

**Winnipegjets.com**

**[Three things - Jets end regular season on a roll](#)  
**[Chibrikov scores game winner, Lambert records assist in NHL debuts](#)****

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – The Winnipeg Jets closed out the regular season with a 4-2 win over the Vancouver Canucks at Canada Life Centre. The Jets matched a franchise record with their 52nd win of the season and finished with the second most points in the Western Conference with 110. Cole Perfetti scored twice, Gabriel Vilardi and Nikita Chibrikov added singles and Laurent Brossoit made 18 saves for the win. Winnipeg will begin the Stanley Cup Playoffs at home when they face the Colorado Avalanche on Sunday.

***LAMBO DEBUT***

Brad Lambert and Nikita Chibrikov made their NHL debuts tonight after a successful regular season with the Jets AHL affiliate, Manitoba Moose. Lambert, Chibrikov, Parker Ford and Colin Delia all flew early this morning into Winnipeg. Lambert ended up with an assist on the Jets first goal of the night from Gabriel Vilardi, the Finnish forward played just under 14 minutes.

“Dream come true, for sure. Unbelievable feeling yesterday when I figured out that I was going to play,” said Lambert.

“It didn’t feel real at first. And then getting here and experiencing this along with Chibby and all these guys that made it so special. To be able to get a win as well feels awesome.”

***CHIBRIKOV THE HERO***

Chibrikov’s goal was the game winner, his first game winning goal this season in the AHL or NHL. He becomes the seventh Jet in franchise history to score their first goal in their NHL debut.

“You can’t believe, first seconds like then, like (take) a seat on the bench,” said Chibrikov.

“and like, go to your mind and things like ‘yeah, it’s happened like you are here and like, it’s the first step of your dream, it starts.”

***THE JENNINGS TROPHY***

The Jets came into tonight as the only team in the NHL having allowed under 200 goals this season. By only allowing two goals, the Jets finished ahead of the Florida Panthers for the fewest goals allowed this season (199). Connor Hellebuyck will be awarded the William M. Jennings Trophy as the Jets allow the fewest goals over an 82-game schedule for the first time in franchise history. Winnipeg seems to have found their defensive game at the right time allowing three goals or less in nine consecutive contests.

**NHL.com**

**[Jets defeat Canucks, end regular season with 8th straight win](#)  
**[Chibrikov breaks tie in 3rd in NHL debut for Winnipeg](#)****

By Darrin Bauming

WINNIPEG -- Nikita Chibrikov scored the tiebreaking goal in the third period in his NHL debut, and the Winnipeg Jets ended the regular season with their eighth straight win, 4-2 against the Vancouver Canucks at Canada Life Centre on Thursday.

"It's like the dream, which you start from the first steps on the ice and live with this every day," Chibrikov said. "[My family is] watching online from Russia because it's really hard to travel now. It's, I think, 30 hours the flight."

Chibrikov, who was selected in the second round (No. 50) of the 2021 NHL Draft, gave the Jets a 3-2 lead at 5:18 of the third. He scored blocker side from the bottom of the right circle off a pass from Nino Niederreiter from below the goal line. The play started after Chibrikov stole the puck from Thatcher Demko behind the net.

"Nino made a [great] look for me and (I) just tried to make a shot for the open space here," Chibrikov said. "First emotion is like, I don't know, like something you couldn't believe for this. From the next shift, you're [thinking about] what you did. Yeah, it's really good. Unbelievable."

Cole Perfetti scored his second goal of the game into an empty net at 17:55 for the 4-2 final.

Gabriel Vilardi also scored, and Laurent Brossoit made 18 saves for the Jets (52-24-6). Brad Lambert, who was also making his NHL debut, had an assist.

"Lambert and Chibrikov, those two kids step in and they look good," Winnipeg coach Rick Bowness said. "It's a good game for them to break into because they didn't have their A squad out there, and we didn't, but they were able to get some ice time. We weren't matching lines, we were just throwing four lines out there and they really felt comfortable out there."

Because Brossoit allowed fewer than three goals, Connor Hellebuyck won the William M. Jennings Trophy, which is presented annually to the goaltenders who play a minimum of 25 games for the team that allows the fewest goals during the regular season.

"The goaltending has been exceptional," Bowness said. "The players have bought right back in and have turned it right around. To play the way we play, it's heart. It's no question, it's heart. It's frustrating to play against, and I think our players take great pride when they're talking to their friends in the League. ... I think that's extra motivation for our players. It all comes from them. They're committed to it."

Conor Garland had a goal and an assist, and Elias Lindholm also scored for the Canucks (50-23-9), who had their four-game point streak end (3-0-1). Demko made 22 saves.

"Obviously, we were missing some big players, but I thought we were decent and I think everyone is looking forward to the playoffs," Vancouver defenseman Quinn Hughes said. "It's obviously not the easiest game to get up for. You're looking forward to the Playoffs, you don't want to get injured, you want to take care of yourself, but I thought for the most part we came out unscathed. Everyone deserves the next week and a half, two weeks, whatever, we're going to play with Nashville (in the Western Conference First Round)."

Garland gave the Canucks a 1-0 lead at 5:22 of the first period. Dakota Joshua couldn't control a pass from Lindholm, and the puck slid across the crease before deflecting in off Garland's leg.

Vilardi tied it 1-1 at 11:26, picking up a loose puck along the goal line and waiting out Demko before lifting a shot over the sprawled goaltender.

Lambert, who was selected in the first round (No. 30) of the 2022 NHL Draft, had the secondary assist on the play.

"[I didn't know] at first, not until they [announced it]," Lambert said. "I just figured maybe I didn't get one on it, but it felt good when they announced it.

"Dream come true, for sure. Unbelievable feeling yesterday when I figured out that I was going to play. It didn't feel real at first. And then getting here and experiencing this along with [Chibrikov] and all these guys made it so special. To be able to get a win as well feels awesome."

Perfetti scored 55 seconds into the second period to put the Jets ahead 2-1. He beat Demko glove side from the high slot on a 3-on-1.

"Thatcher is the last guy I'm worried about," Hughes said. "He made some massive saves tonight and he's going to make some big saves throughout the series (against Nashville)."

Lindholm tied it 2-2 at 17:11 of the second, redirecting Hughes' point shot on a power play.

"Now the big time. The big prize now is playing on Sunday," Vancouver coach Rick Tocchet said. "Really looking forward to it. It's going to be a fun time for the guys, and I want them to enjoy it. We've got some work to do in the next two, three days to prepare, and it's going to be exciting."

*NOTES:* Garland's goal was his 20th of the season. He is the fifth Canucks player to reach the mark this season. The last time Vancouver had at least five players score 20 goals in a season was 2009-10 (six). ... Chibrikov is the seventh player in Jets/Atlanta Thrashers history to score a goal in his NHL debut. He also had a game-high five hits. ... Winnipeg allowed 199 goals this season, one fewer than the Florida Panthers. ... The Jets' eight-game winning streak is tied for the longest in their history. They also won eight straight earlier this season (Dec. 30 to Jan. 11).

## **Canadian Press**

### **[Jets Take Down Canucks 4-2 as Both Teams Wrap Up Regular Season](#)**

By Judy Owen, The Canadian Press

WINNIPEG — Nikita Chibrikov had a memorable NHL debut.

The Winnipeg Jets forward scored the game-winner and Cole Perfetti tallied a pair of goals as the Jets defeated the Vancouver Canucks 4-2 to close out their regular seasons on Thursday.

"It's like the dream, which you start from the first steps on the ice and live with this every day," said Chibrikov, who was called up from the American Hockey League's Manitoba Moose earlier in the day.

The victory produced some notable accomplishments in front of the 10th sellout crowd of the season at Canada Life Centre.

The Jets finished the regular season giving up 199 total goals, the fewest in the NHL and one less than the Florida Panthers, to earn the league's William M. Jennings Trophy for the first time.

"Give the players credit," Jets head coach Rick Bowness said. "The players have to go on the ice and do it, and they have to go out there every night and be committed to it."

The Jets also extended their win streak to eight games, tying the franchise record they set earlier this season. Their 52 victories (52-24-6) also matched the franchise record for wins in a season with the 2017-18 squad.

Winnipeg's 110 points — the most by any Canadian team this season — gave the Jets second place in the Western Conference behind Dallas and home-ice advantage in the first three rounds of the playoffs against teams other than the Stars.

Gabe Vilardi also scored for the Jets, who won the season series against the Canucks 2-1, and Laurent Brossoit made 18 saves for his 15th win of the season in his 23rd game.

Conor Garland had a goal and assist for the Canucks (50-23-9). Elias Lindholm scored on the power play.

Thatcher Demko stopped 22 of 25 shots in his second straight start in net for Vancouver after returning from a 14-game absence because of a knee injury.

"Thatcher is the last guy I'm worried about," Vancouver defenceman Quinn Hughes said. "He made some massive saves tonight and he's going to make some big saves throughout the (playoff) series."

The Canucks snapped a two-game win streak and finished 3-1-1 in their last five games.

Both clubs rested players as they prepare for the first round of the NHL playoffs. Winnipeg takes on the Colorado Avalanche and Vancouver faces the Nashville Predators, with both series beginning Sunday.

Vancouver head coach Rick Tocchet said his team's play wasn't bad.

"Got to move on," he said. "Now the big time. The big prize now is playing on Sunday."

The Jets were without top-line forwards Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor, as well as star defenceman Josh Morrissey and starting goalie Connor Hellebuyck. The Canucks sat forwards J.T. Miller and Brock Boeser.

The game was tied 1-1 after the first period and 2-2 heading into the third.

Vancouver's first shot of the game was a deflection off Garland from a Jets clearing attempt at 5:22, giving him 20 goals this season.

Vilardi tied it up six minutes later when he skated across the crease with the puck, turned and flipped it over a splayed-out Demko for his 22nd marker.

Perfetti made it 2-1 just 55 seconds into the middle frame on a 3-on-1, recording his 18th of the season.

Lindholm's tip of a Hughes shot 25 seconds into a power play tied it up at 17:11, but Perfetti scored into an empty net with 2:05 left in the third.

#### *PARTICIPATION RIBBON*

Jets forward Sean Monahan had the distinction of playing in his 83rd game of the season — the only player in the league to reach that mark.

Monahan was acquired in a Feb. 2 trade with Montreal after playing 49 games with the Canadiens. Thursday was his 34th for Winnipeg.

He could have skated in 84 games, but missed one Jets game because he was sick.

#### *NHL DEBUTS*

Winnipeg used its regular-season finale to call up some players from the Moose before the AHL playoffs begin.

Forward Brad Lambert also made his NHL debut. Goalie Collin Delia backed up Brossoit.

While his Russian teammate scored a goal, the Finnish-born Lambert also recorded his first point with an assist on Vilardi's goal.

#### *UP NEXT*

Jets: Host Colorado Avalanche in Game 1 of their NHL first-round playoff series on Sunday.  
Canucks: Host Nashville Predators in Game 1 of their opening series on Sunday.

### **Global Winnipeg**

#### **[Chibrikov scores winner in NHL debut as Winnipeg Jets secure Jennings Trophy with 4-2 win over Canucks](#)**

By Christian Aumell & Russ Hobson Global News

The Winnipeg Jets have sure picked a great time to match their longest win streak in franchise history.

Despite scratching more than a third of their normal lineup, the Jets secured their eighth win in a row to close out the regular season by beating the Vancouver Canucks 4-2 Thursday night.

Nikita Chibrikov scored the game-winning goal to break a two-two deadlock midway through the third period in his NHL debut and Brad Lambert had an assist in his first game. The Jets matched their franchise record for wins in a season from 2017-2018 with their 52nd victory in front of a sellout crowd.

"We played hard," said Jets head coach Rick Bowness. "We turned the puck over a couple of times, but that's gonna happen in every hockey game. But again in the third period, we really buckled down and we got the job done."

Both teams rested many of their top players as Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor, Josh Morrissey and Connor Hellebuyck were among those who sat out for Winnipeg.

Cole Perfetti notched a pair, including an empty-netter to seal the win.

The Jets will enter the playoffs as the hottest team in the league. The win gives the Jets second place in the Western Conference as they finish the regular season as the top Canadian team, just one point better than the Canucks.

The Jets also secured the William M. Jennings Trophy for Hellebuyck in the process, given annually to the goaltenders who played at least 25 games for the team that allows the fewest goals in a season. The Jets allowed a league low 199 goals, just one fewer than the Florida Panthers.

Lambert and Chibrikov both appeared in their first NHL game just hours after being called up from the Manitoba Moose.

"Really nervous so it was a tough day today," said Chibrikov. "No sleep at night. We were woken up around 4 AM to fly."

While Lambert's parents were able to be in attendance, Chibrikov's family was watching from back home in Russia.

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"The dream which you start from the first steps on the ice and live with this every day," he said. "I'm really excited and happy to be here."

Lambert recorded his first career NHL point less than 12 minutes into his first game.

"It's a dream come true for sure," Lambert said. "An unbelievable feeling yesterday when I figured out that I was gonna play. It didn't feel real at first, and then getting here, and experiencing this along with Chibby, and all these guys, it made it so special. And to be able to get a win as well, feels awesome."

The Canucks opened the scoring 5:22 into the game when Dylan DeMelo tried to clear a loose puck from in front of Laurent Brossoit but he sent it right off Conor Garland's leg and into the net.

Winnipeg responded just over five minutes later when Alex Lafallo won a puck battle behind Vancouver's net and slid the puck out in front where Gabriel Vilardi took it and tucked it around Thatcher Demko to tie the game.

Lambert picked up a secondary assist on the goal.

Each team had a power play opportunity in the first and failed to capitalize, though both teams came close with Quinn Hughes hitting the post for Vancouver.

Winnipeg grabbed their first lead of the night 55 seconds into the middle frame. Mason Appleton carried the puck up the right wing before sliding the puck over to Perfetti, who wired a shot high over the glove of Demko for his 18th of the season.

The Jets held onto the lead for most of the period before Brossoit was called for delay of game for sending the puck out of play from behind his net. 25 seconds later, Elias Lindholm tipped a Quinn Hughes shot past Brossoit to level the score with 2:49 remaining in the second.

Winnipeg regained the lead 5:18 into the third thanks to Chibrikov. After he stole the puck behind the Canucks net, he dropped it off to Nino Niederreiter before the rookie got a return pass and ripped it past Demko for his first NHL goal, sending the building into a frenzy.

Vancouver came close to tying the game with just under three minutes left but the Jets survived, and after the Canucks pulled Demko for an extra attacker, an exhausted Perfetti sent the puck down the ice into the open goal with 2:07 remaining to secure the win.

The eight-game win streak matches the franchise record that was set earlier this season.

Brossoit made 18 saves to earn his 15th win in his 23rd appearance, finishing just two games shy of meeting the threshold to get his name on the Jennings Trophy.

Winnipeg will now have a couple days before they begin the Stanley Cup Playoffs by hosting Colorado in Game 1 of their first-round series on Sunday.

Puck drop is scheduled for just after 6 p.m.

### **[ANALYSIS: Why not Winnipeg? Could Jets break Canada's Stanley Cup drought?](#)**

By John Shannon CJOB

The NHL's regular season is finally over, and now the hard work begins. By qualifying for the Stanley Cup playoffs, 16 teams get a chance to play up to 28 more games to win the Stanley Cup.

In a way, it's an eight-month rehearsal for an eight-week obstacle course — and what an obstacle course it is.

With just seven of the 32 teams in our country, it really is a feat to see four of the eight series have Canadian content. The four teams that qualified all had seasons of more than 100 points, with the Jets leading the way.

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All four Canadian teams took turns through the season as being the talk of hockey. The Canucks and Jets turned many heads for most of the hockey year with their consistency. The Oilers went 16-0 to reverse a horrendous start, and the Maple Leafs led the league in goal scoring for most of the season.

Which leads to the age-old question: Is this the year? Is this the year Lord Stanley's Cup — the Dominion Challenge Cup — actually returns to Canada?

It's been 31 long years since it last happened. The 1993 Montreal Canadiens, with the great Patrick Roy, won the Cup in five games against the Los Angeles Kings. That year, 10 of their 16 wins were won in overtime. It was truly a historic run.

The strength of all four Canadian teams leads me to think the drought might just end in 2024. Certainly, the stars in Edmonton and Toronto have created a stir, And the Canucks' turnaround this season has been impressive.

But it's the depth of the Winnipeg Jets that just might be the difference maker in finding a Canadian-based champion. All too often, stars neutralize each other in the playoffs, and it's the depth of the forwards — the Lowry line and the Namesntnikov line — that could be the difference in any long, hard-fought series.

So actually, that question "Is this the year?" maybe should be changed to, "Why not Winnipeg?"

Why not, indeed.

**Sportsnet.ca**

### **[After meaningless finale, Canucks, Jets ready for bigger, better things](#)**

By Iain MacIntyre

WINNIPEG – Had anyone argued when the National Hockey League released its schedule last July that the final game of the season between the Vancouver Canucks and Winnipeg Jets would mean nothing, a lot of fans in Canada would have been disappointed. But they would have understood.

It would have meant the Canucks, so long in a rebuild and so disappointing since it occurred, had missed the playoffs yet again. And the Jets, who regressed over the final third of last season and were excoriated by coach Rick Bowness after meekly exiting the opening round of the Stanley Cup tournament, would have taken two steps back by gutting their core and moving on from some high-priced stars.

Sure enough, Thursday's game between the Canucks and Jets meant almost nothing. But last summer, no one would have envisioned why.

Secure with home-ice advantage to open this spring's playoffs – having combined for 101 wins and 217 points – the reborn Canucks and refurbished Jets already had their sights on hockey's greatest prize and the chance to become the first Canadian team in more than three decades to lift the Stanley Cup.

Neither franchise has won one, and neither can be dismissed as contenders as the Canucks prepare to open Sunday against the Nashville Predators their first playoff series in Vancouver since 2015, while the Jets start at home against the 2022 champion Colorado Avalanche.

What a hockey season it has been in Western Canada, where the Edmonton Oilers also will be included in arguably the deepest and most even Stanley Cup field in NHL history.

Thursday's game?

The Jets won 4-2 and the contest was settled by rookie callup Nikita Chibrikov, who scored the game-winner in his NHL debut, first stealing the puck from goalie Thatcher Demko behind the Canuck net and then scoring post-and-in at 5:18 of the third period.



The Canucks rested first-line forwards J.T. Miller and Brock Boeser, and defencemen Filip Hronek and Ian Cole. The Jets' seven scratches included Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor, Adam Lowry, Josh Morrissey and goalie Connor Hellebuyck.

Demko doubled his appearances (and playoff prep) since returning this week from a knee injury and made 22 saves. And star defenceman Quinn Hughes played his 82nd game of the season and collected his 92nd point, a second-period assist on Elias Lindholm's power-play tip-in as Hughes raced to the wire with Colorado's Cale Makar for the NHL blue-line scoring crown.

Nobody on either team appeared to get injured.

Now, on to bigger things.

"I'm very excited for this," veteran Canuck Tyler Myers said. "You know, a bunch of us have been waiting for this for a long time, being in Vancouver. Fans have been waiting a long time to have playoffs back, and when we step out on the ice for the first time in front of the fans, step into that atmosphere that we know is coming, it's just exciting for a player."

The Canucks haven't played the Predators since beating them three times in the first half of the season, when Vancouver was at its best and Nashville wasn't. But just as the Canucks went into Edmonton last Saturday and made a statement by defeating the post-coaching-change Oilers 3-1, they're not worried about how different the Predators might look compared to December.

"It doesn't matter who you're playing," Myers said. "We got here for a certain reason; it's focusing on us and our game and our identity as a group, and that's the focus going into Nashville. Each team definitely does a pre-scout and we know about the other team, but ultimately it comes down to how we play our game."

Game 1s for the Jets-Avalanche and Canucks-Predators will be a Canadian doubleheader on Sunday.

It was after losing four straight games to the Golden Knights a year ago that Bowness blasted the Jets' top players for failing to match Vegas' stars.

"I'm so disappointed and disgusted right now," Bowness said on elimination night last April. "No pushback. There's got to be pushback. There's got to be pride."

"We'd all agree we needed to play better," Lowry, the Jets' captain, told Sportsnet before Thursday's game. "(But) we didn't love the messaging. Rick's an emotional guy. He wears his heart on his sleeve and he cares about every one of us. It was a motivating factor for sure."

"We had high expectations (before the season). I don't think other people outside of our locker room maybe had the expectations that we did. But with the depth pieces we've added, the way we're playing five on five, we have a lot of confidence in this group."

Before the season, the Jets bought out former captain Blake Wheeler and dumped Pierre-Luc Dubois on the Los Angeles Kings. But they re-signed key veterans Scheifele and Hellebuyck.

With Thursday's win, the Jets finish second in the Western Conference, one point ahead of the Canucks. Both were among the top six in the NHL.

"The big prize now is playing on Sunday," Canuck coach Rick Tocchet said. "I'm really looking forward to it. It's going to be a fun time for the guys. I want them to enjoy it. We've got some work to do the next two or three days to prepare, and it's going to be exciting.

"I think for our group, we just have to worry about Game 1. You can't look at the big thing. I think . . . it's dangerous when you think that way. Honestly, prepare for that first period against Nashville and be ready to play from that first shift. I think when you think big picture, that's when people get nervous. So I think it's just more of a short-term goal for us."

Tocchet claimed he didn't fully start thinking about the playoffs until the Canucks learned Wednesday after their flight to Winnipeg that they were locked into a matchup with the surging Predators, who went 20-5-3 the last two months to earn the top wild-card spot.

"Yeah, it's exciting," Demko said. "It's what we've been aiming to do the last few years and haven't been able to, so to see it come to fruition is exciting for us. Obviously, there's a lot of work to do. It's a good regular season for us and I'm proud of that for sure. (But) we've got to take another step with our game here."

Demko said the Canucks have become a stronger team mentally.

"I think the big difference for us was just managing the highs and lows," he said of the regular season. "You know, I think maybe in years past we might hit a couple of roadblocks or some adversity and it might throw us off our course for a week or two and hurt us in the standings. But this year, I thought our bounce back was really strong, trusting our identity, trusting our systems."

The Canucks will take Friday off, then practise Saturday ahead of Game 1. Their first home playoff game in nine years starts at 7 p.m. PT on Sunday.

"This was our goal from the start," veteran centre Teddy Blueger said. "Ever since we clinched (a playoff spot) we've kind of been looking forward to it. Everyone wants to play meaningful hockey in the spring. We're fortunate to have that chance. Now we've just got to go out and make the most of it."

### **[Jets, Connor Hellebuyck win William M. Jennings Trophy](#)**

By Sportsnet Staff

It was a good final night of the regular season for the Winnipeg Jets.

Not only did the team tie both the franchise records for longest win streak (eight) and wins in a season (52) with a 4-2 victory over the Vancouver Canucks, but goaltender Connor Hellebuyck secured the team's first William M. Jennings Trophy.

The award is given to the goalie(s) of the team with the fewest goals against during the regular season. Winnipeg gave up 199 this season, one less than the 200 given up by the Florida Panthers.

A goalie has to play in a minimum of 25 games to be eligible to capture the award, which is why only Hellebuyck won. Backup Laurent Brossoit played in 23 games.

Hellebuyck, 30, finished the season with a 37-19-4 record, 2.39 goals-against average with a .921 save percentage. He is the first solo winner of the award since 2018 when Jonathan Quick won with the Los Angeles Kings.

The Boston Bruins' tandem of Linus Ullmark and Jeremy Swayman won last season.

Hellebuyck and the Jets will now turn their attention to Round 1 of the Stanley Cup Playoffs, where they will take on Nathan MacKinnon and the Colorado Avalanche.

## **Winnipeg Free Press**

### **[Jets on roll heading into playoffs](#) [Perfetti nets pair in season-ending 4-2 win over Pacific Division powerhouse Canucks](#)**

By: Ken Wiebe

Bring on the games that really count.

The Winnipeg Jets completed their final dress rehearsal on Thursday, capping the regular season with a 4-2 victory over the Vancouver Canucks before a sellout crowd of 15,225 at Canada Life Centre.

The Jets, who finished the season with a record of 52-24-6 for a total of 110 points, concluded the campaign with the second-best record in the Western Conference (three points behind the Dallas Stars) and tied for fourth in the NHL with the Florida Panthers (four points behind the New York Rangers, who won the Presidents' Trophy).

With the win, the Jets equal the franchise record for victories, set in 2017-18, when Winnipeg finished second in the NHL with 114 points.

They also finish with the most points among Canadian teams this season, leapfrogging the Canucks in that category by a single point.

The Jets are expected to open the Stanley Cup playoffs on Sunday night with puck drop scheduled for just after 6 p.m. CT against the Colorado Avalanche.

Let's take a look at what transpired in the regular season finale.

*1 The debuts* – With the Manitoba Moose locked in to starting the Calder Cup playoffs on the road against the Texas Stars, the Jets recalled forwards Brad Lambert, Nikita Chibrikov, Parker Ford and goalie Collin Delia on Thursday.

Chibrikov, a second-rounder in the 2021 NHL Draft, came through with a moment to remember, converting a pass from Nino Niederreiter at 5:18 of the third period for what proved to be the game-winner in his NHL debut. Chibrikov's quick shot went off the post and in, beating Canucks all-world goalie Thatcher Demko, prompting an emotional celebration for the Russian winger.

“The first game winner goal this season for me,” said Chibrikov, who has 17 goals and 46 points in 69 AHL games.

Lambert, the 30th overall pick in the 2022 NHL Draft, skated on a line with Gabriel Vilardi and Alex Iafallo and recorded his first NHL point with an assist on Vilardi’s 22nd goal of the season at 11:26 of the first period. Lambert didn’t look out of place at all, showcasing his speed on numerous occasions while transporting the puck effectively. Both Lambert and Chibrikov were used on the power play.

“Obviously, playing with those two guys, it makes my job pretty easy. I just came in and, obviously it’s hard to, but tried to treat it like another game,” said Lambert. “Go and play and do my thing.”

*2 The Jennings watch* – By playing a buttoned down and mostly tight-checking style, the Jets were able to hold off the Panthers in the battle for the William Jennings Trophy, handed out each year to the team that allows the fewest goals against. The Jets gave up 199 goals, compared to 200 for the Panthers.

Elite goaltending from Connor Hellebuyck and Laurent Brossoit played a big role in this achievement, but so did a commitment to structure and team defence which turned into the foundation for this impressive season.

“The players have to go on the ice and do it, and they have to go out there every night and be committed to it. They have to recognize when it’s not working and go back to it,” said Jets head coach Rick Bowness. “Our players have worked incredibly hard all year, so you give them a ton of credit. The goaltending has been exceptional as you know. Again, when things flip and we address the issues, the players have bought right back in and have turned it right around.

“To play the way we play, it’s heart. It’s no question, it’s heart. It’s frustrating to play against, and I think our players take great pride when they’re talking to their friends in the league, ‘geeze we hate playing the Jets, you’re so hard to play against’. I think that’s extra motivation for our players. It all comes from them. They’re committed to it.”

Due to a technicality, Brossoit won’t get his name on the trophy since he didn’t make 25 appearances (he finished with 22 starts and 23 appearances), but the Jets know full well how important a contribution he made to this honour. Hellebuyck finished the season with 60 starts, a record of 37-19-4, a 2.39 goals-against average and .921 save percentage.

*3 Finishing in style* – Jets forward Cole Perfetti closed out the regular season by scoring a pair of goals, an even-strength marker at 11:26 of the first period and the insurance marker into the empty net with 2:05 to go in regulation. That allowed Perfetti to finish with 19 goals and 38 points in 71 games played this season. Sure, there were more healthy scratches than he would have liked to deal with but Perfetti showed great perseverance down the stretch and put himself in a position where the coaching staff won’t hesitate to get him into the lineup if an opportunity presents itself.

*4 The iron men* – The Jets had five players to appear in all 82 games this season, including forwards Nikolaj Ehlers, Alex Iafallo, Mason Appleton and defencemen Dylan DeMelo and Neal Pionk.

Pionk suited up in every game for a second consecutive season and that’s a badge of honour.

“It’s one of those personal things. You want to show that you’re durable, you want to show that you can play (all 82), should you have the ability to,” said Pionk. “That’s what I’ve done the past couple of years. It’s important, it’s not THE most important thing. It’s a feather in the cap, if you will.”

Honourable mention to Jets centre Sean Monahan, who is the only player in the NHL to appear in 83 games this season – thanks to when he joined the Jets in the trade with the Montreal Canadiens. Monahan won’t have full iron man status, since he missed a game on Feb. 25 against the Arizona Coyotes due to illness.

The Jets had two other players who could have suited up in all 82 games, but were scratched on Thursday, including defencemen Josh Morrissey and Brenden Dillon.

The Jets were without eight regulars on Thursday, including forward Morgan Barron, who sat out with an upper-body injury. Barron’s status for Game 1 won’t likely be known until this weekend.

That opened the door for defencemen Nate Schmidt and Colin Miller and forwards Perfetti, David Gustafsson and Rasmus Kupari to return to the lineup.

The Jets also recalled first-year forward Parker Ford from the Moose and while he took the pre-game warmup, he was here as insurance and will need to wait to make his NHL debut.

*5 Extra, extra* – The Jets handed out their three team awards on Thursday: Hellebuyck captured the Three Stars award, DeMelo brought home the Dan Snyder Memorial Award for perseverance, dedication and hard work and captain Lowry was honoured with the community service award.

With the Montreal Canadiens finishing 28th in the NHL standings this season, the second round pick the Jets acquired in the deal with the Los Angeles Kings will be 37th overall in the 2024 NHL Draft in Las Vegas.

Speaking of awards, Moose defenceman Kyle Capobianco was named to an AHL first-team All-star. The 26 year old leads all AHL D-men in points with 52 points in 68 games this season.

On an evening where Jets prospects were in the spotlight, 2023 fifth rounder Jacob Julien continued his remarkable season with the London Knights of the Ontario Hockey League by recording a second straight hat trick against the Kitchener Rangers. Julien, who had 29 goals and 78 points during the regular season, is up to seven goals and 12 points in eight points during the postseason. The Knights swept the Rangers on Thursday and have advanced to the Western Conference final. They will play the winner of the series between the Saginaw Spirit and Soo Greyhounds.

**[Dazzling debutants come up big](#)**  
**[Chibrikov nets game-winner, Lambert notches assist in first NHL appearance](#)**

By: Mike McIntyre

It’s often not a good thing when the coach wants to see you in his office.

But rather than be taken to task by Manitoba Moose bench boss Mark Morrison for something they'd done wrong, Brad Lambert and Nikita Chibrikov were on the receiving end of some terrific news: They were headed to the NHL.

The two rookie skaters got the promotion shortly after Wednesday night's game in Milwaukee, triggering a hectic 24-hour span in which they arrived in Winnipeg too late for Thursday's morning skate, but early enough to be in the lineup as the Jets closed out the regular-season against the Vancouver Canucks.

Safe to say they both made the most of the opportunity as the Jets opted to rest a number of regulars. And then some.

Lambert, 20, showed off his speed and skill early and often, not to mention poise with the puck that comes from polishing his game in the AHL. Centering a line with Gabe Vilardi and Alex Iafallo, the Finnish product recorded his first big-league assist when he started an offensive zone cycle play that ended with Vilardi's 22nd goal of the year in the first period.

"Dream come true," said Lambert. "Unbelievable feeling when I figured out that I was going to play. It didn't feel real at first."

Chibrikov, 21, then one-upped his teammate early, taking a pass from Nino Niederreiter and ripping a shot past Thatcher Demko early in the third period to give Winnipeg a 3-2 lead in what would prove to be the game-winner.

"It's like the dream that starts from your first steps on the ice," Chibrikov said. "You live for this every day. I'm really excited to be here, and thankful for the opportunity from the Jets."

Lambert is having quite a week, having been named to the AHL All-rookie team on Wednesday after posting a team-leading 54 points (2p goals, 34 assists) in 63 Moose games this year. That is second in first-year AHL players behind only Logan Stankoven, who is now a full-time player with Dallas after being summoned from the Texas Stars.

Hard to believe the 30th pick in the 2022 draft was playing in Canada Life Centre just 11 months ago as a member of the Seattle Thunderbirds, who beat the Winnipeg Ice in the WHL Final to advance to the Memorial Cup.

His parents were in attendance on Thursday night, and cameras showed them beaming with pride after he registered his assist and the puck was removed from play to be put aside as a cherished souvenir.

Chibrikov, the 50th-overall pick in 2021, has 46 points (17 goals and 29 assists) in 69 games with the Moose, and showed off his gritty nose for the net in scoring his goal. Unfortunately, none of his family could make it to Winnipeg in time.

"They were watching online from Russia," he said. "Nino made a great look for me and I just tried to make a shot to the open space. First emotions were you couldn't believe it. Unbelievable."

Jets coach Rick Bowness, who has presided over hundreds of NHL debuts during his 40 years behind an NHL bench, offered up some sage advice to the youngsters, who took the customary "hot lap" together during the pre-game warmup.

“Go out and enjoy it. You’ve worked your whole life to get here. Just enjoy the game,” Bowness said.

“And we know they’ll be excited, we know they’ll be nervous. And again when they’re playing that well down there they deserve a shot. But the most important thing is it’s a game they’re going to remember for the rest of their lives, and we want them to enjoy it.”

They certainly did.

A third rookie, Parker Ford, was also called up Thursday, but he didn’t play. However, he did take part in the warmup and will collect NHL pay for a day or two.

Expect Lambert, Chibrikov and Ford to all be returned to the Moose on Friday, re-joining the club in Texas as they close out their regular-season with back-to-back games against the Stars. They’ll remain in the Lonestar State as the Moose and Stars face off next week in a best-of-three first round series.

If Winnipeg’s playoff run outlasts that of the farm club, there’s a good chance they’ll be back in town as members of the so-called “black aces,” the group of extras that teams typically carry in the postseason once roster limits and the salary cap have been removed.

“It helps, obviously, confidence-wise. To be able to see what you can do. Now I know what the pace is like and what the standard is,” said Lambert. “There’s still a lot of work to do. I know what I need to improve on.”

### [\*Snapshots and slapshots Winnipeg Jets’ official photographer captures the passion from the best seat in the house\*](#)

By: David Sanderson

Before we begin, Jonathan Kozub would like to thank all those who will be wearing the requisite shade of attire when they arrive at Canada Life Centre to cheer on the Winnipeg Jets during this spring’s Stanley Cup playoffs.

As the National Hockey League club’s official photographer, Kozub couldn’t ask for a more favourable backdrop when he’s documenting the on-ice action than 15,000-plus rabid Jets fans, bedecked head-to-toe in their finest whites.

“There’s a reason why the walls of most photo studios are painted white; not only do you get more depth, it makes the images a lot sharper,” says Kozub, who, between the Jets and the Manitoba Moose, his other primary client, has shot in excess of 1,200 professional hockey games, during an impressive 22-year career.

“Here, during the playoffs, it’s like being in this giant white room... it’s absolutely amazing. I say it again and again: Whiteout shots are always the best, especially with everybody in the building being super pumped-up, to begin with.”

It's 3:30 p.m., three-and-a-half-hours before the Jets are due to host the visiting Calgary Flames in their third-to-last home game of the regular season.

Sporting dark slacks and a navy-blue shell jacket bearing a Jets crest, Kozub, whose work is regularly sought out by newspapers, magazines and major sports card companies, is positioned in a corridor leading to the home team's locker room, where he is busily snapping photos of players as they arrive one by one, for that evening's tilt.

A few pause to smile for the camera but the majority appear razor-focused, offering Kozub's telephoto lens a perfunctory nod.

That's fine by him, he says, checking to see which of his shots of forward Kyle Connor turned out the best.

"It's all about getting the guys coming in, in flashy suits," he remarks, mentioning a selection of the pics he's taking will be posted on the Jets' Facebook and Instagram pages, prior to puck drop.

"The NHL wants fans to be able to get a behind-the-scenes look at their favourite players, and that's where I come in."

Kozub, 44, was six years old when he attended his first Jets 1.0 game at the "old barn." The Los Angeles Kings were in town, he recalls, and during warm-ups, his father encouraged him to head down to ice level to get shots of stars such as Marcel Dionne and Bernie Nicholls, using a Kodak Pocket Instamatic camera his mother had given him as a gift.

To encourage his budding interest in photography, his mom also bought him a coffee-table book packed with photos taken by Bruce Bennett, a New Yorker who's often called the Wayne Gretzky of hockey photography, for his work covering the NHL, particularly the New York Islanders, starting in the 1970s.

He must have leafed through that book a thousand times, Kozub says, and as his shutterbug skills improved, so, too, did his gear.

By the time he was attending Kelvin High School, he was taking all his own pictures, for whatever science project or social-studies assignment he was working on.

Besides his self-taught hobby, Kozub continued to be an ardent hockey fan. As a Moose season-ticket holder in the early 2000s, he regularly snapped pics at games he attended.

"This was back when the Moose website was largely text-based," says Kozub, who, at the time, was employed as a driver for Canada Post. He felt the club's online presence could use a little more pizzazz, and since he had nothing to lose, he continually contacted — "they'd probably say pestered" — the team's front office, to share his photos.

His persistence eventually paid off. One morning, Barrett Paulsen, currently True North Sports + Entertainment's director of community relations, reached out to say "tell you what; we'll let you do a period or two."

"That was at the beginning of the 2002-03 season, and I've been shooting (the Moose), ever since," Kozub says, with a hint of pride.



Like most Winnipeggers, Kozub became excited when the news broke on May 31, 2011 that True North had reached an agreement to purchase the Atlanta Thrashers, paving the way for the return of the city's NHL franchise.

Since he had been working with the Moose for nine years by then, he crossed his fingers, hoping to get a call from somebody associated with the reborn Jets.

He was still waiting by the phone on Sept. 18, 2011, when he was informed his department at Canada Post was being terminated, and that he was being let go, effective immediately.

"People assume you're rolling in dough doing this job, but that definitely wasn't the case," he says, noting he is responsible for covering the cost of every last piece of equipment he owns, presently around \$25,000 worth, not including lights and such. "So yeah, after losing my post-office job, I was more than a little worried how I was going to make ends meet."

Well, not only did the Jets get in touch at the last moment, a photograph Kozub took of then-captain Andrew Ladd skating onto the ice for the team's first exhibition game on Sept. 20 — two days after he lost his job — landed on the cover of *The Hockey News* two weeks later, along with the headline Ladies and gentlemen, your Winnipeg Jets.

"I'm proud to say I've only missed three Jets games in 13 years; one because of COVID and two because I was on assignment for the league, covering outdoor games in Denver and Edmonton," he says.

"I wouldn't say I ever get star-struck but there are definitely times I'll think, 'wow,' when somebody like Sidney Crosby politely asks if I need a shot of him with his helmet on or off, when I'm taking pics, pre-game."

Kozub's day typically starts at 8 a.m. Even if there isn't a Jets game scheduled that afternoon or evening, he's usually playing catch-up, he says, explaining he takes upwards of 4,000 photographs, per game, and he has a week to file them with the NHL, which is technically his employer.

(The Jets pay him to shoot their home games, but that expenditure is covered by the league. In addition to running his own studio, Point Shot Photography, he also has a separate contract with international media conglomerate Getty Images to cover both the Western Hockey and Manitoba Junior Hockey leagues.)

Once he's done taking pics of arriving players — alternate captain Josh Morrissey is notorious for being the last to pull in — he retreats to an area outside the Matt Frost Media Centre, to double-check specific assignments.

For the Jets-Flames game, for example, the league has requested individual shots of the Jets' Sean Monahan and Morgan Barron, along with pics of Flames forwards Andrei Kuzmenko and Blake Coleman.

Come game-time, he's typically at ice level in the northeast corner, below Section 101.

Every rink has small holes cut into the Plexiglas through which photographers can aim their lenses. There is a league stipulation, however, that if a player is within a prescribed distance of

those openings, the shooter is responsible for closing them, by sliding a movable piece of glass into position. That's sometimes easier said than done, Kozub says, uttering "follow me" as he heads to his post.

"In Teemu Selanne's last game in Winnipeg (in 2011), I was taking pics of him skating up the ice when one of the other (Anaheim) Ducks, Patrick Maroon, rimmed the puck along the boards," he says, demonstrating how his camera fits through the gap.

"I didn't react in time, mostly because I was too busy watching Teemu, and (the puck) hit the edge of my lens. It didn't shatter, but to this day I can't attach a filter to it."

Now that he is one of the longest-tenured photographers in the league, Kozub happily dispenses advice to up-and-comers. His first tip is not to beat yourself up if you missed getting a photo of an important moment, such as a timely hit or game-winning goal.

"Instead of being upset, get the celebration afterwards, I tell them, because that's the shot that's going to sell," he says, mentioning how he botched snapping a pic of Blackhawks phenom Connor Bedard scoring against the Jets in December, owing to it being a harmless-looking shot that deflected into the net off a Jets player's skate.

"Today's game is so fast that it's impossible to get everything. What you're really hoping to capture is emotion. You want to catch a player's highs, because even though that feeling will be gone in a split second, it will live on for years in a photograph."

That's a tough one, Kozub says, when asked if there are any moments from his career that stand out above all others.

Getting the opportunity to meet Dale Hawerchuk in 2017, ahead of his induction into the Jets Hall of Fame was one.

So, too, was covering the Jets-Oilers alumni game that was played outdoors, in tandem with the 2016 Heritage Classic. His action shot of Selanne from that match even appears on the front cover of the Finnish superstar's autobiography, which he deems as "pretty cool."

"As for games, the first return of the whiteout in 2015 is right up there," he continues. "The intro to that game had such a crazy atmosphere that (former coach) Paul Maurice and some of the players had tears in their eyes."

On a more personal level, he felt honoured last May when former captain Blake Wheeler requested his services to take a family portrait of himself, his wife Sam and their three kids, before they left the city.

"Though it hadn't officially been announced he wouldn't be back with the Jets, I think he knew, which was the reason for the session," he says.

As fans begin to filter into the building, Kozub says it's hard to argue with friends who continually tell him he has the best seat in the house, game in and game out.

A few years ago Jets management offered to set him up with a workspace of his own, in the bowels of the downtown rink.

His response: “thanks, but no thanks.”

“Right here, this is my office,” he says, settling onto a four-legged metal stool.

## **Winnipeg Sun**

### **[BILLECK: Kids shine bright as Jets close out regular season in style](#)**

By Scott Billeck

Most in this town may be thinking about the Winnipeg Jets’ immediate future, specifically the looming Stanley Cup playoffs and their first-round opponent, the Colorado Avalanche.

But Game 82 of Winnipeg’s regular season was one for a long-term future — the kids.

Nikita Chibrikov, 21, scored his first career goal in his NHL debut, and 20-year-old Brad Lambert notched his first helper in his debut to help the Jets see off the Vancouver Canucks 4-2 at Canada Life Centre.

“It’s like the dream,” Chibrikov said.

He and Lambert shared the ice for the customary hot laps before the rest of their Jets teammates joined them for the warmup before the game.

“A dream come true,” Lambert said, having just been named to the AHL All-Rookie Team on Wednesday.

“Unbelievable feeling yesterday when I figured out that I was going to play. It didn’t feel real at first. And then getting here and experiencing this along with Chibby and all these guys that made it so special. To be able to get a win as well feels awesome.”

Lambert’s first point came when Gabriel Vilardi tied the game up 1-1 just past the midway mark of the first period.

Chibrikov’s game-winner broke a 2-2 deadlock 5:18 into the third. He also had a game-high five hits.

What made it all the more impressive was that both guys were up at 4 a.m. in Milwaukee on Thursday morning, gearing up for a pair of flights that didn’t see them land in Winnipeg until the early afternoon.

“It was a tough day today,” Chibrikov said, having played to a 6-4 loss to the Admirals a few hours earlier. “No sleep at night.”

Added Lambert: “You don’t have as much time to think about it. It’s probably better that way. Don’t get all rattled up with the nerves. It was fun.”

Jets head coach Rick Bowness quickly praised the work of Moose head coach Mark Morrison.

“Those two kids step in, and they look good,” Bowness said. “So, Mark is doing a fantastic job with the Moose getting those guys ready to go, and that’s on him and (associate coach Scott Arniel) and (assistant) Brad (Lauer).

“(Arniel and Lauer) spent a lot of time with the (regular healthy scratches) who aren’t playing, making sure they get extra work, and pushing them and give them some credit, because it’s hard when you’re not playing to stay motivated and work and give that extra effort because you’re not playing.”

Among those scratches has been 22-year-old Cole Perfetti, who has fallen out of favour with Bowness as a regular but stepped in to score a pair of goals in Thursday’s win.

Perfetti is on the outside looking in on Winnipeg’s playoff roster but could play a big role during a long playoff run.

The Jets will likely turn to David Gustafsson if Morgan Barron’s lower-body injury prevents him from playing in Game 1 and beyond.

Speaking of Game 1, it’s set for Sunday at 6 p.m. CT. Game 2 is on Tuesday, with an 8:30 p.m. CT puck drop.

Games 3 and 4 in Denver go on Friday and next Sunday at 9 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. CT, respectively.

If the Jets advance from the first round, they will face the winner of Vegas/Dallas in the second round.

Los Angeles secured the points it needed against Chicago on Thursday night, ensuring it will face Edmonton for a third straight year.

Vegas dropped a 4-1 decision against Anaheim, and coupled with Los Angeles’s 5-4 overtime win over the Blackhawks, they will face the Central Division-winning Stars.

First-round playoff matchups:

#### *Eastern Conference*

Florida Panthers vs. Tampa Bay Lightning

Boston Bruins vs Toronto Maple Leafs

New York Rangers vs. Washington Capitals

Carolina Hurricanes vs. New York Islanders

#### *Western Conference*

Dallas Stars vs. Vegas Golden Knights

Winnipeg Jets vs. Colorado Avalanche

Vancouver Canucks vs. Nashville Predators

Edmonton Oilers vs. Los Angeles Kings

- It’s a shame Laurent Brossoit won’t get his name on the Willam M. Jennings Trophy. He comes up two games short. His numbers were superb in a backup role, winning 15 times in 22 starts (23 appearances), with a 2.00 goals-against average and a .927 save percentage. He’s

been brilliant for Winnipeg, and his securing the Jennings for Winnipeg on Thursday oozed irony.

- I don't believe the Jets can petition for Brossoit's name to be added like teams can for players to get their name on the Stanley Cup. Brossoit has said he's not too worried about it. Also, he already has his name on hockey's biggest prize.
- Connor Hellebuyck's name will be on the Jennings after a stunning year that will likely see him win his second Vezina in June. He went 37-19-4 in 60 starts, with a 2.39 goals-against average and a .921 save percentage with five shutouts. He led the league in goals saved above average with 33.1 in all situations and 28.2 at 5-on-5, nearly 10 more than second place. Hellebuyck allowed three goals or fewer in 50 of those 60 starts, including two separate 10-game streaks of allowing two or fewer.
- I'll be curious to see where Bowness ends up in the Jack Adams race as the league's best coach this season. He's plenty deserving of the nod, including besting one of the other frontrunners for the award, Vancouver's Rick Tocchet, on Thursday to end the regular season as Canada's top team.
- Here's Winnipeg's annual award winners: captain Adam Lowry took home the community service award, Connor Hellebuyck won the 3 Stars award, and Dylan DeMelo was honoured with the Dan Snyder Memorial Award, handed out annually to the player who "best embodies perseverance, dedication and hard work without reward or recognition so that his team and teammates might succeed."
- Here's the list of Jets who played all 82 games this season: Nikolaj Ehlers, Mason Appleton, Neal Pionk, Alex Lafallo and DeMelo. Sean Monahan has become a member of the 82-plus club and the only player in the NHL this season to feature in 83 games. He missed out on 84 after missing one game with the Jets on Feb. 25 in Arizona due to the flu.

### [Jets match records, win Jennings Trophy to close out regular season on a high](#)

By Scott Billeck

You wouldn't usually attach much importance to a game where the Winnipeg Jets sat eight regulars to close out the regular season.

But when you look at some of the storylines that emerged from Winnipeg's 4-2 triumph over the Vancouver Canucks, you'd reconsider the thought.

Here's a list of what the Jets accomplished on Thursday night at the Canada Life Centre:

They matched their franchise-record regular-season win total at 52 (2017-18) and did the same by winning their eighth straight game for the second time this season. They were crowned as Canada's best team with their 110th point and won the William M. Jennings Trophy, allowing a league-low 199 goals—one fewer than the Paul Maurice-led Florida Panthers.

It didn't end there, however, as 2021 second-rounder Nikita Chibrikov scored his first NHL goal and game-winner in his NHL debut, and 2022 first-rounder Brad Lambert notched his first NHL assist, also in his NHL debut.

Not too shabby from a team without Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor, Adam Lowry, Vladislav Namestnikov, Josh Morrissey, Brenden Dillon and Connor Hellebuyck, while Morgan Barron (lower-body) also sat out ahead of Winnipeg's first-round series against the Colorado Avalanche set to begin Sunday in Winnipeg.

Winnipeg called up four players from the Manitoba Moose for the game, including Chibrikov and Lambert, along with Collin Delia, who backed up Laurent Brossoit between the pipes, and Parker Ford, who was a healthy scratch.

Rasmus Kupari got his first game in a month, while other regular healthy scratches, including David Gustafsson, Cole Perfetti, Colin Miller and Nate Schmidt, featured for Winnipeg.

Perfetti scored twice, his 18th and 19th goals of the season, while Gabriel Vilardi recorded his 22nd for Winnipeg, who finished 52-24-6.

Brossoit made 18 saves for his 15th win, extending his career-high.

Connor Garland, who opened the scoring early in the first, and Elias Lindholm, who tied the game 2-2 in the second, scored for Vancouver.

Lambert's assist came on Vilardi's marker that levelled the game 1-1 at 11:26 of the first, and Chibrikov's goal broke a 2-2 deadlock 5:18 into the third.

Perfetti wired home his 18th from the slot to make it 2-1 just 55 seconds into the middle frame, and his second came from inside Winnipeg's blue-line, shorthanded into the empty net with 2:07 remaining in regulation.

### **['Whole different beast': Wise vet and the kid gear up for Jets playoffs](#)**

By Paul Friesen

They played the regular-season finale on Thursday, ending a run of healthy scratches.

If and when they'll get to scratch their playoff itch is another story.

Winnipeg Jets forward Cole Perfetti and defenceman Nate Schmidt may be at opposite ends of their careers, but they're in the same boat when it comes to the start of the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

Likely on the outside, looking in.

The 32-year-old has a plan, based on experience, for how to deal with it.

The 22-year-old will just have to learn on the fly.

"I don't know what's going to happen," Perfetti was telling me before Thursday's game. "But if I get a shot down the road, just staying ready. Obviously the playoffs are a whole different beast. But I feel ready. I know I can play. Just waiting for my name to be called."

It got called for Game 82 against Vancouver, when the Jets rested mainstays Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor and Adam Lowry.

Schmidt got in after Josh Morrissey and Brenden Dillon took the night off.

The veteran has seen this movie before, and remembers doing a lousy job with his role the first time.

It was Schmidt's second year in the NHL, with Washington, and he didn't get a sniff of playoff action.

"I was so negative on myself," he recalled. "And it didn't work. I was not ready for anything. I was just mad about everything. You're mad about not playing, you're mad about your game."

The next time, he was more prepared.

"I remember thinking, 'Hey, I'm not playing but I may as well go out there, have some fun and get my game at least in a place where I like it, I'm working on some things,'" Schmidt said. "And I found I was in such a better head space."

The defenceman may sit across the dressing room from Perfetti, but they've been talking plenty about their situations.

Their most recent chat came on Thursday morning, when the old guy told the kid it's OK to be emotional about not being in the lineup.

"Hey, we're guys that wear our hearts on our sleeve, and that's not a bad thing," Schmidt recalled telling Perfetti. "If you succumb to that type of negativity around your game, it's just going to affect you as a person and as a player. Some guys, they can do it. They let it roll. I try to let it roll, but I wear everything on my arm. So it makes it harder for me.

"That's why I try and stay away from it."

Experience has taught Schmidt another thing: sometimes trying to pass advice to a young player doesn't work all that well.

"I remember guys telling me, 'Man, I've been where you are. Just do this, that,'" he said, laughing. "And it's like, 'Shut up. Just shut up, man.'"

Perfetti seems willing to listen.

But he's notoriously hard on himself. And there's that heart hanging from his sleeve.

"Sometimes you've got to remind yourself you're still in the NHL," he said. "And you're on an amazing team and making a playoff run."

That said, he wants more. They all do.

"You always want more. That's human nature," Perfetti explained. "That's why everyone in this room is where they are today, because of their compete and their drive for more. Never enough."

Enter Schmidt again, with some more lines gained from living.

“For every negative reason they might find that you’re not out there, there’s twice as many positive ones that have you here, that have you ready to step into a playoff series,” he said. “And bang – you could be a playoff hero. That happens every year. All of a sudden, a guy steps into a series and changes it.

“So you never know. Why can’t it be us?”

One thing is certain.

With the stakes so high, the energy in the dressing room has taken a noticeable turn, for those in their second year and those in their 11th.

“It’s a different tone,” Perfetti said. “Just a lot excitement. We know what we can do with this group. Everyone just wants to get it going.”

Schmidt says it’s like a kid approaching the holidays.

“Like Christmas time for hockey,” he said. “The best time of year.”

Even if you might not get the gift of playing.

After all, you can still give.

There’s joy in that, too.

“Ten-year-old me,” Perfetti acknowledged. “Would have signed up for this in a minute.”

**TSN.ca**

**[Series Verdict: Jets vs. Avalanche - Is Winnipeg primed for next step in playoffs? \(VIDEO\)](#)**

Outside of their top line and Cale Makar, the Avalanche come into the playoffs with plenty of question marks and they face a balanced Jets team that could be poised for a big postseason. Which team gets the edge in this series? TSN Director of Scouting Craig Button discusses.

**[Button breaks down the keys to success for Jets, Canucks in the first round of playoffs \(VIDEO\)](#)**

The Jets capped their regular season with a win over the Canucks to ride into the playoffs on an eight-game winning streak. Craig Button joins SportsCentre to discuss the key factor that will decide Winnipeg's series with the Avalanche, and what Vancouver needs to do to carry their success into the playoffs.