

Winnipegjets.com

[Three things - Jets win a wild Game 1
Connor and Lowry score twice in Game 1 win over Colorado](#)

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – The Winnipeg Jets opened their best of seven opening round series with a wild 7-6 win over the Colorado Avalanche at Canada Life Centre ending their four-game losing streak on home ice in the playoffs. The Jets tied a franchise record for most goals in a playoff game (they also scored seven in 2018 vs. Nashville). Adam Lowry and Kyle Connor scored twice, Josh Morrissey, Vladislav Namestnikov and Mark Scheifele had the other goals. Scheifele (1G, 2A), Connor (2G, 1A), Lowry (2G), Gabriel Vilardi (2A), Nino Neiderreiter (2A), Brenden Dillon (2A) and Morrissey (1G, 1A) had multiple point nights for the Jets who will host Game 2 on Tuesday.

WILD, WILD FIRST

The two Central Division rivals put on a show in the opening period of the series scoring six times in a 9:43 span. Colorado opened the scoring at 6:10 with Valeri Nichuskin beating Connor Hellebuyck on the Avs 11th shot. Winnipeg responded with two goals 3:55 apart, Josh Morrissey at 8:02, Vladislav Namestnikov at 11:57. The Avalanche came back with from Miles Wood at 14:47 and Nathan MacKinnon at 15:05 to retake the lead at 3-2. But 48 seconds after the MacKinnon goal, Mark Scheifele evened things at three. Per NHL Stats, Scheifele scored his 20th career postseason goal (38 GP). Only three active players have hit the mark in fewer games: Alex Ovechkin (26 GP), Jake Guentzel (32 GP) and Connor McDavid (36 GP).

HELLEBUYCK HUGE

Connor Hellebuyck faced 46 shots from the Avalanche tonight marking the fourth time he has faced more than 40 in a playoff game in his career. Hellebuyck became the first goalie in NHL history to earn each of a franchise's first 18 playoff wins moving past Georges Vezina, who had each of Montreal's first 17 NHL playoff wins from 1918 to 1925.

"It could have been worse. Seriously. We don't give up that many chances. We don't give up that many shots," said Rick Bowness.

"And Connor had to play better and he made a lot of big saves at the right time, which he always does. I'm not hanging any of those goals on him."

ALWAYS READY FOR GAME 1

Connor, Scheifele and Lowry always seem to be ready for the start of a series. Coming into tonight, the trio had scored in three Game 1's and all three scored as well vs. the Avalanche in Sunday's series opener. Lowry was named the game's first star with his two goals and a team leading six hits.

"His game speaks for himself even in the regular season. He just plays the right way," said Connor.

"He has a 200-foot game, hits like that. Smart player and you see it, that's why he's our captain."

NHL.com

[**Jets score 7, hold off Avalanche in Game 1 of West 1st Round
Connor, Lowry each scores twice, Hellebuyck makes 40 saves for Winnipeg**](#)

By Darrin Bauming

WINNIPEG -- Kyle Connor and Adam Lowry each scored two goals for the Winnipeg Jets in a 7-6 win against the Colorado Avalanche in Game 1 of the Western Conference First Round at Canada Life Centre on Sunday.

"It's not the way we drew it up, a 7-6 game, but sometimes you've just got to play that game that's in front of you," Connor said. "It turned into a bit of a track meet there and we know we've got to be better. Maybe a little nervous energy to start for us. Once we started to get going, we showed that our depth is really key."

Mark Scheifele had a goal and two assists, and Josh Morrissey had a goal and an assist for the Jets, who are the No. 2 seed from the Central Division. Connor Hellebuyck made 40 saves.

"Listen, we'll never complain about a win, especially this time of year," Winnipeg coach Rick Bowness said. "It wasn't exactly how we drew it up, but if that's the way it goes, that's the way it goes. Their top guys took over, our top guys took over. It was just the type of game that it evolved into, and you play it out and we found a way to get the win. So, we'll take it."

Cale Makar had a goal and two assists, and Nathan MacKinnon and Artturi Lehkonen each had a goal and an assist for the Avalanche, who are the No. 3 seed from the Central. Alexandar Georgiev made 16 saves.

"[Georgiev's game] probably needed to be better, right?" Colorado coach Jared Bednar said. "I thought we played well, we created some chances. He made some good saves, but we're [going to] need like a couple more saves than that probably to win, you know? But it is what it is. We'll regroup. We made some mistakes in front of him that we'll have to clean up and try to get the job done. It's a team game."

Game 2 will be in Winnipeg on Tuesday.

Valeri Nichushkin gave the Avalanche a 1-0 lead at 6:10 of the first period, carrying the puck into the offensive zone and beating Hellebuyck with a wrist shot from just above the right face-off dot.

"You're not tagging any of those goals on [Hellebuyck]," Bowness said. "Some of them had seeing eyes, some of them were bouncing all over the place, some of them were just dead giveaways on our part. You're not hanging any of those on him. It could have been worse. Seriously. We don't give up that many chances. We don't give up that many shots. And Connor had to play better and he made a lot of big saves at the right time, which he always does. I'm not hanging any of those goals on him."

Morrissey tied it 1-1 at 8:02. The Jets cycled the puck along the blue line before Morrissey floated a wrist shot through traffic that beat Georgiev glove side.

"That's what playoffs is. Both teams got to push each other and both teams pushing to the brink and make teams play different ways," Makar said. "Unfortunately, all the mistakes that we made ended up in the back of our net. That's just the way she goes sometimes. A couple things to clean up and then turn the page."

Vladislav Namestnikov put Winnipeg in front 2-1 at 11:57. Josh Manson tried to clear the puck along the end boards, but Alex Lafallo deflected it to Namestnikov for a one-timer in front.

"That's why you want to play the game, you want to play against the best and showcase at the highest stage," Connor said. "Every one of us -- we have a really deep team -- to kind of contribute like that, it's part of the fun."

The Avalanche then scored two goals in a span of 18 seconds. Miles Wood tied it 2-2 at 14:47 with a one-timer in the slot before MacKinnon made it 3-2 with a wrist shot from the left circle at 15:05.

"I thought our start was great tonight," Bednar said. "We haven't played the Jets well this year. We played a good game early in the season, but that's our first taste of us playing hard and them playing hard and seeing what's going to happen. And it's a seven-game series. I don't think a whole lot changed for us from start to finish. I thought our guys played as hard as they possibly could and as clean as they possibly could."

Scheifele tied it 3-3 just 48 seconds later. Gabriel Vilardi took the puck from behind the net and slid it across the crease to Scheifele for a tap in at the right post at 15:53.

"It was a lot of emotions," Georgiev said. "Couple great chances for them, couple great chances for us. It was kind of a high-event game. Being tied up after the first was a pretty good position for us."

Lowry made it 4-3 at 8:57 of the second period, keeping the puck on a 2-on-1 rush and shooting between Georgiev's pads.

"[Lowry] has been a great leader for the team on and off the ice," Bowness said. "He was a great choice for captain. He loves these challenges. He's going up against one of the best players in the world, not necessarily the League but the world in Nate [MacKinnon]. So, he loves those challenges and he takes his game to another level. The intensity is always there and it was certainly there tonight and it's nice to see him get rewarded with a couple of goals, because he worked incredibly hard. When you're playing against the Mackinnon line, you're going to have to work very, very hard and you're going to have to be very, very smart, and Adam did those things for us tonight."

Lowry extended it to 5-3 at 3:31 of the third period. He took a pass in the right circle, drove to the net and stuffed the puck around Georgiev's outstretched right pad. A video review determined that the puck crossed the goal line after hitting both posts.

"The offense was nice," Lowry said. "What we gave up, I think we spent a lot of time in our end. And we gave some up off the rush. I look back at that first shift in the third period where he rings one off the post, they get some chances like that. Me, [Mason Appleton] and [Nino Niederreiter], we want to spend a little more time in their zone, wear them down in the cycle. I think there's going to be some tweaks."

Connor pushed it to 6-3 at 5:51, scoring with a one timer from the right circle on the power play.

“We battle all season to get in this position and you’ve got to enjoy it,” Connor said. “You’ve got to relish the pressure that comes with it and you want to be coming through for your team and yourself.”

Lehkonen cut it to 6-4 at 6:29 when he redirected Makar’s point shot past Hellebuyck on the power play.

“I think that’s the thing with a team as talented as Colorado, is for us it’s about taking away the middle,” Jets defenseman Brenden Dillon said. “We want to take away the important ice. When you’ve got players as talented as them, it’s not that you’re necessarily going to eliminate all the chances, but you’re just going to try to cut those down and limit them as much as you can. It’s going to be tough challenge. It’s going to be a long series, but we’ve just got to be ready for it.”

Connor made it 7-4 at 8:54 with a one-timer from the slot off a pass from Vilardi from below the goal line.

“When you get into a track meet like that, it’s a tough game to play but it’s a lot of fun,” Vilardi said. “Our team’s gotta follow it up. We’ve got the best goalie in the world and they’ve got the best player in the world, in my opinion. We’ve got to try and slow them down.”

Makar’s power-play goal, a wrist shot from the point through traffic, cut it to 7-5 at 12:24.

“Mindset-wise, we’re right there,” Makar said. “They played really well and they’re going to capitalize on everything we give up. So for us, we’ve got to start doing the same, and at times tonight we did that.”

Casey Mittelstadt batted in a loose puck at the top of the crease with 30 seconds remaining for the 7-6 final.

“We were up at certain times in the game and then we kind of (made) a couple mistakes and they’re right back in it,” Makar said. “They’re a team that’s going to capitalize on all those little things, so for us, it’s just cleaning those up and making sure this next game we dial that in a little bit. But overall, to me, they’re a good team and we stuck with it. It was a good game.”

NOTES: Only two other Game 1s in an opening-round series have combined for at least 13 goals. The Edmonton Oilers and Los Angeles Kings combined for 18 in 1982, and the Chicago Blackhawks and Detroit Red Wings scored 14 in 1985. ... Avalanche goalie Justus Annunen was ruled out due to an illness just before puck drop. Bednar had no update postgame. Arvid Holm, who has not appeared in an NHL game, served as the backup. ... Makar (50 assists in 62 games) became the third-fastest defenseman in NHL history to reach 50 playoff assists, behind Bobby Orr (59 games) and Al MacInnis (61 games). ... Mikko Rantanen recorded his 58th playoff assist, passing Peter Stastny for third in Avalanche/Quebec Nordiques history.

[Jets understand Game 1 win against Avalanche 'wasn't exactly how we drew it up'](#)
[Winnipeg needed 7 goals to get past Colorado in game that resembled track meet](#)

By Tracey Myers

WINNIPEG -- Brenden Dillon rolled his eyes, shook his head and exhaled through his flapping lips.

"What a hockey game, huh? We were riding the same roller coaster like everyone else there. Crazy," the Winnipeg Jets defenseman said following a 7-6 win against the Colorado Avalanche in Game 1 of the Western Conference First Round at Canada Life Centre on Sunday.

"I guess we proved we can score goals, too, but man oh man, that's not us."

No, it definitely wasn't the Jets.

Playing that up-tempo, track-meet style of hockey, the Jets, who were tied for first in the NHL in goals against per game (2.41) during the regular season, looked more like the Avalanche, who led the League in goals per game (3.68).

At least on this night, however, Winnipeg beat Colorado at its own game, and as crazy as it was and as much as the Jets didn't like how it played out, they'll take it and move on.

"Listen, we'll never complain about a win, especially this time of year. We're very happy to get that win and understand that there are areas we're going to need to be better, and we will. There are things we're going to clean up," Winnipeg coach Rick Bowness said. "It wasn't exactly how we drew it up, but if that's the way it goes, that's the way it goes.

"Their top guys took over, our top guys took over. It was just the type of game that it evolved into, and you play it out and we found a way to get the win. So, we'll take it."

It was uncharacteristic from the start for the Jets, who just eight days ago shut out the Avalanche 7-0 on the road.

This time around, Valeri Nichushkin gave Colorado a 1-0 lead just 6:10 into the game. Josh Morrissey and Vladislav Namestnikov responded for Winnipeg to make it 2-1, but Miles Wood and Nathan MacKinnon scored 18 seconds apart to put Colorado back in front 3-2.

Just 48 seconds later, though, Mark Scheifele answered back for the Jets to tie it 3-3.

"There wasn't really a message, honestly. Just keep playing," Jets forward Gabriel Vilardi said when asked if there was any talk after the first period. "Probably that track-meet style suits them better than us, but hey, it shows we can play that way, too. But preferably we all know we'd not like to get into a 7-6 game."

The Jets were able to get back to their style of play in the second period, cleaning up some mistakes and limiting the Avalanche's chances, which resulted in them carrying a 4-3 lead into the third period.

That period, however, turned out to be much like the first: more chaos, more wide-open hockey and six more goals, three apiece for the Jets and Avalanche.

Connor Hellebuyck ended up allowing six goals on 46 shots, a surprisingly large number for the Jets goaltender, who won the William M. Jennings Trophy after going 37-19-4 with a 2.39 goals-

against average, .921 save percentage and five shutouts in 60 regular-season starts. But Bowness said, "You're not tagging any of those goals on him."

"Some of them were bouncing all over the place, some of them were just dead giveaways on our part. You're not hanging any of those on him. It could have been worse. Seriously," he added. "We don't give up that many chances, we don't give up that many shots, and Connor had to play better, and he made a lot of big saves at the right time, which he always does. I'm not hanging any of those goals on him."

Perhaps it was just a case of the Jets getting caught up in the atmosphere. Winnipeg's traditional whiteout was in full effect outside the arena as well as in, resulting in a raucous crowd for the players to feed off of.

It just happened to result in more goals against than they would have liked.

"Yeah, well, I don't think [Bowness] is going to be preaching 7-6," Jets captain Adam Lowry said with a laugh. "They had a great start. Maybe a little nervous energy (for us). We were excited getting the whiteout and having home ice and getting to play in front of our fans."

"Just moving the puck, we didn't get the puck through the neutral zone early. [Hellebuyck] had to make some big saves. We were able to settle in. I think it's just we gave them some easy offense early, and we'll have to make some adjustments, on the penalty kill, 6-on-5, things like that. But I think we've got to do a better job just staying on top of their speed."

The Jets will take the win in Game 1, but they won't be looking to break away from their style that much again in Game 2 here on Tuesday (9:30 p.m. ET; CBC, TVAS, ALT, ESPN).

"They are a team that basically all season has been talked about as a Stanley Cup favorite, right? They've got one of the best players in the world (MacKinnon), a bunch of superstars. They are a good team, credit to them," Dillon said of the Avalanche, who won the Stanley Cup in 2022.

"But we're confident in the depth we've got here. We're confident in the way we can defend. For us, we know we can be a lot better in certain areas, but at the end of the day, we are happy that we can get the win."

[**Stanley Cup Playoffs postcard: Whiteout with Jets fans in Winnipeg
NHL.com staff writer Tracey Myers checks in from pregame party at Canada Life Centre**](#)

By Tracey Myers

Throughout the Stanley Cup Playoffs, NHL.com writers will be sending postcards from the eight first-round series. Today, staff writer Tracey Myers checks in from Winnipeg, Manitoba:

Greetings from a Whiteout!

No, I'm not in the midst of a blizzard in April. The Winnipeg weather is a balmy 60 degrees and sunny. I'm talking about the Whiteout party that's happening around Canada Life Centre

heading into Game 1 of the Western Conference First Round between the Winnipeg Jets and Colorado Avalanche.

The party had a 5,000-person limit and according to the CBC, tickets sold out within an hour of going on sale. The festivities began at 4 p.m. local time, approximately two hours before Game 1, and lines formed around several blocks with people looking to get into the party.

I love how creative fans got. Sure, most went with the tried-and-true white Jets jerseys, but others went a few steps further. One guy dressed like a yeti, with white streamers attached to a white robe. Another guy completed his look with a white mask. Very Jason-like, I must say.

Honestly, the outdoor-festival lover in me would've been happy to stay outside and watch the game on the giant television that will accommodate those who can't get inside. But great hockey calls, so I have to run and check out the Whiteout inside the arena as well.

Game on!

Until next time,
Tracey

Canadian Press

[Lowry, Connor Propel Jets to 7-6 Playoff Win Over Avalanche](#)

By Judy Owen, The Canadian Press

WINNIPEG — Adam Lowry demonstrated why he was the right choice to be the Winnipeg Jets captain on Sunday night.

Lowry and Kyle Connor each scored twice to propel the Jets to a 7-6 victory over the Colorado Avalanche in Game 1 of their first-round, best-of-seven playoff series.

“He’s been a great leader for the team on and off the ice. He was a great choice for captain,” Jets head coach Rick Bowness said.

“He loves these challenges. He’s going up against one of the best players in the world, not necessarily the league, but the world in Nate (Nathan MacKinnon). So, he loves those challenges and he takes his game to another level.”

MacKinnon, who had a goal and one assist, was second in league scoring with 140 points during the regular season.

“That’s our captain, man. He’s a gamer,” Jets defenceman Brenden Dillon said of Lowry. “The physicality, he plays against the top guys every night. Sometimes when it seems like our group doesn’t have it, he’s able to pull us into the fight.”

A sold-out crowd of 15,225 white-clad fans had plenty to cheer about at the “whiteout” parties inside and outside Canada Life Centre.

Mark Scheifele had a goal and two assists and Josh Morrissey registered a goal and assist. Vladislav Namestnikov also scored. Dillon, Gabriel Vilardi and Nino Niederreiter each added a pair of assists and Connor picked up one helper.

There were 100 hits in the game, with the Avalanche having a 54-46 edge.

Lowry said there will be some tweaks for Tuesday's Game 2 with linemates Niederreiter and Mason Appleton.

"We want to spend a little more time in their zone, wear them down in the cycle," Lowry said.

Connor Hellebuyck made 40 saves for the Jets, who are on a nine-game win streak.

Cale Makar had a goal and two assists for Colorado. Artturi Lehkonen notched a goal and one assist. Valeri Nichushkin, Miles Wood and Casey Mittelstadt also scored. Mikko Rantanen chipped in with two helpers.

"Unfortunately, all the mistakes that we made ended up in the back of our net," Makar said. "That's just the way she goes sometimes. A couple things to clean up and then turn the page."

Alexander Georgiev stopped 16 of the 23 shots he faced for Colorado, which is trying to repeat its 2022 Stanley Cup-championship run. He was backed up by Arvid Holm instead of Justus Annunen, who wasn't at the morning skate.

It was the first time the two teams have met in the NHL playoffs.

The Avalanche came into the series having lost all three regular-season games against Winnipeg.

"We played extremely hard," Avalanche head coach Jared Bednar said. "We did a lot of good things. You don't get six (goals) on the Jets without doing that.

"We also made some mistakes that they capitalized on. Too many, obviously tonight, and it ends up costing us the hockey game."

Bednar said he wasn't going to speculate on if he'd make a change in net for Game 2.

"It probably needed to be better, right?" he said of Georgiev's performance.

Winnipeg finished three points ahead of Colorado in the Central Division, and the parity showed quickly.

The first period ended in a 3-3 tie, including the teams combining to score three goals in 66 seconds.

"It's not the way we drew it up, a 7-6 game, but sometimes you've just got to play that game that's in front of you," Connor said. "It turned into a bit of a track meet there and we know we've got to be better."

With a 10-1 lead in shots on goal, Nichushkin fired the puck high over Hellebuyck's blocker at 6:10 to give the visitors the 1-0 lead.

Morrissey tied it just under two minutes later when his point shot went through traffic past Georgiev.

The teams then combined for four goals in just under four minutes, including three in just over a minute.

Namestnikov got the offensive fireworks started at 11:57 when his go-ahead goal had the crowd roaring.

Wood tied it at 14:47, MacKinnon scored at 15:05 for the 3-2 lead and then Scheifele evened it up at 15:53.

Wood's goal marked the 1,000th playoff goal for the Avalanche-Quebec Nordiques franchise.

Lowry got the only goal of the second period to go ahead 4-3 at 8:57.

His second goal of the game had to be reviewed as the puck hit one post, went across and hit the other post and then slid along the goal line and hit the post again before bouncing out. It counted as crossing the line at 3:31.

Connor and Lehkonen exchanged power-play goals to make it 6-4 at 6:29, but Connor added his second marker just over two minutes later. Makar then scored an unassisted goal on the man advantage for the 7-5 score at 12:24. Mittelstadt finished it off with a goal with 30 seconds remaining.

IN GOOD COMPANY

Mark Scheifele's first-period goal was his 20th career playoff goal, scored in his 38th game.

Only three active players have reached that mark in fewer games. Alex Ovechkin did it in 26 games, Jake Guentzel in 32 and Connor McDavid in 36 games.

UP NEXT

Game 2 is Tuesday night in Winnipeg.

Sportsnet.ca

[How will Avalanche adjust to gain edge on Jets in Game 2? \(VIDEO\)](#)

Kevin Bieska joins Faizel Khamisa and Martine Gaillard recapping Jets win over the Avalanche, discussing what adjustments both teams need after a track meet in Game 1 and also touches on how important Adam Lowry is for the Jets.

[Jets' Hellebuyck the difference in wild, series-opening win over Avalanche](#)

By Eric Engels

WINNIPEG — A series-opening game that saw 13 goals scored was somehow marked by a single save at the most pivotal moment.

Sure, Connor Hellebuyck made nine of them while the Winnipeg Jets appeared blinded by the whiteout through the first 10 minutes of this thriller against the Colorado Avalanche, and that was crucial.

But when this year's Vezina favourite flashed to the top of his crease and calmly grabbed a shot labeled for the top corner of his net in the 18th second of the 11th minute, he truly reinforced the message he was sending his team from puck drop to final buzzer — that he wouldn't allow the nerves they were experiencing to get to him.

"I think that's what makes him so valuable," said Jets captain Adam Lowry, who scored two of Winnipeg's goals in this 7-6 win at Canada Life Centre on Sunday.

Never mind that Hellebuyck was beaten by Valeri Nichushkin just four minutes earlier to surrender a 1-0 lead to the Avalanche.

He wasn't to blame for that one, nor could he be faulted on the goals Miles Wood and Nathan MacKinnon scored 18 seconds apart just five minutes after he made this key first-period save that snatched away what appeared to be a sure one from Josh Manson.

In that one instant, Hellebuyck did for the Jets what Alexandar Georgiev was so far away from doing in this game for the Avalanche.

"He calmed us down," said Josh Morrissey.

He stopped himself from calling Hellebuyck's stop on Manson a game-saver but added, "If all of a sudden, it's 2-0, it could've gone really south, and that gave us a spark before we ended up going shot for shot the rest of the period."

The Jets scored the next two goals, got one more from Mark Scheifele after MacKinnon followed up the one from Wood, and they knew Hellebuyck had helped them dodge the bullet that could've killed them.

"It was a huge save," Morrissey concluded.

How it was made — with such poise and grace under the pressure of the violent storm brewing all around his crease — set the tone for how this game would be decided.

Stylistically, and by the shot totals (46-23), it favoured the high-octane Avalanche, with Lowry, Kyle Connor, Morrissey and Jets coach Rick Bowness all repeating the same mantra: "That wasn't how we drew it up."

But one thing the Jets felt was predictable was that Hellebuyck would make the difference for them if he needed to, and none of them were surprised to see him do exactly that.

Had he been in Colorado's net, the Avalanche would have likely achieved a galvanizing win and nullified the raucous atmosphere Jets fans clad in all-white provided.

Instead, Georgiev gave up four goals on the first 10 shots he faced. He looked like he was prepared to give up many more than the three others that slipped through him. And the Avalanche never appeared more confident in the game than when he was absent from their net

— as they pushed to erase a two-goal deficit with an extra attacker over the last three minutes of play.

The Avs got one back. They even found a way to score six on Hellebuyck.

But they never rattled him.

“I think with him — and it’s something that I’ve learned and something I’ve tried to establish in my own game — his mentality’s incredible,” said Gabriel Vilardi. “He’s calm, he’s always the same. He could give up five goals in a period and you know he’s going to keep playing the same way, and it’s good to see. As a forward, as a player up front, you know that’s what you want to see from your goalie.”

It enabled the Jets to win despite being so far off the game plan that netted them the majority of their 52 wins in the regular season, including wins over the Avalanche in all three games prior to Sunday.

“Give the guys credit,” said Bowness, “We found a way to win a game that wasn’t played out the way it was supposed to be structured. Find a way, and we’ll take that every day.”

He called Hellebuyck’s influence on the outcome “huge,” and said none of the goals he gave up could be pinned on him.

“Some of them had seeing eyes, some of them were bouncing all over the place, some of them were just giveaways on our part,” Bowness said, adding the typically stingy Jets would focus on cleaning up their decisions with the puck in all three zones to avoid trading chances with the Avalanche in Tuesday’s Game 2.

We’re not sure what Avalanche coach Jared Bednar would want to change for that one, other than his goaltender.

Georgiev couldn’t come up with a single save that would have the impact of Hellebuyck’s on Manson. And in a game decided by a razor-thin margin, that proved as costly as what he allowed.

Despite Georgiev’s performance inspiring plenty of doubt, turning to Arvid Holm wasn’t a viable option for Bednar.

The third-string goaltender had never played a game at this level, and he had only played 16 this season — posting an .887 save percentage in 12 appearances with Colorado’s AHL affiliate and not doing much better in four games for the ECHL’s Utah Grizzlies. He was only dressed because Justus Annunen, who had a .928 save percentage in 14 starts with the Avalanche this season, was too sick to be in uniform.

When asked if Annunen would be available for Game 2, Bednar said, “I don’t know.”

“I don’t know if he’s going to be healthy enough to play or not,” he added. “He wasn’t healthy enough to play tonight and we’ll see what we see in the morning...”

If the Avalanche see more of what they saw from their crease on Tuesday night, they’ll be heading back to Denver down 2-0 in this series.

The Jets expect to see the same reliable version of Hellebuyck, and they also expect to play much better in front of him.

[Avalanche coach Bednar on Georgiev: 'Probably needs to be better'](#)

By Sportsnet Staff

Colorado Avalanche head coach Jared Bednar said he wasn't going to speculate on a possible goalie change for Game 2 of the team's opening-round playoff series against the Winnipeg Jets after a shaky start.

Starting netminder Alexandar Georgiev made just 16 saves during Sunday's 7-6 loss in Game 1 as the Winnipeg faithful at Canada Life Centre chanted "pull the goalie" in the third period.

Georgiev gave up all seven goals and remained in net for the entire game with backup Justus Annunen ill and Arvid Holm, who has yet to make his NHL debut, on the bench.

"It probably needs to be better ... we're going to need a couple more saves than that to win," Bednar told reporters post-game, according to CBS Sports' Romi Bean. "But it is what it is. We'll regroup"

Bednar didn't know if Annunen would be healthy enough for Game 2 and said he'd see in the morning.

Game 2 between the Avalanche and Jets goes down Tuesday night in Winnipeg.

Asked about a possible goalie change, Bednar said: "I'm not going to speculate."

Georgiev posted a 38-15-5 record, 3.02 goals-against average and .897 save percentage in 63 games during the regular season.

Colorado captured the Stanley Cup in 2022 with Darcy Kuemper between the pipes. Kuemper departed as an unrestricted free agent just weeks later and the Avalanche acquired Georgiev from the New York Rangers.

The Avalanche's title defence last year ended in the first round as they fell to the Seattle Kraken in seven games.

[TSN.ca](#)

[Dreger expects Jets, Avs to tighten things up after wild series opener](#) (VIDEO)

Jets reporter John Lu was joined by TSN Hockey insider Darren Dreger to get his take on the action-packed Game 1 clash between the Jets and Avalanche, and the outstanding performance by Jets captain Adam Lowry, who had two goals in the win.

[Jets tie franchise record for goals in playoff game in victory over Avs](#) (VIDEO)

TSN Hockey analyst Frankie Corrado broke down how the Jets were able to prevent the game from getting out of hand early on after a sluggish start against the Avs, and how important depth scoring will be in the series, after five different players scored for Winnipeg in the Game 1 victory.

Winnipeg Free Press

[Shootout at the Canada Life corral Jets bury seven goals, outlast Avs for 1-0 series lead](#)

By: Ken Wiebe

The sigh by Brenden Dillon and the head shake that followed after the first question of his post-game media scrum said it all.

No, this was not the way the Winnipeg Jets planned to play against the Colorado Avalanche in this best-of-seven series between the highest-scoring team during the regular season and the stingiest defensive crew.

So when the opener diverged into an all-out track meet, it was a matter of simply riding out the storm.

By the time the final buzzer sounded, the Jets had survived a late flurry after building a three-goal cushion in the third period — which included an extra-attacker goal with just 27.1 seconds to go in regulation — to secure a 7-6 victory before a frenzied Whiteout sellout crowd of 15,225 at Canada Life Centre on Sunday night.

“I guess we proved that we can score goals too. But man oh man, that’s just not us,” said Dillon. “We have got to be way better here in Game 2. But I mean, tip our cap to us, a Stanley Cup Playoff win is a Stanley Cup Playoff win, we’ll take it for sure.”

Jets captain Adam Lowry took a similar approach in his explanation.

“Yeah, well, I don’t think Bones is going to be preaching 7-6,” said Lowry, who scored a pair of goals. “We gave them some easy offence early, and we’ll have to make some adjustments. On the penalty kill, six on five, things like that. But I think we’ve got to do a better job just staying on top of their speed. They come through the neutral zone so well. They have an active back end and they generate a lot there.

“It gave them some of those chances that are a little uncharacteristic for our group. It’s a great team over there. They scored a lot of goals. We know they’ve got great offensive talent. We’re happy with the result. I think both teams will have areas they’ll want to clean up, though.”

Over to you, Coach Rick Bowness.

“Listen, we’ll never complain about a win, especially this time of year. We’re very happy to get that win and understanding that there’s areas we’re going to be better and we will,” said Bowness. “It wasn’t exactly how we drew it up, but if that’s the way it goes, that’s the way it goes. Their top guys took over, our top guys took over. It was just the type of game that it evolved into and you play it out and we found a way to get the win. So, we’ll take it.”

Game goes Tuesday night, with puck drop scheduled for just after 8:30 p.m. CT before the series shifts to Denver for Games 3 and 4.

Let's take a closer look at what transpired on Sunday night as the Jets won their first home game in front of a full crowd since Game 1 of the Western Conference final in 2018:

1. Lowry shines at both ends

Lowry was outstanding in the contest, scoring a pair of goals while also helping to limit Avalanche star Nathan MacKinnon to one goal at even strength and another assist on the power play. Lowry finished with six hits as well.

Lowry's first goal came when he shot on a two-on-one rush and his second was an example of him bulldozing over Mikko Rantanen, then getting the puck and driving the net and caroming his shot off both posts before a review was required to determine that it was actually fully over the line.

"Honestly, from my angle I felt like I could see a piece of white," said Lowry. "But looking at the replay now, I'm like, 'Why was I so confident?' Coming back to the bench, they seemed to think it was pretty conclusive, pretty solid right away. You never know, though. It's a little tense waiting for the confirmation. But it was nice that it just got enough."

2. The goalie battle

One of the areas of concern for the Avalanche going into the series was goaltending and Alexandar Georgiev did nothing to alleviate the question marks, allowing three goals on seven shots and four on 10 shots on goal. Justus Annunen was a late scratch on Sunday due to an illness, opening the door for former Manitoba Moose netminder Arvid Holm to dress as the backup. When the game got to 4-3, Georgiev came through with an excellent save, robbing Kyle Connor on the doorstep after a slick cross-ice feed by Sean Monahan. On the other side, Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck was under siege in the first period, as the Avalanche built an 11-1 edge in shots on goal before things got stabilized.

"His stats aren't going to jump out at you," said Lowry. "But (Bowness) always says timely saves and the goalies are like, 'Well, a save's a save.' (chuckles). He made some saves, but he swallows up some pucks where he allows us to catch our breath. He gives up six, two are on the power play, one's with the net empty, so it kind of skews his stat line a little bit. But he's been our MVP. He should get consideration for the Hart (Trophy). He's had such an amazing year. He's so important for our team. So another solid game for (Hellebuyck). No concerns there."

Hellebuyck is going to win his second Vezina Trophy and Georgiev had a sub-.900 save percentage during the regular season and even though he led the NHL in wins, this is one category the Jets need to have an advantage if they want to be the first team to reach four wins in this series.

"You're not tagging any of those goals on him. Some of them had seeing eyes," said Bowness. "Some of them were bouncing all over the place. Some of them were just dead giveaways on our part. It could have been worse. Seriously. We don't give up that many chances. We don't give up that many shots. And Connor had to play better and he made a lot of big saves at the right time, which he always does."

3. The wild first

Neither head coach would have been happy with what transpired during the first period as six goals were scored — three by each team, including goals 18 seconds apart by the Avalanche. But the Jets got a goal from Mark Scheifele to even the score 48 seconds later to leave things even at 3-3.

For those of you scoring at home, that was three goals in 66 seconds.

“Definitely, we know we can play better. We’ve got the best goalie in the world,” said Jets forward Gabriel Vilardi, who had two assists. “We played kind of nervous. But hey, we got the win. Good teams find a way to win.”

Turnovers were far too prevalent in that first period and resulted directly in several goals at both ends.

That’s part of what the teams will look to clean up.

“Sometimes you’ve just got to play that game that’s in front of you,” said Connor, who had two goals and three points. “It turned into a bit of a track meet there and we know we’ve got to be better. Maybe a little nervous energy to start for us. Once we started to get going, we showed that our depth is really key ... all lines contributed.”

4. Fourth line contribution

The Jets’ fourth line helped give the team a 2-1 lead in the first period, thanks to Alex Iafallo laying down his stick to force Avalanche defenceman Josh Manson into a turnover that landed right on the tape of Vladislav Namestnikov, who unloaded a slapshot from the slot.

Iafallo was involved physically, had a big blocked shot in the third period and made a bunch of smart plays, which is why he was on the ice late in the game protecting the lead.

5. Extra, extra

There were 100 combined hits in Game 1, including 54 for the Avalanche and 46 for the Jets. Lowry and Avalanche forwards Zach Parise and Brandon Duhaime tied for the most in the game with six apiece.

There were three power play goals in the contest, as the Avalanche went two-for-two with the man-advantage and the Jets went one-for-two.

With David Gustafsson drawing into the lineup on the fourth line for Morgan Barron (lower body, day-to-day), the Jets healthy scratches were defencemen Nate Schmidt and Collin Miller and forwards Cole Perfetti and Rasmus Kupari, plus third goalie Colin Delia.

Avalanche head coach Jared Bednar said after the morning skate that defenceman Sam Girard might be an option to return to the lineup, but he was scratched for Game 1, which meant that Caleb Jones played on the third pairing with Jack Johnson.

Georgiev less than ordinary in Colorado cage

By: Mike McIntyre

The chant began midway through the third period, shortly after the Winnipeg Jets scored their seventh goal of the night on just their 22nd shot.

“Pull your goalie,” the frenzied, sold-out crowd at Canada Life Centre began. “Pull your goalie.”

It was both clever and cutting, highlighting in a rather cheeky way what was obvious to anyone watching the game: The Avalanche appear to have a very big problem in net.

Alexandar Georgiev might have led the NHL in wins (38) during the regular season, but that only underlines how much of a team statistic that can be. Dig a little deeper and his goals-against average (3.00) and save percentage (.897) raise plenty of alarm bells for a team with legitimate Stanley Cup aspirations.

The Jets exploited that potential weakness early and often, lighting up the undrafted 28-year-old while their own netminder, Vezina Trophy favourite Connor Hellebuyck, stood on his head at times.

“It probably needed to be better, right?” admitted Avalanche coach Jared Bednar, when asked about his team’s goaltending.

“Like, I thought we played well, we created some chances. He made some good saves, but we’re gonna need like a couple more saves than that, probably, to win, you know. But it is what it is. We’ll regroup. We made some mistakes in front of him that we’ll have to clean up and try to get the job done. It’s a team game.”

Fair enough. But when Georgiev’s own team scores a half-dozen in enemy territory against arguably the world’s No. 1 netminder, anything short of a victory has to be viewed as a massive letdown.

On this night, anyways, there was no Plan B, which is why Bednar didn’t heed the crowd’s helpful advice.

With promising rookie netminder Justus Annunen (2.25 GAA, .928 SV% in 14 games) not even dressed due to illness, the backup was former Manitoba Moose netminder Arvid Holm, who hasn’t played a single NHL game in his life and had middling results in 16 minor-league games this year.

And so Georgiev was left to the wolves, while the opposing fans howled in delight. Not surprisingly, he wasn’t very talkative with media after the game, offering up this answer when asked what exactly happened out there.

“We lost Game 1,” he offered.

Hmmm. Any idea why? Did he feel like he could have been better?

“I’ll watch the video to check it out and analyze,” he said. “They scored some really good goals, a couple lucky ones. You have to stay positive and try to find out what happened and move forward. It’s only 1-0 in the series, so I’m looking forward to the next game.”

Question is, will he be in the crease for it, or might Annunen be healthy enough to get the start?

"I'm not going to speculate," said Bednar, who preferred to focus on what he felt were some positives from his group.

"We played extremely hard. We did a lot of good things. You don't get six (goals) on the Jets without doing that. We also made some mistakes that they capitalized on. Too many, obviously, and it ends up costing us the hockey game," he said.

"We'll have to be better in a couple areas of the game, but I don't think there's a need for frustration at all after that. Shouldn't be frustrated at all. I think we played hard, we played well in a lot of areas. We have to clean up a couple things but, hey, this is gonna be the long, hard series and frustration shouldn't be creeping into it after losing one game on the road."

The Jets have now lit Georgiev up twice in the last eight days. They beat him four times on 15 shots in the first 15:17 of their regular-season game on April 13 as the Jets went on to win 7-0. (Annunen allowed three goals on 11 shots in mop-up duty).

So, file a potential Colorado goalie controversy just one game into the playoffs as a very good development for Winnipeg.

[Lowry's commanding presence on full display for Jets](#)

By: Mike McIntyre

What can you say about Adam Lowry?

"That's our captain, man," is how veteran Winnipeg Jets defenceman Brenden Dillon responded to the query. "He's a gamer."

Lowry's impressive effort Sunday added to his ever-growing list. A player that can lead in so many ways, he had his arsenal on full display in a wild 7-6 victory over the Colorado Avalanche.

There was plenty of head-to-head time against Nathan MacKinnon's line in a shutdown role, keeping the Hart Trophy candidate in check as much as is humanly possible. There were the team-high six hits dished out. There was the usual busy night in the faceoff circle (winning nine of 19). And there were two beautiful goals to show there's a bit of sizzle to go with his steak.

"His game speaks (for itself) even in the regular season. He just plays the right way," said forward Kyle Connor.

"Smart player and you see it, that's why he's our captain. He leads by example and he's a big voice in there. Obviously, pretty good hands around the net. You guys saw that (Sunday), so it translates very well."

Lowry is no stranger to shining on a big stage. Although the Jets were ushered out of the playoffs last spring in just five games, it wasn't for a lack of effort or production from the veteran centre. Lowry led the team with four goals against Vegas in that series.

Now, a solid start for a Jets team that looks poised to make some serious noise, with the first-year captain leading by example.

“The physicality, he plays against the top guys every night. Sometimes when it seems like our group doesn’t have it, he’s able to pull us into the fight,” said Dillon.

“When we are on top of our game we are physical and hard to play against and are hard on the puck in their zone. We are grinding down and changing the other team, (and) he is the first guy to be able to do that for us.”

Lowry has now played in 45 career playoff games with Winnipeg, recording 20 points (11 goals, nine assists), which is actually a more productive pace than the 239 points (105 goals, 134 assists) he’s put up in 702 regular-season games.

His second goal Sunday was quite the mind-bender, as he powered his way to the Avalanche net and put a shot off the left post, the right post and then the left post again — but only after it somehow briefly curled across the goal line.

“That’s how he plays. So strong, tough to play against down low and he’s got that underrated skill,” said forward Gabe Vilardi.

“That’s a really hard play. He puts it under the guy’s stick into an area and then uses his big frame to protect the puck and finish it. Great person and great leader.”

Of all the calls coach Rick Bowness has made since his arrival two years ago, putting the ‘C’ on Lowry’s chest is up there among the best. Not surprisingly, the bench boss was beaming after this latest performance.

“He’s been a great leader for the team, on and off the ice. He was a great choice for captain,” said Bowness.

“He loves those challenges and he takes his game to another level. The intensity is always there and it’s nice to see him get rewarded with a couple of goals, because he worked incredibly hard. When you’re playing against the MacKinnon line, you’re going to have to work very, very hard and you’re going to have to be very, very smart — Adam did those things for us.”

Lowry, the consummate team player, was quick to deflect any praise, instead opting to talk about what he felt he and his linemates (Nino Niederreiter and Mason Appleton) can improve on.

“We spent a lot of time in our end. And we gave some up off the rush. I look back at that first shift in the third period where (MacKinnon) rings one off the post, they get some chances like that,” he said.

“Me, Appy and Nino, we want to spend a little more time in their zone, wear them down in the cycle. I think there’s going to be some tweaks... just some quicker reads is kind of where our line will look to be a little better in Game 2.”

Global Winnipeg

[ANALYSIS: Jets survive '80s flashback in Game 1, need modern approach going forward](#)

By Kelly Moore Global News

ANALYSIS: Jets survive '80s flashback in Game 1, need modern approach going forward - [imageView image in full screen](#)

There might not be another playoff game quite like the one that kicked off the much-anticipated series between the Winnipeg Jets and Colorado Avalanche on Sunday night at Canada Life Centre.

The Jets should be counting on that.

If you're too young to remember the Smythe Division playoff battles of the 1980s and early '90s, Game 1 certainly provided a trip down memory lane to experience hockey the way it used to be played.

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And if you need further evidence of that, when the dust finally settled at Canada Life Centre, the NHL confirmed the first ever post-season meeting between the Jets and Avs was the highest scoring series opener since 1985.

Yes, there was some clutch scoring by captain Adam Lowry and the number-one line. It was fun. Gabe Vilardi admitted as much afterwards.

And it certainly was entertaining for the thousands of white clad fans who finally had a chance to celebrate the first post-COVID home playoff victory in downtown Winnipeg since game one of the 2018 Western Conference final versus Vegas nearly six years ago.

But make no doubt about it: allowing 45 shots and 88 attempts cannot be repeated by the NHL's best defensive team during the regular season if they intend to win this series.

The Jets are well aware of that. So are the Colorado Avalanche, who might not have a choice but to continue pressing for this rash of red lights, especially if they can't even get average goaltending from their starter Alexandar Georgiev.

Winnipeg survived the '80s flashback in Game 1. The challenge for Tuesday night, and the rest of the way, is to return to the present.

Because that's a style of play far better suited for what they would like to accomplish in the future.

[Winnipeg Jets outlast Avalanche 7-6 to win chaotic Game 1](#)

By Christian Aumell & Russ Hobson Global News

If Game 1 is any indication, the first round Stanley Cup Playoff series between the Winnipeg Jets and Colorado Avalanche is going to be a doozy.

In front of a sold out, rabid, whiteout crowd, the Jets escaped a wild series opener with a 7-6 win Sunday evening for their first playoff win on home ice in front of fans since Game 1 of the 2018 West Final.

Kyle Connor and Adam Lowry each notched a pair in the series opener. Connor also had an assist for a three-point night alongside linemate Mark Scheifele who had a goal and two assists.

The two teams combined for six even-strength goals in the span of under 10 minutes in the first period. It was just one tally short of the Stanley Cup Playoffs record for most goals in the opening period of a series.

The Jets built up a three-goal lead in the final frame and the Avalanche stormed back to get within a single goal in the final minute, but the Jets hung on for a one-goal win to grab a 1-0 series lead.

“Maybe not the way we drew it up,” said Connor. “But sometimes you just got to play that game that’s in front of you. It kinda turned into a bit of a track meet there. We know we got better. Maybe a little nervous energy to start for us. I think once we started to get going, we can show that, obviously our depth is really key. I think all lines contributed.”

The Jets’ third line scored twice and the fourth line even found the scoresheet in the playoff opener.

A win is a win in the post-season, but it was far from a Picasso for the Jets as both teams had costly giveaways.

“Listen, we’ll never complain about a win, especially this time of year,” said head coach Rick Bowness. “So, we’re very happy to get that win and understanding that there’s areas that we’re going to be better. And we will. There’s things we’re going to clean up. It wasn’t exactly how we drew it up, but if that’s the way it goes, that’s the way it goes.”

“It’s all three zones and puck management in all three zones. When they’re coming, when they’re carrying the puck in like they were tonight, then we’re clearly off our game. And if you turn the puck over, your structure is going to break down like right away. It’s puck management and yeah, just a little more playing the right way at the right time.”

The Jets tied a franchise record with seven goals in a single playoff game. It was the second straight meeting they hung a seven-spot on the Avs after a 7-0 shutout win last weekend.

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Winnipeg was leading by one goal early in the third period when Lowry shot a puck that deflected off three goal posts and just barely crossed the goal line. It was initially waved off but was confirmed after a replay.

“From my angle, I felt like I could see a piece of white,” said Lowry. “But looking at the replay now I’m like, why was I so confident? But coming to back to the bench today, they seemed to think it was pretty conclusive, pretty solid right away. So, you never know though. It’s a little tense waiting for the confirmation. But it was nice that it just got enough.”

The building was rocking ahead of puck drop but the Avalanche immediately took the crowd out, outshooting the Jets 9-1 in the first four minutes.

Colorado rode that momentum to the game’s opening goal 6:10 into the first. As the Jets tried to change, Josh Manson sent the puck up to Valeri Nichushkin, who skated into the Winnipeg end down the right wing and ripped a perfect shot high over Connor Hellebuyck’s blocker.

It didn't take long for the home team to answer. Just 1:52 after the opener, a wrister off the stick of Josh Morrissey floated through a crowd and past Alexandar Georgiev to tie the game.

Less than four minutes later, the home team had the lead for the first time. As Josh Manson tried to move the puck up the boards from his own corner, Alex Lafallo got a stick on it, sending it careening to the slot where Vladislav Namestnikov was ready to wire it home to make it 2-1.

Winnipeg's lead lasted 2:50 before Colorado got even. Dylan Samberg coughed up the puck as he carried it from behind his own net. Joel Kiviranta carried the puck in front and as he tried to make a move, it jumped to the stick of Miles Wood who potted it to make it 2-2.

Just 18 seconds later, Nathan MacKinnon put the Avalanche back in front. After Winnipeg failed to clear the puck, Cale Makar passed it to Mikko Rantanen, who slid it to MacKinnon for a knuckler that fooled Hellebuyck and beat him five-hole.

The lead lasted all of 48 seconds. The Jets' top line went to work in the Colorado end, leading to Gabriel Vilardi finding Scheifele in front for a tap-in to tie the game 3-3.

Colorado wound up outshooting the Jets 14-8 in the chaotic first period, and at one point had a 10-2 edge in the second period but couldn't break the tie on the scoreboard.

The score stayed tied 3-3 until the 8:57 mark of the second when Lowry was sprung on a 2-on-1 with Mason Appleton. The Jets' captain kept it and fired it five-hole on Georgiev to restore Winnipeg's lead.

Winnipeg pushed for an insurance goal thanks in part to the game's first power play but their lead stayed at one after 40 minutes, with Colorado outshooting Winnipeg 11-9 in the middle frame.

If history were to be any indicator, the Jets were in great position to secure the 'W' as they went 37-1-1 in the regular season when leading after two periods and 35-0 when scoring four or more goals.

True to form, Winnipeg began to pull away early in the third. Lowry scored his second of the night 3:31 into the period, a huge insurance goal that was initially waved off. His shot hit both posts and skimmed along the goal line before being cleared down the ice, but video replay showed that, for one brief moment, the puck fully crossed the line to give the Jets a 5-3 lead.

2:20 later, with Winnipeg on a power play, Morrissey fed Connor for a one-timer that beat Georgiev to make it 6-3.

Colorado earned their first power play just ten seconds later and made good on the chance when Artturi Lehkonen tipped a Makar point shot past Hellebuyck to make it 6-4.

Connor's second of the night at the 8:54 mark restored Winnipeg's three-goal lead, his shot from in close glancing off the foot of Manson and over the glove of Georgiev.

The team's continued to trade goals when Colorado answered back on their second power play of the game. A wrist shot from the point off the stick of Makar beat Hellebuyck through a screen to make it 7-5 with 7:36 to go.

Colorado pulled Georgiev for an extra attacker with 3:21 remaining and pushed hard to cut the deficit, which they finally did with 27.1 seconds left a bouncing puck in the crease found its way past Hellebuyck.

That's as close as the Avs would get as the Jets narrowly got to the finish line.

Hellebuyck made 39 saves in the win, while Georgiev turned aside 16 shots in defeat. Hellebuyck became the first goalie in NHL history to claim the victory in each of a franchise's first 18 playoff wins.

Game 2 goes Tuesday night in Winnipeg with the puck dropping just after 8:30 p.m. Pregame coverage on 680 CJOB starts at 6:30.

Winnipeg Sun

[Jets outlast Colorado Avalanche to take 1-0 series lead after wild Game 1](#)

By Scott Billeck

You'd expect Game 2 to be a lot tighter. There's much to clean up from the first.

But with that said, there isn't a hockey fan with a pulse that wouldn't want to run an IV and dial it up to pump six more Game 1s into their veins.

The hockey was that wild at Canada Life Centre on Tuesday night, and the hometown heroes pulled through with the Whiteout behind them to edge the Avs 7-6, earning a 1-0 lead in their best-of-seven opening-round Stanley Cup playoff series.

"Definitely, we know we can play better," Gabriel Vilardi said. "We've got the best goalie in the world. They played well, so credit to them. I was nervous at the start. We played kind of nervous. But hey, we got the win. Good teams find a way to win."

Madness and mayhem, from the first drop of the puck to the final whistle, including a six-goal opening stanza and another six-top in the third, where caution was thrown to the wind on defence.

Ultimately, Winnipeg's leading goal-getter from the regular season, Kyle Connor, scored twice in the third period to lift the Jets to victory.

The Jets, who went 35-0-0 in the regular season when scoring four or more, continued that run of perfection to start the playoffs.

But it was never assured.

Not when the Jets held a 2-1 lead in the first, a 4-3 lead in the second or a 7-4 cushion in the third.

"Listen, we'll never complain about a win, especially this time of year," head coach Rick Bowness said. "There are things we're going to clean up. It wasn't exactly how we drew it up, but if that's the way it goes, that's the way it goes."

“Their top guys took over, our top guys took over. It was just the type of game that it evolved into and you play it out and we found a way to get the win. So, we’ll take it.”

Cale Makar scored with just under eight minutes left, and there were 30 seconds left when Casey Mittelstadt made it a one-goal game.

Goaltending felt optional on the night, but there was a clear distinction.

The Jets would have been in trouble without Connor Hellebuyck and his 39 saves, even if the game wasn’t worthy of the Vezina he’s sure to win, or the team that allowed the fewest goals in the regular season.

Colorado’s greatest weakness was exploited, with Alexander Georgiev rarely looking settled or confident after allowing seven on 23 shots.

And as if allowing the touchdown and the extra point wasn’t enough, the ruthless sold-out crowd’s chants of ‘pull the goalie’ were a not-so-friendly reminder.

The first period was a no-holds-barred slugfest, where both combatants pointed to the centre of the ring before firing bombs at one another.

Valeri Nichushkin connected. Josh Morrissey quickly countered. Vladislav Namestnikov landed the next blow before Miles Wood and Nathan MacKinnon stole the momentum back, only for Mark Scheifele to even it up on the judges’ scorecards.

Adam Lowry’s first of two on the night put the Jets ahead in a breather of a second-period, the lone tally.

As it would turn out, both teams were greasing the barrels.

Lowry’s second—an incredible defiance of physics that hit the left post, then the right, then crossed the goal-line before hitting the left post again—and Connor’s first and second of the game put the Jets up 7-4, another seven-spot on the Avs after the Jets did it eight days ago in Game 80 of the regular season on enemy ice.

“Honestly, from my angle, I felt like I could see a piece of white. But looking at the replay now, I’m like, ‘Why was I so confident?’” Lowry said of his second goal, which was confirmed after a review. “Coming back to the bench, they seemed to think it was pretty conclusive, pretty solid right away. You never know, though. It’s a little tense waiting for the confirmation. But it was nice that it just got enough.”

Lowry was a force in the game, pairing his two goals with six hits to lead the Jets.

“That’s our captain, man. He’s a gamer,” Brenden Dillon, who also brought the pain, said. “The physicality, he plays against the top guys every night.

“Sometimes when it seems like our group doesn’t have it, he’s able to pull us into the fight. When we are on top of our game we are physical and hard to play against and are hard on the puck in their zone, we are grinding down and changing the other team, he is the first guy to be able to do that for us.”

Makar's wrist on the power play kept Colorado hanging around, and Mittelstadt jammed home the 13th goal of the night.

Colorado left it too late. And Winnipeg found a way to hang out.

Game 2 goes Tuesday back in downtown Winnipeg with an 8:30 p.m. start.

[PLAYER SPOTLIGHT: Kyle Connor makes presence felt with forecheck, pair of goals for Jets](#)

By Ted Wyman

Kyle Connor scored a couple of third-period goals for the Winnipeg Jets, getting credited with the eventual game-winner, but long before that, he made his mark with his strong forechecking.

The high-scoring winger used his speed to disrupt things for the Colorado Avalanche on multiple occasions, and it directly led to Mark Scheifele's first-period goal.

Connor outraced and out-fought Colorado forward Casey Mittelstadt to win the puck, which was picked up by linemate Gabe Vilardi and thrown across the crease to a wide-open Scheifele for a goal that tied the score at 3-3 in the opening frame.

The Jets went on to win 7-6 to take a 1-0 lead in their best-of-seven series, with Connor scoring the sixth and seventh Winnipeg goals.

His first goal came on a power play as he took a feed from defenceman Josh Morrissey and ripped a shot from his usual spot on the right circle.

The second came when Scheifele and Vilardi did the dirty work down low and got the puck out front to Connor for a goal that put the Jets up 7-4.

The Jets needed that goal big-time, as the Avalanche came back to score two late goals and get within one.

Connor finished with a team-high five shots on goal, seven shot attempts, two hits and the best Corsi of any Jets forward at 45.95%.

He had this to say about his team's performance: "We got the win. It's not the way we drew it up, a 7-6 game, but sometimes you've just got to play that game that's in front of you. It turned into a bit of a track meet there and we know we've got to be better. Maybe a little nervous energy to start for us. Once we started to get going, we showed that our depth is really key ... all lines contributed. We just kept rolling them over and we created a lot on the forecheck as well. Pressuring their D, turning the puck over."

[GOALTENDER REPORT: Not a great night for the goalies, though Jets still had big edge](#)

By Ted Wyman

Alexandar Georgiev had one of the worst save percentages among all NHL starting goalies during the regular season, and nothing changed in the first game of the Stanley Cup playoffs.

The Colorado Avalanche netminder stopped just 16 of the 23 shots he faced on Sunday night (.696 save percentage) as his team fell 7-6 to the Winnipeg Jets in the opener of their first-round best-of-seven.

He was beaten three times on eight shots in the first period, once on nine shots in the second and three times on just six shots in the third.

In essence, he was terrible and destroyed a strong offensive performance from the high-scoring Avalanche.

It's sometimes hard to believe Georgiev is still between the pipes for the Avalanche at this point of the season. He somehow led the NHL in goalie wins with 38 during the regular season, but his 3.02 goals against average was 24th best among all NHL starters, and his save percentage was 61st best in the NHL.

You'd have to think Avalanche head coach Jared Bednar will try to give someone else a chance between the pipes, most likely regular backup Justus Annunen, who didn't even dress on Sunday because of illness.

How could it possibly be worse?

On the other hand, Connor Hellebuyck of the Jets allowed six goals on Sunday and still seemed to have a pretty good game.

He was outstanding early on when the Jets were under siege and wound up stopping 39 of the 45 pucks directed his way. Yes, the .870 save percentage looks pretty bad, but Hellebuyck still made some big stops, and the Jets needed them, barely hanging on for the win after going ahead by three goals twice.

Hellebuyck already won the Jennings Trophy and is the front-runner to win the Vezina Trophy as the NHL's top goalie this season, but there's some pressure on him to prove himself as a playoff goaltender in this series

The Jets won't win a ton of games when giving up six goals, but as long as Hellebuyck keeps making big saves on high-danger chances, they'll have a decent chance.

He'd likely want to have a couple of the goals back, particularly one off the stick of Nathan MacKinnon in the first period, but there were others he couldn't really be faulted for. Val Nichushkin scored on a terrific shot high blocker in the first period, Cale Makar fired a seeing-eye shot through traffic, Arturri Lehkonen tipped a Makar shot home, Casey Middelstadt bounced one in out of the air and Miles Wood scored after a brutal giveaway by Jets defenceman Dylan Samberg.

Everyone expected this to be a defensive series, with the Avalanche saying they needed to play more like the stifling Jets to succeed.

Instead, the Jets played very much like the Avs normally do: run and gun and hope for the best.

In a 7-6 game, Hellebuyck outshining his counterpart wound up being a big difference.

[JETS SNAPSHOTS: Lowry's unusual goal fitting for a wild and crazy night in downtown Winnipeg](#)

By Ted Wyman

On a night that seemed both strange and beautiful in downtown Winnipeg, Adam Lowry's third-period goal was surely the most bizarre turn of events.

The Jets captain scored one of the more unusual goals you will ever see, deking out both Colorado Avalanche centre Nathan MacKinnon and goalie Alexandar Georgiev before shooting a puck that went off one post, off the other post and back off the first post again.

Somehow, in all of that, it took a turn to its side and crossed the goal-line, giving the Jets a 5-3 lead in an eventual 7-6 win at Canada Life Centre, filled to the brim with white-clad fans in full throat.

The referee on the goal-line initially ruled no-goal and play went on, but the Jets believed they had scored and a video review confirmed their suspicions.

"Honestly, from my angle, I felt like I could see a piece of white," Lowry said after the Jets took a 1-0 lead in the best-of-seven first-round series.

"But looking at the replay now, I'm like, 'Why was I so confident?' Coming back to the bench, they seemed to think it was pretty conclusive, pretty solid right away. You never know, though. It's a little tense waiting for the confirmation. But it was nice that it just got enough."

The NHL has existed for a long time, but there surely haven't been many post-post-in-post goals in its history.

"You don't see that very often, going post-to-post, with the puck turning like that," Jets winger Kyle Connor said. "It was a bit of a fortunate bounce, but we'll take it."

Lowry and Connor had two goals apiece for the Jets in the wild win.

Lowry was also tasked with trying to shut down 140-point scorer MacKinnon, who finished the night with a goal and an assist. MacKinnon didn't score that much, but Lowry had just a 26.3% Corsi for the night and that's a frightening number for a shutdown centre.

Here are some more observations from Game 1 of what is shaping up to be a tremendous series.

You have to love the whiteout. The atmosphere inside and outside of the arena is palpable, and it's truly a joy for many fans just to be a part of the party. Still, isn't it kind of a shame that the fans have a whiteout when the Jets wear blue? The home team wearing white is one tradition from the 1.0 era that is seemingly not coming back, but maybe it should.

— The playoffs have been memorable for all the wrong reasons for Jets' defenceman Dylan Samberg. Last year, his clearing attempt went off a skate and right in front to Michael Amadio,

who scored the game-winning goal in double overtime for the Vegas Golden Knights. This year, in Game 1 of the playoffs, Samberg tried to make a play in tight by his goal, lost the puck and was directly responsible for a game-tying goal by Miles Wood of the Avalanche. It was a goal that simply should not have happened.

— Of course, Samberg's giveaway was no worse than the one by veteran Josh Manson of the Avalanche, whose clearing pass was tipped by Alex Lafallo of the Jets and went right to Vladislav Namestnikov in front for an easy goal. Samberg is young and prone to mistakes. What's Manson's excuse?

— Mark Scheifele scored in the first period for the Jets, earning his 20th career playoff goal in 38 games. Only three active NHL players have hit the mark in fewer games — Alex Ovechkin (26 games), Connor McDavid, Jake Guentzel (32 games) and Connor McDavid (36 games).

— The Jets won, but they probably wouldn't have if it weren't for some shoddy goaltending from Alexandar Georgiev, who stopped only 16 of 23 Winnipeg shots. Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck allowed six goals on the night, but at least it was on 45 shots, and he made plenty of big saves off of dangerous chances for Colorado's high-end snipers.

— The Avalanche led 88-48 in shot attempts in the game. They will win this series if the numbers remain like that the rest of the way.

—The referees made it pretty obvious they were going to let a fair amount go in terms of rough stuff after the whistle and sure didn't seem to be quick with their whistles on marginal calls. That's really the way it should be in the playoffs. There were only four power plays in the game, with the Jets going 1-for-2 and the Avalanche going 2-for-2. That number for Colorado is something the Jets will have to improve upon going forward to keep the upper hand in the series.

—The teams combined for 100 hits in the game, with the Avalanche getting 54 of them and the Jets 46. Not surprisingly, Lowry led the Jets with six hits, while Zach Parise and Brandon Duhaime were credited with six apiece for the Avalanche.

[Jets whiteout parties bring out emotions in long-time Winnipeg hockey fans](#)

By Ted Wyman

Amidst a sea of white jerseys, painted faces, coveralls and even polar bear costumes, Michal Grajewski stood with his family in front of the Dale Hawerchuk statue in downtown Winnipeg and savoured a magical moment.

"I'm feeling everything all at once," Grajewski said as the Whiteout Street Party got underway outside Canada Life Centre on Sunday. "My dad's no longer with us and I'm sad for that because I miss being with him and taking him to the game. But now I'm a dad and I'm taking my son to his first whiteout. It's weird to have this all at once and I'm so excited for him to experience it for the first time."

Decked out in their Jets jerseys, Michal, his wife Katherine and their son Lawrence were just a few of the people feeling strong emotions and pride as their Winnipeg Jets prepared to take on the Colorado Avalanche in the first game of the Stanley Cup playoffs.

They were expecting 15,000-plus fans inside the arena, and another 5,000 at the Party in the Plaza in True North Square and the Whiteout Street Party on Donald Street.

“The whiteout’s really cool cause everyone’s proud of being from Winnipeg and it’s a great opportunity for everyone to rally around our hockey team and show our pride for the team and for the city and the province,” Grajewski said. “The energy in the building, just before the game starts, oh man it’s electric. You could reach out and grab it almost.”

The tradition of the whiteout for playoff hockey games dates back to 1987 when the original Winnipeg Jets got it started in a series against the Calgary Flames.

It has taken on a life of its own since then, with the Jets 2.0 making appearances in the post-season in 2015, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2023 and 2024.

“I’ve been coming since the Jets 1.0 whiteouts, the original ones,” Dean Speechley said. “We were commenting on what a beautiful day it is for this and hopefully we’re going to have a big run here so we can have lots more of these.”

For some people, the entire experience is almost overwhelming.

Charlene Turcotte, a season ticket holder decked out in a polar bear costume, said it’s something she wouldn’t miss for the world.

“We’re having a blast,” she said. “It’s very emotional. We get so excited. We want to support our team and Winnipeg and I just love being here. I love everything about it.

“We live for this. All our kids play hockey. Hockey is life in Winnipeg. It’s better than anything that you’ll ever experience. Even if you don’t have tickets to the game, it’s still worth it to just be here with people who all have the same passion that you have and just celebrate. It’s part of being a Winnipegger.”

Ben Bruinooge, wearing full coveralls as he sipped a cold one with friends in True North Square, said the whiteout connects Winnipeg’s past hockey era with the current one.

“It’s an important Winnipeg tradition and I’m glad the new Jets have all these traditions,” Bruinooge said.

“The whiteout, the team name, everything. Very well done.”

Speechley was wearing one of the more interesting white shirts at the party. It had the words “Spittin’ Chiclets” printed several times on the back, referring to the Ryan Whitney, Paul Bissonnette podcast that caused some controversy regarding the Jets in recent months.

Both hosts are former NHL players and Whitney caused a stir when he said an anonymous current NHL player told him the Jets are “the biggest frauds in the league.”

“(Bissonnette) has the Jets making it through this round, though, so I’m good with that,” Speechley said. “The rest of the guys, they can go you know where.

“After this series everyone will be jumping on the wagon.”

Denver Gazette

[Colorado Avalanche are not panicked after Game 1 loss to Winnipeg Jets](#)

By Kyle Fredrickson

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — Colorado Avalanche fans are likely more frustrated than players and coaches.

A 7-6 loss Sunday night to the Winnipeg Jets is not how the Avs expected Game 1 to unfold. But the team didn't show signs of panic in the aftermath at Canada Life Centre with Game 2 on Tuesday night.

"I think there's lots to look at that is on the positive side. We'll have to be better in a couple areas of the game, but I don't think there's a need for frustration at all after that," coach Jared Bednar said. "I think we played hard. ... We have to clean up a couple things, but this is gonna be a long, hard series."

Defenseman Cale Makar added, "They're a team that's going to capitalize on all those little (mistakes), so for us it's just cleaning those up and making sure this next game we dial that in a little bit. But overall, to me, they're a good team and we stuck with it. It was a good game."

Replacing Drouin

Top-six winger Jonathan Drouin will miss the entire first round with a lower-body injury. He was replaced on the top line in Game 1 by Zach Parise, who recorded two shots on goal.

"You have to have the depth scoring and the contributions throughout your lineup. Everyone has their own specific role and identity," Bednar said. "As a group tonight, we didn't miss (Drouin's) offense because everyone else was significantly better than just average."

Girard status

Defenseman Sam Girard (concussion protocol) participated in optional morning skate but did not play in Game 1. Bednar said that Girard is "feeling better" and was "possibly an option" for Sunday. Caleb Jones remained in the lineup to replace Girard.

Winnipeg reaction

The Jets were not satisfied with their start or finish in Game 1.

"The goals we gave up in the first were a little too easy for them. We kind of gave them those goals," Winnipeg coach Rick Bowness said. "We also recognized ... that was on us. Let's clean those things up. We cleaned them up in the second period for the most part, and then they took it to another level in the third. We knew that was going to come.

"We bent a little. We broke a couple of times. But give the guys credit. We found a way to win that wasn't structured."

[Alexandar Georgiev blasted for 7 goals in Game 1 loss; Will Avalanche make goalie change?](#)

By Kyle Fredrickson

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — The Colorado Avalanche's situation in net for Game 2 of their first-round playoff series is clear as mud.

Starting goalie Alexandar Georgiev allowed seven goals in a Game 1 loss Sunday night at Canada Life Centre. He did not get pulled with backup Justus Annunen unavailable due to illness. That didn't stop the raucous Jets crowd from taunting Georgiev with chants at nine minutes left in regulation.

"PULL YOUR GOALIE!"

Will Annunen get the start for Game 2?

"I don't know if (Annenen) is going to be healthy enough to play or not," coach Jared Bednar said following the 7-6 loss. "He wasn't healthy enough to play tonight. We'll see what we see in the morning. ... I'm not going to speculate (if the Avs will make a goalie change)."

Georgiev answered questions in the visitor's postgame dressing room for about two minutes. His initial assessment was blunt — "We lost game one," he said — before analyzing his performance. Georgiev made 16-of-23 saves and allowed three-goal periods in the first and third.

"Yeah, it was a lot of emotions," Georgiev said about the fast start. "Couple great chances for them, couple great chances for us. It was kind of a high-event game. Being tied up after the first was a pretty good position for us. ... Just trying to build it up and play my game, no matter what. It was not enough today, unfortunately."

Avalanche coach Jared Bednar agreed that Georgiev "probably needed to be better" in the loss. But some blame can be spread around. A Josh Manson turnover led directly to Winnipeg's second goal of the night.

"(Georgiev) made some good saves, but we're gonna need like a couple more saves than that probably to win," Bednar said. "But it is what it is. We'll regroup. We made some mistakes in front of him that we'll have to clean up and try to get the job done. It's a team game."

Georgiev explained his mindset over a challenging game.

"I'm just trying to focus on the next shot," Georgiev said. "I think I had a couple good saves when we were down 4-3 in the second. They just managed to score a couple at the right time."

Bednar won't give Winnipeg the luxury of knowing his plans in net moving forward. It's possible the answer will be determined by Annunen's health status on Tuesday before Game 2. The 24-year-old goalie never appeared in a Stanley Cup playoff game.

But something needs to change. Georgiev posted a meager .696 save percentage in Game 1.

"You have to stay positive and try to find out what happened today and move forward," Georgiev said. "It's only 1-0 in the series so I'm looking forward to the next game."

[**Avalanche vs. Jets: 3 takeaways from Colorado's Game 1 loss**](#)

By Kyle Fredrickson

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — The Colorado Avalanche fell to the Jets, 7-6, Sunday night in Game 1 of their first-round playoff series. Here are three takeaways from Canada Life Centre.

Goals, goals, goals

The two winningest goaltenders during the NHL regular season — Colorado's Alexandar Georgiev (38) and Winnipeg's Connor Hellebuyck (37) — were blasted for a combined six goals, 3-3, in the first period. The Avs led in shots, 14-8, and mostly controlled pace of play. They also squandered an early lead that temporarily silenced an incredibly loud Jets crowd. Momentum shifts were jarring. The Jets scored twice in four minutes. The Avalanche responded with two goals over a span of 18 seconds. Neither team could have predicted such a chaotic start.

Val steps up

The first-round absence of Jonathan Drouin (lower-body injury) creates a void of top-six production. In Game 1, Valeri Nichushkin stepped up to fill the void. His first-period wrister — beating Hellebuyck over his right shoulder — gave Colorado the early goal it so desperately needed against Winnipeg's strong defense. Nichushkin is back healthy after a lower-body injury and stint in the NHLPA player's assistance program. The Avalanche need him to return as one of the league's most dominant power forwards for any chance of surviving the first round.

Ride it out

Georgiev gave up three goals over his first 10 shots faced at the midway point of the game. Colorado had no choice but to keep him in net. The Avs called up AHL goaltender Arvid Holm with backup Justus Annunen unavailable due to illness. Holm, 25, is an average-at-best AHL goalie in no position to make his Stanley Cup playoffs debut. That left Georgiev in a tough spot, especially after Winnipeg's three goals in the third period. Don't be surprised if Colorado goes with Annunen in Game 2 if he's back to full health. Georgiev failed his first test this postseason.

What happened: Colorado failed to protect an early lead and imploded defensively in a deflating Game 1 loss to Winnipeg.

What went right: Valeri Nichushkin opened the scoring with a wrister on the rush. Miles Wood tied the game, 2-2, collecting a rebound off a Winnipeg turnover. Nathan MacKinnon scored 18 seconds later to lead 3-2 in the first period. Artturi Lehkonen added a power-play goal in the third period. Cale Makar later scored on a power-play goal.

What went wrong: Colorado gave up three goals in the first period; Josh Morrissey (wrister), Vladislav Namestnikov (off a Josh Manson turnover) and Mark Scheifele (wrister). The Jets took a 4-3 lead in the second when Adam Lowry beat Alexandar Georgiev five hole on a rush opportunity. Lowry scored again in the third period on a shot that clanked off the post and barely crossed the line. Kyle Connor scored twice in the third period, including a power-play goal.

Between the pipes: Georgiev made 16-of-23 saves. Winnipeg's Connor Hellebuyck stopped 40 of Colorado's 46 shots on goal.

Injury report: Sam Girard (concussion protocol) participated in an optional morning skate Sunday but did not play in Game 1. Backup goalie Justus Annunen (illness) was also unavailable.

What's next: The Avalanche face the Jets, 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at Canada Life Centre in Winnipeg for Game 2 of their first-round playoff series.

The Athletic

[Winnipeg Jets try to make sense of frantic, 'roller-coaster' Game 1 win](#)

By Murat Ates

WINNIPEG — Adam Lowry knew and the rest of us did not know.

Somewhere in the eternity that passed as his third-period shot bounced off of the left post, and then the right, and then the left post one more agonizing time, we had the chance to reflect.

When exactly did it become obvious that Game 1 between the 110-point Winnipeg Jets and 107-point Colorado Avalanche was going to be quite this absurd?

Canada Life Centre is a chest-pounding, eardrum-splitting place to play a playoff game but, one game into the Stanley Cup playoffs, this barn has been burnt. Scorched. The roof is on fire and only 60 minutes have been played. Winnipeg and Colorado combined for 13 goals for the first 7-6 playoff game since 2006 and the first one in regulation since 1985.

It's enough to make a person question a lot of their assumptions about a first-round series. For example: If the best defensive team of the regular season gives up six goals, with Nathan MacKinnon, Mikko Rantanen and Cale Makar combining for seven points, how does it go on to win?

How does a player without a stick make a massive play to set up one of the game's biggest goals? Where did this board-rattling, forecheck-dominating version of Kyle Connor come from — the one who positively erased Casey Mittelstadt on the way to Mark Scheifele's first-period goal?

Why did Colorado keep Alexandar Georgiev in the net at all, given his .696 save percentage on the night? (We know the answer to this one: Justus Annunen was sick and, absurdly enough, former Jets goaltending prospect Arvid Holm suited up for the Avalanche as their backup.)

All of that ground and more is worth covering as the Jets' 7-6 win — and the sold-out Canada Life Centre crowd's response to it — keeps ringing in our ears and reverberating through our chests.

There was Lowry throwing Rantanen to the ice, picking up Mason Appleton's pass, driving through MacKinnon on his way to the net and taking a shot off the left post that zig-zagged from one post to another through time and space — through the raucous whiteout crowd, the women in wedding dresses, the CF-18 pregame flyover and the Hoosli Ukrainian Male Chorus — then hit the first post again and was somehow declared a goal.

MacKinnon cleared the puck but Lowry celebrated — certain of what he saw through the chaos of the roaring crowd and the frenetic pace of a hockey game that gave us six goals and three lead changes in its opening 15 minutes.

How did he know?

“Honestly, from my angle (on the ice) I felt like I could see a piece of white,” Lowry said after the game. “But looking at the replay now, I’m like, ‘Why was I so confident?’”

“Our video guys had it up right away,” Connor explained. “It was pretty quick and we all started celebrating pretty quick. That’s when Adam saw the bench all excited. You can see the puck kind of turns on its side.”

“We looked down and I see this puck rolling on its edge inside the line ... ‘OK. It’s in.’” Rick Bowness said. “Take it and run.”

It’s a lesson that could be applied to the game at large.

It’s hard to know what to believe after a 7-6 game with so much chaos in it — a coach’s nightmare, with Bowness more concerned about puck management than appreciative of all of the speed, mistakes and skill. The first period was a goal fest, with consecutively successful breakout passes something of a unicorn for both teams. The turnovers piled up and so did the unsavable scoring chances at both ends of the ice.

There was Valeri Nichushkin picking a perfect corner, a loud “ping!” emanating from the spot where the crossbar meets the post after Josh Manson expertly turned Neal Pionk’s missed stretch pass toward Gabriel Vilardi into a dangerous counterattack. Winnipeg’s first sustained zone time led to Josh Morrissey’s equalizer, but then came a long run of mistakes.

Alex Lafallo got a piece of Manson’s breakout pass, which led to Vladislav Namestnikov diving into a slap shot that rocketed past Georgiev for a 2-1 Jets lead. Dylan Samberg tried to break the puck out through Winnipeg’s crease, leading to a giveaway and Miles Wood’s 2-2 crease-crasher. A failed Jets breakout effort led to MacKinnon’s first goal of the playoffs, with the added chaos of a deflection off Dylan DeMelo’s stick.

And then there was Connor, who gives up 12 pounds to Mittelstadt, finishing his check and leading to Scheifele’s tap-in.

Connor finished the night with two goals and one assist and his line with Scheifele and Vilardi won their minutes 3-1 at five-on-five.

He wasn’t thrilled with the style of play so much as grateful for the win.

“It’s not the way we drew it up, a 7-6 game, but sometimes you’ve just got to play that game that’s in front of you,” Connor said. “It turned into a bit of a track meet there and we know we’ve got to be better.”

If they didn’t draw this game up, someone did. The first-period chaos gave way to second-period Jets fortune. When Nino Niederreiter’s stick exploded on a shot block, he stayed in the play, running a desperate, lunging pick on Makar that sprung Lowry for his first goal of the night. It could have been a penalty; instead, it was a savvy, veteran play.

Lowry’s shot for the 5-3 goal hit Georgiev’s skate, the left post, the right post and the left post again, and then crossed the line — just like Lowry said it did.

But that wasn’t the end of the script.

Winnipeg went ahead 6-3 in the third period when Connor blasted an 81-mile-per-hour one-timer past Georgiev to match the No. 81 on his jersey. Artturi Lehkonen pulled one back for Colorado, just to prove our series preview right, and then Winnipeg caught another break: Connor scored again, making it 7-4 on a play that was either onside by the slimmest margin or offside but uncaught by Colorado.

Suddenly the pair of Royal Canadian Air Force CF-18 Hornet fighter jets that flew over the arena shortly after Hoosli sang the anthems weren't the loudest rumble of the night. That came from the fans, chanting "Pull the goalie!" and reminding us Canada Life Centre is unmatched at its peak.

But then Colorado scored a power-play goal and did pull its goalie — and scored again. The Jets scored seven goals on Georgiev, the Avalanche didn't want to trust their net to Holm, and somehow Winnipeg was still holding on with 30 seconds left in the game. It worked and the Jets won, earning their first playoff win in front of a full-capacity crowd since Game 1 of the Western Conference final in 2018.

Did the how of it make sense to anyone? Even the Jets? (It did not.)

"We were riding the same roller coaster everybody else was," said Brenden Dillon.

"I don't think Bones is going to be preaching 7-6," Lowry said. "Maybe a little nervous energy, we were excited getting the whiteout and having home ice and getting to play in front of our fans."

It's possible to take a sober, more analytical look at what went wrong. Winnipeg's puck management was sloppy, particularly in the first period, and Colorado made the Jets pay for their giveaways on Nichushkin's and Wood's goals. The Avalanche are also an elite zone entry team, with players like MacKinnon and Rantanen who can gain the zone and then protect the puck until the next wave of offence comes.

"I think we've got to do a better job just staying on top of their speed. They come through the neutral zone so well. They have an active back end and they generate a lot there," Lowry said. "F3 got caught a few times, pucks inside the blue line, ours and theirs. It gave them some of those chances that are a little uncharacteristic for our group."

Again, this echoes a chief concern for the Jets, as we identified in our preview.

Rantanen's pass to MacKinnon for his goal came after Makar stuffed a Jets zone exit, but it showed perfect patience. There is also the matter of Winnipeg's penalty kill, which continues to give up shots for free from the outsides while struggling to box out its opponents or clear the puck when the time comes.

The Jets are up 1-0 in the series but have a lot of things to work on.

"Listen, we'll never complain about a win, especially this time of year," Bowness said. "We're very happy to get that win and understanding that there's areas we're going to be better and we will. There are things we're going to clean up. It wasn't exactly how we drew it up, but if that's the way it goes, that's the way it goes. Their top guys took over, our top guys took over. It was

just the type of game that it evolved into and you play it out and we found a way to get the win. So, we'll take it."

Asked to specify, Bowness pointed to the same thing Lowry did. Winnipeg routinely got burned by Colorado's speed on Sunday night. Part of that is inevitable and the Jets understand that. There was a third-period rush from MacKinnon around DeMelo that most players are powerless to stop. But a big part of what kick-started Colorado's speed came for free on Jets giveaways. The Avalanche doubled Winnipeg in shots by a count of 46-23, and if Georgiev or Annunen can find good form or good health, the Jets are going to need to elevate their game by miles to keep beating Colorado.

Sometimes the hockey gods smile on a team. The Jets have an almost complete bill of health, whereas the Avalanche lost Jonathan Drouin to injury and Annunen to illness. Video review vindicated Lowry's goal, even if Lowry himself is second-guessing how certain he was that he scored.

But a 1-0 lead in a series this close is a big deal, particularly with Connor Hellebuyck the most likely goalie to bounce back with an elite performance.

Add in the playoff version of Lowry, who's scored six goals in his last six postseason games while matching up against the opposition's best, and I think it would be perfectly valid for Jets fans to look past the absurdity and at the opportunity in front of Winnipeg — right here, right now. These Jets have a 1-0 lead on the 2022 Stanley Cup champions and are as hungry as they've ever been and Lowry is one of many players leading the way.

"That's our captain, man. He's a gamer. The physicality, he plays against the top guys every night," Dillon said. "Sometimes when it seems like our group doesn't have it, he's able to pull us into the fight."