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***Practice report - Toffoli returns from illness
Toffoli expected to play vs. Calgary Thursday, Niederreiter out at least a week***

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG- Tyler Toffoli is truly hoping he has paid his dues when it comes to battling the flu.

The Jets forward has had the flu, not once but twice this season and clearly would like to avoid battling with it again. Toffoli returned to the practice ice this morning at hockey for all centre ready to get back it.

"I woke up in the middle of the night and obviously wasn't feeling right. I tried to sleep it off, woke up in the morning and kind of figured I wasn't going to be ready to go and obviously unfortunate," said Toffoli of the illness.

"But it's obviously nice to be at home and resting and watching the guys get a win."

It appears that Toffoli will be playing with Adam Lowry and Mason Appleton against one of his former teams, the Calgary Flames on Thursday night. Rick Bowness said today that Nino Niederreiter will miss at least a week after suffering a cut on the back of his leg Monday against Los Angeles.

"I think I've been around I played with a lot of different guys, and I try not to change my game too much," said Toffoli.

"I think at the end of the day, I'm out there to shoot and create opportunities and create offense and what my game is kind of built on is forechecking, getting the puck back in the ozone and creating opportunities."

The Jets third line has been on their game as of late containing the Eichel line (Vegas), Pinto line (Ottawa) and the Kopitar line (Los Angeles). The trio was especially dominant against the Kopitar line on Monday in a huge win and Mason Appleton expects to pick up where they left off tomorrow with Toffoli replacing Niederreiter.

"Toff is such a smart player; I think he'll be able to read off us really easy. The biggest thing is he's a right-shot and I'm used to playing with two (lefties), so I'm usually finding that side slot on the right side because they can't hit that one-timer as a lefty," said Appleton.

"So, it's kind of going to be me and Toff getting in and out of those holes together. All three of us can go down low and win battles and make easy plays down there."

Lowry, Sean Monahan and Logan Stanley also missed practice this morning. Lowry and Monahan were maintenance so it is expected that they will be on the ice tomorrow against Calgary, but Stanley was the next man up in the battling the flu department.

After the night that Cole Perfetti had on Monday (2G, 1A), he has earned the opportunity to stay in the Jets top six forward group. He will remain with Sean Monahan and Kyle Connor, Mark Scheifele, Nikolaj Ehlers and Gabriel Vilardi will also stay intact.

"Well, yeah. We're not going to take him off that line now. I mean, he's earned it. We told him when you back in, we'll try to get you more ice time with the top six," said Rick Bowness.

"He took full advantage of it, so we'll go right back with it again. Listen, the game is all about adjustments. That's what it is. You see something you like, you let it go. You see something you don't like; you change it. Right now, we'll take a look at this, and we'll go from there."

Winnipeg Free Press

Gash to leg sidelines Jets' Niederreiter

By: Ken Wiebe

They've been one of the constants for the bulk of this Winnipeg Jets season.

A shutdown trio that has also been able to contribute offensively, despite facing some of the toughest competition the opposition has to offer.

But when the Jets host the Calgary Flames on Thursday at 7 p.m. to wrap up a five-game homestand. Adam Lowry and Mason Appleton won't have Nino Niederreiter riding shotgun as he has so many times before.

The Swiss-born forward suffered a skate cut to his leg about eight minutes into the third period of Monday's 4-3 victory over the Los Angeles Kings and he'll be sidelined for at least a week.

"It will definitely be different. We've played the last 60-some, call it 70 games together," said Appleton. "(Niederreiter) got very fortunate with how it ended up playing out for him. Hopefully, he's back soon.

"It will look a little different, but at the same time, we've still got the constant, Adam, in the middle. If it's (Tyler Toffoli) on the left or whoever it is, we'll find a way to work as a unit and create offence and defend hard."

Based on how the Jets skated in Wednesday's workout, Toffoli likely will slide onto the unit after he missed Monday's game owing to illness.

After racking up four goals and six points through his first five games after the trade with the New Jersey Devils, Toffoli has gone through a bit of a dry spell, going six games without a point.

He's a versatile forward and recognizes what is going to be asked of him as he shifts onto the Lowry line.

"I've been around, I played with a lot of different guys and I try not to change my game too much," said Toffoli. "I'm out there to shoot and create opportunities and create offence... what my game is kind of built on is forechecking, getting the puck back and you know, (offensive) zone and creating opportunities."

Jets head coach Rick Bowness explained why he's giving Toffoli the opportunity to fit in with that trio.

“Well, he’s played a lot of left wing and he’s got 30 goals,” said Bowness. “He’s an experienced guy. He’s killed penalties in the league. He’s been in every role in the league... we’ll see what it looks like.

“A guy like Tyler, he has the experience and he knows how to hem teams and top lines in the other zone and hang onto the puck and make high percentage plays with it, so that they are defending and they’re not coming at us on the rush.”

Appleton isn’t the least bit concerned about Toffoli making the adjustment.

“Toff is such a smart player, I think he’ll be able to read off us really easily,” said Appleton. “All three of us can go down low and win battles and make easy plays down there. He’s one of those guys, I feel like, sometimes he doesn’t have the puck on his stick a ton or he’s just milling in the weeds, but he’s such a smart player that he’s always in the right areas and the puck seems to just find him and then it’s in the back of the net just like that. We’ve got to find a way to get pucks to him and let his offensive skill set show.”

Although the Lowry line didn’t score the other night, it did an excellent job of creating extended time in the offensive zone and kept Anze Kopitar’s mostly line in check.

Kopitar scored, however, the goal was generated when Lowry’s trio wasn’t on the ice.

As for Niederreiter, his physical presence and ability to get to the blue paint will certainly be missed for the time being.

“Nino’s probably out for about a week. Hopefully, not longer than that. But he took a pretty good gash in the back of his leg so there’s some stitches in there that are going to require time to heal,” said Bowness. “It could have been a lot worse, had it gone any deeper.”

The other piece of the equation is that Cole Perfetti remains alongside Sean Monahan and Kyle Connor after chipping in two goals (including the game-winner) and three points Monday.

“Well, yeah. We’re not going to take him off that line now. I mean, he’s earned it,” said Bowness. “We told him, when you get back in, we’ll try to get you more ice time with the top six. He took full advantage of it so we’ll go right back with it again. Listen, the game is all about adjustments. That’s what it is. You see something you like, you let it go. You see something you don’t like, you change it. Right now, we’ll take a look at this and we’ll go from there.”

Lowry and Monahan took a maintenance day on Wednesday, while defenceman Logan Stanley was under the weather.

Bowness hinted there could be further changes coming on the blue line, though he didn’t indicate what those might be.

“There were some guys we weren’t happy with their play and there are some other things we didn’t like, so when we see things we don’t like, we make adjustments,” said Bowness.

This is the third and final meeting of the season between the Jets and Flames, who find themselves in next-year country.

“Yeah, it’s never easy for a team to be in that situation,” said Toffoli. “They have a lot of guys that care and watched some of their game the other night and they’re working as hard as they were earlier in the season so it’s not going to be easy and we’ve got to be ready for the test.”

With a win, the Jets can avoid a series sweep and also lock up a playoff spot, since their magic number is down to two.

“I didn’t even know that. It just puts a little peace of mind, I guess. It’s all it really is,” said Appleton. “We’ve been in a playoff spot basically the whole season. When you’re fighting for the seventh and eighth spot and then you clinch, that’s when you get the X beside your name (and feel relief).

“With where we’ve been in the standings all year, we’ve always believed in this group and always thought we were a playoff team and a good playoff team. It’s nice to clinch if we win tomorrow night, but at the end of the day, we knew we weren’t missing the playoffs, so it’s not that big of a deal.”

Winnipeg Sun

[This draw is for dad: Jets' Kyle Connor takes on cause dear to his heart](#)

By Paul Friesen

Kyle Connor isn’t usually involved directly in opening faceoffs, much less ceremonial ones.

As a winger, the Winnipeg Jets’ perennial 30-goal scorer is normally off to the side.

Thursday will be different.

Before the Jets take on Calgary, Connor will be at centre ice for a ceremonial faceoff that’ll mean so much more than who gets the puck to start the game’s first shift.

This draw is for his dad. And his dad’s dad. And for everyone afflicted with Parkinson’s disease here in Winnipeg.

“I first of all wanted to give back to this community,” Connor said in a one-on-one chat after practice, Wednesday. “And have something that I was passionate about that can hopefully make an impact on somebody.”

Connor’s passion for Parkinson’s awareness has a painful back story, beginning when his grandfather died from the disease when he was a kid.

Some 10 years ago, the disease hit the family again when his dad was diagnosed at age 45.

“It was tough to see them go through that battle,” Connor said. “More so my dad. I was younger when my grandpa passed away. It can drastically impact a person’s mobility, the way they communicate. So it was tough dealing with that. And this whole game and charity is just something that hopefully I can raise awareness about.”

Connor’s dad, Joe, was a major influence on him growing up, both as a coach and father, building rinks for his sons to skate in back in the suburbs of Detroit.

He lost his dad to a separate issue nearly three years ago, but his struggle with Parkinson's — as a young adult Connor watched the tremors begin and saw his dad falling asleep a lot — has left a mark on him.

Last summer, he was inspired to do something.

Through connections in his home state, Connor met former Major League slugger Kirk Gibson, a giant of the Detroit sports scene.

Diagnosed with Parkinson's in 2015, Gibson has started a foundation to raise money for a treatment facility there.

"I saw what big impact he made there and I thought maybe I can try to help out this community here which has been so good to me," Connor said. "Hopefully it does something good."

Connor's family back home, including aunts and uncles, take part in a race for Parkinson's.

Here at his home away from home, the 27-year-old has hooked up with Winnipeg's Movement Disorder Clinic to help raise awareness and money for research and treatment.

Jets players often get involved in charities and causes, but when there's such a personal connection to one it takes on a different meaning.

"Obviously our family's been impacted by it a lot," Connor said.

There's currently no cure for Parkinson's. Just some medications that may improve symptoms.

The cause remains largely unknown, but are believed to be a combination of genetic and environmental.

Don't think Connor hasn't looked into that.

"You don't know how much is genetics," he said. "I have two brothers as well and it seems to be more common in males. Honestly, I wish I knew more."

What he does know is there's a stigma around the disease, "that it's an old person's disease."

"But it impacts families so much, too," he said. "He (his father) was 45 when he was diagnosed with it. That's pretty young for it. I still live my life. It's something I don't think you can go about your day-to-day business worrying about. At the same time, I'm aware."

Awareness is what Thursday is all about.

Joining Connor at centre ice will be a local doctor from the Movement Disorder Clinic as well as Winnipegger Tim Hague, who a decade ago won the Amazing Race Canada while dealing with the disease, and a Jets season-ticket holder who's also afflicted.

Connor has met them all. More importantly, he can feel for them all.

After the faceoff, he'll shake their hands, put his work gloves on and get back to his job.

But the disease that's so rocked his family, and many others, has given him a whole different perspective on goals, assists and even losing streaks.

"It sure does," Connor said. "Family always takes priority over everything in my life. I'm sure there's a lot of people that are the same way."

[Saved by the sock: Cut to Jets' Nino Niederreiter could have been worse](#)

By Paul Friesen

The Winnipeg Jet have lost winger Nino Niederreiter for at least a week after he suffered a skate cut in Monday's win over the LA Kings.

Head coach Rick Bowness says it could have been more serious if Niederreiter hadn't been wearing cut-resistant socks.

Article content

"Those socks probably saved him, yeah," Bowness said. "It was a pretty deep gash. It could have been a lot worse, had it gone any deeper. Worst case scenarios, this is probably the best one. And hopefully it's no longer than a week."

Niederreiter was cut right after a third-period faceoff, getting tangled up with the Kings' Adrian Kempe and heading straight down the tunnel, where he collapsed.

Bowness wasn't sure how close the cut came to Niederreiter's Achilles tendon.

Losing him means a change to the only line that's remained virtually intact all season: Niederreiter and Mason Appleton flanking centre Adam Lowry.

"It will definitely be different," Appleton said. "We've played the last 60-some, call it 70 games together. He got very fortunate with how it ended up playing out for him. Hopefully he's back soon."

Taking Niederreiter's spot when the Jets host Calgary on Thursday will be Tyler Toffoli, the trade-deadline acquisition who missed Monday's game due to illness.

Toffoli's replacement that day, Cole Perfetti, scored twice and set up another as the Jets won, 4-3, ending a six-game skid.

Perfetti will stay in, making Toffoli the easy choice to replace Niederreiter.

"He's played a lot of left wing and he's got 30 goals," Bowness said. "He's an experienced guy. He's killed penalties in the league. He's been in every role in the league and he's got 30 goals so we'll see what it looks like."

Of Toffoli's 30 goals, four have come since his trade from New Jersey – in back-to-back games in the middle of March.

He has just one assist in his last seven games.

"I've been around," Toffoli said. "I've played with a lot of different guys and I try not to change my game too much ... what my game is built on is forechecking, getting the puck back and creating opportunities."

Bowness likes to match Lowry's line with opponent's best lines, and that won't change.

"Just watching that game against LA, you saw what a great job Adam's line did, making the Kopitar line play most of their game in their zone," the coach said. "They made that line defend instead of coming at them. A guy like Tyler has the experience and he knows how to hem teams and top lines in the other zone and hang onto the puck and make high percentage plays with it, so that they are defending and they're not coming at us on the rush."

Perfetti will get another chance to play on the second line with Kyle Connor and Sean Monahan, a unit that helped produced all four goals on Monday, while also giving up a pair.

"We're not going to take him off that line now," Bowness said. "He's earned it. We told him when you back in, we'll try to get you more ice time with the top six. He took full advantage of it. The game is all about adjustments. You see something you like, you let it go. You see something you don't like, you change it."

After shuffling each of his defence pairings against the Kings, Bowness says he'll change a few things on the blue line again on Thursday.

"There were some guys we weren't happy with their play and there are some other things we didn't like. So when we see things we don't like, we make adjustments."

X marks the spot

The Jets can clinch a playoff spot with a win over the Flames.

But it wouldn't stop Bowness from pushing his players to reach another level.

"That's the object. Get that as quick as we can," the coach said. "But... going into the playoffs you have to be playing your best hockey. You've got to make sure you're at your top of your game in every area going into the playoffs."

With that in mind, Bowness said there are no plans to begin resting players if and when the Jets clinch.

Appleton agrees stacking up some wins over the last seven games is critical.

"Obviously, you want home ice and we play Colorado there and we have a chance to make up two (points) on them," he said. "You don't want to stare at the standings too much, but every two points is massive right now."

Clinching a spot, he added, is worth a little "peace of mind," but not much else.

"We've always believed in this group and always thought we were a playoff team and a good playoff team," Appleton said. "It's nice to clinch if we win, but at the end of the day we knew we weren't missing the playoffs, so it's not that big of a deal."

Are we having fun, yet?

While finally getting a win lightens the mood, Bowness says it's time to embrace the heat that comes with spring hockey.

"Listen, this is the time of year you have to be at your best. But it's also the time of year you should be enjoying it," he said. "This is what we all sign up for, these pressure situations."

Asked if his team is enjoying it, Bowness laughed.

"After the last game, they better be."

Global Winnipeg

[ANALYSIS: With a few games left, Jets hope to move past recent issues](#)

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

Monday's victory over Los Angeles was certainly a move forward for the Winnipeg Jets, but it was hardly a statement that the team is on the other side of their recent issues.

With seven games remaining in the regular season schedule, and positioning within the Central Division still slightly clouded — at least for a few more games — what the Jets do to follow up their first win in seven drips with intrigue as their week progresses.

Leading up to Monday's game, head coach Rick Bowness was not shy about demanding more from the upper crust of his team, saying, "We certainly need more from certain players."

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And if those in question were the likes of Kyle Connor, Mark Scheifele, Neal Pionk, and to some degree, Josh Morrissey, then the internal edict and public message was duly noted.

Connor and Morrissey both had multiple-point nights, Scheifele was a bull in the faceoff circle at over 70 per cent effective and grinding to win puck battles all night, and Pionk was back to skating, hitting, shot blocking and moving the puck in his over 21 minutes of ice time.

All told, it was without question an encouraging sign, but a singular moment. And if Winnipeg wants to stop limping into the playoffs and even continue a desire for a higher seeding in the division, then they'll need to compound Monday's result without delay.

That's why Thursday's contest with Calgary carries with it an added layer of importance, at the very least to allow Winnipeg to hang on to what they currently have as third-place residents in their division.

Otherwise, the celebration of Monday's win will be brief. And instead of another move forward, the Jets will find themselves trying to side-step more of their recent issues.

[Winnipeg Jets' Nino Niederreiter sidelined by gash from skate](#)

By Russ Hobson Global News

The Winnipeg Jets will be short a forward for the next week or so.

Nino Niederreiter is out for the time being after getting stitches to repair a cut on his leg from a skate.

Niederreiter left Monday's win over the Los Angeles Kings in the third period after taking a skate blade to the back of his lower calf on a faceoff.

"Nino's probably out for about a week," Jets head coach Rick Bowness told reporters after Wednesday's practice. "Hopefully not longer than that. But he took a pretty good gash in the back of his leg, so there's some stitches in there that are going to require time to heal.

"It's a pretty deep gash. It could have been a lot worse had it gone any deeper, so the worst-case scenario, this is the probably the best one."

It would have been a whole different story if Niederreiter hadn't been wearing the cut-resistant socks at the time of the incident.

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"Those socks probably saved him," Bowness said. "Listen, the blades are so sharp out there today, I think every player should be wearing those and the wrist bands as well."

Niederreiter's spot in the lineup will be taken by Tyler Toffoli after he missed their last game with an illness.

He practiced on their third line on Wednesday as Bowness doesn't want to mess with a good thing after the newly-formed second line scored four times against the Kings. So Cole Perfetti will get another crack in the top-six with Kyle Connor and Sean Monahan after his three-point effort.

"I'm not going to take him off that line now," said Bowness. "He's earned it. We told him when you get back in we'll try to get you more ice time with the top-six. He took full advantage of it, so we'll go right back with it again."

The Jets can clinch a playoff spot with a win over the Calgary Flames on Thursday to close out the homestand.