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**[Practice Report - Jets look to improve](#)
[Hellebuyck: "That was probably one of the most sweatiest games I've played in this league."](#)**

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – After a wild Game 1, Jets fans know that Connor Hellebuyck is recovering from his busy night.

The Jets goaltender faced 46 shots on Sunday evening in the 7-6 victory over the Colorado Avalanche and joked he's still winding down.

"That was probably one of the most sweatiest games I've played in this league yesterday. So, there's a few extra things I had to do," said Hellebuyck.

"But for the most part it was just slowly winding down and watching highlights or some other games, see what's going on around the league and just relaxing."

The likely Vezina Trophy finalist was second in the league in save percentage (.921) and fourth in goals against average (2.39) during the regular season. Not once did he allow six goals in a game until the opener of the playoffs, but with 41 playoff games under his belt, he knew he just had to adjust his mindset to the game in front of him.

"It's going to be, 'I need to stop one more than the other guy.' I turn my mindset to that. our offence was buzzing, we scored seven. That's an incredible feeling and our crowd was absolutely insane," said Hellebuyck.

"What more could you ask for out of a playoff hockey game? That being said, you have to soak it in, use the crowd to your advantage and be one better than the next guy."

Tyler Toffoli has played 19 games (18 regular season, 1 postseason) with the Jets since being acquired from the New Jersey Devils in March. Toffoli won a Stanley Cup with Los Angeles in 2014 when Jonathan Quick starred in the nets leading the Kings to their second championship. The 31-year-old compared Hellebuyck to Quick in the way they both go about their business.

Very similar to Quicky in the sense that he just comes in and gets the job done and does his job, gets his recovery, gets his work in," said Toffoli.

That's kind of all it is. He doesn't need to be praised in a good way and doesn't need to hear the negatives."

Toffoli experienced his first ever Whiteout last night and enjoyed the energy that the fans brought in the building. From a performance standpoint, Toffoli's line with Sean Monahan and Nikolaj Ehlers were kept off the scoresheet but also didn't give up anything at even strength.

"Sean's line is very reliable at both ends of the ice. They didn't score last night, but they had some really good looks," said Rick Bowness.

“And they really weren't in a lot of trouble in our zone. Of all the lines, they weren't. So, give them credit for that.”

After the Jets beat the Avalanche 7-0 in their final regular season meeting in Denver, the team knew that Colorado would be at their best for Game 1. The Avalanche were a handful thanks in large part to their entries into the Jets end of the ice.

“They got in way too easy, and we didn't pick up that second wave of defencemen coming up. They were able to get in and it wasn't one and done,” said Bowness.

“Sometimes those rushes are one and done, we get the puck and go. It was a rush, a chance, and we were scrambling too much. We didn't end enough plays.”

NHL.com

[Georgiev aims to 'stay positive' for Avalanche heading into Game 2 of Western 1st Round](#)

[Goalie hopes to respond, help even series after allowing 7 in opener against Jets](#)

By Tracey Myers

WINNIPEG -- Alexandar Georgiev was understandably disappointed but also optimistic.

“I feel eventually it is going to come,” the Colorado Avalanche goalie said after allowing seven goals on 23 shots in a 7-6 loss to the Winnipeg Jets in Game 1 of the Western Conference First Round on Sunday. “They scored some really good goals, a couple lucky ones. You have to stay positive and try to find out what happened today and move forward. It's only 1-0 in the series, so I'm looking forward to the next game.”

He'll need to rebound, along with his teammates in front of him, in Game 2 of the best-of-7 series at Canada Life Centre on Tuesday (9:30 p.m. ET; CBC, TVAS, ALT, ESPN).

Avalanche coach Jared Bednar wouldn't speculate following Game 1 when asked if he'd consider a goaltending change Tuesday, although there may not be an option there, anyway.

Backup goalie Justus Annunen was unavailable in Game 1 due to illness (Arvid Holm backed up Georgiev), and the 24-year-old was still sick Monday and did not participate in an optional practice. Annunen, a rookie, was 8-4-1 with a 2.25 goals-against average, .928 save percentage and two shutouts in 14 regular-season games (12 starts). He has played 18 career NHL games, all with the Avalanche, and has never started in the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

Ivan Prosvetov was recalled from Colorado of the American Hockey League on Tuesday, and Holm was reassigned to the AHL. Prosvetov was 4-3-1 with a 3.16 GAA and .895 save percentage in 11 games (eight starts) with the Avalanche this season. The 25-year-old has played 24 career NHL games (16 starts) with the Arizona Coyotes and Avalanche.

Bednar said Monday that Game 2 “is going to be about mental toughness, right? Not just for [Georgiev], for our group.”

“As positive as I'm going to be up here and sitting up here, we didn't win the hockey game, but you have to be able to reset,” Bednar said. “It's about playing tomorrow the best game we possibly can, controlling what we can control, getting better at some of the areas that we have to, continuing to go in the direction that we were in some of the things like offensive output and how heavily involved we were with our forwards,” Bednar said. “If you're dwelling on the past in the playoffs, then you're not setting yourselves up for success the next night, and 'Georgie's' no different. He's got to reset and go play better than he did last night.”

Avalanche forward Ross Colton wasn't worried about Georgiev's ability to come back.

“He's our guy and obviously maybe he wants some back, but that's on us,” Colton said. “We have to do a better job of eliminating the turnovers, boxing guys out in front, not giving them the Grade-A [chances] that they had. That's for us to kind of clean up in front of him.”

Defenseman Josh Manson took responsibility for his miscues, including a pass that deflected off Jets forward Alex Iafallo's stick and right to Vladislav Namestnikov, who scored for a 2-1 Jets lead at 11:57 of the first period.

“You figure out what went wrong and how you can be mentally sharp or sharper,” Manson said. “I did feel like offensively I was contributing, and I was making plays, but really that's not my game. My game that has kept me in the NHL isn't putting points on the board. It's keeping pucks out of the back of the net.”

“I think I need to get back to that a little bit, just getting harder to play against in front of the net and making a little bit better reads and let the offense come from there. I did feel like I played a pretty good game, but [I] made a few mistakes and they ended up in the back of our net.”

The Avalanche were more than happy with their offensive output; their six goals in Game 1 were two more than they had in three regular-season games combined against the Jets. Offense wasn't a problem during the regular season for Colorado, which led the NHL with 3.68 goals per game.

They're confident they can fix what's necessary on the other side.

“I think they've got a good read on what we are, and we've got a good read on what they are,” center Casey Mittelstadt said. “For us, it's just using our forecheck, getting on their [defense] and trying to play with the puck is probably the main objective.”

“I thought we did a good job of it last night and we're going to have to clean up some things defensively, but keep our focus on that and I think we should be fine.”

[**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."

[Sportsnet.ca](https://www.sportsnet.ca)

[How the Jets came out on top in a track meet against the Avalanche \(VIDEO\)](#)

Sean Reynolds and Eric Engels discuss the Winnipeg Jets Game 1 matchup against the Colorado Avalanche and how the Jets found success in a fast-paced game with Sean Monahan's line being the standout line for Rick Bowness by sticking to his game plan.

[Pat McAfee blown away by 'White Out,' but doesn't know where Winnipeg is](#)

By Sportsnet Staff

Pat McAfee has discovered Winnipeg, though he confesses he still could not find it on a map if he had to.

Speaking on his sports program, The Pat McAfee Show, on Monday, the ESPN host referenced Sunday's Stanley Cup playoff game in Manitoba's capital city — and the support fans showed in the Jets' 7-6 win.

"There was a game in Winnipeg that was fantastic," McAfee said. "And Winnipeg, I couldn't even. ... If there was an empty map of Canada and they said, 'Pat, go ahead and pin this particular whatever, mountie, a horse, pin this horse ... and it's big so there's a lot of different options ... I could not guess, for the life of me, where the hell it is."

"But I do know it's a place I'd like to be sometime."

McAfee was impressed with Winnipeg's white-towel-waving effort, aka "The White Out," a tradition in the city for Jets games that dates back to the late 1980s.

"Look at this place going bananas!" McAfee said. "Full white out, full commitment!"

The Jets responded on Twitter by offering to help McAfee find Winnipeg by inviting him to a game.

During the break, McAfee said he'd accessed a map and learned that Winnipeg "is above Minnesota and North Dakota," adding, "I thought it was way left."

[Lowry poised to help Jets assert their style in Game 2 vs. Avalanche](#)

By Eric Engels

WINNIPEG — It seems unfair but also necessary to ask more of Adam Lowry.

He put the Jets on his back in Game 1 of this series, scored two goals to give them a final lead they never relinquished, had a team-leading six hits, took a game-high 19 faceoffs, served a primary penalty-killing role, and spent the majority of his even-strength ice-time trying to shut down the best player in the world, and he deserves all the credit in the world for how he handled most of it.

It's reasonable to ask: What more can Lowry do?

But it's also reasonable to expect him to do more because he's capable of doing more, and because he expects it of himself.

"That's our captain, man," said Brendan Dillon after Sunday's 7-6 win. "He's a gamer."

Knowing that is knowing Lowry didn't go home patting himself on the back for his two individual efforts for crucial goals after he was on the ice for twice as many goals against. The six-foot-five, 211-pound forward probably began thinking right then and there about how can make an even bigger impact in Game 2 to help the Jets assert the style that enabled them to win 52 games in the regular season.

Lowry knows he'll have to do exactly that — with the help of linemates Nino Niederreiter and Mason Appleton — for the Jets to carry a 2-0 series lead with them to Mile High City on Wednesday.

"The offence was nice. Anytime you can get some against those guys, it's great," he said after Game 1. "But what we gave up — I think we spent a lot of time in our end, and we gave some up off the rush ... 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. Maybe at some times in the game we were a little

tentative; we were trying to be so cautious that we were over top, that we were light on the forecheck. And anytime you're light on the forecheck, you allow some easy outlet passes, and that's where their speed can really hurt you.

"Just some quicker reads is kind of where our line will look to be a little better in Game 2."

The Jets, as a whole, have many more adjustments to make.

They can't repeat the same mistakes that led to 46 shots against and many more scoring chances than the Avalanche ultimately capitalized on.

They fed most of the offence the Avalanche generated in Game 1 by not moving the puck quickly enough. And as coach Rick Bowness pointed out on Monday, the Jets didn't support the puck well enough to move it as fast as they typically do.

Those are things that must change from opening faceoff to closing buzzer in Game 2.

Another area of emphasis will be not allowing the Avalanche to gather as much momentum up ice and into Winnipeg's zone.

"It's their entries," said Bowness. "They got in way too easy, and we didn't pick up that second wave of defenemen coming up. They were able to get in, and it wasn't one and done. Sometimes those rushes are one and done, we get the puck and go. It was a rush, a chance, and we were scrambling too much. We didn't end enough plays. We didn't get the puck after that first initial chance.

"Then it's up to us to battle harder to get that puck, get it going north and get it going the other way. We didn't do that well enough last night."

All of that is typically what Lowry's line executes better than any other on the Jets, enabling him to drive it to a 57 per cent share of the expected goals despite starting 64 per cent of its shifts outside the offensive zone during the regular season.

It may not be reasonable to expect Lowry to do as well while having to lead the effort in shutting down MacKinnon, Mikko Rantanen and Zach Parise, but it's not beyond reason to expect him to drive a much better result than the one that saw him and his linemates account for just 29 per cent of the expected goals when they were on the ice at five-on-five in Game 1.

The Jets know he'll do it.

"I think he's just a guy who's been so dialed in his career, and he's just been getting better and better and better and just realizes how important his role is and plays his role to a tee," said goalie Connor Hellebuyck on Monday. "I don't think there's many guys out there that do such a job like that and are so OK with being perfect in their role, if that makes sense. Because I believe that he knows his role and he strives to be perfect in it."

It is Lowry's unwavering pursuit of perfection that has made him such a dependable player in this league and a player the Jets depend on so heavily.

He has been at the heart of their success to this point of the season. And even if he was a big part of their Game 1 win over the Avalanche, you expect him to be an even more central figure in Game 2.

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

Canadian Press

[Jets, Avs goalies reset after wild Winnipeg win in series opener](#)

By Judy Owen The Canadian Press

Connor Hellebuyck made sure he did one important thing while winding down Sunday after the Winnipeg Jets beat the Colorado Avalanche 7-6 in Game 1 of their first-round playoff series.

The favourite to win this season’s Vezina Trophy as the NHL’s top goalie made sure his recovery included replenishing his fluids.

“That was probably one of the most sweatiest games I’ve played in this league,” Hellebuyck said before skipping the team’s Monday optional skate at Canada Life Centre ahead of Game 2 on Tuesday.

“So there’s a few extra things I had to do. But for the most part, it was just slowly winding down and watching highlights or some other games, see what’s going on around the league and just relaxing.”

Hellebuyck didn’t have much time to relax in the first game of the Western Conference best-of-seven series. He faced 46 shots, compared with Avalanche goalie Alexandar Georgiev’s 23.

The teams combined for six goals in the first period and six in the third. It’s the second game in Stanley Cup playoff history to feature two teams combining for at least six goals in multiple periods.

Hellebuyck said he tried to stay on an even keel after the frenzy of the opening period.

Colorado was outshooting the Jets 10-1 before Avalanche forward Valeri Nichushkin fired the puck over the goalie’s blocker at 6:10 to give the visitors a 1-0 lead.

“I’ve been in this league long enough it’s going to be, ‘I need to stop one more than the other guy.’ I turn my mindset to that,” Hellebuyck said.

“Our offence was buzzing, we scored seven. That’s an incredible feeling and our crowd was absolutely insane. What more could you ask for out of a playoff hockey game?”

Georgiev was brief after the game when analyzing how he had played.

“(The Jets) scored some really good goals, a couple lucky ones,” he said. “You have to stay positive and try to find out what happened today and move forward. It’s only 1-0 in the series so I’m looking forward to the next game.”

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Winnipeg’s seven goals tied a franchise playoff record for most in a game.

Avalanche head coach Jared Bednar said post-game that Georgiev’s performance “probably needed to be better.”

On Monday, the coach said Georgiev and his teammates need a bounce-back mindset for Game 2.

“It’s going to be about mental toughness, right? Not just for him, for our group,” Bednar said. “As positive as I’m going to be up here and sitting up here, we didn’t win the hockey game. But you have to be able to reset.”

Avalanche backup netminder Justus Annunen missed Sunday’s game because he was ill. He was still sick on Monday and wasn’t at the rink.

Arvid Holm, who’s never played an NHL game, backed up Georgiev. The Swedish netminder got into 12 games this season with the American Hockey League’s Colorado Eagles. He played two seasons with Winnipeg’s AHL Manitoba Moose affiliate (2021-23). The Jets drafted him in 2017 (167th overall).

Hellebuyck claimed the Vezina in 2020 and was a finalist last year and in 2018.

He played 60 games this past regular season, registering a 37-19-4 record, 2.39 goals-against average and .921 save percentage.

Avalanche forward Zach Parise is very familiar with Hellebuyck’s skills over the course of his 19-season NHL career. He spent nine seasons with Minnesota, including 2017-18, when Hellebuyck and the Jets bounced the Wild out of the playoffs in five games in the opening round.

“From the numbers that (Hellebuyck has) put up this year, he had a great season,” Parise said Monday. “We knew going into the series that will be a great challenge.”

The approach to beating him is the same as with other goalies in the league, added Parise, who confirmed this month that he is retiring after the playoffs.

“As far as rattling (Hellebuyck), you just try to get bodies around there and traffic and make him uncomfortable,” he said.

Both sides liked the ‘whiteout’

Forward Tyler Toffoli joined the Jets at the trade deadline from the New Jersey Devils and experienced his first Winnipeg playoff game Sunday, with its white-clad, roaring sold-out crowd and thousands of similar fans partying outside.

He even looked up at the video scoreboard at the start of the game and saw two fighter jets flying over Winnipeg’s downtown.

“With the planes flying over, I didn’t think it was actually real. I thought it was a video, you know?” Toffoli said. “That was sweet. So, hopefully we can keep the energy up and get a couple more wins.”

Bednar also soaked up the atmosphere from the visitors’ bench.

“I hadn’t been in a playoff atmosphere here yet and that’s as good as it gets,” Bednar said. “It’s a whiteout, the fans are chanting and going crazy and you can feel the energy on the bench.

“It gave me goosebumps as a coach and I think the players were all feeling the same thing and it just forces you to bring your best.”

The Athletic

[How Winnipeg Jets’ Josh Morrissey has grown into a playoff veteran — and proud foodie](#)

By Murat Ates

There was a time in Josh Morrissey’s life before he’d ever experienced a Winnipeg whiteout or scored a game-tying playoff goal.

Back in 2015-16, when he was a young man, still new to the city, Morrissey remembers barely being able to cook for himself.

He’d have his mom Bev and dad Tom over from Calgary, or his girlfriend Margot, and he’d take them to Pizzeria Gusto on Academy Road instead of braving the kitchen at home. He had an ambitious palate and the bad habit of forgetting staple ingredients at the grocery store so when the Jets veterans had recommended their favourite restaurants, Morrissey was keen to listen.

Forget about Morrissey the All-Star, or the 76- and 69-point seasons he’s scored at 28 and 29 years old. Forget about him screaming “Let’s go!” to the Canada Life Centre faithful after he scored to tie Game 1 for Winnipeg — if you can.

Consider Morrissey when he was working hard to turn a Manitoba Moose pro season into an NHL career. Outside of his teammates and hockey connections, he didn’t know a lot of people in the city. In those days, Margot lived in Calgary and flew out to see him when she could. Morrissey would go on to become such good friends with people in Winnipeg that Mark Scheifele became a groomsman when Margot and Josh got married.

In the beginning, though, Morrissey was alone and his kitchen was his enemy.

“There was probably a lot of overcooked chicken and steak if I was cooking,” Morrissey says. “My bigger fails would be having to do multiple trips to the grocery store as I forgot a key ingredient in the meal. Or didn’t realize I didn’t have eggs or milk or butter — some staple that would have been needed to do the cooking.”

Morrissey's development from first-round draft pick to centre stage in the Stanley Cup playoffs hasn't been a straight line. There was early promise, mid-career struggles that ran concurrent with his dad Tom's battle with cancer, and then a resurgence beyond Jets fans' wildest dreams.

Ask Morrissey how he charted his path from eggless, milkless existence to his status as an impact player and he'll tell you about the work he's put in, on and off the ice. He completely revamped his approach to training heading into the 2022-23 season, leading in part to his 76-point explosion and his first appearance in an NHL All-Star Game. He'll also talk about mentorship.

Morrissey was golfing with Scheifele when Jets head coach Rick Bowness called him for the first time in 2022. At first, Bowness just told him to go win his round, and the two reconnected later that day. Instead of leaping into his vision for the Jets, Bowness spent the conversation asking Morrissey what he thought Winnipeg needed.

"We love his creativity and he's a threat out there," Bowness told me before Game 1. "As I told Josh, when I first took the job and I called him, coming in here with Dallas or Tampa, we always used to say 'We've got to know when Morrissey is on the ice.' Much like we're talking about (Cale) Makar on the ice. We always made a point of making sure that we knew where he was. We had that much respect for him. He's got the green light and we'll never take that away from him."

Creativity is a word that means more to Morrissey than you might expect.

For Morrissey, creativity involves the freedom to take calculated risks. To experiment. To fail and then succeed in a new, better way because of the lessons he's learned. Watch him dance at the offensive blue line, walking around defenders, like he did in Game 1, and there is an element of risk there. Morrissey says one of the most important lessons he's learned in his ascension from hungry prospect to franchise cornerstone is knowing when the moment calls for something a little bit different.

He's not just talking about his on-ice play. Morrissey pursues unique experiences in life. Teammates are enchanted by his offseason travels, saying he always picks the best and most interesting places to eat.

"He knows the spots," says longtime partner Dylan DeMelo. "He's dialled in and does a lot of research into it."

This is where a potentially surprising mentorship enters into Morrissey's story.

Let's go back to the young version — the one who overcooked his chicken, didn't know a lot of people in Winnipeg and ordered takeout from Pizzeria Gusto so often he's convinced they knew him by voice.

At Pizzeria Gusto, Morrissey met a restaurant manager named Bobby Mottola — a gregarious, charismatic, hospitality industry professional who'd welcome him in and make sure he got a table and had what he needed.

It's likely that budding Jets stars get unique care at restaurants as a general rule, but Mottola and Morrissey hit it off.

“I did more ordering out and takeout than I did cooking,” Morrissey says of his younger years. “I got to know Bobby, eating in his restaurant fairly frequently or calling in to the point where they probably knew it was me. That was the beginning of the friendship. Bobby would take care of me and check to see if I needed extra food for the house and most of the time I did, because I had no idea what I was doing with my groceries.”

Morrissey is 29 now. He’s firmly entrenched in the Jets leadership group, wears an “A” on his jersey and has four years left on the \$6.25 million AAV contract that made him a cornerstone to build the team around. He wants to retire in Winnipeg — a committed, single-franchise player in an era of freedom and opportunity — and he frequently praises Winnipeg’s community when interviewed by national media.

When Mark Chipman went door-to-door in the city, trying to regenerate goodwill in the face of declining season ticket sales, Morrissey was first in line to go meet Jets fans. He’s not that young man with big dreams and an empty fridge anymore, but Morrissey still credits those first trips to Pizzeria Gusto for giving him his first taste of Winnipeg’s community.

“With the exception of your teammates and people you meet through the game, often you don’t really know too many people in the city (when you’re new)” said Morrissey. “Early on, it almost felt like Bobby almost had me under his wing in a way. When our family would eat at the restaurant, I’m sure my parents felt good about Bobby’s presence — ‘Hey, if you need any food or if he needs anything, I’ll take care of him.’”

That’s why Morrissey was all ears when Mottola approached him about opening a pop-up restaurant in time for the playoffs.

“I’m a big foodie. I have big interests. I’m always travelling and love food,” Morrissey says. “I wasn’t in the position — nor am I now — to be running a restaurant, nor do I know the first thing about doing that. He presented the opportunity to me where we could collaborate: I could help with the menu and it would be a cool way to interact with the city and with Winnipeggers.”

Enter “The 44” — a pop-up restaurant at Hargrave St. Market that will be open throughout the playoffs as well as next season. Morrissey’s No. 1 focus is on the ice — he’s handed things off for now — but he’s been in conversation with Mottola and chef Jesse Friesen for over a year to get things off the ground.

The menu is based on Morrissey’s favourite sporting foods that Mottola and Friesen have taken in creative directions.

“We’re doing prime rib sliders,” Morrissey offers, before explaining the process. “I’d just said ‘sliders’ and they went out with the prime rib and the au jus and the fancy sauce and aioli, all the different stuff where you’re like ‘OK, this went from nice comfort food to being really delicious and a little more elevated.’”

“Or we’re doing a chilli using Canadian Wagyu beef as the base. Again, that’s not something I would have thought of at the store but they do that and it goes from good to amazing. Even our grilled cheese, we’re doing in-house sourdough and local Manitoba cheese, ham from a deli here in the city.”

Morrissey sees this pop-up as one more way to integrate himself into the community of Winnipeg. He says he understands that game tickets are expensive and that there’s a large

number of Jets fans who will be watching at home, so he's proud to have partnered with Skip The Dishes — a company with Winnipeg origins. A percentage of proceeds will go to the True North Youth Foundation, with opportunities for The Dream Factory and other charitable initiatives to benefit in the long run.

"It's been almost 11 years since I was drafted here," Morrissey says. "I've been coming here for a long time and living here for the last nine years. I've really felt like I am part of the city. I've really enjoyed getting to know people, getting to know the DNA of the city. For this, I guess it's always possible to invest in something or be a behind-the-scenes partner and not be connecting with anyone, but this opportunity ... While it doesn't allow a fan to meet me face-to-face, per se, the menu is curated by me. There will be merch available as prizes and through purchase, with some money going to the True North Youth Foundation through Skip The Dishes. Hopefully people feel like this is truly a 'Winnipeg' dining experience."

His mom Bev and wife Margot had a chance to go to "The 44" before Game 1 in Winnipeg and were touched to see Morrissey's vision realized.

Morrissey jokes that Margot is still waiting for him to cook her a proper meal but it's clear he's come a long way since his early days in Winnipeg. He doesn't overcook his chicken anymore — he smokes it, as he was taught by Dustin Byfuglien and Matt Hendricks. He doesn't stifle his on-ice creativity anymore, either — he pushes up ice and takes the calculated risks that help the Jets win.

He's not afraid to show fans his personality, either — and feels that this is one more step in his growing connection with people in Winnipeg.

"It's been exciting for me to show my interests and creativity outside of hockey," he says. "It's fun to show my creativity and personality in a different way on the ice or in the postgame and pregame interviews. You can be creative on the ice — which I love — and I really enjoy that piece. But this is a different space. It's fun to change where your mind is at in your free time while supporting the charities in the city that are close to my heart, starting these playoffs with the True North Youth Foundation. It's cool because there aren't necessarily rules about what you have to do or design — we can do what we want and be creative and hopefully people like it."

[TSN.ca](#)

[7-Eleven That's Hockey: Dreger goes 1-on-1 with Jets' Lowry after thrilling Game 1 win \(VIDEO\)](#)

Darren Dreger speaks with Jets captain Adam Lowry about his mindset going into the series, adjustments the Jets plan to make for Game 2 and the overall hype of the postseason in Winnipeg.

[Dreger details why Avs are going back to Georgiev, Hellebuyck's ability to rebound \(VIDEO\)](#)

TSN Hockey Insider Darren Dreger joins John Lu to discuss why the Avalanche are going back to Alexandar Georgiev in net despite a rough performance against the Jets in the series opener,

Connor Hellebuyck's ability to bounce back for Winnipeg, and adjustments the Jets are looking to make in Game 2.

[Hot or Not: Avs' goaltending will be their demise against Jets \(VIDEO\)](#)

After the Jets scored seven goals in Game 1 against the Avalanche, will Alexander Georgiev sink Colorado's chances of winning the series? Martin Biron joins SportsCentre to answer this and more in the latest Hot or Not.

Denver Gazette

[Avalanche vs. Jets: 3 keys to Colorado victory in Game 2](#)

By Kyle Fredrickson

The Avalanche face the Jets on Tuesday night for Game 2 of their playoff matchup. Here are three keys for Colorado to even their first-round series in Winnipeg.

Stability in net

Will Alexander Georgiev get a chance to redeem himself? Or should the Avs make a goalie change? That decision looms large after Georgiev allowed seven goals in a Game 1 loss. Either way, Colorado must find stability in net to stay in this series. Georgiev posted a miserable .696 save percentage on Sunday.

Eliminate crowd early

The atmosphere at Canada Life Centre — with everyone dressed in white — is unbelievable. Fan noise is incredibly loud and relentless. Coach Jared Bednar admitted it gave him “goosebumps” on the bench to start Game 1. But the Avalanche can lessen Winnipeg’s home-ice advantage with an early goal in Game 2.

Stars step up

Nathan MacKinnon and Cale Makar are the two best players on the ice at any given time. They can flip momentum of a game in a single spectacular play. Colorado needs the best versions of both players to overcome subpar goaltending. Depth is always important. But the Avalanche are led by their stars.

[Avalanche's Casey Mittelstadt makes strong NHL playoffs debut: 'I loved every second of it'](#) [Avs trail Jets, 1-0, in first-round series entering Game 2 on Tuesday in Winnipeg](#)

By Kyle Fredrickson

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — Casey Mittelstadt hardly contained his excitement.

The Colorado Avalanche trade deadline acquisition, in his seventh NHL season, finally debuted Sunday night in the Stanley Cup playoffs for Game 1 against the Jets.

“You could tell he was all smiles on the bench before the game,” coach Jared Bednar said. “I think he handled it the right way. He went out and had one of his hardest working games for us last night.”

The Avs need a spark for Game 2 on Tuesday night after a deflating loss to begin their first-round series. Mittelstadt could provide a match. The second line of Artturi Lehkonen, Mittelstadt and Valeri Nichushkin was a bright spot from Game 1.

Mittelstadt proved relentless until the final buzzer. His third-period goal at the net front — batting the puck mid-air into the net cleaning up a rebound — cut the Avalanche deficit to 7-6 with just 27.1 seconds left in regulation. Mittelstadt also recorded three hits to match the physical requirement of postseason hockey.

“With the energy and the atmosphere overall, I don’t know if I’ve played in a game like that in my career, to be honest,” Mittelstadt said. “I loved it, though. I loved every second of it. I’m definitely excited for (Game 2).”

Bednar added: “(Mittelstadt) was willing to get into the battle, win races, use his legs as a solution offensively, trying to challenge guys off the walls, beat them off the walls, drive pucks into the interior of the ice and made some nice plays. Physically involved in the game.”

The Avalanche traded defenseman Bowen Byram to the Sabres in exchange for Mittelstadt as their long-term answer at second-line center. The 25-year-old Minnesota native is due for a contract extension this offseason as a pending restricted free agent. Right now, Mittelstadt looks like a smart investment.

Colorado needs his production to continue, especially with the first-round absence of Jonathan Drouin (lower-body injury). Mittelstadt is clear minded for what it will take to even the series in Game 2.

“Using our forecheck, getting on their (defensemen) and trying to play with the puck is probably the main objective,” Mittelstadt said. “I thought we did a good job of it last night. We’re going to have to clean some things up defensively. Keep our focus on that and we should be fine.”

Health updates

Defenseman Sam Girard (concussion protocol) skated Monday and is “definitely moving in the right direction,” Bednar said. Girard’s status is unknown for Game 2.

The availability of backup goaltender Justus Annunen is unclear after he missed Game 1 due to illness. Bednar said following optional practice that Annunen is “still sick” but remains with the team in Winnipeg. The Avalanche also recalled goaltender Ivan Prosvetov on Monday from the Colorado Eagles (AHL); sending down goalie Arvid Holm in a corresponding move.

Bednar would not speculate who will start in net for Game 2. But he did comment on starter Alexandar Georgiev’s mindset after getting blasted with seven goals allowed on Sunday night.

“If you’re dwelling on the past in the playoffs, then you’re not setting yourselves up for success the next night, and Georgie’s no different,” Bednar said. “He’s got to reset and go play better than he did last night.”

Winnipeg Free Press

[**Jets working to ensure no repeat of ‘23 meltdown**](#)

By: Mike McIntyre

Here they go again? Not if they can help it.

We take you back to last spring, when the Winnipeg Jets were feeling pretty good about themselves after drawing first blood in the Stanley Cup playoffs. It turned out to be a short-lived euphoria, followed up with four consecutive losses to the Vegas Golden Knights that left head coach Rick Bowness feeling “disappointed and disgusted.”

Naturally, the topic came up Monday, with the local NHL team once again up 1-0 in a best-of-seven opening-round series, this time against the Colorado Avalanche.

“I wouldn’t say more guarded. I think it’s more of just being aware,” Bowness said of how recent history might impact the current mindset of his club, which includes a similar core from a year ago.

Bowness sees huge differences this time around. Winnipeg played a near-perfect Game 1 against Vegas to secure the victory, while the Jets were far from their best in downing the Avalanche 7-6 on Sunday night.

“We won Game 1 last year and then we kind of took our foot off the gas pedal a little bit in the second game. It’s the exact opposite. We need to put our foot on the pedal (in Game 2),” he said, following a team meeting and optional skate at the downtown rink. “Vegas came out at us hard in the second. Well, we’ve got to come out hard (Tuesday).”

Yes, the team that put up a converted touchdown and is three wins away from advancing feels it has a lot more to offer, which is a scary thought for opponents but, perhaps, a sign of how far this group has really come. A win is a win, sure. But the process by which it was achieved must improve.

“First of all, give the Avalanche credit. That’s the best game, by far, that they’ve played against us all year,” said Bowness, whose team went 3-0-0 against the Avalanche and outscored them 17-4 during the regular-season.

“That was by far their most aggressive game. They came at us very hard in all three zones. It wasn’t that we over-analyzed our game. That had nothing to do with it. They came really hard. So, did we respond the way we wanted to respond? No. We didn’t. But give them credit to the way they played and now it’s up to us to make sure we make some minor adjustments and make sure we’re going to answer the bell.”

There’s no shortage of video for coaches to go through with players, given the high-event nature of Sunday’s contest. But Bowness said he’s being careful not to overload his troops with too much, especially since their self-awareness is higher than ever.

“We won’t over-analyze it. Do we have to make some adjustments to the way we played? Absolutely. That’s our job,” he said. “The rest of it has to come from the players. They were very honest (Monday). They know they didn’t play their A-game.”

Cleaning up their own end of the ice is priority one, as the Jets were badly outshot (46-23) and spent way too much time defending. Poor puck management was the primary cause.

"I think we know that we have (can be) a lot better, and we kind of talked about it after the game," said forward Tyler Toffoli. His line with Nikolaj Ehlers and Sean Monahan had a quiet night, as it wasn't on the ice for any goals either for or against.

"It almost felt like we were forcing things and not holding on to pucks when we could've and should've and kind of threw it away," he said. "Little things like that, that I think that the three of us, that's the best part of our game is being able to make plays and holding onto pucks. We'll take it, and we'll move forward and, hopefully, do some better things with the puck and produce (Tuesday)."

Bowness identified a couple key areas of concern: slow puck movement out of their own zone, a lack of puck support from others on the ice, and giving Colorado too much time and space through the neutral zone to get into Winnipeg's end and establish possession without much of a fight.

"It's their entries. They got in way too easy and we didn't pick up that second wave of defencemen coming up. They were able to get in and it wasn't one and done," he said.

Another area of improvement is the penalty kill. Easier said than done, of course. The Jets only took a pair of minor penalties in Game 1, but the Avalanche converted on both power plays in the third period.

"That will be addressed," said the veteran bench boss. "That will be cleaned up, for sure."

[Hellebuyck all about winning](#) **[Stats matter little to Jets' supremely confident netminder](#)**

By: Ken Wiebe

Connor Hellebuyck called it one of the "most sweatiest games" he's ever been a part of — and it had nothing to do with the temperature in the building.

Winnipeg Jets head coach Rick Bowness provided a quick explanation Monday of what his No.1 goalie meant.

"Well, we were what, over six-and-a-half-minutes in our zone. We're normally down around four," said Bowness, noting the Colorado Avalanche hemmed in the Jets more than they're used to, putting additional heat on Hellebuyck.

"So, that's why he's a little sweaty. That would do it."

A quick and cursory look at the stat line from Sunday's 7-6 victory for the Avalanche in Game 1 of the best-of-seven opening-round series, would have left many observers raising an eyebrow and wondering what the goaltending was like.

When you look under the hood and dig in a bit more, one finds Hellebuyck did exactly what he's done so many other times over the course of this latest Vezina-worthy season — and throughout his nine NHL campaigns.

Even if it looked like Hellebuyck had been transformed to the 1980s and was challenging his inner Grant Fuhr (with apologies to the fans of the Jets 1.0 era who were often haunted by the Edmonton Oilers' future hall-of-famer.)

"I was feeling pretty good," said Hellebuyck, who was seated in front of a 2024 Stanley Cup playoff banner in the Matt Frost Media Centre. "Felt like I had a really good game and when the results end up like that, I instantly know, I've been in this league long enough, it's going to be, 'I need to stop one more than the other guy.' I turn my mindset to that."

Game 2 is set for Tuesday (8:30 p.m. CT) before the series shifts to Denver for the next two tilts.

Hellebuyck prefers to avoid the podium when the playoffs begin, though that's simply not possible when you're one of the most important players in a series.

The star goalie of the Jets would rather block out the white noise surrounding himself and his team and just focus on his job, which is to keep the puck out of the net and give his team a chance to win.

Hellebuyck's mindset has been the same since he was chosen in the fifth round of the 2012 NHL Draft from the Odessa Jackalopes of the NAHL and has been on display ever since.

That's not to suggest there hasn't been growth, as Hellebuyck's commitment to the craft and maturity have allowed him to grow into a member of the leadership core.

Part of becoming one of — if not THE — best goalie in the NHL is his belief in himself, and that was on full display once again Monday.

"It's the ones that I think I could've had, which I feel is almost every single one these days. I'm getting picky on myself. But those ones are actually easier to move on (from)," said Hellebuyck.

"There's not much I can do and if you're going to beat me, it's going to be a fluke and that's the way I like it. And a lot of times if I need to get past it, that's something I'll tell myself. 'Oh, that one's a fluke. That's not happening again.' So there are little tricks you learn along the way that help you tick and keep your mind right."

For the sake of context, Hellebuyck was asked a question about being someone who relies on the process and if it was easier to move on from "unlucky" goals.

He's also been rooted in the power of positivity and liking the details of his game and that confidence extends to his teammates, whether during good times or challenging ones.

"He has a tremendous amount of faith in his ability, and I love that about him," said head coach Rick Bowness. "We just love that about him. He's a great goalie. He is. He has that character and that belief in himself to back it up and the players know that. I remember Grant Fuhr, man he'd give up a bad goal, he'd give up three, and it wouldn't bother him a bit.

"Connor is like that. If it's a goal, it's a goal. He'll battle back, (it) doesn't rattle him one bit. Doesn't change the way he plays, doesn't change the way he approaches it. He just keeps battling in there."

The calm demeanour is the type of character trait that is also appreciated.

“Even when he allows, for lack of a better word, a bad goal in his eyes, he’s the type of guy that even if he gets beaten super clean or if it’s an open net or whatever it is, he’s like, ‘Oh man, I should have had that one.’ He’s got an amazing confidence,” said Jets defenceman Dylan DeMelo.

“He knows how good he is and he knows the type of goalie he is for us and how important a piece he is for our squad.”

Jets winger Tyler Toffoli was asked about what he’s learned about Hellebuyck since becoming his teammate. His thoughts immediately turned to Jonathan Quick, the guy who was between the pipes when Toffoli won the Stanley Cup as a rookie with the Los Angeles Kings.

“Very similar to Quicky in the sense that he just comes in and gets the job done and does his job, gets his recovery, gets his work in. That’s kind of all it is,” said Toffoli.

“He doesn’t need to be praised in a good way and doesn’t need to hear the negatives. That’s one thing I definitely notice and obviously Quicky’s a Hall of Famer and still getting it done today.”

Even after allowing six goals in a post-season contest for the first time in his NHL career, Hellebuyck’s numbers at even strength were still stellar since two of the goals allowed came on the power play, and another was on a crazy bounce during an extra-attacker situation for the Avalanche.

Hellebuyck saw no need whatsoever to lean on his .923 save percentage at five-on-five (36 saves on 39 shots on goal). He’s got much bigger things in mind.

“You can if you need to, but this time of year, who cares about stats, really? Stats are going to be something people look at, pick apart and talk about,” said Hellebuyck.

“At the end of the day, did you win or did you not win? We’re going to keep saying that over and over again and you guys are probably going to keep writing about the fine details. But at the end of the day, 16 wins win the Stanley Cup and that’s my goal. So, who really cares about everything else that goes with that?”

Certainly not Hellebuyck, and that’s a big part of what’s made him who he is today and why the Jets should hold the goaltending advantage in virtually any series they play this spring.

[Whiteout gets rave reviews from near and far](#)

By: Mike McIntyre and Ken Wiebe

The Winnipeg Jets seem to have made a new superfan.

That would be Pat McAfee, the former NFL punter turned sports commentator who couldn’t stop raving about the atmosphere inside Canada Life Centre on his wildly successful YouTube show Monday.

“That was fantastic,” he said, admitting he wouldn’t be able to pick out Winnipeg on a map prior to Sunday.

“I could not guess for the life of me where the hell it is, but I do know it’s a place I’d like to be one time. That barn was fantastic.”

Viewers were then shown images of the raucous Whiteout scene as he continued to verbally wave the pom-poms.

“Look at this place going bananas,” he said.

The Jets social media team quickly pounced, inviting to help McAfee “with your Canadian geography if you wanna come out for a game.”

The playoff environment made a great first impression on some of Winnipeg’s newest players who got to experience it for the first time.

“That’s what hockey is all about. It was an awesome game to be a part of,” said forward Gabe Vilardi, the key return in last summer’s blockbuster Pierre-Luc Dubois blockbuster trade with the Los Angeles Kings.

Tyler Toffoli, a pending unrestricted free agent who was added at the trade deadline, said the Whiteout came as advertised. And then some, including the chaotic scenes outside the rink at the downtown street party.

“I definitely notice all of it. You could tell that they’re super involved the entire night,” he said.

“It was just a great experience and with the planes flying over, I didn’t think it was actually real. I thought it was a video, you know? That was sweet. So, hopefully we can keep the energy up and get a couple more wins.”

You know it’s something special when the team that lost is tipping its collective hat.

“With the energy and the atmosphere overall, I don’t know if I’ve played in a game like that in my career, to be honest,” said Avalanche forward Casey Mittelstadt.

“I loved it, though, I loved every second of it. Definitely excited for more. Especially on the road, I think it’s fun to come into someone else’s barn and be the villains. The crowd was awesome, extremely loud.”

And here’s Colorado head coach Jared Bednar, whose words might as well get slapped on Jets promotional materials.

“I love our crowd and the way they get excited for games back at home, I hadn’t been in a playoff atmosphere here yet and that’s as good as it gets,” he began.

“It’s a Whiteout, the fans are chanting and going crazy and you can feel the energy on the bench. It gave me goosebumps as a coach and I think the players were all feeling the same

thing and it just forces you to bring your best. You get two teams that are fully engaged, bringing their best. That's why (you like) watching playoff hockey in this type of atmosphere.

"We were also laughing after we saw a replay on one of the shows of when we were playing in the bubble and there were no fans, just recalling that atmosphere and trying to get up for a playoff game.

"That's what makes playoff hockey the best is the fans getting into it, the city's getting into it and then playing in that type of atmosphere, there's nothing better."

There's plenty of secrecy this time of year around injured players, so take everything with a grain of salt.

However, Jets coach Rick Bowness disclosed that forward Morgan Barron, who suffered a lower-body injury last Tuesday against the Seattle Kraken, is not expected back anytime soon.

"He's not skating yet. So he's probably still another week away," he said.

Bowness was asked if he's considering any lineup changes after Game 1.

"Not at this point. We'll discuss it again later with the coaches. We're going to take our time. We don't want to panic to make any decisions," he said.

The Avalanche remain encouraged they finally got to their game against the Jets for the first time since November, but they aren't satisfied with keeping things close.

"We felt like we played a really good game other than a few mistakes and they capitalized on them," said Avalanche defenceman Josh Manson. "At the end of the day, even if we played a good game, we still lost. It's still one for them in the series."

Any potential lineup changes for the Avalanche won't be known until after the morning skate, since Justus Annunen is still dealing with an illness and defenceman Sam Girard remains day-to-day with an upper-body injury. We do know, however, that winger Jonathan Drouin is out for the series with a lower-body injury suffered last week.

As for how Avalanche goalie Alexandar Georgiev is feeling after giving up seven goals on 23 shots on net on Sunday?

"Yeah, I'm sure not great. It's going to be about mental toughness," said Bednar. "Not just for him, for our group. As positive as I'm going to be up here and sitting up here, we didn't win the hockey game. But you have to be able to reset.

"If you're dwelling on the past in the playoffs, then you're not setting yourselves up for success the next night, and Georgiev's no different. He's got to reset and go play better than he did last night."

Winnipeg Sun

[FRIESEN: Wins, not stats, will define Jets' Hellebuyck](#)

By Paul Friesen

Going into the first round of the playoffs, Connor Hellebuyck handled interview requests the way he takes routine shots from the point.

He kicked them to the corner.

On Monday, the Winnipeg Jets goalie acquiesced.

Taking his seat before a roomful of media types looking for angles, Hellebuyck revisited the Jets' wild 7-6 win on Sunday, the crazy bounces, his ability to stay calm amidst the madness and, yes, his reasons for shunning those with the microphones and notebooks before the series began.

Let's start with Game 1 against the Avalanche, which looked more like the ragged Jets of the past than it did this year's version.

How did he wind down from it?

"Still doing it," he said. "That was probably one of the sweatiest games I've played in this league."

No wonder.

As head coach Rick Bowness pointed out, the Jets spent an inordinate amount of time fumbling around and chasing players in their own zone: more than six and a half total minutes, compared to their average four.

"So that's why he's a little sweaty," Bowness said.

The plan this year was to make him sweat less, and for the vast majority of games it's worked.

Sunday, with its three goals against in the first period, three more in the third, has to be an anomaly if the Jets want to go anywhere.

"I felt like I had a really good game," Hellebuyck said. "And when the results end up like that, I instantly know, I've been in this league long enough, it's going to be, 'I need to stop one more than the other guy.'"

If it wasn't for the "other guy," Colorado's Alexandar Georgiev, the Jets would be licking their wounds from another home playoff loss, facing tough questions about how they could be out-hustled so badly and out-shot 45-23.

And yes, Hellebuyck would be warding off some tough ones, too, about how so many got past him, including a few that rang off the iron and could have added to the unflattering total.

As it is, he could lean on the fact the Avs scored twice on the power play and once with their net empty, meaning his save percentage at five-on-five was just fine.

“This time of year, who cares about stats, really?” he said. “Did you win or did you not win? We’re going to keep saying that over and over again and you guys are probably going to keep writing about the fine details. But 16 wins wins the Stanley Cup, and that’s my goal.

“Who really cares about everything else that goes with that?”

No arguing with that.

There’s also no arguing one of the goals was a fluke that bounced off everything except the kitchen sink on its way past him.

“Those are actually easier to put (behind) me,” he said. “It’s the ones that I think I could’ve had, which I feel is almost every single one these days. I’m getting picky on myself. If you’re going to beat me, it’s going to be a fluke and that’s the way I like it.”

Even when the non-flukes beat him, and there were several of those, Hellebuyck claims they don’t faze him.

Teammates and coaches buy it.

“His mentality is incredible,” is how Gabriel Vilardi put it after Game 1. “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.”

Bowness says he’s actually never seen his goalie outwardly rattled or thrown off his game.

He can give up one or half a dozen, and his reaction is always the same.

“The first time I was exposed to that was last year in Detroit,” Bowness said. “He gave up six, we lost, and I was talking to him after and it was, ‘Yeah, yeah, I was good. I was fine.’ And I love that about him. They’re not going to rattle him. I’m saying to myself, ‘Wow, this guy, that’s unique.’ Most goalies would be beating themselves up.”

In the running for another Vezina Trophy as the NHL’s top stopper this season, Hellebuyck repeatedly says the only thing on his mind is winning the bigger trophy.

Playoff wins are what has kept the 2020 Vezina winner from being universally recognized as one of the best in the business.

But the 30-year-old deflects all of that as outside noise, attention from media as an unnecessary distraction, particularly going into the playoffs.

“Maybe it’s a reporter that’s writing negatively about you, and who needs that right now?” he said. “The only people who really understand what we’re going through is us. I don’t need any of the coverage. The ultimate goal is to win a Cup and I don’t need anyone else to get in my ear.”

One win down, 15 to go.

[**Avalanche coach Bednar got goosebumps from atmosphere in Jets’ arena**](#)

By Ted Wyman

Count Colorado Avalanche coach Jared Bednar among those who were impressed by the Winnipeg Whiteout on Sunday night.

Bednar experienced the playoff atmosphere at Canada Life Centre for the first time on Sunday night when his team lost 7-6 to the Winnipeg Jets in Game 1 of their first-round series and it was the kind of thing that makes the 82-game grind of the regular season all worth it.

"I hadn't been in a playoff atmosphere here yet and that's as good as it gets," Bednar said Monday after his team held a light skate at the downtown arena.

"It's a whiteout, the fans are chanting and going crazy and you can feel the energy on the bench. It gave me goosebumps as a coach and I think the players were all feeling the same thing and it just forces you to bring your best."

The Avalanche brought an offensive onslaught to the fight but weren't able to overcome some defensive lapses and shoddy goaltending as they fell to the Jets in Game 1.

Game 2 goes Tuesday night at Canada Life Centre and Bednar can't wait to be a part of that frenzy one more time.

"You get two teams that are fully engaged, bringing their best," he said. "That's why (you like) watching playoff hockey in this type of atmosphere."

"We were also laughing after we saw a replay on one of the shows of when we were playing in the bubble and there were no fans, just recalling that atmosphere and trying to get up for a playoff game. That's what makes playoff hockey the best is the fans getting into it, the cities getting into it and then playing in that type of atmosphere."

"There's nothing better."

[Jets' Morrissey not ready to compare himself to Colorado's Makar, but he's trying to get there](#)

By Ted Wyman

Winnipeg Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey quickly shuts down any comparisons people make between him and Colorado Avalanche blue-line Cale Makar.

While both are clearly dynamic players, tremendous skaters who can get up into the rush to drive offence and get back quickly to stay defensively responsible, Morrissey can't really put himself in the same conversation as Makar at this point in his career.

"What he's done in his career so far, he's got a Stanley Cup, a Norris Trophy, a Calder, Conn Smythe Trophy," Morrissey said Monday after taking part in an optional skate at Canada Life Centre.

"What he's been able to do is pretty remarkable to say the least. Even though he's a few years younger than me, my offensive growth to my game came a little bit after he came into the league."

“He does a lot of things out there that I’m trying to learn from and I’m just trying to keep up with his torrid pace in his young career, so far.”

Morrissey is now 29 years old and played his eighth full season in the NHL, while Makar is 25 and just completed his fifth season.

Both players are from Calgary and know each other from off-season training there. Both players are drivers of their teams from the back end.

Makar had 21 goals and 90 points this season, Morrissey 10 goals and 69 points.

Where they are most similar on the ice is in their ability to read plays, jump up into the rush, abort when necessary and never lose sight of their primary responsibilities.

“Both elite skaters, elite hockey IQ, elite skills,” Jets head coach Rick Bowness said Monday, a day after the Jets took a 1-0 lead in their best-of-seven with the Avalanche by winning 7-6 at Canada Life Centre on Sunday night.

“They have that innate ability to know when to jump in and when not to jump in. They’re both reliable defensively. But it’s that unique ability, that elite ability to skate. They’re so fast, and their anticipation of when to use their speed. They see a play and they’re gone. You watch how many times that the Avs, as soon as they get that puck, Cale’s gone. The same thing with (Morrissey) and our team. It’s the hockey IQ, it’s the anticipation. And then it’s the skating ability to back it up.”

Avalanche coach Jared Bednar sees a lot of similarities himself. While Morrissey might not have quite the resume that Makar has, he still is a player every opponent has to be aware of at all times.

“Both guys are really well rounded when it comes to their game and the fact that (they’re) really good defenders, being able to play against other teams’ top lines,” Bednar said after his team held an optional skate on Monday at CLC.

“Probably both of them are getting better and better in that area as they mature a little bit as defenders, but then both are clearly dangerous offensive guys.

“Morrissey’s one of those guys for me that, there’s not a whole lot of guys, blue line or otherwise, that can score from distance and I think you saw it Game 1. Both guys find the top corner of the net from the blue-line using screens, being able to hit that part of the net.”

Until last season, Morrissey’s career-high for points in a season was 37. Last year he exploded for 76 and came close to that number again this year.

He has blossomed under the coaching style of Bowness and associate coach Scott Arniel, and while he hasn’t yet won a Norris Trophy as the league’s best defenceman, he’s certainly in the conversation.

Long before Makar came along, Morrissey was taking his cues from players such as Scott Niedermayer, Nicklas Lidstrom, Drew Doughty and Erik Karlsson — all great skaters with tremendous two-way skills and high hockey IQs.

“The No. 1 thing that guys that are offensive players in the league, and produce, possess is hockey sense,” Morrissey said.

“When you look back at the great offensive defencemen in the history of the game, Bobby Orr, Paul Coffey, Phil Housley, Brian Leetch, Niedermayer, Nik Lidstrom, Karlsson, Doughty, Quinn Hughes, Cale Makar, Roman Josi, Viktor Hedman, the commonality would be that all those guys can skate and they all have great hockey sense.”

Clearly, Morrissey has that too.

His ability to skate along the blue-line with the puck and find open teammates is impressive and whether it be forward, backward or sideways, he is the smoothest skater on the Jets roster.

He rarely gets caught out of position, even though he often can be found in the vicinity of the opposition’s goal mouth.

“It’s been really exciting for me to see some results the last few years,” Morrissey said.

He may never reach the heights Makar has already reached, but he’s certainly not going to shy away from trying to get there.

“I feel as though I’m trying to chase him with how great he is and how great he’s been in his career,” Morrissey said.

“Guys like him are pushing the envelope for defencemen in the league and it probably makes us all better as a result.”

JETS SNAPSHOTS: Avalanche bringing more aggressive game and Jets need to respond

By Ted Wyman

Rick Bowness warned for more than a week that people shouldn’t read too much into the fact that the Winnipeg Jets not only swept the season series against the Colorado Avalanche but outscored them 17-4 over three games.

The Avs looked very different in Game 1 of their Stanley Cup playoff series at Canada Life Centre on Sunday night, dominating possession, directing 88 shot attempts toward the Jets net and putting 46 of them on goal in a 7-6 win by the Jets.

Yes, the Avalanche lost, but it certainly wasn’t because their offence was being stifled by a Jets team that had the best defensive numbers in the NHL during the regular season.

Some shoddy defensive play and weak goaltending did Colorado in, but their offence came in waves all night and the Jets were under siege at times.

“That’s the best game, by far, that they’ve played against us all year,” Bowness said.

“That was by far their most aggressive game. They came at us very hard in all three zones. So, did we respond the way we wanted to respond? No, we didn’t. But give them credit for the way they played and now it’s up to us to make sure we make some minor adjustments and make sure we’re going to answer the bell tomorrow.”

The Jets will take a 1-0 series lead into Tuesday’s Game 2 at Canada Life Centre and, to a man, they know they have to be much better if they want to win again.

TAKE ANY WIN

“First and foremost, any win in the playoffs, you’ll take,” Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey said.

“The one thing that our team was able to do in a game that was really a wild one, was I don’t think our confidence wavered, I don’t think we got tight at any point in the game, even when they made it 7-5,7-6.

“I felt like we just kept going. Certainly it wasn’t our best game and we didn’t have our best stuff, but we found a way to win. They brought their A-game and we weathered the storm and found a way to get it done.”

Bowness pointed out that the Avalanche had full control of the puck in the Jets’ zone for six-and-a-half minutes in the game, two-and-a-half minutes more than the average for Winnipeg’s opponents.

“It’s their zone entries,” Bowness said. “They got in way too easy and we didn’t pick up that second wave of defencemen coming up. They were able to get in and it wasn’t one and done. Sometimes those rushes are one and done, we get the puck and go. It was a rush, a chance, and we were scrambling too much. We didn’t end enough plays. We didn’t get the puck after that first initial chance. Then it’s up to us to battle harder to get that puck, get it going north and get it going the other way. We didn’t do that well enough.”

Bowness said no line-up changes are expected for Game 2.

Winger Morgan Barron, who has been out since the second-last game of the regular season with a lower-body injury, has not resumed skating and Bowness said he’ll be out at least another week.

LOWRY AN ‘HONEST’ LEADER

Jets captain Adam Lowry just seems to elevate his game in the playoffs every year and Game 1 was no exception.

Lowry scored a pair of goals, matching the point total of the player he was covering all night, Colorado superstar Nathan MacKinnon (1G, 1A).

It’s the kind of thing you want from your captain, a role Lowry just took over this season with the departure of Blake Wheeler.

Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck said Lowry has many attributes that make him a good leader.

“I think he’s got a very strong opinion, and it’s a good opinion,” Hellebuyck said. “He’s not going to go and just blow smoke up your butt. If you’re looking for some honesty, he’s giving it to you.

“He’s not a liar at all, which is great for a leader. He’s going to give you exactly what you need and what this group needs.”

Lowry has scored 11 goals and has 20 points in 45 career playoff games.

In the playoffs, he has scored 0.24 goals per game and 0.44 points per game.

Over the course of his 702 career regular season games, he has scored 0.15 goals per game and 0.34 points per game.

Like we said, he elevates.

“He showed it with his play (Monday) night,” Hellebuyck said Monday morning.

“He put it all out there, and he’s just a guy who’s been so dialled in, in his career, and he’s just been getting better and better and better, and just realizes how important his role is and plays his role to a tee.

“I don’t think there’s many guys out there that do such a job like that and are so OK with being perfect in their role, if that makes sense. Because I believe that he knows his role and he strives to be perfect in it.”

REMEMBER LAST YEAR

Bowness didn’t need to be reminded that his team won Game 1 in the first round of the playoffs last year against the Vegas Golden Knights and proceeded to lose the next four.

He remembers it well and so do all the players in the locker room who were here last season.

“We won Game 1 last year and then we kind of took our foot off the gas pedal a little bit in the second game,” Bowness. “It’s the exact opposite. We need to put our foot on the pedal tomorrow.

“I wouldn’t say we’re more guarded. I think it’s more of just being aware. It’s how we’re going to approach the second game. Again, Vegas came out at us hard in the second, well we’ve got to come out hard tomorrow. They’ve got to put the foot back on the pedal and get going again.”