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[Practice Report - Travel to Denver](#)

[Morrissey: "We know they feel good playing at home, and we've had some success playing there this year."](#)

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – After missing out on taking a two-game series lead on Tuesday night, the Winnipeg Jets headed to the airport today to depart for Denver.

The Jets fell 5-2 in Game 2 at Canada Life Centre to the Colorado Avalanche but felt they played a better game than the series opener.

"Yeah, we were better last night, we spent a little more time in their zone. And a minute less in our zone," said Rick Bowness.

"So, there's improvements there. But it's something that we have to continue to address and continue to improve."

The discussion continues about line matching against Nathan MacKinnon and Mikko Rantanen in the series as Jared Bednar looks to get the Avs top line away from the Adam Lowry line. But 5-on-5 the Jets are getting the job done. According to Natural Stat Trick, MacKinnon, Rantanen, Zach Parise and Valeri Nichuskin have been outscored 2-1 and the scoring chances-against ratio is 12-10 in favour of Winnipeg.

"They're going to get their chances. So again, it's on-ice awareness. They're elite. Makar and MacKinnon and Rantanen, listen, they're going to create chances. It goes back to the players that are on the ice recognizing," said Bowness.

"Again, when we ice the puck, we have no say in that. Neither do they. So, it's up to the players that are on the ice, recognize who's out there, who they're out against, and play the game the right way."

That confidence will be key when the Jets head to Ball Arena for Game's 3 and 4 where Jared Bednar will have the last change. The Avalanche also had the most wins (31) on home ice this season.

"You're going to get out there, even when we're on home ice, whether it's an icing or just the game flow or whatever it is, everyone is going to play against their top guys. It's about managing the puck and doing the right things, rely on our structure defensively," said Josh Morrissey.

"But, like I said, we can be aggressive as well and make them worry about us. That's going to be our mindset going into Game 3, we can be aggressive as well and push that pace."

The regular season isn't supposed to count for much now that the playoffs have begun, but Winnipeg won both times in Denver this season.

"I haven't watched all 41 of their home games to tell you what they did well in those ones. But in the games, we've played, we changed our focus when we're on the road to maybe not being so worried about the match and just understanding who you're on the ice with," said Morrissey.

"But as players, going out there and just trying to do your job as best you can. We know they feel good playing at home, and we've had some success playing there this year."

NHL.com

**[Avalanche 'know where we stand' entering Game 3 against Jets](#)
[Look to take series lead at home after defeating Winnipeg for 1st time this season in Game 2](#)**

By Ryan Boulding

DENVER -- The Colorado Avalanche are content after splitting the first two games of the Western Conference First Round series against the Winnipeg Jets, and are hoping to take the series lead at home in Game 3 on Friday (10 p.m. ET; MAX, truTV, TNT, ALT, TVAS, CBC).

The 5-2 victory in Game 2 of the best-of-7 series on Tuesday proved to Colorado that it could defeat Winnipeg after getting swept by the Jets in three games during regular-season series and losing 7-6 in Game 1 on Sunday.

"I think, through any series, you have to go play your best and put some doubt in your opponent's minds, right? And that's tough to do, and sometimes it's impossible to do," Avalanche coach Jared Bednar said Wednesday. "Now we kind of know where we stand. We know how difficult it's going to be and how well we're going to have to play to win, and we have belief that we can win there or here.

"It's not always possible to gain the mental advantage, but you've got to go play your best. Again, if you want to advance, you've got to expect to have to play your best to do it."

Colorado got its best throughout the lineup in Game 2, including from goalie Alexandar Georgiev, who made 28 saves after allowing seven goals on 23 shots in Game 1.

"I didn't love the first period," Bednar said of the Game 2 win. "But the way we came out in period two and period three and kind of locked things down on the defensive side, we got the big saves when we needed it. I was really proud of our group to finally get to that adjustment and finish that game.

"And even more important for me, not just our team making the adjustments but 'Georgie' giving up a goal early and then just fighting through and sticking to his process of what he needed to do to have success. Was really proud of him and the way he handled himself in that game under a lot of pressure."

Through two games, the Avalanche have scored 10 goals on Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck, who won the William M. Jennings Trophy for allowing the fewest goals in the regular season (199, including shootout-deciding goals).

Hellebuyck has allowed at least four goals in each game of the series, something he did only 10 times in 60 regular-season games.

"It's important, and to me that was just straight competitiveness and intensity through our entire forward group," Bednar said.

"That's as hard as I've seen our guys play in certain areas of the game, fighting to the net, being relentless on the forecheck, really getting up and getting in attack mode and making it difficult for Winnipeg, and that's going to need to continue."

Colorado has 13 players with at least one point in the series, and defenseman Cale Makar is tied with Edmonton Oilers center Connor McDavid for the playoff lead in points with five, although McDavid has only played one game.

However, forwards Nathan MacKinnon, who finished second in the regular season with 140 points (51 goals, 89 assists) and Mikko Rantanen, who was eighth with 104 points (42 goals, 62 assists) have combined for one goal in the series.

"I think our top guys have been great through two games," Bednar said. "I think our guys are beyond, when they get to the playoffs, they're beyond just like worrying about points. I don't think they're worried about personal accolades at this point."

[Jets 'not satisfied' heading into Game 3 against Avalanche Winnipeg has allowed 11 goals in series after allowing fewest in NHL during regular season](#)

By Tracey Myers

WINNIPEG -- The Winnipeg Jets haven't truly played their game yet in the Western Conference First Round, and that could be bad news for the Colorado Avalanche.

Winnipeg hasn't been that stifling, defense-first team that entered the Stanley Cup Playoffs with a head of steam after winning its final eight games of the regular season.

"The type of group we are, I think we're never really satisfied," Jets forward Kyle Connor said after a 5-2 loss to the Avalanche in Game 2 at Canada Life Centre evened the best-of-7 series.

"If you talk to 'Bones' (Jets coach Rick Bowness), it's always something to improve on. Yeah, we took some strides compared to last game defensively, but at the same time, I thought we had more zone time last game and created a lot more offense. So, at the same time, you're never going to be satisfied completely with your game, you want to strive. That's what makes this group so successful. We look at the hard things. It starts with Bones. He's on us. Even after that first win, he was going over stuff that we can improve on."

The Jets allowed an average of 2.41 goals per game in the regular season, tied for first in the NHL with the Florida Panthers, although Winnipeg allowed a League-low 199 goals (including shootout-deciding goals). The Avalanche, who led the League in scoring 3.68 goals per game, have scored 11 goals in the first two games of this series. The Jets' 5.50 goals against per game average is 15th among 16 playoff teams, ahead of only the Los Angeles Kings, who allowed seven goals in their only game thus far.

Connor Hellebuyck was 37-19-4 with a 2.39 goals-against average, .921 save percentage and five shutouts in 60 regular-season games, ranking in the top five in wins, GAA, save percentage and shutouts among qualified goalies (minimum 25 games). However, in the first two games against the Avalanche, he has allowed 10 goals on 77 shots (5.04 GAA, .870 save percentage).

But as Bowness pointed out, the Jets had chances in the second period, right before Avalanche forward Artturi Lehkonen tied it 2-2, and have to capitalize on those opportunities moving forward.

"We had them hemmed in their zone a little bit at times last night, we didn't take full advantage of it," Bowness said Wednesday. "But you want to go back and nitpick, like it's 2-1 (Jets), we go down, (Connor) hits the post, Gabe (Vilardi) hits a rebound. We need those to go in. And then that last couple minutes, we kind of self-inflicted the problem. So, we correct those and get some more chances and go from there."

The first two games, including a 7-6 win by the Jets in Game 1, were played inside the raucous Canada Life Centre. The Jets will enter an equally crazed atmosphere in Game 3 at Ball Arena in Denver on Friday (10 p.m. ET; MAX, truTV, TNT, ALT, TVAS, CBC).

The Avalanche went 31-9-1 at home during the regular season, had the most home victories of any NHL team, and will get last change.

"Nothing we can do. We're going to win some faceoffs, then we can control it," Bowness said.

The Jets are ready for it all.

"Every team tries to make their home arena a tough place to play and certainly, they've been able to do that this year. With the players they have, maybe their matching (lines). I haven't watched all 41 of their home games to tell you what they did well in those ones. But in the games we've played, we changed our focus when we're on the road to maybe not being so worried about the match and just understanding who you're on the ice with," Jets defenseman Josh Morrissey said Wednesday.

"But as players, you're going out there and just trying to do your job as best you can. We know they feel good playing at home, and we've had some success playing there this year (4-2 win on Dec. 7, 7-0 win on April 13). So, we need to be a confident group going in there on Friday night."

The Jets came away from Winnipeg with a split in the series. They made some mistakes on which the Avalanche capitalized in Game 2, much like the Jets did on Colorado miscues in Game 1. They have some areas they want to clean up, but are confident they can do it.

"We know it's going to be a good crowd in Colorado. We just have to continue to work on our game and continue to find what makes us us," Jets forward Mark Scheifele said Tuesday. "They are a fantastic team over there, so you've got to give them a lot of credit. They did a lot of good things. They blocked a lot of shots, and they made it tough to get anything going (in Game 2).

"That's the fun part of the playoffs. We weren't expecting this to be an easy series. They're a great team over there. We've just got to continue to roll with the punches."

Sportsnet.ca

[Who has been biggest disappointment so far in Stanley Cup Playoffs? \(VIDEO\)](#)

ESPN's Greg Wyshynski joins The Jeff Marek Show to share why he thinks goaltenders Connor Hellebuyck and Jake Oettinger's performances have been the biggest concerns in the playoffs.

Canadian Press

['We feel good about ourselves:' Jets coach Bowness optimistic after Game 2 loss](#)

By Canadian Press

WINNIPEG — Rick Bowness always goes to bed with hockey looping in his mind, but Tuesday night's thoughts weren't all bad for the Winnipeg Jets head coach.

Despite the Jets losing 5-2 to the Colorado Avalanche Tuesday in a Game 2 that evened their first-round playoff series at 1-1, Bowness saw improvements in his team's play from Sunday's wild 7-6 victory.

"We were better (Tuesday) night," Bowness told reporters at the airport Wednesday before the team flew to Denver for Friday's Game 3 and Sunday's Game 4.

"We spent a little more time in their zone and a minute less in our zone, so there's improvements there. But it's something that we have to continue to address and continue to improve."

So is the glass half full or half empty at this point in the Western Conference best-of-seven series?

"Half full, because we feel good about ourselves and we feel we can go in there and win a game," Bowness said.

The Avalanche were the NHL's best home team during the regular season, finishing 31-9-1 at Ball Arena to rank first in home wins.

However, the Jets accounted for two of those losses as they took the season series 3-0, including a 7-0 victory on April 13 and a 4-2 win Dec. 7.

Winnipeg also went 25-13-3 on the road this season and were tied for third in the NHL in road wins.

While regular-season results are usually tossed out the window when the playoffs roll around, Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey said their success in Denver can help a little bit.

"They're a great team, they play well at home," Morrissey said. "But we should have confidence going into that building having gotten a couple of wins there this year. We're a confident team."

Goaltending will likely play a big role in the upcoming games.

“It’s always going to come down to that,” Bowness said. “We can get to the net harder, we can direct more shots at the net.

“I think we still pass up the odd chance to put the puck on the net and crash the net, so we have to do a better job at that.”

Jets netminder Connor Hellebuyck outperformed Avalanche counterpart Alexandar Georgiev in Winnipeg’s Game 1 victory, stopping 40 of 46 shots while Georgiev let in seven goals on 23 shots.

Georgiev rebounded with some key stops in Game 2, turning aside 28 shots. Hellebuyck had 27 saves, got caught behind the net playing the puck leading to a goal by veteran Colorado forward Zach Parise to make it 3-2 late in the second period.

Parise’s marker was the middle goal of three Colorado scored in a span of 5:37 late in the second.

Morrissey said the Jets are capable of more improvement.

“We know we’ve played well in these first two games against a great team,” he said. “We know we can be more aggressive as well and definitely not sitting back and giving them too much respect.

“Certainly, you have to honour their top players and understand how dynamic they are, but at the same time we have a great team. We need to continue to push that aggressiveness.”

ONE FOR THE AGES

When Bowness was behind the bench for Winnipeg’s Game 1 victory, the 69 year old became the oldest head coach in NHL history to win a playoff game.

“No, and I don’t like it,” Bowness said with a laugh when asked if he was aware of the fact and his thoughts about it.

TIME TO CHANGE THE STATS

The Jets don’t have a lot of success in Game 2 playoff matches.

Winnipeg is now 3-8 in franchise history for those second games. Their all-time mark in a Game 3 is 3-7.

FLURRY OF GOALS

Winnipeg’s “whiteout” at Canada Life Centre produced a flurry of goals in the first two games.

The Avalanche (11 goals) and Jets (nine goals) became the first teams to combine for 20 or more goals through the first two games of a Stanley Cup playoff series since the Edmonton Oilers and Calgary Flames combined for 23 during the second round of the 2022 playoffs.

The most in NHL history is 24, recorded by the Minnesota North Stars and Boston Bruins during the 1981 preliminary round.

Winnipeg Free Press

[Jets need to lift game to next level](#)

By: Ken Wiebe

In this high-stakes game of chess between the Winnipeg Jets and Colorado Avalanche, the board hasn't been heavily tilted one way or the other.

That's why the two teams made their way to Denver with the series all square at one game apiece, with Game 3 scheduled for Friday night (9 p.m., CBC, CJOB).

Sure, in the quiet comfort of the coaches' offices, Rick Bowness and Jared Bednar could make the case their club could hold a two-game edge but in those same conversations, they would be astute enough to know they could just as easily be down 2-0, were circumstances a little bit different.

That's the beauty of the Stanley Cup playoffs, a singular moment could grow from a minor piece of minutiae into a turning point in a best-of-seven series.

The Jets won the opener in a topsy-turvy affair that featured multiple lead changes and included 13 goals, finishing with a 7-6 score that was as unexpected as it was exhilarating.

The Avalanche responded with a 5-2 triumph in Game 2 that included withstanding an early push, settling things down and pushing the pace while often dictating the terms of play.

Which team will impose its style of play on Game 3 to take a one-game edge in what is now a best-of-five, with the Avalanche stealing home-ice advantage?

"There are lots of little things both sides are going to look at and that's just the fun chess match that playoffs is," Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey said Wednesday before boarding the plane to Denver. "We've done a lot of good things in these first two games and we're now in a five-game series. Our job is to be ready to go in and bring our best game that we've played yet in Game 3."

That's the thing.

Neither team feels it has truly played its best game yet, though that's probably got more to do with the fact this is basically a coin-flip, pick 'em series that features two clubs with contrasting in styles.

The Avalanche were the highest scoring team during the regular season and they've managed to score 11 goals so far, including one empty-netter, which would be an encouraging sign for them.

The Jets won the Jennings Trophy for allowing the fewest goals in 82 games, but they've been a little too loose at times through 120 minutes of play. On the flip side, scoring nine goals amplifies the depth throughout the lineup that was viewed as a potential differentiator.

Of those nine Jets goals, Morrissey is the only defenceman to score and one other marker came on the power play, with Kyle Connor ripping home a one-timer.

Of the remaining seven goals, Adam Lowry's line has two (with the captain scoring both of them) and the fourth line has a pair (with Vladislav Namestnikov and David Gustafsson finding the back of the net) and the top line has three (two for Mark Scheifele and another at even strength for Connor).

The line of Sean Monahan, Nikolaj Ehlers and Tyler Toffoli have been held off the scoresheet entirely and that can't continue.

"They're going to have to rely on their trust in their teammates and their trust in themselves and hold everybody accountable. And trust in our team game. It's carried us this far, and it's going to have to carry us the next little while."

– Jets head coach Rick Bowness

Ehlers has been driving play throughout the course of the season, Monahan has been a consistent performer since his arrival and Toffoli, who had 33 goals during the regular season, is known for his clutch performances when the chips are down, but he's been a bit too quiet on the offensive side of things.

This isn't pointing the finger at the trio by any means, but they were clicking on all cylinders late in the regular season during the Jets eight-game winning streak and they'll need to get back to that form.

"They're going to have to put some points on the board. They are," Bowness said succinctly on Wednesday. "That's our second line, we expect them to generate some offence."

Speaking of expectations, Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck clearly has another level to reach.

The expected winner of the Vezina Trophy has now allowed 10 goals, compared to nine for much-maligned Avalanche netminder Alexandar Georgiev.

Hellebuyck has enjoyed some shining moments in the series and made some critical saves, there's no doubt about that, but he has the ability to elevate his game considerably and that's what he's going to need to do.

Defensively, the Jets have actually done a really good job against Hart Trophy front-runner Nathan MacKinnon, limiting him to a goal and an assist at even strength and another assist on the power play.

That's what minimizing the damage looks like, though the next challenge includes trying to maintain that while Bednar gets the last change for the next two contests at Ball Arena, where the Avalanche had the best home record in the NHL this season (31-9-1)

Should Bednar be looking to get MacKinnon away from Lowry's line on occasion, that means Scheifele's trio must be on high alert — just like they've been during the head-to-head shifts that have occurred thus far.

"Yup. And then again, they have to be responsible. They all know the right way to play and they have to be just a little more cautious with their puck management and the structure," said Bowness. "And the D have to be fully aware of when to pinch and when not to pinch against those guys because they're just so fast. We can be above them all we want, but they're so quick

laterally and then gone. You end up chasing them. So we'll do the best we can, that's all I know."

Speaking of challenges, when playing at top speed, the Avalanche are a handful for any team to contend with.

The same applies to the Jets when they're on their game.

"We did a better job (in Game 2) with the speed and skill and the pace they can play at, especially their top guys. That's where the structure is very important, being on the same page," said Morrissey. "Forwards, defencemen, goaltender — everybody. Not thinking, but just reacting. There's something to be said, that we have a great team, too. We had a great regular season and we know we've played well in these first two games against a great team.

"We know we can be more aggressive as well and definitely not (be) sitting back and giving them too much respect. Certainly, you have to honour their top players and understand how dynamic they are, but at the same time, we have a great team, we need to continue to push that aggressiveness."

As for the tension that comes with being even instead of holding a two-game cushion in the race to four victories, that's part of the fun of playing at this time of the year.

"They're going to have to rely on their trust in their teammates and their trust in themselves and hold everybody accountable," said Bowness. "And trust in our team game. It's carried us this far, and it's going to have to carry us the next little while."

It's not like this is the first dose of adversity the Jets have faced this season.

"We weren't going to go 16-0 in the playoffs, that's just not how it works," said Morrissey. "We've shown that we've handled adversity well all year. It comes throughout the season in many different ways. You follow us all of the time, you see the different things that we go through as a group.

"We've always risen to the occasion. We've got great leadership, a lot of veteran players and we're a tight group. We're ready to handle the ups and downs of the playoffs and it's always said, but just turning the page and moving on to the next game is the biggest thing."

[Central time zone, 'ugly stepchild of television' says veteran broadcaster](#) **[Numerous factors cause of late starts for Jets games](#)**

By: Ken Wiebe

It is a complicated puzzle, tougher to solve than a Rubik's Cube.

Months of planning are involved, with many moving parts and multiple factors that come into consideration — each presenting its own set of challenges.

When the Stanley Cup playoffs arrive, each and every fanbase among the 16 teams left standing is eager to know the schedule — and often curious why their home team might not be playing at its usual time.

The short answer falls under the category of its complicated.

“It’s something that no other league in North America has the same problem as the NHL,” longtime broadcaster John Shannon said Wednesday. “The strength of this league is what it does in Canada and yet, it creates a huge issue when you’re trying to serve those three masters.”

Those masters Shannon mentioned include three national rights holders for Stanley Cup playoff games, including Rogers in Canada and ESPN and TNT in the U.S.

Making things a bit more interesting this spring is the Stanley Cup playoffs and the NBA post-season got underway at the same time, instead of being staggered.

To make things even more challenging, ESPN and TNT also have national rights for NBA playoff action.

Shannon has worn a wide variety of hats during his career, from working with rights holders on both sides of the border, including a prominent role as executive producer on Hockey Night in Canada to working for the NHL.

So his perspective on the topic is an interesting one.

Several cities feature NHL and NBA playoff team and shared buildings provide another layer of juggling — including Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles, which houses the Los Angeles Kings, Los Angeles Lakers and Los Angeles Clippers, each of which is involved in the post-season.

Toss in previously scheduled concerts, which can’t be rescheduled, and it’s easy to see how tough it is to keep every market happy.

The revenue from those concerts is more important than ever, when the amount of money lost during the pandemic is considered.

There are also some late-season twists and turns that can throw a wrench into the best-laid plans, such as when the Vegas Golden Knights lost to the Anaheim Ducks in the regular season finale and ended up facing the Dallas Stars as a wild-card team instead of finishing third in the Pacific Division and having a first-round date with the Edmonton Oilers.

“Steve Hatze Petros would have been working on this schedule for the last 45 days and it would have been a moving target every day, a change in the standings,” said Shannon. “All of a sudden, on the last day of the schedule, something happens, like the L.A.-Vegas thing and everything gets blown up.

“And then, the expectation is that you’ve got to have a schedule ready and you’ve got to get it out. The networks are phoning (and asking), ‘Where’s the schedule? Teams are phoning (and asking), ‘Where’s the schedule?’ It’s exhilarating, but I’ll tell it’s a thankless task and (Hatze Petros) does a hell of a job.”

“It’s not very nice to say, but the central time zone is the ugly stepchild of television... It happens more to the North-South issue, than it does the East-West issue, and that’s just the reality of where it fits in with market size and with population.”

– John Shannon

As the Winnipeg Jets and Colorado Avalanche see this best-of-seven series shift to Denver for Game 3 on Friday, the times are only set through the weekend, with Game 4 to be played on Sunday afternoon.

Game 5 heads back to Winnipeg, though the puck drop has yet to officially be determined and could depend on how some of the other series are going.

One thing is certain: the Toronto Maple Leafs and Boston Bruins will play Game 5 in Boston, so they will occupy the early slot — so the Jets are likely to have a third late start in the first five games.

Is it optimal for the Jets to have 8:50 p.m. puck drops for home games in April or May?

Absolutely not.

This isn't the league or the networks taking it out on Winnipeg, it's got much more to do than the time zone the Jets are playing in.

On Monday night, the Stars — who frequently feature 7 p.m. starts during the regular season — had an 8:50 p.m. puck drop for their first two games against the Golden Knights as well.

In previous seasons, the Nashville Predators, Chicago Blackhawks and St. Louis Blues dealt with the same time zone issues. That didn't prevent the Blackhawks or Blues from capturing the Stanley Cup or the Predators from reaching the final in 2017.

"It's not very nice to say, but the central time zone is the ugly stepchild of television," said Shannon. "Trust me, I was watching this earlier in the week, Oklahoma City, the No. 1 seed of the Western Conference in basketball, had an 8:50 tip off for the Thunder. It happens more to the North-South issue, than it does the East-West issue — and that's just the reality of where it fits in with market size and with population."

For those wondering why the Jets couldn't stay in the early time slot on Tuesday, since Shannon explained that the Eastern Conference already had a pair of games on the docket in New York City and Sunrise, Fla., so cramming a third game into the early window didn't make a whole lot of sense.

So, the Jets game on Tuesday was played at nearly an identical time as the one in Vancouver involving the Canucks and Nashville Predators.

"It's unfortunate and it's the luck of the draw," said Shannon.

On an unrelated note, the Jets and Avalanche were involved in the wildest game of the early stages of the 2024 Stanley Cup playoffs and ESPN announced that the 7-6 thriller in Game 1 played on Sunday night was the highest-rated first-round game ever shown on ESPN2 (with 1.1 million viewers).

Winnipeg Sun

[Winnipeg Jets looking for more aggression as series shifts to Colorado](#)

By Scott Billeck

Josh Morrissey knows his team has it in them.

"We know we can be aggressive as well and make them worry about us," the Winnipeg Jets blue liner said Wednesday before jetting off to Denver ahead of Game 3 of their first-round series with the Colorado Avalanche on Friday.

Aggression came in spurts during Game 2 on Tuesday night.

But there wasn't much that Colorado had to worry about at the end of a 5-2 victory to even up the best-of-seven series.

Instead, Winnipeg sat back too often at times, sagging when they should have been charging forward.

David Gustafsson's goal 3:15 into the opening frame was a confidence killer for Alexandar Georgiev, or at least it should have been,

Winnipeg's hot start cooled off over the remaining 16:45 of the period, allowing Georgiev time to steady a ship that appeared terminal after Game 1.

"What you see in the playoffs is momentum swings, quick goals, back-to-back lead changes," Morrissey said. "They're a fast team, with some very elite players. And I think we can do a better job of defending that as well as that first game (where) we created a lot of chances with good defensive play and created odd-man rushes with our aggressiveness."

Morrissey's club rode the wave of momentum to the go-ahead goal in the second, with Mark Scheifele executing a moment of magic as he one-handed a centring pass past Georgiev.

And then the momentum swung back in Colorado's favour, resulting in three goals in a little under six minutes.

A couple of bad decisions with the puck, one by Connor Hellebuyck and the other by Nikolaj Ehlers, proved costly.

And there went the game, slipping through their fingers.

"We improved our game last night," head coach Rick Bowness said. "First period, we weren't in any trouble until the last couple of minutes. Their power play came out and gave them some momentum. We didn't give up anything on the rush. So there's big improvements there."

Colorado's were more impactful, with Georgiev and his 28 saves leading the way.

His night was much easier on Tuesday. Part of that was simply him not being nearly as shaky as he was in Sunday's Game 1.

But the Jets let him off the hook.

Winnipeg earned themselves the first two power plays of the game in the opening frame, only to struggle to get themselves set up in the offensive zone, let alone find a shot to put on goal.

Overall, the Jets finished with 12 more attempts and seven more shots than Game 1, but they lacked the finishing polish they had in the series opener.

They could have used some of that from their second line, with Sean Monahan, Tyler Toffoli and Ehlers. For a second straight game, the line failed to find the back of the net.

Ehlers has all the skill and speed in the world to be a game-changer for Winnipeg, but it hasn't been there for him just yet in these playoffs.

"They're going to have to put some points on the board," Bowness said. "That's our second line. We expect them to generate some offence."

A challenge lobbed their way from the head coach.

As Morrissey chose to look at it, it's now a best-of-five series.

The Jets won in Denver twice this season, including their emphatic 7-0 win in Game 80 of the regular season.

"We weren't going to go 16-0 in the playoffs, that's just not how it works," Morrissey said. "We will look at some areas to get better from (Tuesday), look at some things we did well.

"They're a great team. They play well at home. But we should have confidence going into that building, having gotten a couple of wins there this year. We're a confident team. That's just part of the Stanley Cup playoffs. That's what makes it so much fun."

Morrissey chose only to praise the Avs to a point, turning the focus back on his team, one that he said had a great regular season and is feeling good about a lot of their play after two games.

Still, they have to negotiate their first taste of adversity on Friday, something Morrissey said they've proven capable of over the course of this season.

"It comes throughout the season in many different ways," he said. "We've always risen to the occasion. We've got great leadership, a lot of veteran players and we're a tight group. We're ready to handle the ups and downs of the playoffs, and it's always said, but just turning the page and moving on to the next game is the biggest thing.

"We will do what we need to do today ... and start preparing for Game 3."

['Make them worry about us': Jets, Avs, reach series tipping point](#)

By Paul Friesen

They won a game despite giving up six goals, then gave up four more, plus an empty-netter, and lost.

They've limited the damage done by superstar Nathan MacKinnon, but their own second line is pointless.

They're going to Colorado, where they won both games this season, including a 7-0 romp two weeks ago, yet the Avalanche won more home games than any team in the NHL this season.

So, going into Game 3 of their first-round playoff series, is the Winnipeg Jets' glass half-full or half-empty?

"Half-full," head coach Rick Bowness said before hopping a flight to Denver on Wednesday. "Because we feel good about ourselves and we feel we can go in there and win a game."

They should feel that way. That seven-goal shellacking instilled a nice veneer of confidence.

But being outshot 2-to-1 in the first playoff game and dropping the second has probably chipped away at some of it.

As Josh Morrissey said at the airport Wednesday, playoffs are a "totally different animal."

This animal has dragged its claws across the Jets' skin and drawn a trickle of blood.

How Winnipeg reacts in Game 3 is the series' first potential tipping point.

We all know the old playoff proverb: You never want to lose two in a row.

"We've shown that we've handled adversity well all year," Morrissey said. "It comes throughout the season in many different ways. You follow us all of the time, you see the different things that we go through as a group. We've always risen to the occasion."

That's true. You don't finish second in the West by tucking your tail between your legs at the first sign of trouble.

Morrissey's glass is clearly half-full.

The more he talked, the more he gave the impression that he may be just a little tired of hearing how good MacKinnon and the Avalanche are.

Yeah, they have some elite talent. And yeah, they're fast, blah-blah-blah.

"We have a great team, too," Morrissey said at one point. "We had a great regular season and we know we've played well in these first two games against a great team. We know we can be more aggressive as well and definitely not sitting back and giving them too much respect."

Until now, the Avs have pushed the pace and carried the play for longer periods. That has to change.

"Make them worry about us," is what Morrissey suggested the Jets do.

Taking charge of Game 3 would sure reverse the momentum. Of course, that'll be harder to do in the enemy arena, where the opposing coach has better control over who skates against whom.

"Every team tries to make their home arena a tough place to play and certainly, they've been able to do that this year," Morrissey said. "We know they feel good playing at home and we've

had some success playing there this year. So, we need to be a confident group going in there on Friday night.”

They need to be, but are they? Morrissey says the Jets have changed their focus on the road, worrying less about who they’re matched up with. That message comes straight from his coach.

“They have to know who they’re up against,” Bowness said. “And then play the game accordingly. You can’t start yelling from the bench. No one’s going to hear you anyway because the crowd noise.”

There’s no reason to think this is the same team that caved under adversity last season. In fact, there are multiple signs to the contrary.

“We’ve got great leadership,” Morrissey said. “A lot of veteran players and we’re a tight group.”

Now is when that bond has to show.

“They’re going to have to rely on their trust in their teammates and their trust in themselves,” Bowness said. “And hold everybody accountable. Trust in our team game. It’s carried us this far, and it’s going to have to carry us the next little while.”

So half-empty or half-full? Not sure we’ve answered the question. The pouring is still underway.

And if there are leaks, it might not matter.

[Jets' big goaltending advantage seems to have narrowed](#)

By Paul Friesen

The Colorado Avalanche’s supposed Achilles heel supported a good amount of weight in Game 2 of its playoff series with the Winnipeg Jets.

If that continues, the biggest advantage the Jets seemed to have going into this series may have shrunk a tad.

After giving up seven goals in the opener, Avalanche goaltender Alexandar Georgiev was solid in his team’s 5-2 win on Tuesday, out-stopping Vezina Trophy candidate Connor Hellebuyck at the other end.

As always, the men behind the masks will have a lot to say as the series shifts to Denver for Games 3 and 4 on Friday and Sunday.

“It’s always going to come down to that,” Jets coach Rick Bowness said Wednesday. “We can get to the net harder, we can direct more shots at the net. We still pass up the odd chance to put the puck on the net and crash the net, so we have to do a better job at that.”

Georgiev rebounded from an early Jets goal by David Gustafsson and settled into a groove he never found in Game 1, stopping 28 of 30 shots.

"I felt I played pretty good in that moment," the Avs stopper said. "The puck was going to my right side and he gets the rebound to the left and then it bounces back to the right. Kind of a tough position. It's a long game, try and reset ... and trust the process."

The 28-year-old says the fallout from Game 1 was made easier by his teammates.

"They showed so much support to me over the last couple of days," he said. "A very rough first game, obviously. I just felt so much trust in the room from everybody and I appreciate it so much. It helped me reset, to know that they have got my back. I know I'll help them out as well during this playoff. It was huge from them. I appreciate it."

The six-year NHL veteran from Bulgaria also appreciated the Jets crowds.

"I've seen the atmosphere here before on YouTube. It's one of the more fun buildings probably, in the playoffs, the way that they come together, and the whole crowd is white. It's super fun, even though I don't really focus on them.

"But you feel the energy, you feel the atmosphere, you feel how important it is, how much fun those games are."

As much of an advantage as the playoff whiteout is for the Jets, Colorado led all NHL teams this season with 31 home wins.

"It's 100-plus sellouts in a row," Colorado coach Jared Bednar said after Game 2. "Our guys really understand, truly, deeply in their heart, that we have to put our best foot forward and reward our fans for supporting us. And this was a great environment. One of the best I've been in, and I know our building is going to be rocking when we get back home."

JETS KILLER STRIKES AGAIN

Zach Parise's goal in Game 2 gives him four goals in five career playoff games versus Winnipeg.

The 39-year-old former member of the Minnesota Wild came out of semi-retirement to join the Avs around the all-star break for one more shot at a Stanley Cup.

"This is a guy that's come out of retirement, that had multiple options on teams where he could go and he decided to come to us," Bednar said. "He's a guy that is taking one of his last kicks at the can to try and raise the Stanley Cup. We'd love to be able to help him do that."

BIRTH-CERTIFICATE BLUES

With a Game 1 win, Bowness, at 69, became the oldest head coach in NHL history to win a Stanley Cup Playoff game.

Not that he was aware of it.

"No," he said, laughing. "And I don't like it."

Bowness's predecessor with the Jets has also added another notch to his belt.

Paul Maurice, now guiding the Florida Panthers, has become just the eighth head coach to win a playoff game in four different decades.

The only one who's done it over five decades: Scotty Bowman.

TSN.ca

[All In: With series shifting to Colorado, Jets aim to generate more scoring chances \(VIDEO\)](#)

The Jets head to Colorado with their first-round series tied knowing they will have their hands full with an Avalanche team that was the best in the regular season at home. TSN Jets reporter John Lu has more on the series shift and Winnipeg aiming to generate more scoring chances and high danger opportunities.

[The Talking Point: Is Hellebuyck's playoff start cause for concern? \(VIDEO\)](#)

The Avalanche have scored 10 times on Connor Hellebuyck through two games of their first round series with the Jets, which heads back to Colorado tied 1-1. Is Hellebuyck's playoff start cause for concern? TSN Hockey analyst and former NHL head coach Bruce Boudreau weighs in.

The Athletic

[Five keys for the Winnipeg Jets to get back on track against the Avalanche](#)

By Murat Ates

DENVER — I don't think the Winnipeg Jets have wavered in their belief.

I don't think they've been as outclassed by the Avalanche as they were in the first round by Vegas one year ago.

And I don't believe that their goaltending is a concern, even as Connor Hellebuyck wears Game 2 goat horns in the eyes of a vocal contingent of Jets fans.

Great, Murat. The Jets have been outshot 78-53 in the series and they gifted Colorado its game-winning goal in Game 2 and you've got opinions.

Rick Bowness thinks there's more pushback in this group than the one that split the first two games against Vegas last year, and I believe him. The Jets held a media availability on their way to Denver on Wednesday, and he told reporters what Winnipeg needs to do to regain control of the series.

"They're going to have to rely on their trust in their teammates and their trust in themselves and hold everybody accountable. And trust in our team game," he said. "It's carried us this far, and it's going to have to carry us the next little while."

I believe these Jets have that trust in a way that last year's one-win, four-loss playoff Jets didn't.

"Everyone in that room really believes we have a chance to do something special," Josh Morrissey told The Athletic. "Everyone believes we can play and beat anyone. We've had a

great regular season. We've done it this year in a different way, probably, than we ever have in the past. What did it was our depth and our defensive play and our team game. Everyone knows, in the playoffs, that those things are massively important."

Here are five keys for Winnipeg to re-establish itself as the team to beat in its chaotic first-round series with Colorado.

Hellebuyck needs more boring

It seems natural to me that Hellebuyck's giveaway, in concert with Neal Pionk, has become a lightning rod for fans. He finished last year's playoffs with worse numbers than Laurent Brossoit and there are those who believe Hellebuyck needs to steal playoff rounds to be considered among the best of his era.

I believe Winnipeg's biggest concern in this series is about finding ways to control the flow of play — something it's only done in short bursts against a powerful Avalanche team. I expect Hellebuyck to be very good.

But he did hold on to that puck in Game 2 for long enough for chaos to ensue. He prides himself on what he calls a "big and boring" style of play; he'd come up big plenty of times in the first period of Game 2 before making one of the game's least boring, most memorable plays leading to a goal against.

The more boring he can make things look in Denver, the more belief everyone will have in the Jets.

Making the Avalanche worry

Morrissey spoke to reporters at the airport before flying to Denver on Wednesday.

Asked as per usual about handling the matchups with Nathan MacKinnon and Mikko Rantanen, Morrissey acknowledged the importance but then smartly changed the focus.

"Everyone is going to play against their top guys. It's about managing the puck and doing the right things, rely on our structure defensively. But, like I said, we can be aggressive as well and make them worry about us. That's going to be our mindset going into Game 3, we can be aggressive as well and push that pace," he said.

The Jets who beat the Avalanche three times during the regular season were a problem in a way that they're not just at the moment.

Winnipeg simply isn't spending as much time in the offensive zone as it does when it's controlling games. Its defencemen have yet to fully adapt to the playoff pace of Colorado's forecheck, in part because it's been so frenetic and in part because the forwards haven't offered quite enough puck support down low, below the faceoff dots.

"We can support the puck better. We can move it a lot quicker," Bowness said on Monday. "We were slow moving the puck. We didn't have enough quick support on the puck, we just looked very slow with the puck."

You saw it again in Game 2, including Hellebuyck's slowness to get rid of the puck on the play that led to Zach Parise's game-winner.

The Jets' struggles to get the puck moving north are ubiquitous — even Morrissey is looking human — but one wonders if Winnipeg moves away from its third pair. Logan Stanley had a strong finish to his season but his exit numbers are particularly poor, while Dylan Samberg is making more mistakes than usual while playing on his off-side. Nate Schmidt and Colin Miller aren't burners, to be sure, but Samberg-Schmidt had a ton of regular season success while Miller offers a right-handed option if the Jets want everybody playing on their strong side.

To make the Avalanche worry about Winnipeg in earnest, though, it will take a lot more than ironing out roster wrinkles — Winnipeg's forwards will need to do a better job of holding on to pucks in the offensive zone.

Take Morrissey's goal in Game 1. Yes, he's the beneficiary of Gabriel Vilardi's net-front traffic, but count the Avalanche players in front of the net and compare it to the ones above the top of the circles.

Colorado plays a man-to-man defensive zone coverage that allows players to chase their check wherever they go in the zone. Morrissey gets space to work with because Kyle Connor draws MacKinnon away from the net and MacKinnon's linemates get caught up with Brenden Dillon.

Morrissey shoots and scores because of the traffic. Had there been a rebound, the Jets would have been two-on-two in front of the net to fight for it, instead of swamped by Avalanche defenders. But if Winnipeg is able to control the puck at length, stretching the Avalanche zone and drawing defenders to the outside, Morrissey will have passing options in the middle of the ice, too. Or he'll walk the line and do his Cale Makar-esque dance to beat his first man, opening up space underneath.

Every single one of those options takes controlled puck possession, at length, in the Colorado zone, but the Avalanche are getting early stops.

I'm advocating for more Connor wizardry, more Nikolaj Ehlers long routes and more Morrissey greatness at the offensive blue line, but all of those items take puck possession. My read is that the Jets have found an awkward balance of passing off clear-cut opportunities while also shooting early in sequences, going one-and-done because they didn't take the opportunity to stretch Colorado's defence before pressing.

A much smarter person's read is that the Avalanche have gotten progressively better at playing the defence they're supposed to play.

"We got beat to the net in the D-zone a couple of times," said Avalanche head coach Jared Bednar after Game 2. "We got beat to the net off the rush a couple times. That's how they created their scoring chances. It's really that simple. When you tighten the gap on a guy, you've got to beat him back to the net. D-zone, if you go finish the guy in the corner and they move it someplace, you at least have to beat him back to the net and then adjust from there within the structure of our game."

Winnipeg's forwards need to turn their half-chances into full chances by holding on to pucks, stretching Colorado out of its structure and then winning those races to the net again. The Jets have that kind of firepower.

Defending the rush

Colorado has one of the best rush offences in the NHL. The Avs are an elite zone entry team and great at turning those entries into scoring chances.

Not only have they scored a rush goal in both games of the series, they've generated additional offence and scored goals after turning their rush into extended in-zone offence. For an example of the latter, watch MacKinnon curl up after gaining the Jets zone on the play that leads to Artturi Lehkonen's tying goal in Game 2.

MacKinnon doesn't get an assist but he makes the play that gives the Avalanche their opportunity:

"You're assessing their rush as soon as you're in the offensive zone," Dylan DeMelo told The Athletic. "You've gotta start off with your gap, and that's where it starts off the most. Then, once they get the puck, you're already looking: do we have F3, do we not have F3? Who's caught? Where is their slash forward? Where is their forward who doesn't have the puck? You're assessing it all the time, really. Even when you have the puck, you're assessing where they are."

If you're not jargon-savvy, DeMelo's checklist to prepare for the Avalanche rush game might be a bit dizzying at first glance.

In an ideal world, Winnipeg would engage with oncoming Avalanche forwards as soon as possible, stopping rush offence before it started. DeMelo's focus on F3 is one of a defenceman's biggest cues as to how much pressure to apply: If Winnipeg has a high forward ready to come back, it's a lot easier for him to decide to set a tight gap. If not, or if Jets forwards are caught up ice, Winnipeg's defencemen have to back off — a recipe for pain against MacKinnon and Rantanen.

Note that DeMelo is also assessing the Colorado breakout: When he asks where the "slash" forward is, he's talking about an Avalanche forward cutting across the ice to support the puck carrier on his way out of the zone. Defending the rush depends on reading the player's routes before the rush is in full flight.

"The biggest thing is once they get out of the zone, you really see the rush progress and what exactly it's going to be," DeMelo said. "Is it a three-on-two? Is it a three-on-three? Is there a fourth man coming? Can we squeeze, can we be tight, can we force them to dump it in or force them to do something they're not ready for. It starts immediately, as soon as you're out there in the O-zone."

If it were easy, Colorado wouldn't be scoring at least a goal per game this way.

The second line

Tyler Toffoli took the shot that caused the rebound that led to the 2014 Stanley Cup-winning goal. His own shot finished off Montreal's 2021 second-round sweep of the Jets. He has 18 goals and 26 assists for 44 points in 90 career playoff games but none through the first two games against Colorado.

Sean Monahan has 21 points in 32 playoff games but none so far this round. Ehlers has 12 points in 34 playoff games and has had scoring chances in both games of this series but no points. And his giveaway led in part to Josh Manson's breakaway goal in Game 2.

They're also the only line that hasn't been scored against at five-on-five, prompting some praise from the coach.

"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," Bowness said before Game 2. "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."

On paper, the Jets have a second line advantage over the Avalanche. Kevin Cheveldayoff's torrid two years have transformed Winnipeg's roster into one with two viable scoring lines, Adam Lowry's checking line and one of the best fourth lines in the league.

They're not burying the Jets — Colorado is doing most of its damage against other players — but a statement game from the second line would go a long way toward recementing Winnipeg's belief.