”

Not to be outdone, the Jets penalty kill was just as dominant, stopping all six power plays assessed to the Flames. Winnipeg forward Dominic Toninato added insult to injury after he was sprung on a breakaway coming out of the penalty box before beating Wolf with a head fake and a cheeky on-ice shot that slid near the right post. Connor scored his second goal of the night minutes later, with just 1:09 remaining in the second period. Ehlers scored a power-play marker midway through the third to round out the scoring for the Jets.

It was an impressive outing for Rittich, who made 37 saves for the shutout. Rittich, who signed with the Jets in the off-season after rough stints in Toronto and Nashville, stood tall all evening, and was particularly strong on the penalty kill, including a glove save on Dillon Dube late in the game to keep the shutout intact.

“I mean, (I) prove (something to) myself. Prove that I can be in the NHL,” Rittich said. “That is obviously the No. 1 thing for everyone who is going into the training camp. Maybe to be in NHL, to be on power play. Those kinds of things.”

It was the first audition for forward Morgan Barron, who recently returned from an upper-body injury to play in his first exhibition game. Barron is fighting for a role on the third line, in a shutdown role alongside centre Adam Lowry and winger Mason Appleton.

The trio got a healthy dose of Calgary’s top line of Jonathan Huberdeau, Elias Lindholm and Tyler Toffoli, limiting the three dynamic forwards to no goals and very few scoring opportunities. Barron also logged some significant time on the penalty kill, with Lowry and Appleton also killing penalties, as the Flames went scoreless on the man-advantage.

“He did a good job on the penalty kill and was smart with the puck, made some really good decisions with the puck,” Bowness said of Barron. “A couple of good neutral zone angles taking time and space away. He did a lot of good things for us tonight.”

Bowness put two rookie wingers in Cole Perfetti and Brad Lambert together on a line with Toninato. Perfetti and Lambert were both coming off stellar pre-season performances of late, with each collecting a pair of points over the previous two games.

Wednesday was a reminder that the NHL level is a difficult one to adjust to, and the more experienced Flames lineup offered up a challenge that was unlike any they had seen before. Bowness matched the line with the Flames second trio of Dube, Nazem Kadri and Andrew Mangiapane but changed up his rotation as the game went on.

“The kids got a good taste tonight,” Bowness said. “Cole has played in the league before, Brad hasn’t. So, it was a good eye-opener for Brad, I’m sure. There’s a lot of good players on that team, it was a little intimidating the first time you see them all together.”

For those fighting for a spot on the blue line, no one really shot off the page, though some looked more poised than others.

Ville Heinola showcased his offensive prowess once again, but also had some of his defensive deficiencies exposed with a couple of bad giveaways and a holding penalty. Dylan Samberg and Logan Stanley were also stable at times, contributing well on the PK.

The Jets have just one remaining pre-season game to play, with a rematch against the Flames on Friday night. The Jets will remain in Alberta over the ensuing days, with three practices scheduled in Banff before returning to Winnipeg on Tuesday, ahead of the Oct. 14 season-opener at home against the New York Rangers.

It's unclear if the Jets will make cuts ahead of Friday's game, but Bowness did say he's seen enough to make some final decisions on the roster. The Jets need to trim their roster to 23 players, with the likelihood of cutting two forwards and two defencemen.

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/jets-shut-out-flames-in-final-auditions-for-some>

Jets shut out Flames in final auditions for some

By Scott Billeck

It was billed as a last chance corral of sorts by head coach Rick Bowness earlier in the day.

Wednesday's penultimate preseason game for the Winnipeg Jets was both the most veteran-laden lineup they have iced in exhibition action and also the most competition-oriented one, with three of the team's six dressed blue-liners — Ville Heinola, Dylan Samberg and Logan Stanley — locked in a cutthroat battle vying for a single spot for the opening night roster in just over a week's time.

As Bowness alluded in his pre-game comments, Wednesday night would be the last game for a couple of those hopefuls, with further auditions up front being given to forwards Morgan Barron and 18-year-old training camp standout Brad Lambert.

Who is left standing remains very much in question with cuts expected Thursday, but the Jets as they were configured showed they can hang with one of the NHL's best teams from a year ago.

Advanced test aside for a number of hopefuls, the Jets came away with a rather dominant 5-0 win against the visiting Calgary Flames at Canada Life Centre.

Kyle Connor struck the back of the net twice, while Mark Scheifele and Dominic Toninato also bulged the twine as the Jets went 3-for-5 on the power play, and a perfect 6-for-6 on the penalty kill.

"Big Save" David Rittich got the net for the Jets and was perfect as well against his former club, stopping all 37 shots he faced en route to his final pre-season tune-up, a shutout no less.

Rittich's first two appearances in the preseason had lacked a little, but that simply wasn't the case on Wednesday. He made a number of clutch saves, including flashing the leather in the third period on a Dillon Dube chance on Calgary's fifth power play of the evening.

Much of Winnipeg's offensive damage came during a second-period flurry.

Connor got the scoring started approaching the mid-way point of the frame, finishing off a filthy give-and-go with Sam Gagner on the power-play at 8:28.

Gagner, operating on the top power-play unit on the night, had his fingerprints all over this one, feeding Scheifele in front for not one, but two chances before his deftly flicked saucer pass made its way onto Connor's stick in front to make it 1-0.

Winnipeg's veteran offseason signing finished with a pair of assists.

Winnipeg would lead 2-0 before the 10-minute mark of the period, with Scheifele expertly redirecting a centring feed from Nikolaj Ehlers at 9:12, also on the power play after Calgary was rung up on a too many men call that was pending as Connor scored.

Toninato's goal came at 12:53, shortly after he stepped out of the penalty box. He latched onto a breakaway pass, giving Calgary goaltender Dustin Wolf a little head fake before sliding the puck five-hole along the ice to make it 3-0.

Connor's second of the game, and third of the preseason, came with 69 seconds left in the frame, with Nikolaj Ehlers providing a beautiful backhand cross-crease pass to last season's 47-goal scorer to push the lead to 4-0.

Ehlers fired home Winnipeg's fifth goal of the game at 10:47 of the third, Winnipeg's third power-play marker of the evening.

Jacob Markstrom, Calgary's starting goalie, had the night off. He's expected to face Connor Hellebuyck back in Calgary on Friday for the final preseason tilt for both clubs.

Markstrom's backup, Dan Vladar started and played just under half the game for Calgary, making 13 stops on 15 shots. Wolf took over after Scheifele's goal and made nine saves.

Any separation in the battle for jobs?

All three of the defencemen vying for a job had their moments, with Heinola coughing up a puck after missing a hip check in the first that led to a 3-on-1 by the Flames. He also took an ill-advised holding penalty in second.

The young Finn's prowess at the other end of the rink was also on display, feeding Adam Lowry in close on what should have been the opening goal of the game if it hadn't ricocheted hard off his skate.

The question for Heinola, perhaps more than any other defencemen in the battle, is this: does his offensive upside make up for his defensive mistakes at times?

Samberg is the "safer" option and comes equipped with a bigger body. Still, he hasn't exactly taken the reins from anyone and hasn't stood out above Heinola by any means. Nor has Stanley for that matter.

Bowness will ultimately make the call in the coming days.

Johnathan Kovacevic has been a sleeper all camp. He didn't play Wednesday. Perhaps he gets a final crack at the spot on Friday? Kyle Capobianco, also in the mix, did not dress for the game either.

Meanwhile, Saku Maenalanen had another good outing, showing some speed and toughness, especially late after big Nikita Zadorov hit Cole Perfetti. At this point, it feels like Winnipeg's fourth line will feature the 28-year-old Finn, along with David Gustafsson and Gagner.

Brad Lambert had just an OK game, after tearing it up in his previous outings. One of the big questions coming into the game was how would the 18-year-old handle the stiff NHL-level competition. He was just alright.

Morgan Barron, playing in his first preseason game, looked good, throwing three hits and making a pair of blocks. He was used quite a bit on Winnipeg's penalty kill and it went 6-for-6. Barron, who suffered an upper-body injury in a pre-camp skate, may have entered the fray late, but he put some good stuff on film on Wednesday.

Calgary Sun

<https://calgarysun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/calgary-flames/snapshots-flames-sloppy-in-pre-season-loss-to-jets>

SNAPSHOTS: Flames 'sloppy' in pre-season loss to Jets

By Wes Gilbertson

WINNIPEG — Maybe it's a good thing the Calgary Flames have one last tuneup opportunity before their regular-season opener.

Or maybe it's good to get these gaffes out of their system.

You don't worry about wins and losses during exhibition action but what was troublesome about Wednesday's 5-0 blanking by the Winnipeg Jets is that the Flames were so sloppy on some of their details, that they were guilty of too many groan-worthy mistakes.

Allowing two power-play markers in a span of 44 seconds? Yeah, you don't wanna do that.

Somehow managing to surrender a goal and be dinged for too-many-men on the same sequence? Yeah, you don't wanna do that.

How about an errant pass on the man-advantage that gifts a breakaway to the guy who is just leaving the sin bin? Or a blatant giveaway by one of your workhorse defencemen in your own zone? You don't wanna do that, either.

This was pretty close to Calgary's opening-night lineup. It can't be close to their opening-night performance, and they know it.

"It was just sloppy, a lot of mental mistakes," assessed Flames forward Blake Coleman. "You look at the goals they scored, we gave them pretty much all of them."

"You learn from every game you play, no matter the outcome. Yeah, it's pre-season, but we're getting right up to it so we need to get that urgency back in our game. I don't think you dwell on things like this. You learn from it. But we have a lot of older, veteran guys that have been around and know how to play the game right, myself included. I have a lot better than I had tonight. I think, almost to a man, everybody in this room would say the same. I don't think there's any concern in the group. It's a game that we're not happy with, and we'll look to respond."

Dan Vladar was once again sharp in Calgary's crease, although he had a frustrating finish as the Jets cashed a couple of power-play goals in less than a minute near the midway mark of Wednesday's affair — a one-timer by Kyle Connor after a sweet saucer pass by Sam Gagner and then a top-shelf redirect by Mark Scheifele after a nifty feed from Nikolaj Ehlers.

Vladar was hooked after Scheifele's tally — the plan all along was that he would work just half the contest — and replaced by top puck-stopping prospect Dustin Wolf.

After Dillon Dube found nobody home as he attempted a pass to the point at the tail-end of a PP, Jets forward Dominic Toninato stepped out of the penalty box, claimed the loose puck and ultimately whistled a shot through Wolf's five-hole on a breakaway.

A few minutes later, Noah Hanifin coughed up a giveaway from behind his own net and couldn't stop Ehlers from setting up Connor for a freebie.

Calgary's penalty-killers were burned again in the third, with Ehlers doing the honours.

While the visitors did rack up 37 shots at Canada Life Centre, they never did solve old friend David Rittich, now serving as the backup in Winnipeg.

"Our power play sucked and theirs was really good," said Flames bench boss Darryl Sutter. "And our penalty-killing sucked too ... We lost one of our best penalty-killers last year on defence (Erik Gudbranson) and there's some guys haven't picked that part of it up for us yet."

These two teams will hook up again Friday at the Saddledome, the final exhibition outing for either side. The Flames open their regular-season slate next Thursday against the defending champs from Colorado.

"We've gotta bring it on Friday, because that's the last game we're going to have before Game 1," Hanifin said. "I think we're all excited and ready to keep building."

DOUBLE TROUBLE?

The Flames' latest addition, Radim Zohorna, doesn't want to cause any sort of stir. If he requires a new nickname, no problem.

But there seemed to be some good-natured controversy brewing at Wednesday's morning skate in Winnipeg, with teammates trying to tell Nikita Zadorov that he'll now be known as 'Little Z.'

Both Zadorov and Zohorna are listed at 6-foot-6. Both are accustomed to answering to 'Big Z.'

“They said I’m taller than him, a little. But I’m not sure,” Zohorna said. “It’s hard because we have a Big Z already, so we have to figure that out.”

Zohorna was plucked Monday off waivers from the Pittsburgh Penguins, news that caught him by surprise. The daily deadline for claims had just passed when his phone started to vibrate.

“I was on the way to the airport because we had a pre-season game in Detroit and one of my buddies called me and he saw it on Twitter,” said Zohorna, who skated in 17 games last winter with the Penguins, contributing two goals and four assists and posting an impressive plus-12 rating. “I was like, ‘No, you’re joking’ because it was like five minutes after 2 o’clock. And then I realized it, and I was happy. I was really happy because I wanted to get an opportunity.

“I know I can be an NHL player full-time, so I’m here and I’m so happy I’m here. I hope now I can prove myself.”

Zohorna was relatively quiet in his first appearance in the Flaming C, understandable after a couple of whirlwind days. The 26-year-old left-winger had one scoring chance — he couldn’t shovel a rebound past Rittich — and two hits in 10:17 of ice time.

OFF THE GLASS

Whether he’s ‘Big Z’ or ‘Little Z,’ Zadorov will appreciate being called this. After Wednesday’s morning skate, Sutter offered up that the 27-year-old has “probably been our best defenceman” this fall ... Asked about his blue-line pairs after the final buzzer, Sutter was less complimentary: “I didn’t like any of ’em. All three were not up to par.” ... The Flames experimented Wednesday with an unusual configuration — three defencemen on the same power-play unit. Hanifin, Michael Stone and MacKenzie Weegar were all on PP2, with Dube and Andrew Mangiapane as the only forwards ... Sutter admitted that he didn’t know much about Zohorna, save for what he’d learned from a few snippets of video. “There’s three ways of evaluating a player — there’s what you did, what you might do in a couple years and what he’s doing now,” he said. “I would say what he’s doing now would be the best evaluation” ... Zohorna, by the way, will wear No. 67. Those digits were last donned by Michael Frolik ... Coleman had an ‘A’ stitched on his sweater ... The Flames scratched both of their professional tryout forwards — Cody Eakin and Sonny Milano — in Winnipeg. Will we see either again in Calgary’s colours?

Canadian Press

<https://www.chrisd.ca/2022/10/06/winnipeg-jets-calgary-flames-pre-season-game-win/>

Jets Dominate Flames Behind Rittich’s 37 Saves, Four Second-Period Goals in 5-0 Win

By Judy Owen, The Canadian Press

WINNIPEG — David Rittich was glad he delivered a shutout for his new Winnipeg Jets team, but any kind of victory would have felt good.

Rittich made 37 saves and Kyle Connor scored two of Winnipeg’s four second-period goals as the Jets defeated the Calgary Flames 5-0 in pre-season action Wednesday.

“Obviously, it’s great if you perform well,” Rittich said. “If you get saves and you get a shutout it’s nice. I don’t really care.

“Most important thing for me is we got the win. That’s what matters.”

Rittich used to play for the Flames, signing as a free agent with the club in 2016. He was traded to Toronto in April 2021 and signed as a free agent with Nashville three months later. The Jets signed him this past summer.

“It’s been good so far here with (the) new team,” Rittich said. “Obviously new faces, new system, but we’ve gotta learn that. It’s been good so far.

“I’m feeling great. It’s still pre-season, but we’ll see how it goes.”

Connor and Mark Scheifele each had power-play goals 44 seconds apart to start the middle period. Dominic Toninato also scored during the 20-minute attack.

Nikolaj Ehlers added a power-play goal in the third period and contributed a pair of assists. Sam Gagner also recorded two assists.

Dan Vladar stopped 13-of-15 shots for Calgary before being replaced by Dustin Wolf midway through the second period. Wolf made nine saves.

The Flames went 0-for-6 on the power play while the Jets were 3-for-5.

“Our power play sucked and theirs was really good, and our penalty kill sucked, too,” said Calgary coach Darryl Sutter.

Ehlers liked the way he and his new linemates, Connor and Scheifele, also clicked on the power play.

“You try to play the same way on (the) power play. You don’t want to move it slow just because you have one more guy on the ice,” Ehlers said. “And I think we did that pretty well tonight. We were moving the puck and that way plays open up. That’s something we got to continue.”

Calgary iced a squad close to its projected regular-season roster, including new acquisitions Jonathan Huberdeau and Nazem Kadri, but sat starting goalie Jacob Markstrom.

Winnipeg didn’t play forwards Pierre-Luc Dubois and Blake Wheeler, defencemen Nate Schmidt and Brenden Dillon, as well as starting goalie Connor Hellebuyck.

The Flames had a three-on-one chance early in the first period, but couldn’t beat Rittich. Vladar turned aside a Connor breakaway shot late in the period.

Calgary outshot Winnipeg 10-8 in the opening frame.

Connor began the second-period barrage with a power-play goal at 8:28, followed by Scheifele’s man-advantage marker at 9:12 that sent Vladar to the bench and bumped the lead to 2-0.

Toninato got the puck after stepping out of the penalty box, went in alone on Wolf and beat him close in after a little body move at 12:53.

"We just gave too many grade A chances to high-skilled players," Flames forward Blake Coleman said. "It's not fair to the goalies to be judged on those."

A clearing attempt by Calgary's Noah Hanifin was intercepted by Ehlers, who passed the puck to Connor for his second goal of the game at 18:51 that made it 4-0.

"That was pretty much all on me there on that goal," Hanifin said. "Just got to realize the pressure that's coming."

Winnipeg went up 5-0 when Gagner sent a pass to the circle for Ehlers, who fired a power-play blast by Wolf at 10:47.

The Hockey News

<https://thehockeynews.com/news/brad-lambert-proving-doubters-wrong-with-dream-pre-season>

BRAD LAMBERT PROVING DOUBTERS WRONG WITH DREAM PRE-SEASON

BY TONY FERRARI

To start last season, many believed Finnish center Brad Lambert would be one of the few challengers to Shane Wright's status as the No. 1 pick in the 2022 NHL draft. While Wright was unseated by Slovak winger Juraj Slafkovsky, Lambert was far from close to challenging for first overall.

The silky smooth skating Finn went 30th overall to the Winnipeg Jets, with some scouts and analysts believing he may fall out of the first round altogether. A mid-season trade, underwhelming counting stats, playing with questionable talent around him and a few bad bounces saw Lambert's stock fall – to the delight of the Winnipeg Jets.

Fast forward less than three months and 'Big Bad Brad' is looking like one of the most consistently dangerous forwards at Jets' camp. He was also the leading scorer for the Jets at their prospect showcase.

The skating prowess and puck skill that made him one of the most enticing prospects heading into last season have shown up in a big way. His on-ice vision and transition ability have shined beacons in the pre-season.

The big question through two pre-season games and a number of training camp highlights is what is the next step for the Jets' newest toy?

Generally speaking, when a 30th overall pick attends training camp mere months after his name is called, they're in town to tour the NHL facilities and get a feel for what NHL talent looks like up close and personal. Lambert, on the other hand, seems uninterested in leaving.

The options for the young Finn are fairly easy to identify.

Going back to Finland to play in the Liiga seems out of the question. The Lahti Pelicans are not a strong squad, and despite their best efforts to employ the 'Flying V' (yes, this happened), developing another year in that system would likely lead to more frustration than success.

His CHL rights are owned by the Seattle Thunderbirds, a powerhouse team in the WHL. His speed and puck skills would be comical in the Canadian junior ranks. He would play with fellow 2022 first-round picks Kevin Korchinski (Chicago, 7th overall) and Reid Schaefer (Edmonton, 32nd overall) as well as 2023 top prospects in goalie Scott Ratzlaff and forward Gracyn Sawchyn.

Would he have success at the WHL level? Almost certainly, he's torn up junior hockey just about every chance he's had. But is junior hockey what's best for his development after spending the majority of the last two seasons against men?

Since Lambert was drafted out of Finland, he is eligible to play with the AHL's Manitoba Moose. 18-year-old prospects rarely get the opportunity because of the NHL-CHL agreement, but it would allow him to continue to develop his trademark speed and agility against bigger, faster, more mature competition without thrusting him into NHL action before he's ready.

Oftentimes players drafted out of Europe are contractually obligated to head back to their home club. Lambert remains unsigned in any league. Signing his NHL entry-level contract could be in the cards due to his impressive performance thus far, but he would need to sign his deal soon to get into game action with the Moose – or the Jets.

Lambert's cerebral mindset offensively has been evident against mixed NHL-AHL lineups, but could he continue to do that against full-blown NHL squads? The NHL is his third realistic option.

His coaches and teammates have all expressed how impressed they've been with him. They gushed about how he won't have to catch up to the speed of the NHL game. That said, they've also been quick to caution that the NHL regular season is a different beast than the pre-season. Full NHL lineups with standings points on the line are much tougher competition.

It's certainly a massive ask for Lambert to come into the Jets' lineup and presumably play top-six minutes. He's been paired with Cole Perfetti in practice recently – a duo that's flashed some magic and chemistry already. While the two playing together on a scoring third line could make the Jets more dangerous offensively, they would likely need a center who's happy to let them dance while he plays a background role, cleaning up defensive mistakes.

Making the Winnipeg roster less than four months after being drafted 30th overall would be a massive accomplishment for Lambert. It would also be a big step up from the competition he faced last season, albeit with more talented teammates who think the game a bit more cohesively.

So where does Lambert wind up?

Winnipeg has two more pre-season games, one tonight against the Calgary Flames at home and then another in Calgary on Friday. Lambert is likely to be featured heavily in both, being given his shot to earn a spot on this Jets roster.

If he performs well as he has been, he might stick with the NHL club, possibly forming a rookie dynamic duo with Perfetti. Maybe 'Big Bad Brad' is given the nine-game look in the NHL and then sent to the AHL to develop further. That seems like the most likely scenario at this point. A cup of coffee with the big club before a season developing in the minors. That also gives him the opportunity to be called up should injuries or poor performances occur in the NHL club.

All of this depends on Lambert signing his entry-level contract. Once pen hits paper, I don't think there will be any thought of Lambert playing outside of the organization. AHL or NHL, Lambert is putting his name back on the map as one of the most talented prospects in the world at the moment.

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/article/jets-top-line-shows-glimpse-of-enormous-potential/>

Jets' top line shows glimpse of enormous potential

By Ken Wiebe

WINNIPEG – The preseason is nearly over, yet the fun is merely beginning for the Winnipeg Jets newly configured top line.

It's important to not make too many snap judgments, especially since this was just the second game of action for the trio of Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor and Nikolaj Ehlers. But the potential for them to be one of the most electrifying lines in the NHL to watch was on full display as the Jets comfortably defeated the Calgary Flames 5-0 on Wednesday night.

They've got speed to burn.

They've got three guys with lightning-quick releases and finishing ability.

They've got three guys with vision and they've got three guys who aren't afraid to share or distribute the puck.

The only thing missing for them is a snazzy nickname. But there will be plenty of time for that should they stay together and find a way to continue to build on their strengths.

The hype machine usually goes a little bit out of control at this stage of the exhibition season, but these are three players with solid track records.

Scheifele has put together six consecutive point per game seasons. Connor is coming off a campaign where he produced a career-best 47 goals and 91 points in 80 games. Ehlers is poised for a breakout season after finally earning a promotion to the top line and first power play unit for the first time in his career.

What's the ceiling for them?

Good question.

Can they work their way into the conversation as being one of the most productive lines and earn league-wide acclaim?

“That’s not something we think about daily per say, but you bring it up, 100 percent. That’s our mindset,” said Connor. “Each player, if you ask individually, or if you ask me if we could be one of the best lines in the league, absolutely.”

Connor is not wrong — and he’s not the type of guy who says things to get attention or for effect.

This is something he feels strongly about.

And for a group that is highly motivated to have a bounceback season, Connor and company would love nothing more than to lead the way.

Not just offensively either.

They’ll need to get more than they give up on a regular basis. Especially when you consider the level of competition they’ll be facing most nights.

There’s always plenty of debate about whether teams should load up a top line or spread the wealth a bit, either throughout the top two lines or even sprinkle a bit more offence on the third line.

With Jets head coach Rick Bowness taking over, it was impossible to know which way he might lean. Especially since Connor found such great chemistry with Pierre-Luc Dubois last season.

Since the first day of camp, Bowness decided to roll with Scheifele between Ehlers and Connor and there’s plenty of good reasons for that.

“They’re all very creative offensively,” said Bowness. “They see the ice, they see each other, they know where they are. That’s how you play fast. You get the speed out there, you get the skill out there and the ability to read off each other and make plays.”

The question about whether this configuration can succeed will always circle back to how well are they going to play without the puck or defend.

But one thing that’s been noticeable since training camp is the effort being put forth in that area — whether it’s covering off for one another or for a pinching defenceman or using their speed to apply back pressure or to nullify an odd-man rush.

Provided that level of commitment remains, they could be a handful for opponents in all three zones and not just a high-level threat in the transition game.

“Yeah, we’re going to use our speed whenever we can, all over the ice,” said Connor, who scored twice, including a beauty at even strength that was set-up by Ehlers on a no-look backhand. “Where we can use that in the D zone, say it’s a change of side, our wingers, me and (Ehlers) going down and getting those pucks, just being quick and getting to spots. So we can have an out for each other as well.”

This will be the first time the three players are set to spend an extended period of time on the top power play together. On Wednesday night, they were involved in all three goals on the man-advantage.

Connor buried a perfect saucer pass from Sam Gagner (filling in for Dubois on the top unit) for the first goal, Ehlers found Scheifele for a beautiful redirection for the second and Ehlers closed out the scoring by burying a ridiculous cross-ice feed from Gagner to round out the scoring just past the midway point of the third period.

"You try to play the same way on the power play," said Ehlers. "You don't want to move it slowly just because you have one more guy on the ice. And I think we did that pretty well. We were moving the puck and that way plays open up. That's something we've got to continue."

The Jets improved to 3-1-1 in the preseason and they'll close out their six-game slate on Friday with a rematch in Calgary against the Flames.

One of the understated storylines in Wednesday's affair was the play of Jets backup David Rittich.

After a somewhat rusty outing in the exhibition opener against the Edmonton Oilers, Rittich has regrouped and given up only one goal over his final five periods.

That's how you start earning the trust of the coaching staff and the players in front of you when you join a new team.

"When you get the opportunity to play, you've got to take advantage of it because if you play like that, the coach doesn't hesitate to put him back in the next opportunity," said Bowness. "There's no hesitation at all. You play like that and you earn the trust and the respect of his team and his coaches. That also earns him another start."

The starts won't be as frequent once the regular season begins, but the Jets have several back-to-backs in the early portion of the schedule, so Rittich will need to be ready to give Connor Hellebuyck a breather.

After losing his starting job with the Flames in the bubble and barely playing as the backup to Juuse Saros with the Nashville Predators, Rittich realizes there is plenty at stake for him.

"Obviously, it's great if you perform well. If you get saves and you get a shutout it's nice. I don't really care. Most important thing for me is that we got the win. That's what matters," said Rittich. "I mean, prove myself. Prove that I can be in the NHL. That is obviously the No. 1 thing for everyone who is going into the training camp."

Much like Eric Comrie did in training camp last October, Rittich has taken the steps toward showing the Jets he's ready to handle the 20 or 22 starts required out of the job.

As for the remaining battles for jobs on the Jets roster, things are beginning to come into clearer focus with another round of cuts looming in the coming days.

Bowness was impressed by Morgan Barron in his first taste of preseason action and he'll get another look with Adam Lowry and Mason Appleton on Friday.

Although the competition for that job remains open, it's tough to imagine Barron being outside of the 13 forwards expected to start on the roster.

Dominic Toninato was used on the penalty kill and scored a goal on a smart head-fake after coming out of the penalty box, but he remains in a healthy competition for a job up front.

The battle on the blue line is still difficult to fully determine, though Dylan Samberg appears to have a leg up on both Ville Heinola and Logan Stanley.

It will be interesting to see if the Jets are willing to subject a player to waivers, try to move one of the players who require waivers or ultimately decide to send Heinola down for some additional seasoning and ensure that he plays big minutes out of the gate in the American Hockey League.

With Bowness saying during training camp that he'd like the blue line to go from 24 to somewhere in the neighbourhood of 40 goals this season, Heinola is sure to help increase that total. But there is still room for improvement when it comes to his defensive game.

The issue is that Heinola needs to improve his angles, body positioning and decision-making at the NHL level in order to take his game to the next level. It's possible the Jets might ultimately decide to keep him around for some additional on-the-job training.

Bowness wasn't handing out any clues when it comes to the competition. The bench boss did say numerous times that Friday's lineup will be close to what he expects to use on Oct. 14 against the New York Rangers.

During his post-game session with members of the media on Wednesday, Bowness was asked if he's seen enough to have a pretty good idea of which way he was leaning?

"Yes," Bowness conceded. "Without a doubt."

It won't take much longer to figure out who is in and who is out, at least for the time being.

But what's important to remember is that this is just the starting point and things can change dramatically over the course of a long season.

An assignment to the minors isn't permanent and nor is a spot on the periphery of the roster, unless that player does enough to cement his status with consistent effort.

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/9177830/winnipeg-jets-four-line-hockey/>

ANALYSIS: Jets can benefit from four-line hockey

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

Prior to their last pre-season game against Edmonton on the weekend, Winnipeg Jets associate coach Scott Arniel spoke about the importance of being a four-line hockey team.

He opined that the ability to play all 12 forwards — instead of just nine or 10 — allows a team to run at a higher pace, be quicker overall, and is less taxing on the star players — and that playoff history shows successful teams use everyone on their bench.

Now, let's be clear, Arniel's take wasn't a stunning revelation in hockey — particularly the NHL — as the New York Islanders have been doing it with notable success for the last many years, thanks to the trio of Matt Martin, Cal Clutterbuck, and Casey Czikas.

What was compelling about the four-line conversation was the obvious change in philosophy from the Jets' coaching staff, now believing it's a necessity to success, which wasn't always a popular strategy the last many years.

When you review usage between the Jets and Islanders, Winnipeg's fourth line last season averaged just over nine minutes per game, while the New Yorkers ran their fourth line 13.

Now, four minutes might not seem like a lot, but in a 60-minute game, it's at least four or five more shifts, meaning the pace of play, shift length, and overall performance is expected to improve as the ice time is spread more equitably.

And while the Jets didn't make a big splash into free agency this past off-season, they did acquire Sam Gagner, a 13-goal scorer last season and a prototypical fourth-line player at 33 years old. With Gagner's experience, coupled with his ability to skate and play responsibly, Winnipeg's fourth line might become more important to the team than ever before.

If so, then the Jets will have strength in numbers this season — all 12 of them, in fact — up front.

The Athletic

<https://theathletic.com/3631632/2022/10/06/nhl-breakout-candidates-for-2022-23/>

Red Wings, Senators, Devils among top NHL breakout candidates for 2022-23

By Murat Ates

Every couple of years, an NHL team stuns our best models and our most zealous fans by wildly outperforming offseason expectations.

Last season's Calgary Flames were the poster child of that stunning success, skyrocketing from the 81-point pace of their pandemic-shortened 2020-21 season all the way to a 111-point season. They went from missing the playoffs to first in the Pacific Division and sixth in the league without making a major offseason splash. They simply put their trust in Darryl Sutter and a group of stars who'd had disappointing years and won 50 games.

Their offense improved, both in terms of how many goals they scored and what kinds of scoring chances they created. Their defense improved by preventing scoring chances of the same quality.

Who could have predicted it?

To that end, we at The Athletic decided to study a group of the NHL's 15 biggest year-over-year improvements in the salary cap era, looking for clues about what each team had in common.

The goal? To predict the most obvious teams who might take a surprising, enormous leap forward this season.

We waded through coaching changes, roster transformations, No. 1 overall draft picks, and goaltending acrobatics. We sifted through some truly awful teams and some great ones that played poorly in search of the conditions whereby any team is most likely to get a whole lot better in short order.

Coaching changes featured heavily, just as with Calgary's massive turnaround via Sutter. This included coaches in their second seasons with a club, too, like Jon Cooper's 2013-14 Lightning or Jared Bednar's 2017-18 Avalanche. Massive roster turnover played a role for the 2007-08 Flyers, while the right depth adds worked for the 2012-13 Ducks. Finally, sometimes young teams simply get better, whether by adding Evgeni Malkin to Sidney Crosby or watching as Nathan MacKinnon becomes the Nathan MacKinnon. And yes, it helps if you can add Roberto Luongo in his prime to a group of budding stars like the Panthers did at the tail end of 2013-14.

But not every team makes a superstar addition. Some, like Calgary last year, simply stay the course. And usually, it's a combination of a lot of factors working together to push a team into that next tier. It makes sense that the truly special turnarounds involve a lot of items working out just right.

The checklist

Our study of the teams who made the biggest year-over-year improvements found that they typically had (at least some of) these factors in common:

- New coaching staffs, whether immediately prior to the season or within a year
- Improved goaltending, whether from bad to great or even just from horrible to average
- Top-end talent entering their prime offensive years
- Meaningful roster movement, whether for key depth or top-end talent
- A little bit of luck

And it certainly didn't hurt if the team's previous year was particularly bad. It's easier for a team to improve by 20 points if they're starting from 60 points than if they just won the Presidents' Trophy. This is especially true if key players were missing due to injury or a great player had an unusually poor season. Also, if you're a fan of a bubble team, don't fear: There were plenty of examples of teams from Crosby's 2006-07 Penguins to the 2016-17 Jets who missed the playoffs and then posted 100-plus point seasons the following year.

One thing that never seems to work? Throwing a No. 1 overall pick to the wolves like Edmonton did for so many years. The biggest leaps were all made by teams adding quality to some level of quality, not starting from scorched earth.

So who are the best candidates to take an enormous step forward this season? We're glad you asked.

Winnipeg Jets

2021-22 record: 39-32-11, 89 points

The best case for major improvements: Connor Hellebuyck is the single biggest reason the Jets have stayed in the playoff hunt through most of the post-Dustin Byfuglien era. Even then, a

qualification round loss to Calgary in 2020 and last season's playoff miss mean the Jets have been to the postseason proper just once in three seasons without their top defender. Winnipeg's forwards were expected to outscore some of the Jets problems but a lack of attention to defense just made Hellebuyck's job harder and harder until he fell from the league's elite and played an average season in 2021-22.

If Hellebuyck stops shots at a rate more typical of his career average, Winnipeg will enjoy a 13 to 14 goal swing in goal differential. If he matches his career-best .924, set back in 2017-18 — the last time Winnipeg was an above-average defensive team as per most publicly available measures of shot quality — then the swing could grow as big as 30 goals. We can't snap our fingers and fix Winnipeg's lack of 200-foot play, nor can we will Hellebuyck to Vezina-winning levels just by including the Jets in this list.

But Hellebuyck has played that well multiple times before. And measures of shot quality like goals saved above expected still point to him as one of the NHL's best goaltenders. On the other hand, David Rittich will be in tough to match Eric Comrie's suddenly spectacular performance in 2021-22 and Hellebuyck already started 66 games last season. There's not a lot of room left to play him more if Rittich doesn't work out.

Where else could the Jets improve?

It's about that 200-foot play. The organization is betting on a new coaching staff, led by 67-year-old head coach Rick Bowness, associate coach Scott Arniel, and up-and-comers Brad Lauer (formerly of the WHL Oil Kings) and Marty Johnston (formerly of the Manitoba Moose) to create the rising tide that floats all defensive boats. Winnipeg boasts elite offensive players like Kyle Connor and Mark Scheifele but cannot boast about their defensive impact. Both spent a lot of time above their men in the defensive zone and Winnipeg frequently paid the price for it.

This is where Paul Maurice's abrupt exit and Dave Lowry's inability to turn things around work in favor of this year's team. Bowness has been lauded by many of his players throughout training camp for his teaching and attention to detail. Improved systems teaching has been evident, too.

Winnipeg probably doesn't have the star power on both sides of the puck to pull off Calgary's year-over-year brilliance. But it does have two of the most important boxes checked. A new coaching staff with demonstrably better organization than the last one and a goaltender who has frequently been among the world's best give the Jets their shot.

Daily Face-Off

<https://www.dailyfaceoff.com/32-bold-predictions-auston-matthews-to-sign-nhls-first-ever-max-contract/>

32 Bold Predictions: Auston Matthews to sign NHL's first-ever max contract

By Frank Seravalli

Auston Matthews (David Kirouac-USA TODAY Sports)

Fortune favors the bold, or so the saying goes.

Even conservatively handicapping a sport as unpredictable as hockey – where seemingly every season, there are two or three jaw-dropping surprises in the standings based on the bounces of a frozen vulcanized rubber disk – can leave you looking foolish.

We're throwing conservative selections out the window. Go bold or go home.

With that, enjoy our annual tradition of public embarrassment with 32 bold predictions for the 2022-23 NHL season:

1. Move over MacKinnon. On July 1, the first day eligible, Auston Matthews will sign the NHL's first-ever max contract to stay with the Toronto Maple Leafs: eight years x \$16.7 million. That rounds up to \$134 million, with a little flair for his jersey number. Brad Richards (2006) is the only player to sign for the maximum 20 percent of the salary cap, but it was only a five-year deal, not the maximum term.
2. It's Showtime on Broadway. Patrick Kane will be traded to the New York Rangers and sign a long-term extension. He'll be reunited with Artemi Panarin to chase a fourth career Stanley Cup.
3. Kane will have a twinge of doubt about his decision to leave when the Chicago Blackhawks win the 2023 Draft Lottery and earn the right to select generational talent Connor Bedard. Yes, this year, it is #SuckHardForBedard.
4. Four straight trips to Final? Anything is possible for Tampa Bay Lightning, who will win the Atlantic Division. Some are predicting a drop-off. I don't see it, not with a Core Four that includes Andrei Vasilevskiy, Victor Hedman, Brayden Point and Nikita Kucherov.
5. Five players will be 50-goal scorers in 2022-23: Auston Matthews, Leon Draisaitl, Kirill Kaprizov, Kyle Connor and Connor McDavid – who will hit the mark for the first time in his career. Alex Ovechkin and Chris Kreider will fall short.
6. "Dollar Bill" Kirill Kaprizov will win the Hart Trophy with an electrifying season, becoming the first Hart winner in Minnesota Wild franchise history. Kaprizov, 25, finished seventh in Hart voting last season after a 47-goal and 108-point campaign.
7. Bruce There It Was. Vancouver Canucks coach Bruce Boudreau will be the first coaching casualty of the season. Still can't shake the apparent friction that existed between Boudreau and the front office last spring when he asked for and did not receive an extension. The Canucks' stars haven't impressed in the preseason and that might mean a slow start.
8. The Great Eight, Alex Ovechkin, will fall short of a record-setting 10th 50-goal season. Ovechkin will end up with 45 goals, passing Gordie Howe for second all-time to give him 825 for his career – 69 short of tying Wayne Gretzky's all-time goals mark. Nice.
9. Western New York kid Alex Tuch will be named the next captain of the Buffalo Sabres. Tuch gave the Sabres a much-needed shot in the arm last year, and if Peyton Krebs can take the next step, then GM Kevyn Adams will have made the best of a tough trade situation with Jack Eichel.
10. PointsBet Team Point Total Stone Cold Mortal Lock No. 1: St. Louis Blues OVER 95.5 points. Usually when I see a line that doesn't make sense, I ask what oddsmakers know that I

do not. I can't figure this one out for the life of me. The Blues had 109 points last year. Does anyone see a 14-plus point regression coming? I don't.

11. With renewed interest and buzz as the Sens' rebuild bears fruit, late owner Eugene Melnyk's daughters, Anna and Olivia, will reach an agreement to sell the Ottawa Senators franchise and maintain a minority stake. Melnyk left the team to his children upon his passing on March 28, 2022.

12. The Los Angeles Kings will be kings of the Pacific Division, winning their first division title since 1991. The team that took the Edmonton Oilers to Game 7 without Drew Doughty and Viktor Arvidsson quietly added 85-point scorer Kevin Fiala and has some of the best young talent in the league.

13. The 2019 No. 1 overall pick, Jack Hughes, will vault into the 100-point club. Hughes busted out with 56 points in 49 games last year, which is a 94-point pace, but he'll need to prove he can stay on the ice. He'll do that in the first year of his \$64 million deal with the Devils.

14. Matty is the Man to Beat. Seattle Kraken center Matty Beniers will take home the Calder Trophy as the NHL's rookie of the year. Beniers enters with the third-best odds to win, behind Anaheim's Mason McTavish and Buffalo blueliner Owen Power, but piled up nine points in a 10-game sample size last spring after leaving Michigan.

15. The Toronto Maple Leafs will win a playoff round for the first time since 2004, but GM Kyle Dubas will part ways with the organization after his contract expires. That Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment has allowed Dubas to enter the final year of his deal without an extension has other teams salivating and has to at least leave Dubas wondering. His status might have an impact on prediction No. 1, too.

16. Playoff Teams: Tampa Bay, Toronto, Florida, Boston, Carolina, New York Rangers, Pittsburgh and Washington (East); Colorado, St. Louis, Minnesota, Nashville, Winnipeg, Los Angeles, Edmonton and Calgary (West).

17. With all eyes on Patrick Kane, Detroit Red Wings captain Dylan Larkin will be traded before the March 3 trade deadline. Larkin is quietly entering the final year of his deal and is a pending UFA. He holds a no-trade clause, but that could be a big change for a Michigan kid who has played almost exclusively in the Detroit area his entire life.

18. Prepare for more chaos in Vegas. Golden Knights GM Kelly McCrimmon will be the first GM fired this season, after six chairs changed hands league-wide last year. It's no secret that owner Bill Foley did a deep dive on McCrimmon's job security after missing the playoffs for the first time and McCrimmon enters on shaky ground. For the second summer in a row, he was forced to unload a critical piece (Marc-Andre Fleury, Max Pacioretty) for nothing because of poor salary cap management.

19. For good measure, Max Pacioretty will be the NHL's Comeback Player of the Year, coming off a torn Achilles tendon. There's a chance Pacioretty is even back before the end of the calendar year. "We already know who our trade deadline acquisition is," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said on the DFO Rundown podcast.

20. PointsBet Team Point Total Stone Cold Mortal Lock No. 2: Columbus Blue Jackets OVER 79.5 points. They had 81 last year and they're much improved. You're welcome.

21. The Vezina won't have to travel very far, crossing over the East River. Islanders stalwart Ilya Sorokin will capture the 2023 Vezina Trophy, out-battling Rangers counterpart and reigning winner Igor Shesterkin.

22. The Ottawa Senators will trade for Jakob Chychrun before the New Year, ending what feels like a year-long pillow fight between Chychrun and the Coyotes after he's made it abundantly clear he'd like to play elsewhere. The Sens have shown the most interest, with the Kings also in the mix, and he'd be a solid boost on a burgeoning backend.

23. After a tumultuous offseason and preseason, the Winnipeg Jets will bounce back to make the Stanley Cup playoffs. Yes, I picked them to win the Cup last season, and shame on me. But I'm doubling down. This roster has too much talent to fade into oblivion.

24. Yes, that means Rick Bowness will win the Jack Adams Award as coach of the year after winning over the curmudgeonly Jets with his infectious positivity. Bowness, 67, has been a coach in the league almost as long as the Jack Adams Award has been in existence. His first year as a Jets coach was in 1981-82, assisting the Jack Adams Award winner in Tom Watt.

25. Two-time Stanley Cup champion Phil Kessel will become the NHL's new Iron Man on Oct. 25 when he skates in his 990th consecutive game in San Jose. The Golden Knights forward will surpass 1,000 games and a record that will never be broken. The next closest active streak is Carolina's Brent Burns (679 games) and no other active player is close to 500.

26. Nice to know you, Naz. The emergence of Alex Newhook as Colorado's second line center will make the Avalanche forget about Nazem Kadri, the 87-point scorer who was a huge part of their Stanley Cup run. Newhook will take a huge step forward with a 60-point campaign and plenty of ice as the Avs win their second straight Central Division title.

27. New Florida Panthers coach Paul Maurice will pass Lindy Ruff and the late Al Arbour to move into fifth all-time with 800 career victories. This is no Florida retirement gig for Maurice, who oozes passion and wants to win. The Panthers won't cruise to 122 points like last year, but they'll undoubtedly be a threat.

28. While the Arizona Coyotes appear to be a darling in Tempe selling out a 5,000-seat Mullett Arena at Arizona State Univ., there will be a 30-percent drop in Arizona's contribution to league revenue. Ticket sales will be on par with last season in a larger arena, but consider losses in corporate sales, suites, signage, parking, all of which will add up.

29. After resurrecting his career, Oilers forward Evander Kane will net a career-best 40 goals in Edmonton. He is the best pure stylistic fit on the planet to play with Connor McDavid.

30. Down Highway 2 in Calgary, Flames center Elias Lindholm will win the Selke Trophy for the first time in his career. Lindholm was sublime last year, finishing runner-up to Patrice Bergeron, and though the faces have changed, Lindholm will be seen as a driver to the success of his linemates – now including Jonathan Huberdeau.

31. We'll revel in another two-week run of hockey's best drama in the Battle of Alberta, this time with the Calgary Flames avenging last year's five-game loss. With the additions of Huberdeau, Kadri and MacKenzie Weegar, the Flames will be better suited for playoff success, and they'll advance to the Stanley Cup Final for the first time since 2004.

32. This time next year, the Carolina Hurricanes will be unfurling the franchise's second Stanley Cup banner. Perhaps the most balanced and consistent team in hockey, the Canes will knock off the Flames, as Rod Brind'Amour will become the first since Lester Patrick in 1928 to coach and captain the same franchise to a Stanley Cup.

Giddy up.

www.winnipegjets.com

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/connor-scores-twice-rittich-earns-shutout-in-jets-win-over-flames/c-336104860>

Connor scores twice, Rittich earns shutout in Jets win over Flames
"Most important thing for me is we got the win. That's what matters." - Rittich

by Mitchell Clinton @MitchellClinton / WinnipegJets.com

WINNIPEG - For a team working on new systems at five-on-five, throwing in some wrinkles on the power play, and trying to improve the penalty kill, Wednesday night was just what the Winnipeg Jets needed.

In a 5-0 win over the Calgary Flames, who had plenty of veterans in their line-up, the Jets went 3-for-5 on the power play, 6-for-6 on the penalty kill, and David Rittich made 37 saves for the shutout.

Still, the Jets aren't losing perspective.

"It's still preseason," said head coach Rick Bowness. "We won't feel good about letting the opposition get so many shots on net so those are things that we'll keep working on. Overall, at five-on-five, we were pretty happy with it."

Rittich was happy with the shutout against the organization he 130 games with between 2017 and 2021. However, like his head coach, he wasn't getting too far ahead of himself.

"Obviously, it's great if you perform well," Rittich said. "If you get saves and you get a shutout it's nice. I don't really care. Most important thing for me is we got the win. That's what matters."

The trio of Kyle Connor, Mark Scheifele, and Nikolaj Ehlers combined for six points in the win, as all of them saw their second game of the preseason.

Connor scored twice, Scheifele and Ehlers had singles, and Dominic Toninato rounded out the scoring.

"There's a lot of potential there," said Connor of his line with Scheifele and Ehlers. "I think all three of us play at such a high pace and got a lot of skill to make plays. I think we turn a lot of pucks over on the forecheck, too."

After a scoreless first, two consecutive power plays led to the game's opening two goals for the Jets.

Rittich set up the first one 8:28 into the second, sending a long stretch pass to Sam Gagner as the flames tried to fit into a line change. Gagner worked a give-and-go with Kyle Connor, who made no mistake burying his second of the preseason into the top corner past Dan Vladar.

As the goal was being scored, there was a delayed call coming to the Flames for too many men, putting the Jets right back on the man advantage. It took all of 44 seconds for Ehlers to send a laser beam of a pass from the left circle into the slot for Scheifele, who redirected it for a 2-0 Jets lead.

"(Gagner) was so good out there, hanging onto it and making plays," said Bowness. "Ehlers is a threat coming downhill, not only to score but to find that seam. Once you make that seam (pass), you've got the whole... you've got the penalty kill running around and the goalie has got to move. They just did a great job moving the puck."

The Jets extended the lead to 3-0 just over three minutes later, as Toninato hopped out of the box after serving a tripping penalty, and was sent in on a breakaway on new Flames goaltender Dustin Wolf. Toninato's quick head fake froze Wolf in place, and the Jets forward slipped home his first of the preseason.

That capped off a stretch of three goals in 4:25.

The offence wasn't done there though, as Connor added to his preseason point totals - and the Jets lead - when he forced Flames defenceman Noah Hanifin out from behind the net, causing him to turn the puck over on a clearing attempt. Ehlers pounced on that, moving toward the Flames net before sliding a backhand pass to Connor for the tap-in.

"We like to catch them off guard," said Connor. "We're very underrated forecheckers. Just get the puck back in our hands and make plays. I think we're still learning tendencies and I think we're only going to get better."

It was 4-0 Jets through 40 minutes.

The third and final power play goal of the night came off the stick of Ehlers, who took a cross-ice pass from Gagner and ripped it into the yawning cage, as a diving Wolf tried to get into position.

"Just before he passed it, I said I was going to come in a little bit and he had his back turned to me and still put it right on my tape," Ehlers said of Gagner. "That's pretty impressive. He's a very smart guy out there and very fun to watch. It's pretty exciting to have a guy like him on our team."

The Jets are now 3-1-1 in the preseason, and take on the Flames in a rematch on Friday at the Scotiabank Saddledome.

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/feature-sydney-daniels-road-to-the-nhl-paved-by-family-and-courage/c-336109850>

***FEATURE: Sydney Daniels' road to the NHL paved by family and courage
"To think in the last two generations of everything that has got me to this place -
it's pretty powerful and overwhelming"***

by Mitchell Clinton @MitchellClinton / WinnipegJets.com

Sydney Daniels remembers the moment well.

She was in preschool when she heard her name over the public address system.

"Sydney Daniels, please come to the office."

Her eyes went wide. She hadn't done anything wrong.

Off she went to the office, where she saw her father, Scott, waiting for her.

"My dad picked me up in the middle of the day and was like 'You ready to go skating?'" she recalls. "I was like 'Hell yeah,' although, at that age that's probably not what I said."

The two went to some open ice and, with some figure skaters also making use of the surface, Scott used his 149 games of NHL experience to teach his daughter how to skate.

So what is so special about a former NHLer teaching his daughter the game he loved?

Well, two things.

First, after Scott Daniels' NHL career ended due to concussions (after stints with the Philadelphia Flyers, New Jersey Devils, and Hartford Whalers), he had a hard time finding a way to love the game again.

"He had a down period where he was struggling with his mental health and the ramifications that come with athletes not being able to do what they love anymore," said Daniels. "I was persistent as heck with my dad being like 'Dad I want to play hockey. I want to be like you.' He'd say 'No, you'll find a different sport.'"

Her persistence paid off, and it resulted in a memory she'll never forget.

The second part? Her falling in love with the game arguably began two generations earlier. Her grandfather, Noel Daniels, played at St. Michael's residential school - the same place as Fred Sasakamoose, the first Indigenous player to play in the National Hockey League.

"At the back of the book (titled Call Me Indian - From the Trauma of Residential School to Becoming the NHL's First Treaty Indigenous Player), he talks about my grandfather and my dad," Daniels said. "It's been kind of this three-generational thing between my grandfather, my father, and I."

She turned her incredible passion for the game, and her love of her Indigenous heritage, into a hockey resume that boasts playing and coaching at Harvard, a gold medal at the 2011 World Under-18 Tournament and National Aboriginal Youth Championships, and one season with the Boston Pride in the National Women's Hockey League.

It's all led her to where she is now: the first female scout hired by the Winnipeg Jets.

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While she played her high school hockey with Westminster School in Simsbury, Connecticut, and grew up in Southwick, Massachusetts, Daniels honed her skills on her grandfather's farm in Leask, Saskatchewan.

"He did what he needed to do to make sure his children had the ability to do everything they want to do," Daniels said. "He taught them how to play hockey. Every year he'd build a hockey rink on their farm and teach them the game."

Noel Daniels had five sons and two daughters. One of the daughters passed away shortly after being born, but was given the name 'Tara,' which happens to be Sydney's middle name.

"My grandfather taught all of them how to play and made sure they were able to have opportunities that Indigenous youth weren't given back then - and still today, really aren't given because of disparity in wealth and the systemic racism that's still in play," Daniels said. "In that regard, he was so focused and dead set on giving his children the opportunity to get off the reservation and excel outside of their place."

When Daniels talks about her grandfather, who was also a two-term Chief of Mistawasis (Nehiyawak) First Nations Reservation before passing away due to COVID-19 in 2020, she gets lost in the thought of what he was able to accomplish despite being taken away from his family at the age of six.

He was at St. Michael's residential school until the age of 17.

"He was a very good hockey player. Because of that, he was protected within those schools. He was given proper meals because they'd go travel and play other residential school teams, they would have exhibitions against NHL teams," Daniels said. "Because of the sport, my grandfather was able to survive residential school, have a way out, have a way to be protected, and have a way of 'Hey I love this sport too but if I do well, then I'm going to live. I'm going to be okay.'"

His courage, Sasakamoose's courage, and the courage of those who never made it home, are just part of what makes Daniels who she is.

She returns to Saskatchewan in the summer, along with her dad, to run hockey schools to give back to the game that has given her so much. On top of that, she's played in the Chief Thunderstick tournament - named after Sasakamoose - and on top of being the only female to compete in the all-male event in 2021, she was part of the winning women's squad - Sage Strong - in 2022, the first year that such a division existed.

She wore number 42 that year, the same number her grandfather wore when he played. On her team were Olympians (and Manitobans) Brigitte Lacquette and Jocelyne Larocque.

Lacquette, who became the first Indigenous woman to play for the Canadian women's hockey team at the Olympics in 2018, remains close friends with Daniels to this day. The two text about how to continue to open doors for Indigenous youth.

"She, in my opinion, is a trailblazer for me to not only want to pursue this but to feel confident," Daniels said of Lacquette, who is a pro scout with the Chicago Blackhawks. "For her to be such a strong Indigenous female as well, we're texting all the time on how we can make a bigger

change. It's incredible to see women coming in and I plan to try and work my hardest so people can see it's the same sport."

And it's the sport her dad, and her grandfather, have taught her as long as she can remember.

"We quickly morphed into a very strong hockey family," said Daniels. "My dad just fell in love with the game. He wanted to succeed. He was an athlete, a competitor, he wanted to get to where he wanted to go and was willing to take those sacrifices in moving away from home. He had to move away from home and he had to deal with instances of racism consistently, constantly, throughout his career."

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In 2013, Daniels began her NCAA career at Harvard.

In 2015, Daniels and Harvard won the Beanpot Tournament - an annual event featuring the four major US college hockey schools in the Boston area: Harvard, Boston University, Boston College, and Northeastern.

Over her four years as a player, she scored 59 goals and had 86 points in 126 games. She was the captain in her final season, which came in 2016-17.

When her time as a student-athlete ended, Daniels was looking at what life might be like after playing.

"I went to Harvard, so I figured I had to be like every other Harvard student and go right into finance and 'I want to make a million dollars,'" she laughed. "But my heart wasn't in it."

So, it was time for a phone call home. She called her mom, Lynn, and told her the cubicle life wasn't for her.

"She apparently was already expecting that phone call, which is a mother's sense," Daniels smiled. "I kind of stumbled back into hockey and started coaching and fell in love with it."

So there she was, back on the Harvard bench, this time as an assistant coach.

Daniels helped Harvard to another Beanpot title in February of 2022, becoming one of the rare people to win the tournament as both a player and a coach.

She served as an assistant coach for four years. But before she could start her fifth season, her life was about to change again.

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It was supposed to be a quick meet-up at a coffee shop outside of Boston. Winnipeg Jets assistant general manager Larry Simmons remembers it well.

"It turned into an hour and a half," Simmons said. "It probably could have kept going if not for a game that I had to get to."

Daniels, who remembers feeling excitement, nerves, and a touch of anxiety the night before the meeting with Simmons, felt an instant "click" in the conversation as the two chatted about the game, and Winnipeg.

"I had been working in the women's game, played four years of college, coached for four and a half years after that, my world has been pretty solid the last nine years," Daniels said. "Meeting someone like Larry, who is a huge figure and role model in this space, the NHL, and having that conversation with him, I left thinking this is something I really want to pursue."

Over several rounds of interviews, Daniels kept rising to the occasion, just as she did when she was a player.

"Her experiences in the game as a player and as a teacher are somewhat similar to that of Mark White and Brian Renfrew who have been in this position for us previously," said Simmons, who was struck by Daniels' enthusiasm from the very start. "She has Canadian roots, so I think the opportunity to work for a Canadian team is extra special for her."

On September 21, 2022, Daniels was officially named a college scout for the Jets, becoming the first female to hold a scouting position with the team.

Her first phone call, just like five years ago when she returned to Harvard, was to her parents.

"Ever since I was little I wanted to be in the NHL," Daniels said. "This might not be the way I planned it in the role, but to be able to call my dad, my mom, and my grandparents and say 'I made it to the show' is a moment I'll never forget."

After that phone call, she got right down to work.

Daniels met with Pete Ratchuk, the Director of Pro Scouting for the Jets, at an event in Buffalo, NY prior to coming to Winnipeg for training camp.

"It's cool to have a new player pool with a different gender," said Daniels, who also did some recruiting work as part of her coaching job at Harvard. "It's very dialed in on players we're looking for and things we're looking for. I'm excited to work with Mark White within in the NCAA. He was a Providence guy. I played in Boston. When I first came on he said 'I'm so happy to have another person at the table fighting for the NCAA!'"

Hard to believe it all started with a resume and a coffee.

"That 90 minutes might have made (Simmons) late," said Daniels. "But it definitely changed my life, whether I ended up in this position or not."

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There was a time when Daniels was a kid that she saw herself as a hockey player "just like everyone else," as she puts it.

As she grew older, she learned she was much more than that.

"My success is not just mine. My success is for my people, my success is for the youth to see that 'hey, this girl is just like me. She's indigenous just like me and she's doing this? I can do

that," Daniels said. "I grasped that at an early age because that was something my father really made me conscious of. I'm so thankful for that."

Whether it's through her hockey schools, her numerous texts with Lacquette, or conversations with the people closest to her, Daniels wants to continue to open doors and be an inspiration.

"To think in the last two generations of everything that has got me to this place - it's pretty powerful and overwhelming," she said. "Sometimes I'm just struck in awe of how much has changed in those three generations. It also instills me with this pride, purpose, and gratitude. It motivates me to keep pushing and see how far I can make change, and see how far I can empower youth and indigenous youth, and other people, to keep pushing and keep breaking those systems and try to get them to realize how special they are."