

Winnipegjets.com

[Three things - Jets clinch playoff berth](#)
[Vilardi records first career hat trick in 5-2 Jets win](#)

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – Gabriel Vilardi scored his first career hat trick leading the Winnipeg Jets to a 5-2 win over the Calgary Flames and with the victory, clinched a playoff berth. Nikolaj Ehlers (1G, 1A) and Josh Morrissey (2A) had multi-point nights for the Jets (46-24-6) and Connor Hellebuyck finished with 31 saves. The Jets will play their next four games on the road beginning with the Minnesota Wild on Saturday afternoon.

OFF TO THE DANCE

The Jets are making their sixth postseason appearance since 2017-18 thanks to the win tonight. Unlike last year when the team had to wait until the second to last game of the season, Winnipeg has six games left on their schedule to get prepared for the playoffs.

“It’s nice. We didn’t wait till the second last game of the season like last year. There was never any doubt in my mind that we’d make the playoffs this year,” said Rick Bowness.

“We’ve got a good team here. And we’ve got a good bunch of guys. So, there was never any doubt. It’s nice to put that behind us. And now we push forward.”

HAT TRICK VILARDI

Gabriel Vilardi has had a tough year with battling injuries but when he has been in the lineup he has made a difference. The 24-year-old recorded his first career hat trick and has really helped the power play since his return to the lineup. The Jets scored twice on the man advantage in four opportunities and have gone 3-for-10 in the last three games since Vilardi came back from an enlarged spleen.

“We had what, two power play goals? That’s good. Obviously, we got the five-minute there. I don’t think we scored on that one there, but whenever you get all these power play opportunities, you’ve got to bury,” said Vilardi.

“You have to have that killer instinct and make sure the other team pays for taking all the penalties, right? I think the power play looked good; we had some chances.”

FINDING CONSISTENCY

With a playoff berth 20 minutes away, the Jets buckled down in the third period and made sure that they took care of business. The game was up and down in the opening 40 minutes and Winnipeg really struggle in the second period and allowed the Flames to take over for a long stretch of time.

“I thought in the third, we kind of got to our structure our breakouts and execution of passing were a lot better and obviously getting up by a couple goals and they have to push so that was kind of the story of the third,” said Josh Morrissey.

“But I just thought we did a better job of executing and making cleaner plays.”

[NHL.com](#)

[Vilardi scores hat trick, Jets top Flames to clinch playoff berth](#)
[Hellebuyck makes 31 saves for Winnipeg; Calgary eliminated from postseason contention](#)

By Darrin Bauming

WINNIPEG -- Gabriel Vilardi scored his first NHL hat trick, and the Winnipeg Jets clinched a berth in the Stanley Cup Playoffs with a 5-2 win against the Calgary Flames at Canada Life Centre on Thursday.

"A great night for me, but a better night for the team," Vilardi said. "Make the playoffs. Still got a long way to go. A lot of work that needs to be done still. But definitely a good night."

Nikolaj Ehlers had a goal and an assist, and Tyler Toffoli also scored for the Jets (46-24-6), who have won their past two games after dropping six straight. Connor Hellebuyck made 31 saves, and Josh Morrissey had two assists. Winnipeg remained six points ahead of the Nashville Predators for third place in the Central Division and four points behind the Colorado Avalanche for second.

"There was never any doubt in my mind that we'd make the playoffs this year," Jets coach Rick Bowness said. "We've got a good team here. And we've got a good bunch of guys. So there was never any doubt. It's nice to put that behind us. And now we push forward."

MacKenzie Weegar had a goal and an assist, and Dustin Wolf made 40 saves for the Flames (34-36-5), who have lost seven of eight.

Calgary was eliminated from playoff contention with the loss.

"I thought the effort is what we want to see," Flames coach Ryan Huska said. "Five-on-five, I liked our game. I thought their power play was good tonight. They had a lot of chances off their power play, but I was pleased with the way we came out and played tonight. And it was really a total opposite of our last game (4-2 loss to the Los Angeles Kings on Tuesday) so that's what we need to see."

Weegar gave the Flames a 1-0 lead with a power-play goal at 4:35 of the first period. Jonathan Huberdeau found Weegar in the high slot, and he scored with a wrist shot.

"It [stinks]. I mean, everybody wants to chase the Cup, that's what it's all about," Weegar said. "Some teams are ramping it up right now to go on a big playoff run and some teams are looking out, which is disappointing."

The Jets then scored two goals in a span of 1:57. Vilardi tied it 1-1 on the power play at 12:59 when Kyle Connor set him up with a slap pass, and Ehlers made it 2-1 at 14:56 when Cole Perfetti found him with a cross-slot pass that Ehlers quickly slid under Wolf.

Winnipeg went 2-for-4 on the power play after having gone 1-for-23 in its previous seven games.

"We did a lot of good things," Morrissey said. "You're going to need both (power-play) units down into the playoffs now so it's nice. We didn't execute as well as we probably could have on the five-minute power play, but I don't think that killed our momentum at all. Yeah, I felt like it's nice to see a couple go in and we'll keep working on it to keep trying to make it a strength of our team."

Daniil Miromanov tied it 2-2 at 10:34, deflecting Weegar's point shot.

"Penalties killed us, for sure," Miromanov said. "These guys are the best players in the world and if you get a penalty, they'll punish you. ... Our discipline was slipping away from us. It's really frustrating and everybody's battling so hard and it just [stinks] to lose those games, and I feel like most of the game we have it, and it slips away from us. We have to keep building on that."

Toffoli restored the Jets lead with a power-play goal at 15:35 to make it 3-2.

"[Wolf] played amazing. He plays his heart out every single night," Miromanov said. "We have to help those guys and be ready in the defensive zone."

Vilardi extended it to 4-2 at 8:44 of the third period, batting down Morrissey's shot and banging it in, before scoring into an empty net at 18:56 for the 5-2 final.

"I'm not the coach but I'd say we've got to clean up things," Vilardi said. "We are having breakdowns where I feel we're getting outworked for not a few shifts, but for the whole period and we can't have that. There's definitely parts of the game where we are dominating. You can see it. And then we just kind of lose it. We have to find a way to narrow that down. We're not going to have a perfect 60 minutes but we can't have 20 minutes of having [Hellebuyck] stand on his head. Definitely got to clean things up. We know how good we are when we play to our standards. Gotta clean things up too."

NOTES: Jets center Adam Lowry left the game in the third period after taking a hit from Flames center Kevin Rooney. "He's fine," Bowness said of the Winnipeg captain. "I just talked to him. He's good. He was surprised they put him in that concussion protocol. But he's fine." ... Weegar has eight points (three goals, five assists) during a five-game point streak. ... Weegar's goal was his 19th, leaving him one shy of becoming the first Flames defenseman to score 20 in a season since Mark Giordano (21 in 2015-16). ... Flames forward Andrei Kuzmenko has seven points (four goals, three assists) during a four-game point streak and has scored nine goals in 22 games since he was traded from the Vancouver Canucks on Jan. 31.

Canadian Press

[Winnipeg Jets Clinch Playoff Berth with 5-2 Win Over Flames](#)

By Jim Bender, The Canadian Press

WINNIPEG — Gabe Vilardi's hat trick helped the Jets clinch a berth in the NHL playoffs. And now, he's looking forward to Winnipeg's famous playoff Whiteout.

Vilardi's three goals lifted Winnipeg over the Calgary Flames 5-2 on Thursday before 14,055 fans at Canada Life Centre.

“A great night for me, but a better night for the team to make the playoff,” Vilardi said. “Still got a long way to go, a lot of work that needs to be done still. But definitely a good night.”

Vilardi has seen the Whiteout on TV but never experienced it in person.

“It looks pretty fun,” he said. “I’m excited to be a part of it with them cheering for me. It will be a lot of fun and I’m looking forward to it.”

Vilardi scored his third goal into an empty net with 1:04 left in the game. Nikolaj Ehlers, who had a goal and an assist, and Tyler Toffoli also scored for Winnipeg (46-24-6).

Connor Hellebuyck stopped 31 of 33 shots for the win.

“You play 82 games to try to get an opportunity to be a part of the playoffs and it’s just, I guess, an invitation to the dance,” said Josh Morrissey, who had a pair of assists for the Jets. “It’s exciting to get in and ... just excited to see this building, the Whiteout again and that energy that we all experienced.

“Hopefully, we can get our game in top shape and be ready to hit the ground running.”

MacKenzie Weegar and Daniil Miramanov scored for Calgary (34-36-5). Dustin Wolf made 41 saves for the Flames, who were eliminated from the wild-card race by the loss.

“It sucks,” Weegar said. “I mean, everybody wants to chase the Cup, that’s what it’s all about. Some teams are ripping it up right now to go on a big playoff run and some teams are looking out, which is disappointing.”

Weegar felt bad for Wolf.

“He’s a special goaltender,” he said. “He battles hard, he’s a competitor. He’s a confident kid and they brought it to him tonight.

“He stood tall for us. It’s too bad we couldn’t get that victory for him because I thought he played a really strong game tonight.”

Vilardi scored his second of the game when he pounced on a Morrissey rebound and plopped the puck in the net to give the Jets a 4-2 lead almost midway through the third period.

In the last minute of the second period, Pospisil elbowed Morrissey in the head. After a review demanded by Jets coach Rick Bowness, Pospisil was given a five-minute major for elbowing and a game misconduct instead of the minor infraction originally called. Morrissey had no issue with the hit.

Toffoli had given Winnipeg a 3-2 lead on the power play. With Nikita Okhotiuk off for hooking, Toffoli took a pass from Vladislav Namestnikov and swept the puck past Wolf. Ehlers also assisted.

Earlier in the second, Miromanov scored on a screened shot from the point to knot the score at 2-2.

The Jets took a 2-1 lead less than two minutes after scoring their first goal. Ehlers converted a perfect pass from Cole Perfetti and fired a quick shot past Wolf.

Winnipeg had knotted the score 1-1 on the power play. With the Kevn Ronney off for tripping, Vilardi converted a perfect pass from Kyle Connor alone in front of Wolf. Morrissey also assisted.

Calgary opened the scoring on the power play early in the game. Just 31 seconds after Ehlers took a tripping penalty, Weegar scored on a screened shot from the point.

NOTES — Jets winger Nino Niederreiter is out for about a week after suffering a gash to his leg from a skate during Monday's game against the L.A. Kings ... Toffoli returned to the lineup after missing Monday's match due to illness ... Calgary was without defenceman Joel Handy, who was injured during Tuesday's loss to the Anaheim Ducks ... Connor was just one power play goal away from passing Bryan Little (58) for third on the franchise's all-time list ... Connor, whose grandfather died from Parkinson's disease and whose father was diagnosed with it 10 years ago, took part in the ceremonial puck drop for the Parkinson's Awareness Game.

UP NEXT — The Jets will travel to Minnesota to take on the Wild on Saturday afternoon. The Flames will return to Calgary to host the Edmonton Oilers on Saturday night.

Global Winnipeg

[Vilardi pots hat trick, Jets clinch playoff spot with 5-2 win over Flames](#)

By Kevin Hirschfield & Russ Hobson Global News

For the sixth time in the last seven seasons, the Winnipeg Jets have clinched a spot in the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

Gabriel Vilardi scored his first career hat trick and the Jets (46-24-6) beat the Calgary Flames 5-2 at Canada Life Centre Thursday night to end their five-game homestand on a two-game winning streak.

Nikolaj Ehlers and Tyler Toffoli also scored goals for the Jets who knocked the Flames out of playoff contention with the victory.

Winnipeg becomes the fourth team in the Western Conference to secure a playoff berth.

"It's nice," said head coach Rick Bowness. "We didn't wait until the second last game of the year like we did last year, but there was never any doubt in my mind that we'd clinch that.

"It's nice to put that behind us and now we push forward."

For Vilardi, it'll be his first time experiencing the whiteout.

"I've seen it on the TV," said Vilardi. "It looks pretty fun. I'm excited to be a part of it, obviously with them cheering for me. So it'll be a lot of fun and I'm looking forward to it."

With the victory the Jets match last season's win total, but with six games left to go, there's still plenty of kinks to iron out after just ending a six-game losing streak. They outshot the Flames 17-8 in the first, only to let the Flames back in the game in the second period.

"We get spread out too much," Bowness said. "We make it too easy for the opposition to come at us cause we're spread out. We're not stopping and starting on puck battles. Basically, it comes down to that. We're just making it too easy for the opposition to come at us, and we just take our foot off the pedal for a little bit."

Josh Morrissey was leveled by an elbow from Martin Pospisil late in the second period. He received a five-minute major penalty and a game misconduct and will likely get a call from the league for supplemental discipline.

"Like, in the moment I didn't feel like it was dirty," said Morrissey. "I just felt like I got smoked. That's my fault, but not my fault, but it is part of the game. I just don't want to turn into it. When I watched it after he kinda extends the elbow."

The Jets didn't score on the ensuing five-minute man advantage but finished the night 2-for-4 on the power play.

Jets captain Adam Lowry left the game in the third period after a heavy hit. He was removed from the game by the concussion spotters but Bowness said he's fine and Lowry was surprised to be placed in concussion protocol.

It was the first time the Jets beat the Flames this season after losing the first two meetings.

After going down 1-0 early thanks to a MacKenzie Weegar goal, the Jets bounced back with two goals later in the period, one from Vilardi on the power play and another from Ehlers, his 23rd of the season.

The Flames tied it in the second on a Daniil Miromanov goal, but the Jets struck again with the man advantage before the intermission as Toffoli scored his 31st of the campaign.

Ehlers had an assist along with his goal, while Morrissey picked up a pair of assists for Winnipeg. Connor Hellebuyck made 31 saves for the victory in net.

Colin Miller returned to the lineup after six straight games as a healthy scratch. He replaced Nate Schmidt.

The Jets remain third in the Central Division, four points back of the Colorado Avalanche, who also won Thursday, and still six points clear of Nashville.

Winnipeg now hits the road for four straight games, beginning Saturday afternoon in Minnesota against the Wild. The pregame show begins at 1 p.m. on 680 CJOB with puck drop just after 3 p.m.

Canadian Press

[Perfetti Pots Three Points as Winnipeg Jets Edge L.A. Kings 4-3](#)

By Judy Owen, The Canadian Press

WINNIPEG — Cole Perfetti stayed patient and it paid off.

With his Winnipeg Jets pushing for the playoffs, the 22-year-old forward was a healthy scratch for six of the team's last nine games. Then, on Monday, he replaced an ill Tyler Toffoli on the second line against the L.A. Kings.

The move paid off — Perfetti scored twice and contributed an assist as the Jets edged the Kings 4-3 to snap a six-game losing skid.

"I'm not going to lie, it wasn't easy. It has been tough the last little bit," Perfetti said of sitting out. "I just tried to come to work every day with a positive mindset and be a good teammate.

"If an opportunity presented itself, I just wanted to be ready. An opportunity came tonight, and I just tried whatever I could to seize the moment."

Josh Morrissey added a goal and an assist for the Jets (45-24-6), while Sean Monahan also scored. Kyle Connor registered three helpers.

Morrissey's ninth goal of the season came off a feed from Perfetti.

"It was a great dish," Morrissey said. "(Perfetti) played a great game. Nice to see him using his tools out there and playing with confidence. Great look, and a huge game for us."

Jets head coach Rick Bowness said Perfetti has been working hard with the coaches.

"I did tell him, 'Listen, when you get back in, we're going to give you more time with the top six,'" Bowness said. "That's more his game, so he took full advantage of it. Give him credit for that."

Laurent Brossoit made 25 saves for Winnipeg before a crowd of 13,334 at Canada Life Centre, halting a four-game sellout streak.

Viktor Arvidsson, Kevin Fiala and Anze Kopitar scored for the Kings (38-25-11). Defenceman Vladislav Gavrikov had two assists and Cam Talbot stopped 28 shot.

"We had a lot of guys who played really hard, I thought," Kings interim head coach Jim Hiller said. "(The Jets are) a good team, they were desperate.

"I thought it was a good hockey game both ways. We go down and have a breakaway, they come back and get one. It's that close."

The Jets went on the game's first power play midway through the third period with the score tied 3-3.

Kings forward Trevor Moore went on a short-handed breakaway, but fired wide of the net.

The Jets then went the other way and Perfetti fired a low shot past Talbot two seconds after the man advantage expired.

The goal, his 17th of the season, came at 13:05.

Both teams have struggled recently, with Winnipeg going 0-5-1 heading into the match. The Kings have now lost three straight.

L.A. holds the second wild-card spot in the Western Conference with a three-point cushion on the St. Louis Blues. Winnipeg is third in the Central Division, six points up on the Nashville Predators.

Monday's game was tied 1-1 after the first period and 3-3 heading into the third.

Perfetti flipped in a loose puck at the side of the crease to give the Jets a 1-0 lead 11:14 into the opening frame.

Arvidsson tied the score at 12:30 with a blast from high in the circle.

It was the second goal of the campaign for Arvidsson, who's played just 10 games in an injury-marred season punctuated by back surgery in October and a lower-body injury in late February.

Fiala got the puck rolling in a four-goal second period when he recorded his 25th goal after spinning quickly and firing the puck past a screened Brossoit at 5:48.

A five-minute span later in the period had fans cheering.

Monahan evened the score at 2-2 at the 11:49 mark when a pass from Morrissey went in off his skate.

The Kings broke the tie just over two minutes later with Kopitar's 26th goal of the season from the slot, but Morrissey made it 3-3 at 16:47.

"That game was back and forth for us," Gavrikov said. "Didn't get the result, obviously.

"That's exactly what we're looking for in the next games and just got to move on. Every single game matters for us, every single point has got to matter."

OFFICIAL CHEERS

Ryan Galloway was recognized for officiating in his final NHL game during a third-period stoppage in play.

Players from both teams tapped their sticks on the ice and fans gave the Winnipeg product a standing ovation as he patted his striped shirt above his heart.

Galloway, who had family and friends in the stands wearing striped shirts, has worked more than 1,400 games since entering the league in 2002.

UP NEXT

Kings: Host the Seattle Kraken on Wednesday.

Jets: End a five-game homestand Thursday against the Calgary Flames.

Winnipeg Free Press

[**Brossoit gets Jets' Masterton nod**](#)

[Backup goaltender rides highs and lows to award nomination](#)

By: Mike McIntyre

Laurent Brossoit knew there would be highs and lows in his hockey career. The veteran goaltender is surprised just how extreme the roller-coaster ride has been over the past year.

A pair of major surgeries. An extended stint in the minors. A triumphant return to the NHL. A devastating playoff injury. A Stanley Cup celebration viewed from the sidelines. An uncertain future. A return to familiar surroundings. A new level of performance unlocked.

Now, the Winnipeg Jets' nominee for the Bill Masterton Memorial Trophy — awarded annually to the player who best exemplifies the qualities of perseverance, sportsmanship, and dedication to hockey .

"I'm extremely grateful for the recognition," Brossoit said Thursday of the honour, which was voted on by local chapter members of the Professional Hockey Writers Association. The entire PHWA will vote on the league winner later this spring, with the results announced during the NHL's year-end awards ceremony in June.

There's no question the 31-year-old British Columbia product checks off the boxes required to win the annual award.

It was around this time a year ago that Brossoit was summoned from the American Hockey League, where he'd spent the majority of the 2022-23 campaign toiling away, after the Vegas Golden Knights ran into injury issues in goal.

"It can be a little bleak down there, after having been up for as long as I have," said Brossoit, who had spent the previous four seasons entirely in the NHL but underwent procedures on one of his hips and his abdomen prior to training camp.

"But looking back, hindsight is 20/20, I'm extremely grateful that I went down and I got to shake off all the rust after a surgery and not do it on the big stage, because there were still lots of things I had to get to (in order to) get my game back. It was a good, humbling experience."

Brossoit played a major role in helping Vegas lock up the No. 1 seed in the Western Conference and beat the Jets in an opening-round series — only to suffer a torn groin in the second round against the Edmonton Oilers.

His year was over, with Adin Hill taking the reigns and standing tall as the Golden Knights won the 2023 Stanley Cup last June.

"Having gone down to what felt like rock bottom and then back up to the tippy top, starting for the best team in the league. Then, I was all of a sudden on cloud nine and then it was taken away just like that," Brossoit said of the range of emotions.

"But, to be honest, after another 20/20 hindsight moment. I was still grinding at that point from the surgery. It takes a while for a lot of the compensating patterns to smooth out and I felt like I just had to push the limits of my body just to stay in the spotlight and to take advantage of the opportunity. I got as many miles as I could, I think, with the body last year."

Hill was re-signed for two years at US\$4.9 million per season, while Brossoit was essentially told, “Thanks, and good luck,” as he hit free agency last summer.

Back to Winnipeg he came — on a US\$1.75 million contract — to again serve as the understudy to Connor Hellebuyck, just as he’d done for three seasons prior to joining Vegas for a pair of campaigns.

“It gave me the opportunity to come back here and prove to everyone that I can stay healthy and play at the same level that I was last year,” said Brossoit.

“The whole thing... At the time, it’s very difficult to deal with but it made me so much stronger. I mean, I didn’t know that I could handle as much as I did last year, not even close, so it’s a blessing that I got the opportunity to experience it.”

Brossoit is arguably the top backup in the NHL this year, with a 13-5-2 record over 20 starts (and one relief appearance), a 2.10 goals-against-average and a .925 save-percentage. He points to his time in the AHL, which he had previously experienced in the Edmonton Oilers organization during his first couple pro seasons, as playing a big role.

Brossoit is arguably the top backup in the NHL this year, with a 13-5-2 record over 20 starts (and one relief appearance), a 2.10 goals-against-average and a .925 save-percentage.

“It’s hard to have an ego in that situation cause you’re in the minors and it humbles the crap out of you,” he said. “I’ve always known I have the ability to be one of the best goalies in the world, so I think that was my biggest motivator in not giving up and making sure I take advantage of every day to get healthy.

Brossoit said he was “shocked” to learn he’d been nominated for the Masterton, which was won by former Golden Knights teammate Robin Lehner in 2019 following his well-documented battle with bipolar disorder and substance abuse.

“I’m not even going to put myself in the same category as (Lehner) because he’s been through quite a lot more than I have. But to have seen that, and to have been able to talk to him, his resiliency was really motivating for me,” said Brossoit.

“You should have seen all he was playing through. Seeing that, any time you’re playing through injury or pain or fatigue or whatever the case may be you can look to those kinds of moments and experience and think, ‘Someone else has gone through far worse.’ He was very motivating for me.”

Brossoit will once again be an unrestricted free agent this summer, and there’s a strong chance a team other than Winnipeg will make him an offer he can’t refuse. With Hellebuyck now locked up for seven more years, the path to a No. 1 job is now blocked for Brossoit.

“It’s been a blessing to be here. Of all the places I could have come to after a year like last year, I’m pretty happy that it was here,” said Brossoit.

“It’s a lot of familiar faces, a lot of familiar teammates and staff and what not. The familiarity provided a lot of comfort which provided a lot of healing. I was coming into the season off that injury and to be able to have that home feel helped the process quite a bit.”

His passion for the game, something he admits was wavering at times last season, has been rekindled now that both his body, and his mind, are at full health.

"I'm enjoying the game again and the results are starting to take care of themselves and I'm feeling better on the ice. I'm feeling better consistently. It's not good days and bad days. I'm feeling like the same goalie every day," Brossoit said.

"I don't have to do as much prep before or as much stuff after. I can stay out later on the ice and work on specific things. I'm just enjoying the game and blessed that I've got to this point where I feel like I can put my foot on the gas."

[Vilardi's first hat trick powers Jets past Flames 5-2 Winnipeg clinches playoff spot](#)

By: Ken Wiebe

X marks the spot for the Winnipeg Jets.

By virtue of a 5-2 victory over the Calgary Flames on Thursday night at Canada Life Centre, the Jets have punched their ticket to the Stanley Cup playoffs.

The Jets, who improved to 46-24-6, have six games left in the regular season to try and catch the Colorado Avalanche (who are four points up) for second place in the Central Division.

This is merely the first step in the process, though it's an essential one for the Jets to get to where they want to go.

It's the sixth time in seven seasons the Jets have advanced to the postseason.

"You play 82 games to try and get an opportunity to be part of the playoffs. It's an invitation to the dance," said Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey. "We still want to get our game right over the next six games. We've been giving ourselves opportunities. If you talk to guys that have long careers and the more opportunities you can give yourself, the better. But we want our game to be in top shape heading into the first game of the playoffs, so we can try and make a run. It's exciting to get in. I'm just excited to see the White-Out again and the energy that we all experience."

Jets head coach Rick Bowness was happy the chase didn't go on as long as it did last spring.

"It's nice. We didn't wait till the second last game of the season like last year. There was never any doubt in my mind that we'd make the playoffs this year," said Bowness. "We've got a good team here. And we've got a good bunch of guys. So there was never any doubt. It's nice to put that behind us. And now, we push forward."

The Jets closed out the home stand with a record of 2-2-1 and they'll open a four-game road trip against Central Division opponents on Saturday afternoon at 3 p.m. at Xcel Energy Center against the Minnesota Wild.

"I'm not the coach, but I'd say we've got to clean up things," said Jets forward Gabriel Vilardi, who paced the offensive attack with three goals and finished with nine shots on goal. "We are

having breakdowns where I feel we're getting outworked for not a few shifts, but for the whole period and we can't have that. There's definitely parts of the game where we are dominating. You can see it. And then we just kind of lose it.

"We have to find a way to narrow that down. We're not going to have a perfect 60 minutes but we can't have 20 minutes of having Bucky stand on his head. Definitely got to clean things up. We know how good we are when we play to our standards."

Here's a closer look at what transpired:

1 The power play – It was a sluggish start to the first period for the Jets, who gave up a power-play marker to MacKenzie Weegar to fall behind 1-0. But after minor penalties to Flames forwards Walker Duehr and Kevin Rooney, the Jets got a boost as they evened the score with a power play marker of their own with 10 seconds left in the minor to Rooney. That goal featured a perfect slap pass by Kyle Connor to Vilardi for a nifty redirection. Vilardi added a pair of goals in the third period — including an empty-netter — to complete his first career hat trick and he's up to 19 goals in 41 games this season.

"It's cool. A great night for me, but a better night for the team," said Vilardi. "Make the playoffs. Still got a long way to go. A lot of work that needs to be done still. But definitely a good night."

Vilardi set a career-high with 23 goals last season and would likely have shattered that mark were it not for all of the time lost to injury (which is 36 games, for those of you scoring at home).

2 The hit – Flames forward Martin Pospisil is having himself a solid season with nine goals and 21 points in 56 games and he's earned a bit of a reputation as a feisty player who throws big hits and gets under the skin of the opponent. Pospisil scored a goal on a deflection, but he was ejected from the game with 43.2 seconds to go in the second period for elbowing Morrissey. Pospisil was originally given a minor penalty on the play, but after the officials huddled together, a major was assessed and the play was reviewed. After the review, the major penalty was upheld and Pospisil was given a game misconduct. Pospisil left his feet on the hit and his elbow made contact with the head of Morrissey, who was lucky he wasn't injured on the play.

"It is what it is. They upgraded to a five and that's their decision. We'll see if anything comes from it," said Morrissey. "I missed a pass up the wall about five seconds earlier, which I would have completed and then that wouldn't have happened. So that's kind of how I see those things."

"In the moment, I didn't feel like it was dirty. I just felt I got smoked and it's my fault. It's part of the game. When I watched it after, he kind of extends the elbow. Thankfully, it just kind of grazed my chin. Obviously, he's got a history and the elbow was the part I feel was the reckless part of it. The league will look at it. He's got a couple of suspensions and he's a young guy in the league, so it's not the best to be losing money like that."

Pospisil has some history with the Jets, as he caught Cole Perfetti with a blindside hit during a preseason game on Sept. 27. Pospisil received a match penalty for attempting to injure. Last month, Pospisil got a three-game suspension for boarding Seattle Kraken defenceman Vince Dunn. The Jets were unable to extend their lead during the major penalty.

"That was the right call. Good on the refs to take a look at it and change their call," said Bowness. "I think the linesman called it. That's their job to watch out for those things as well. It was the right call. Good on them to make that change."

3 The return (s) – Tyler Toffoli was back in the Jets lineup after sitting out Monday’s game against the Los Angeles Kings with an illness. Toffoli skated on a line with Adam Lowry and Mason Appleton and got involved offensively almost immediately. He had scoring chances on each of his first two shifts, then found the back of the net in the second period when his pass intended for Vladislav Namestnikov went in off the stick of Flames defenceman Rasmus Andersson and the skate of Weegar. For Toffoli, it was his 31st goal of the season and his 10th power play marker – which matched his career high. Toffoli had gone six games without a point and seven without a goal, so this was a welcome development for him. He finished with six shots on goal and seven shot attempts in the contest.

“He made a great play to (Appleton) in the first period. In the second period, you can tell he’s a natural goal scorer because, from the bench, he’s coming down on his off wing and he knows exactly where to put that puck and he just missed that far top shelf,” said Bowness. “You also see his poise with the puck. He knows when to release it. He doesn’t panic with his shot. He’s not forcing it. He waits for the opening to develop and then it’s on the net. That’s why he’s got 31 goals.”

Jets defenceman Colin Miller also jumped into the lineup after sitting out the past six as a healthy scratch. Miller was effective on the third pairing with Dylan Samberg and got a bit of time on the penalty kill when Neal Pionk was serving a penalty. Miller finished with just under 12 minutes of ice time and had two hits and one blocked shot.

4 The explanation – Following the morning skate, Bowness shed a bit of light on one of the reasons Jets forward Cole Perfetti saw his ice time reduced when he was moved to the fourth line.

“He hit the wall for a little bit. We all recognized it, he recognized it. He’s the first to admit it. But there does come a point where you’ve got to give him another opportunity. We know he’s got a great hockey IQ. And he’s got good hands, good vision,” said Bowness. “It’s (about) staying in the game, it’s staying in the fight. When he gets in trouble he doesn’t stop, he roams and he takes himself away from the play. If you watch the last game, he stopped and started when he needed to stay in the fight for the puck. That was a big improvement. And also defensively in OUR zone. You’re not going to score points every game, but you can’t be responsible for goals against every game. If you’re going to score and you offset it, that’s fine. So he’s improved his defensive play. He’s stopping and starting, that’s big, because then you’re in the fight, you’re not chasing the game all over the ice. Those are the two big things we were looking for.”

Perfetti got another shot in the top-6 on Thursday and chipped in another assist, feeding Nikolaj Ehlers for the go-ahead goal late in the first period.

After going through a stretch of one goal and two points in 23 games, Perfetti has two goals and four points during his past two games.

5 Extra, extra – Bowness said Jets captain Adam Lowry was pulled from the game by the concussion spotter in the third period after he took a shoulder to the jaw from Rooney.

“I just talked to him. He’s good,” said Bowness. “He was surprised they put him in that concussion protocol. But he’s fine.”

Connor Hellebuyck made his 56th start of the season on Thursday and with six games left before the playoffs begin, the Jets goalie is on track to hit 60 for the fifth time in his nine-year NHL career. Hellebuyck finished with 31 saves as he improved to 33-19-4 for the season.

The healthy scratches for the Jets were defencemen Nate Schmidt and Logan Stanley and forwards Rasmus Kupari and David Gustafsson.

Winnipeg Sun

[Goalie Brossoit nominated for Masterton Trophy after roller-coaster ride with Golden Knights and Jets](#)

By Ted Wyman

Sometimes Laurent Brossoit can barely believe the circuitous, hilly, bumpy route that has been his career path.

Never has it been more rife with wild highs and lows than over the last 18 months, during which he recovered from hip surgery, spent time in the minors, played in the playoffs for the Vegas Golden Knights, got injured again, eventually got his name on the Stanley Cup and then signed with the Winnipeg Jets for the second time in his career.

From those low moments of spending time in the minors to now, when he's in the midst of a stellar season as the Jets' backup goalie, the 31-year-old Brossoit has shown the kind of fortitude and ability that should help him land a bigger role with an NHL team next season.

"A roller coaster of a year, having gone down to what felt like rock bottom and then back up to the tippy top, starting for the best team in the league," Brossoit said Thursday at Canada Life Centre ahead of a Jets game against the Calgary Flames.

"Then, I was all of a sudden on cloud nine and then it was taken away just like that."

For his efforts over the last year, Brossoit was voted as the Jets' nominee for the Masterton Trophy by the Winnipeg chapter of the Professional Hockey Writers Association.

The Masterton Trophy is awarded annually to the NHL player who best exemplifies the qualities of perseverance, sportsmanship and dedication to the game.

"I was shocked," Brossoit said.

"I never even considered myself for it. I don't really think about such things, but I think it's great. I'm extremely grateful for the recognition."

Each chapter of the PHWA selects one player from the team they cover as a nominee for the honour, which will be presented during the NHL Awards in June.

Brossoit played for the Jets for three seasons (2018-19 to 2020-21) before spending two seasons with the Golden Knights.

Last season, he returned from off-season hip surgery in November, only to find himself being sent to the minors, where he played 23 games with the Henderson Silver Knights.

“It can be a little bleak down there, after having been up for as long as I have,” Brossoit said. “But looking back, hindsight is 20/20, I’m extremely grateful that I went down and I got to shake off all the rust after surgery and not do it on the big stage, because there were still lots of things I had to do to get my game back.

“It was a good, humbling experience.”

Brossoit was recalled late in the season and wound up making a big impact with the Golden Knights. He started 10 games down the stretch and went 7-0-3 with a 2.17 goals against average and .927 save percentage.

He started in the first round of the playoffs — against the Jets of all teams — and led the Golden Knights to a 4-1 series win, outperforming Winnipeg star Connor Hellebuyck throughout the series.

But after starting the first eight games of the playoffs, Brossoit got hurt again, injuring his groin, and was never able to get back. He watched as Adin Hill start the rest of the way and helped the Golden Knights win the Stanley Cup.

“I got as many miles as I could with the body last year and, obviously, not the final result I wanted in terms of starting at the end but at least it gave me the opportunity to come back (to Winnipeg) and prove to everyone that I can stay healthy and play at the same level that I was last year,” Brossoit said. “At the time, it’s very difficult to deal with but it made me so much stronger. I mean, I didn’t know that I could handle as much as I did last year, not even close, so it’s a blessing that I got the opportunity to experience it.”

Brossoit signed back with the Jets in the off-season, at the time perhaps thinking there would be an opportunity to start given the uncertainty surrounding Hellebuyck’s future at the time.

When Hellebuyck signed a long-term contract extension just prior to this season, Brossoit knew he would be a backup again and set out to make the most of the situation again.

He has started 20 games for the Jets this season and has a sparkling 13-5-2 record with a team-best 2.10 GAA, a .925 save percentage and two shutouts.

It would be shocking if he doesn’t earn a healthy contract and a chance to play more somewhere in the NHL next season, after becoming a free agent on July 1.

“I proved that, playing without pain and all of a sudden, instead of working every day to keep my head above water, I’ve been able to work on my craft,” Brossoit said.

“That’s been so fun, to be honest. I’m enjoying the game again and the results are starting to take care of themselves and I’m feeling better on the ice. I’m feeling better consistently. It’s not good days and bad days. I’m feeling like the same goalie every day.

“I’m just enjoying the game and blessed that I’ve got to this point where I feel like I can put my foot on the gas.”

Brossoit clearly still has big aspirations in the NHL and may well get his chance next season. Plenty of teams are going away from riding one goalie all season to platoon situations and there should be plenty of opportunities for a player such as Brossoit.

He has no qualms about his situation in Winnipeg though. He's close friends with Hellebuyck and many other players in the organization and feels at home in a Jets' uniform.

"It's been a blessing to be here," he said. "Of all the places I could have come to after a year like last year, I'm pretty happy that it was here.

"It's a lot of familiar faces, a lot of familiar teammates and staff and what not. The familiarity provided a lot of comfort, which provided a lot of healing. I was coming into the season off that groin injury and to be able to have that home feel helped the process quite a bit."

[BILLECK: Vilardi's wisdom will benefit Jets as they head into the playoffs](#)

By Scott Billeck

Gabriel Vilardi did a lot of his talking on the ice on Thursday night.

But when he got off of it, fresh off of his first career NHL hat trick in Winnipeg's 5-2 win over the now-eliminated Calgary Flames, the Jets forward had some wisdom for the assembled media.

"I'm not the coach but I'd say we've got to clean up things," Vilardi said, moments after his team clinched a playoff berth. "We are having breakdowns where I feel we're getting outworked for not a few shifts, but for the whole period and we can't have that."

Vilardi wasn't popping champagne bottles in Winnipeg's dressing room. No one was. It looked and smelled like any other game.

Sure, this team is heading to the postseason for the sixth time in the past seven seasons, but Vilardi wasn't focusing on that.

He spent little oxygen on it, calling it a good night for himself and a better one for the team.

But his honesty is what stood out.

"Still got a long way to go," he said. "A lot of work that needs to be done still."

It wasn't long ago that this room would look a little different after a game like Thursday's.

It would have more of a "look at what we did" feel and less of a "this is only the beginning" vibe.

Vilardi wasted little time pointing to Winnipeg's flaws, some evident during the win over Calgary.

"There's definitely parts of the game where we are dominating, you can see it," he said. "And then we just kind of lose it. We have to find a way to narrow that down. We're not going to have a perfect 60 minutes but we can't have 20 minutes of having (Connor Hellebuyck) stand on his head. Definitely got to clean things up. We know how good we are when play to our standards. Gotta clean things up, too."

That's an admission from Vilardi that the team didn't play to its standards, even in victory.

A span during the second period saw Calgary dominate the Jets, outshooting them 15-4.

With Winnipeg up 2-1, Calgary tied it after Neal Pionk got caught on a two-minute shift and Mark Scheifele's line couldn't find a way to get the puck to safety.

"We get spread out too much and make it too easy for the opposition to come at us because we're spread out," head coach Rick Bowness said. "We're not stopping and starting on puck battles. Basically, it comes down to that. We're just making it too easy for the opposition to come at us and we just take our foot off the pedal for a little bit.

"Every team in this league, regardless, is a good team, and they're fighting for their lives (on Thursday) to keep the thing alive. It's more on us taking our foot off the pedal. That's something we've been dealing with for... Yeah. And we're going to continue to keep pushing."

Getting outshot in a stretch of the second period by a lowly Flames team that had lost seven of eight coming into the game is one thing.

If they allow that against Nathan MacKinnon and the Colorado Avalanche — Winnipeg's likely first-round combatant — it's an entirely different animal.

Vilardi was well aware of this. Bowness, too. And anyone watching on over the past couple of months knows that as well.

Thursday was a step forward for this team, just like Monday was when they bested the Los Angeles Kings.

The power play looked much improved, with Vilardi spearheading that effort.

Still, the Jets couldn't make the Flames pay on an extended 5-on-3 in the second, and failed to score during the five-minute major following Martin Pospisil's ejection for elbowing Josh Morrissey in the head.

Those moments could make or break a series against Colorado and whoever else they may face in the playoffs.

And that's what Vilardi was talking about.

The work is only beginning, and the Jets have six games left to fine-tune their game before glaring errors lead to an ended season.

- It felt like Bowness overthought the Cole Perfetti-to-Nikolaj Ehlers connection that led to Winnipeg's second goal of the game. It was a great play, no doubt. But it didn't necessitate a line change, putting Ehlers back on the second line and Kyle Connor back on the top line with Scheifele, something that doesn't work that well.

- Indeed, the plan backfired after Scheifele's line, with Connor on it, was caught out on the game-tying goal in the second. Bowness ditched the idea soon after. "We didn't like it so we moved them back."

- There are six games left here. Let the lines breathe a little. Let them find some chemistry. Let them work out the kinks. The micromanagement, at times, seems to lead to self-inflicted problems.
- Adam Lowry has played all 44 playoff games. Mark Scheifele is the franchise leader in playoff goals (19) and ranks second in points (32) behind Blake Wheeler (39).
- Lowry's fine, by the way. Kevin Rooney lit Lowry up in the third, a questionable hit that hit Lowry high and went uncalled. The concussion spotter pulled Lowry but everything checked out, Bowness said. On the hit, Bowness kept it short: "We'll leave it at that."
- Connor Hellebuyck owns every postseason win in franchise history (17).
- Rick Bowness can become the oldest coach to win the Stanley Cup at 69, a year older than Scotty Bowman, who won his last at 68.

[Gabriel Vilardi hat trick helps Jets punch playoff ticket, eliminate Calgary Flames](#)

By Scott Billeck

They didn't exactly bash the door off of its hinges over the last little while, but they didn't stumble through the back this season either.

And while it hasn't always looked pretty, for the sixth time in the past seven years, the Winnipeg Jets are playoff-bound after becoming the eighth team to clinch a berth to the post-season dance Thursday night at Canada Life Centre.

Gabriel Vilardi notched his first career hat trick, Nikolaj Ehlers and Tyler Toffoli also scored, and Connor Hellebuyck made 31 saves as Winnipeg improved to 46-24-6 via a 5-2 win over the Calgary Flames.

"A great night for me, but a better night for the team," Vilardi said. "Make the playoffs. Still got a long way to go. A lot of work than needs to be done still. But definitely a good night."

The loss for Calgary ended their slim hopes of playing beyond April 18.

The Jets, meanwhile, earned their spot in 76 games this year, five fewer than the 81 it took last season to ensure the Whiteout will make an appearance in Winnipeg this spring.

"It's nice," head coach Rick Bowness said. "We didn't wait till the second last game of the season like last year. There was never any doubt in my mind that we'd make the playoffs this year. We've got a good team here. And we've got a good bunch of guys. So there was never any doubt. It's nice to put that behind us. And now we push forward."

Winnipeg's first-round opponent is yet to be determined. They sit third in the Central Division, four points back of the Colorado Avalanche in second and seven back of Dallas for first.

MacKenzie Weegar opened the scoring on the power play for Calgary before Vilardi tied the game on the first of two power-play goals for Winnipeg in the game.

Ehlers's 23rd made it 2-1 heading into the second, where Daniil Miromanov would temporarily tie the game midway through the period before Toffoli snapped a seven-game goalscoring drought with his 31st later in the frame.

"You have to have that killer instinct and make sure the other team pays for taking all the penalties, right?" Vilardi said. "I think the power play looked good, we had some chances. But we've got to keep going with that, because come playoffs, everything is so tight. We've got to take advantage of our power plays and score on those."

Vilardi's 18th and 19th markers came in the third, the latter sliding into the empty net with just over a minute to go in regulation.

Meanwhile, Martin Pospisil was tossed from a game for the third time this season late in the second period after taking a run at Josh Morrissey.

The Flames centre lined up Morrissey with an open-ice hit, appearing to leave his feet and catching the blue-liner with an elbow to the head.

"I watched it after and in the moment, I didn't feel like it was dirty I guess I just felt like I got smoked and that's my fault," Morrissey said. "Not my fault, but it is part of the game. I just don't want to turn into it. And when I watch it after, he kind of extends the elbow. So in the moment, I didn't feel it was a five or that bad. Just thought it was a big hit. And you can see, kind of throws the elbow."

Originally, the refs only chalked it up as minor, but after a review, the call was changed to a major and a game misconduct.

It's not the first time Pospisil has been Enemy No. 1 against Winnipeg. He was thrown out of a preseason game last September after catching Cole Perfetti with a high, blindside hit.

Pospisil was suspended three games last month for boarding Seattle's Vince Dunn.

"Thankfully it just kind of grazed my chin and didn't make contact but he's got a history and the elbow was probably the piece of it that I feel like is the reckless part of the hit," Morrissey said. "So the league will look at it. Obviously, he's got a couple of suspensions and he's a young guy in the league, so not the best to be losing money like that. So we'll see what happens."

The Jets are back in action on Saturday afternoon in Minnesota.

['Fun to watch': Jets' Dillon just fine with game-opening line brawl ... not so much with bad penalties late in games](#)

By Paul Friesen

The scene was familiar, the venue the same.

Winnipeg Jets defenceman Brenden Dillon saw the line brawl that kicked off Wednesday night's game between the New York Rangers and New Jersey Devils and couldn't help but recall what he lovingly refers to as "the rumble at MSG."

Dillon was a member of the Washington Capitals when their game at New York in May, 2021, boiled over before it even began, all three forwards dropping their gloves with the drop of the puck.

Another three fights broke out early in the first period of that one, the hostilities sparked mainly by the antics of Washington's Tom Wilson one game earlier.

On Wednesday, the Rangers and Devils actually topped what Dillon's Capitals and the Rangers did three years ago, as all five skaters on the ice went at it right after the opening faceoff.

"We talk about the good and bad of fighting in hockey," Dillon said, a big grin appearing at about the 5-foot-10 mark of his 6-foot-4 frame. "Time and a place for it, of course. That's a big rivalry game, New Jersey and the Rangers, and a big two points that was necessary for both teams. So it's fun to watch.

"Glad nobody really got hurt or anything."

Dillon joked that he tried to fight Rangers rookie Morgan Barron in that 2021 tilt, but he actually didn't take a penalty that night.

The game was notable, though, for Barron, now Dillon's teammate with the Jets: He scored his first NHL goal.

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Sin bin can feel like hell

Through a dozen NHL seasons, Dillon had spent 856 minutes in penalty boxes going into Thursday's home game against Calgary.

When he's in the box alone, leaving his team shorthanded, and it results in a goal by the opposition, there are few things worse, particularly when it comes at a critical time.

Last Saturday was one of them, Dillon's late high-sticking call allowing Ottawa to score the winner with less than two minutes to go and extending the Jets' losing streak to six games.

"I just felt like I let the team down, let all the guys down," is how Dillon described it. "I felt horrible. You're sitting there in the penalty box and you can't do anything about it. You're just hoping it's not something that comes back to bite you here come Game 82 or whatever position we finish in."

The 33-year-old knows he's probably not in the league if he's not playing his rugged game.

But he's learned to walk the line, instead of cross it.

"I don't think it's been an issue or a habit this year, where I've taken a million penalties in front of our net, cross-checking or doing these types of things," he said. "That's been an evolution. Maybe 10 years ago, Brenden Dillon would be taking double minors all the time or doing stupid stuff."

Come playoff time, of course, every penalty, every turnover and every missed check is magnified. Goals are even harder to come by, so you can't just give one away.

Dillon says he and his teammates are well aware and accountable for the mistakes they make.

"In a playoff game all it takes is one break," Dillon said. "Those are the things that we can eliminate. It's such a fine line, because you want your talented players to make those plays. You want your physical players to finish all their checks. But just the maturity to be smart about it and not hurt the team ... not the little getting back at a guy, or the highlight-reel goal that could be scored.

"Our group's done a really good job with that, at least recognizing and talking about it and just being aware of it."

And you are?

It's not often, if ever, that Dillon has gone through the bulk of a season playing with the same defence partner, only to have that change with less than 10 games to go.

Starting with the fourth game of the season, Dillon was paired with Neal Pionk, but that changed when coach Rick Bowness shuffled all his pairings for Monday's game against the LA Kings.

Dillon was alongside Nate Schmidt for that one. On Thursday he was with Dylan DeMelo, at least to start.

“That’s just part of being a professional,” Dillon said. “We’re in the business of when you’re told to jump, it’s ‘How high?’ And told where to go, it’s ‘What time do I have to be there?’

“Whatever it takes to help the team win.”

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TSN.ca

[Jets lock up playoff berth while the Flames are officially eliminated](#) (VIDEO)

The Winnipeg Jets clinched a playoff position for the second straight season after their win over the Flames on Thursday night. Dan Robertson and Kevin Sawyer discuss the big night for Gabe Vilardi.

Calgary Sun

[Zary scratched, Pospisil ejected as Flames eliminated with loss to Jets](#)

By Wes Gilbertson

The night started with frustration among the fan-base, folks wondering why one of the Calgary Flames’ two rookie standouts was being healthy-scratched in Winnipeg.

By the end of the evening, they were wondering if the Flames’ other impact freshman would soon be stuck sitting due to his second career suspension.

Connor Zary was a surprise spectator Thursday in Friendly Manitoba, watching from the press-box as his squad was mathematically eliminated from the playoff race with a 5-2 loss to the Jets at Canada Life Centre.

Zary may have been joined for the third period by Martin Pospisil, who was tossed late in the second after an elbow-to-the-chops on Josh Morrissey.

It was less than a month ago that Pospisil was dinged with a three-game suspension for a dangerous hit on Seattle’s Vince Dunn, and the feisty forward could be receiving a Zoom link for another chit-chat with the NHL’s Department of Player Safety.

The 24-year-old sparkplug appeared to leave his feet for that open-ice lick on Morrissey. The refs initially signalled a two-minute minor but changed their minds after a review, and Pospisil was ultimately slapped with a major and game misconduct.

“When I watched it after, he kind of extends the elbow,” the Calgary-raised Morrissey told reporters in the Jets’ locker-room. “Thankfully, it just kind of grazed my chin. Obviously, he’s got a history and the elbow was the part of it that I feel was the reckless part.

“The league will look at it. He has a couple of suspensions and he’s a young guy in the league, so it’s not the best to be losing money like that.”

Whether or not Pospisil is forced to take the night off, Flames fans — and maybe management, too — will be calling for Zary to be back in the lineup for Saturday's Battle of Alberta.

While the 22-year-old left-winger has struggled in six appearances since returning from an upper-body injury, there will be plenty of debate about whether one of your best building blocks should be scratched at this time of year, especially since this retooling team is focused on the future.

Prior to Wednesday's flight to Winnipeg, Flames coach Ryan Huska mentioned that Zary seems to be missing some of the pace and pizzazz that allowed him to make an immediate impact at the NHL level. He is averaging 0.54 points per game, which still ranks fifth among rookie regulars, but has just one assist since his absence and has been a minus-5 over that stretch.

"Since he's been back from his injury, I think he's been a step behind, and I think that's probably why he hasn't been able to generate all that much," Huska said. "He missed eight games and now he's come back and the pace that he was playing at isn't the same. I think a lot of that has to do with his time away, but now it's up to him to make sure that, 'I have to raise it again and I have to be making sure I'm pushing the envelope here.'"

Pospisil, who leads the Flames with 214 hits in his 56 outings, pushes the envelope in another way.

Now considered a repeat offender, it may cost him another suspension.

"We don't ever want to see him sitting in the penalty-box, because he's a more effective player for us on the ice," Huska told media in Winnipeg when asked about Pospisil's third major since the all-star break. "So it's a matter of having him make sure that he understands there is a way to play but there is just that very fine line that he wants to make sure he's good with. But we don't want to change the way he plays. It's just making sure you're always on the right side of it."

Gabriel Vilardi notched a hat-trick Thursday for the Jets, while Nikolaj Ehlers and old friend Tyler Toffoli also tallied for the home side. In a head-to-head showdown with Vezina Trophy frontrunner Connor Hellebuyck, Flames goalie-of-the-future Dustin Wolf racked up 40 saves and was watching from the bench as Vilardi sealed the result with a late empty-netter. Hellebuyck turned aside 31 shots.

MacKenzie Weegar, now just one snipe shy of 20 on the season, and Daniil Miromanov did the lamp-lighting in a losing cause.

ICE CHIPS: With the victory, the Jets locked up a playoff spot. They are sitting third in the Central Division ... After Tuesday's dud against the Anaheim Ducks, Huska described the performance in Winnipeg as "a total opposite of our last game." Weegar agreed during his media scrum at Canada Life Centre, saying: "It was a good effort tonight, and I think that was the most important part coming off that last game. I'm proud of the way we responded" ... It was a milestone night for Weegar, who scored on the power-play, also assisted on Miromanov's marker and now has 200 career points at the NHL level ... While the locals are playing out the string, Saturday's clash at the Saddledome is one of those easy-to-get-up-for games. The Flames will host the arch-rival Edmonton Oilers in the late date on Hockey Night in Canada (8 p.m. MT, CBC/Sportsnet, Sportsnet 960 The Fan) ... Birthday boy Andrew Mangiapane, now

28, missed a fourth consecutive contest due to injury. The Flames were also without blue-liner Joel Hanley. He was replaced by Nikita Okhotiuk.