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Jets announce coaching staff appointments

By Winnipeg Jets PR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WINNIPEG, June 17, 2024 - The Winnipeg Jets announced today that they have appointed Dean Chynoweth and Davis Payne as assistant coaches under head coach Scott Arniel.

“After a thorough interview process, I feel we’ve found two great individuals to help push our team forward,” said Winnipeg Jets Head Coach Scott Arniel. “Both Dean and Davis bring with them a great deal of enthusiasm as well as a tremendous amount of team success and experience on the development side of coaching, having worked with veterans and young players alike. Both have excelled in the area of specialty teams with top-10 power plays and penalty killing units. I am excited by what both can offer our staff and our players.”

Chynoweth, 55, served as an assistant coach for the Toronto Maple Leafs for the past three seasons. The Calgary, Alta. native previously served as an assistant coach for the Carolina Hurricanes (2018-2021) and the New York Islanders (2009-2012). Chynoweth also worked as a head coach for the AHL’s San Antonio Rampage in the 2015-16 season and for the Lake Erie Monsters (2012-2015). Chynoweth also worked in several roles in the WHL since 2000 and as an assistant coach/assistant GM for the IHL’s Utah Grizzlies from 1998 to 2000.

Chynoweth was drafted in the first round (13th overall) by the New York Islanders in the 1987 NHL Draft. He played 10 seasons professionally, including 241 regular season games for the Islanders and the Boston Bruins where he posted 22 points (4G, 18A) and 667 penalty minutes. He also played six playoff games for the Islanders and Bruins.

Payne, 53, served as an assistant coach for the Ottawa Senators for the past five seasons. The product of Kamloops, B.C. also worked for the Buffalo Sabres (associate coach, 2017-2019), Los Angeles Kings (assistant coach, 2012-2017), and St. Louis Blues (head coach, 2009-2012). Payne won a Stanley Cup with the Kings in 2013-14. He also served as an assistant and head coach for the AHL’s Peoria Rivermen from 2007 until he was hired as Blues head coach during the 2009-10 season. Payne got his coaching start working in the ECHL as an assistant for the Greenville Growl in 2000-01 before he worked as a head coach for the Pee Dee Pride (2000-03) and the Alaska Aces (2003-2007), where he won the 2006 Kelly Cup. Payne has worked with forwards and power plays during his NHL coaching career and has produced a number of successful players and top-10 power plays along the way.

Payne was drafted by the Edmonton Oilers in the seventh round (140th overall) in the 1989 NHL Draft. He played 22 games for the Boston Bruins as part of his eight professional seasons and recorded an assist and 14 PIMs.

Chynoweth and Payne will join assistant coaches Wade Flaherty and Marty Johnston, who both return to the Jets coaching staff.

Winnipeg Free Press

Arniel rounds out Jets coaching ranks with Chynoweth, Payne

By: Ken Wiebe

Scott Arniel has checked off an important item from his to-do list.

By the time the process of rounding out the Winnipeg Jets coaching staff came to its conclusion, he had interviewed 17 people for the two vacancies.

Coming out of the extensive process were a pair of NHL veteran assistants in Davis Payne and Dean Chynoweth, who officially joined the Winnipeg Jets on Monday.

Payne, 53, spent the past five seasons working with D.J. Smith for the Ottawa Senators and has experience as a head coach with the St. Louis Blues. He spent two seasons as an associate coach with the Buffalo Sabres and five seasons as an assistant coach with the Los Angeles Kings — helping them win a Stanley Cup on Darryl Sutter's staff in 2014 against the New York Rangers.

"With the success of (Payne's power plays), with myself running the PK and going against some of his power plays and knowing how detailed they are and how he approaches that," Arniel said Monday afternoon. "It's evident he's done it for a number of years. Not only that, but his ability to help with development. He's been with a lot of those young kids in Ottawa over the last few years, whether that's (Tim) Stutzle or (Drake) Batherson. I also heard good things about his relationship with Claude Giroux and the veteran guys.

"He also worked with guys like Justin Williams and (Anze) Kopitar in L.A. The unanimous thing you hear about him is that he puts in the time and the effort to care about the players. The body of work he's created over the course of his coaching career has been really noticeable."

Chynoweth and Payne join a coaching staff that also includes assistant coach Marty Johnston and goalie coach Wade Flaherty.

Payne will be responsible for the Jets' power play and will run the forwards, while Chynoweth is tasked with overseeing the penalty kill and the defence.

Chynoweth, 55, spent the past three seasons with the Toronto Maple Leafs and also has NHL coaching experience with the Carolina Hurricanes and New York Islanders.

Chynoweth was part of consecutive Memorial Cup championship teams (serving as captain for the Medicine Hat Tigers in 1988) and went on to play 11 pro seasons as a defenceman, including 241 NHL games with the Boston Bruins and Islanders, who chose him 13th overall in the 1987 NHL Draft.

He also spent nine seasons as a head coach in the Western Hockey League with the Seattle Thunderbirds and Swift Current Broncos and four seasons as bench boss in the American Hockey League with the Lake Erie Monsters and San Antonio Rampage.

The Calgary product has worked with players such as Jaccob Slavin, Brett Pesce and Morgan Rielly in the NHL and with Tyson Barrie and Nikita Zadarov in the AHL — all of whom represent a wide variety of skill sets.

“With Dean, he’s a guy that’s been at a lot of different levels, whether that’s in the AHL or in junior,” said Arniel. “In the NHL, he’s worked with some elite players. He worked with that group in Carolina and then moved over to Toronto. In Carolina, he was a big part of their PK and we know that’s one of the better ones in the league over the last few years.

“His personality is very upbeat and positive, he’s really outgoing. The one thing in talking to players is how they felt unified as a group and with (Chynoweth) constantly checking in on them on the relationship side of things. Wherever he’s been, he’s had a good relationship with his players and I felt that was a real positive.”

Arniel wasn’t familiar with Chynoweth, other than monitoring his work in other stops and running into him at different events.

Helping Josh Morrissey in his pursuit of the Norris Trophy and integrating some of the young blue-liners such as Ville Heinola and eventually Elias Salomonsson will be among Chynoweth’s responsibilities.

“Defence is a big part of the game and we’ve felt like we’ve done a pretty good job over the last couple of years with our D,” said Arniel. “This is the next step.”

Payne, 53, was chosen in the seventh round of the 1989 NHL Draft by the Edmonton Oilers and played eight pro seasons as a forward, including 22 NHL games with the Bruins.

His coaching resume also includes seven seasons in the ECHL — capturing a Kelly Cup with the Anchorage Aces — and another three seasons in the AHL with the Peoria Rivermen.

Payne’s first NHL head coaching job with the Blues ended after just 137 games, as he was replaced by Ken Hitchcock 13 games into the 2011-12 season.

Arniel was dismissed by the Columbus Blue Jackets several weeks later and the two bonded over their shared experience.

“We had the same sort of timeline of doing the same things,” said Arniel. “We both got let go around the same time and that’s when I really first met him. I was out working for Vancouver and pre-scouting for the playoffs for (Alain Vigneault) and he was working for St. Louis and doing the same thing. We were in the same cities, at the same games and had a couple of meals together, so we’ve always been in contact over the years.”

Throughout the interview process, Arniel heard from a number of coaches with varying levels of experience.

“I was open to anything,” said Arniel. “I had some really good interviews. The people I talked to were younger and older. It was an interesting process, a fun process.

“With Dean and Davis, they just check so many boxes.”

With the coaching staff complete, Arniel’s focus shifts fully to the offseason.

“The free agency part has been going on since the day I got hired, but now it’s ramping up here,” said Arniel.

Salomonsson ready to take on the NHL Prospect brings speed, skill and grit in quest for job on Jets' blue line

By: Mike McIntyre

He may be more than 6,000 kilometres away and speaking a language he's still learning, but there's no mistaking the clarity in Elias Salomonsson's voice or the confidence in his message.

The 19-year-old right-shot defenceman is ready to take Winnipeg by storm and jump on his first chance to join the Jets as early as this fall.

"I'm going to training camp with the mindset to make the team," Salomonsson told the Free Press from Sweden.

Elias Salomonsson (left) will savour winning a Swedish Hockey League title with Skelleftea AIK before he comes to Winnipeg and tries to land a spot on the Jets' blue line.

Opportunity is knocking, and Salomonsson — fresh off winning a championship with his hometown team earlier this spring — is hoping to make the most of it.

"I'm really excited. I just have to try to make them have to make a decision," he said.

As of today, the Jets have four defenceman signed to contracts for next season in Josh Morrissey, Neal Pionk, Dylan Samberg and Nate Schmidt.

Dylan DeMelo, Brenden Dillon, Colin Miller and Kyle Capobianco are all pending unrestricted free agents as of July 1, while Logan Stanley and Ville Heinola are restricted free agents.

While much could change between now and the start of the 2024-25 campaign in October, it's not hard to envision a scenario in which Salomonsson is given a lengthy look to start his North American pro hockey career with the big club.

The 55th-overall pick in the 2022 draft is coming off a dynamic year in which he had 11 points (two goals, nine assists) in 31 regular-season games with Skelleftea AIK, then really stepped up in the playoffs with six points (one goal, five assists) in 16 games while playing an important shutdown role en route to a league title.

"We got some injuries to our top guys, so I had more responsibility and played more minutes," said Salomonsson. "I think I handled it really well. I think I took my game to another level in the playoffs. So I'm really happy about my game."

Salomonsson, a smooth-skating puck-moving pivot, also added a bit of snarl to his style, earning a trio of suspensions for questionable hits — a two and four-game ban in the Swedish men's league, and a one-game timeout in the World Juniors.

"I think I always had a physical game in me. I think this year I focused a little bit more on it," said Salomonsson, who began to chuckle. "And I went over the line a couple times."

The Jets don't mind that development one bit. They can certainly use another defender who keeps opponents on their toes, in addition to bringing a slick skill set.

"I think he's a really good skater. I'd call him almost an elite skater, a puck moving defenceman," Mark Hillier, the Jets director of amateur scouting, said after the team selected him in the second round.

"He plays with an edge and some sandpaper to him."

In that sense, he carries himself a lot bigger than his 6-0, 172 pound frame would suggest.

"I just try to play hard every shift. I think when I play physical that's when I'm on top of my game, so I'm going to keep doing that," said Salomonsson, who is trying to add a bit more weight this summer.

Salomonsson, along with Heinola, are the clear top two blue-line prospects in the system right now. It remains to be seen how much rope incoming head coach Scott Arniel might be willing to give them, although he's on record as stating the importance of incorporating youth onto the roster.

Salomonsson spoke regularly with Jets director of player development Jimmy Roy, who also got overseas to watch him play on multiple occasions.

"They were really happy with how I developed and how I played this season," he said. "They are excited, like me, for me to come over next season."

Salomonsson also tried to keep an eye on the Jets, something he admits can be difficult from such a distance.

"I didn't watch so many games. It's a bit hard when the games are in the middle of the night, but I would watch highlights every morning," he said.

It's possible some seasoning with the Manitoba Moose could be required, but Salomonsson said he's prepared to do whatever possible to realize his NHL dreams. The fact the AHL club plays in the same city is a bonus.

He'll be in Winnipeg in early July for summer development camp, then make the full-time move here along with his girlfriend. Having a few fellow Swedes in the organization such as David Gustafsson, Axel Jonsson-Fjallby, Simon Lundmark, Daniel Torgersson and Fabian Wagner will help, too.

"It's going to be a little bit easier with the transition," said Salomonsson.

After going on such a lengthy playoff run, he took a few weeks away from the rink to stop and collect his breath and savour what was truly a magical season.

"It was really special to win at home, too, with all the family in the stands and all my friends. It was the best possible way I could imagine," he said.

Now, he's back at the rink on a daily basis as an exciting new chapter beckons.

"That's my focus," said Salomonsson. "It's an important summer here for me to train hard and get better, so hopefully I can make the (Jets)."

Fans want answers after Jets' first-round playoff exit

By: Mike McIntyre, Ken Wiebe

It's been said time heals all wounds. Judging by what was in our Winnipeg Jets mailbag this month, that's not true.

Fans are still fired up about the club's early first-round exit from the Stanley Cup playoffs at the end of April. Who can blame them? The Jets, after all, finished the regular-season tied for fourth in the overall standings with the Florida Panthers. And that's where the similarities end.

Many of the questions pertain to what went wrong and what needs to be done to ensure hockey history doesn't repeat itself. There's also an eye to upcoming events such as the NHL draft and free agency and roster moves, both internal and external.

Free Press hockey writers Ken Wiebe and Mike McIntyre have your answers below.

1. There is a lot of discussion regarding the personnel make up of the Jets: Playoff grit, experience, etc. I've read many people say they need more playoff savvy veterans. I'm under the impression that the opposite is required. An injection of youthful hunger should be on the menu. A few hungry young (hopefully with sandpapery personalities, because I think the jets lack 'mean' in their lineup) guys would not only help but also improve the salary structure for other additions. What do you think? — Adrian

WIEBE: The beauty of the NHL is that every team is looking to find the sweet spot of melding high-end skill with playoff grit and experience. Putting together a team that is relentless defensively but can also score enough to win. Through two rounds, the Dallas Stars were viewed by many as having the perfect blend of youth and experience. Even that wasn't enough to get past the Edmonton Oilers this season. As impressive as the Stars were both in the regular season (finishing second overall) and the playoffs (recording 10 wins), further roster improvements are required. The reason roster construction has been a hot topic of conversation for the Jets is that they've been bounced in five games in consecutive postseasons. Determining whether some tweaks or a massive renovation is required is where the debate gets tricky. There's little doubt that in order to take the next step, the Jets need to work in some youthful enthusiasm, including a player or two on an entry-level contract or close to the league minimum. That's how teams widen their competitive windows. Incoming Jets head coach Scott Arniel referenced the importance of bringing players on entry-level deals in his first press conference after getting the job. Experience remains important and the Jets have brought in more of it during the past several seasons. Having players that have played in high-pressure games is rarely a bad thing, though it's not a guarantee of future playoff success. For example, adding Tyler Toffoli, who won the Stanley Cup as a rookie, was a smart move by the Jets. It just didn't have as big an impact as projected. That's part of the deal and it doesn't mean the Jets shouldn't look to bring in another player or two that has their name engraved on Lord Stanley's mug. Knowing what it takes to reach the top of the mountain is a valuable thing to bring to the table. The other part of the equation of difficult playoff losses is that they often pave the way to future success. Look no further than the Florida Panthers, who are led by a head coach Jets fans are very familiar with.

2. I, like thousands of other Jets fans, was again very disappointed in the Jets early defeat in this year's playoffs. It has caused me to truly wonder... what are they missing? One thing they seem to be missing are 1st round draft picks of the last five years playing for the big club. Just

Perfetti right now, I think. I guess Vilardi is an equivalent (Laine, Dubious, Vilardi). How many from previous years' first-round picks? Is this one of the missing components on the Jets? When the Jets returned we were told it would be a "draft and develop" organization. Has that held true? — Bob

MCINTYRE: Mark Scheifele, Josh Morrissey, Kyle Connor, Nikolaj Ehlers, Cole Perfetti and Logan Stanley are all first-round drafted and developed players who remain with the organization. We've also seen other first-rounders like Jacob Trouba, Patrik Laine and Jack Roslovic get moved for players that, if you follow the current chain, include Neal Pionk, Gabe Vilardi (himself a first-rounder), Alex Lafallo and Rasmus Kupari (also a first-rounder). That's... a lot, for one NHL team. And it raised the bar exceptionally high around here. As you note, there hasn't been a ton of hits lately, at least not yet. Kristian Vesalainen (2017) was the first true swing-and-miss for the organization. And the jury is still out on the likes of Ville Heinola (2019), Chaz Lucius (2021), Rutger McGroarty (2022), Brad Lambert (2022) and Colby Barlow (2023). Ideally, some/all of those players will form part of the next core to allow for a much smoother transition from the present to the future. Looking ahead to this coming season, I'd expect Heinola and Lambert to take on meaningful roles with the Jets, and hopefully Lucius, McGroarty and Barlow aren't too far behind them.

3. It's clear to see every year that as the playoffs wear on less is called, in general, so it's imperative you have enough players willing to play up to the line and cross it a bit. Do the Jets have enough of those players as currently constructed? That is the question. My thought on it would be on D, I would suggest Brenden Dillon and Neal Pionk fit that bill and Dillon is likely gone. On forward, I'd suggest Adam Lowry and Vladislav Namestnikov are capable, but that's really it. The skill to grit ratio on this team is way off if you want to compete in the playoffs where the rules change and it's a completely different game. What are your thoughts on that? I feel like we get really caught up in what the regular season shows us and without fail, there are people and frankly teams that construct their rosters for the wrong season and consistently get shocked at the results instead of questioning the construction of their cores. (See the Toronto Maple Leafs, Jets and Carolina Hurricanes as examples of good on paper short on playoff results) — @eoghanisowen

WIEBE: I don't see a lack of will as an issue for the Jets at this time. Nor do I see the skill to grit component as being that far off. Could the roster use a further increase in sandpaper? No doubt. Almost every team in the NHL would like a little more. There's been significant changes to the roster, with an eye to finding players that can continue to produce in higher traffic areas when open space is difficult to come by. A bunch of recent trades by Cheveldayoff brought the combination of size and skill, including (but not limited to) Nino Niederreiter, Gabriel Vilardi and Morgan Barron (whose presence was missed in the first-round series with the Colorado Avalanche). Mark Scheifele has nearly been a point per game player in the playoffs (38 points in 42 games) and Kyle Connor has 15 goals and 32 points in 45 playoff games and has essentially been a point per game player in each of the past four series he's been involved in. As for rosters being built for the regular season but not the playoffs, the evidence I present to you is this: of the four teams to reach the conference final, the New York Rangers were first in the NHL, the Stars were second, the Panthers were tied with the Jets for fourth overall and the Oilers were ninth — though they were the hottest team in the NHL and nearly caught the Vancouver Canucks for top spot in the Pacific Division. So while it didn't work out for the Jets, three division winners and the Oilers, who had an eight-game winning streak and a 16-game heater during the regular season, all made lengthy runs. And I don't think there were dramatic changes in terms of style for those teams from the regular season to the playoffs. A ramping up of intensity? Sure, but they didn't start playing a completely different game.

4. I may have missed the details last year, but how/why did the Jets lose Kevin Stenlund? This guy is a beast in these playoffs with the Florida Panthers; penalty killing, face-offs, etc. — Anthony

MCINTYRE:

Stenlund has been a staple on Florida's fourth line, no question about it, and as you point out he's a huge part of a PK unit that has completely stymied the Edmonton Oilers so far in the Stanley Cup Final. Given all of Winnipeg's problems when short a man this season, including in the five-game series against the Colorado Avalanche, there's no question the Jets could have used a guy like him. Of course, Winnipeg had him in the fold last year, after signing the Swedish product to a one-year, league-minimum US\$750,000 contract on July 13, 2022. Stenlund appeared in 54 games with the Jets (6G, 3A) and was part of a PK unit that finished seventh in the NHL (82.4d per cent). This past season? Just 77.1 per cent when short-handed, good for 21st overall.

The Jets actually could have retained Stenlund last summer, as he was a pending restricted free agent. However, they chose not to tender him a qualifying offer, which ultimately made him an unrestricted free agent. While I don't know the specific reasons, no doubt they wanted to leave the door open for David Gustafsson to try and win the 4C job. Florida ended up signing Stenlund to a one-year, US\$1 million deal that, in hindsight, is one of those sneaky good moves that championship teams often have on their roster. Now 28, Stenlund is no doubt earning himself a raise after a regular-season in which he set career highs in games (81), goals (11) and points (15). While the offensive production hasn't followed to the playoffs, with just one assist in 20 games, he's done everything Paul Maurice and company could have asked — and then some. He truly has been a beast.

5. The Jets need a shake-up. Regardless of how many regular-season points they put up they continue to get embarrassed in round one. If this team believes in their drafting process wouldn't it make the most sense to move both Kyle Connor and Ehlers in trades? Do not overpay on extensions for guys in their 30's. Trust that Rutger McGroarty, Lambert, Cole Perfetti, Nikita Chibrikov, Colby Barlow and Chaz Lucius can fill that void. Stop over valuing your own players that are not getting us past round one. — Darren

WIEBE: That depends on your definition of shake up. But if you're looking for a bunch of changes, it's likely you're going to be disappointed. From my perch in the press box, I don't share the same opinion. Subtle tweaks or addition to the core? That's what is likely required. Losing in five games to a team that includes Nathan MacKinnon, Cale Makar, Mikko Rantanen and other core group members of the 2022 Stanley Cup champions is not an embarrassment — though there were obvious areas where the Jets needed to be better — and in some of those, much better. Special teams and protecting the blue paint in front of Connor Hellebuyck being two of those areas. While the Jets have plenty of intriguing young forwards, including the prospects you mentioned, on the horizon, trading away two of the top goal scorers doesn't seem like a path a team looking to contend is going to go down at this time. Incorporating some or even most of those young forwards over the next two or three seasons is definitely part of the plan for the Jets, keeping one of — if not both — of Connor and Ehlers for the next season or two, is an important part of easing that transition. To your point, it seems unlikely that both of Ehlers and Connor will receive long-term extensions, the expectation is that one of them will remain in the mix and join Mark Scheifele, Connor Hellebuyck and Josh Morrissey as core pieces that have at least four more seasons on their respective deals. To your final point, there's

a fine line between trusting your core too much and doubling down on your belief in them and allowing them the opportunity to grow and show that they're able to learn from past playoff exits.

6. Outside of Nikolaj Ehlers, the unrestricted free agents and the restricted free agents, what players could you see not wearing a Jets jersey next year? — Bubba

WIEBE: The crystal ball remains a tad cloudy when it comes to the first part of the question. Although there has been some speculation about a potential buyout on defence, it's important to remember the Jets already have a dead cap hit of US\$2.75 million for former captain Blake Wheeler on the books for the 2024-25 season. Also, the Jets have only bought out two players in the previous 13 years of operation. That's not to say it's impossible another one is on the horizon, it's not necessarily likely. The expectation is that the Jets will be revamping the defence corps. What that means for the futures of Nate Schmidt or Neal Pionk is unclear. As for the forwards, Alex Iafallo ended up being a really good fit for the Jets after coming over in the deal with the Los Angeles Kings as part of the package for Pierre-Luc Dubois. Iafallo played up and down the lineup, was a valuable penalty killer and managed a sixth consecutive campaign of double-digit goal scoring. The only issue with Iafallo is that he finished the season on the fourth line and he's making US\$4 million. That's not a knock on the player and the contract isn't egregious by any means, but a case could be made that the Jets might consider moving Iafallo and replacing him in the lineup with a player making closer to one million dollars — leaving nearly US\$3 million in cap space to invest in the defence corps or the second-line centre role. Iafallo is a high-character guy who could also be signed to an extension, but he would probably be looking at a pay cut in that scenario.

7. What are the top three-four priorities for Jets management this off-season? — Ed

MCINTYRE: Kevin Cheveldayoff's to-do list is a lengthy one, but a few items are more important than others. The first order of business is building, or re-building the blue-line. Winnipeg currently has just four NHL regulars under contract for the coming season in Josh Morrissey, Dylan Samberg, Nate Schmidt and Neal Pionk. Logan Stanley and Ville Heinola are notable restricted free agents, while Dylan DeMelo, Brenden Dillon, Colin Miller and Kyle Capobianco are the notable unrestricted free agents. Whether it's re-signing some of those players or completely re-tooling through trade or free agency, addressing the back-end is priority No. 1. Next up will be securing a backup goaltender, one who can complement Vezina Trophy favourite Connor Hellebuyck. Ideally, find the next Laurent Brossoit, who will be moving on to bigger opportunities this summer in free agency. It's a job that will likely only call for 20-22 starts, but finding the right person for it is pivotal. Third, I'd put the Nikolaj Ehlers situation as one that requires some urgent attention. If the Jets aren't going to get his name on a long-term extension — whether by their own choice, Ehlers' choice or a mutual decision — then moving him prior to next season would seem to be the safest, smartest option. Getting some clarity, and soon, will be vital. Fourth, I'd say getting pending RFA Cole Perfetti signed to a new deal — a bridge rather than a long-term extension at this point seems most likely — but this matter could drag out well into the summer. We shall see.

8. Does Cheveldayoff's longevity in Winnipeg equate to anyone else. It seems like the numbers or years and number of coaches without sustained success would be an issue but for TNSE. — Mattie

WIEBE: The general manager of the Jets is the second-longest tenured at his position in the NHL, behind only Doug Armstrong of the St. Louis Blues. As it turns out, the Blues announced a succession plan for Armstrong on Thursday morning, as the architect of the 2019 Stanley Cup

will spend two more seasons as GM before moving into the role of president of hockey operations. Winnipegger Alex Steen will spend the next two seasons as the special assistant to Armstrong before taking over as GM. This is not to suggest the Jets will soon come up with any succession plan, only to mention what is happening with the only guy who has been in the job longer. The third longest tenured GM is Jim Nill of the Dallas Stars, who has been in that role since 2013. Nill was the GM of the year in each of the past two seasons as the Stars have made consecutive appearances in the Western Conference final and helped the team reach the Stanley Cup final in the bubble season of 2020. Brian MacLellan of the Washington Capitals took over in 2014, is fourth on the list and he guided the organization to the Stanley Cup in 2018. Cheveldayoff is preparing for his 14th season and is coming off a fourth-place finish in the regular season where the Jets won the Jennings Trophy for allowing the fewest goals in the NHL. There's no doubt the Jets are looking to improve in the post-season, as the Jets have one series victory since the run to the Western Conference final in 2018. The overall playoff record on Cheveldayoff's watch is 18-31 (3-7 in playoff series). On the flip side, the Jets have qualified for the playoffs in seven of the 13 seasons. Cheveldayoff is coming off a strong season in terms of acquisitions and long-term signings, but it's another important summer ahead when it comes to decision making and roster construction.

9. How long is Chevy's leash? (Paul Maurice) is proving there was NEVER a coaching issue. Coaches are leaving, constant player changes, bare prospect cupboards, especially on the blueline, and the same results over and over again. Entering Year 14 of Chevy's "five-year plan". — Joey

MCINTYRE: Just because Maurice is having success in Florida doesn't mean there wasn't a coaching issue near the end of his tenure in Winnipeg. However, I agree pointing the finger of blame at one person, or one problem, is foolish. I'd disagree the prospect cupboards are bare, although the blue-line could certainly use a few more bodies beyond Ville Heinola and the promising Elias Salomonsson. But to your main question/point about Cheveldayoff, I suspect there's still some considerable length to his leash. That could certainly change if what appears to still be an open window for contention in the coming year(s) quickly slams shut.

Florida Panthers head coach Paul Maurice, center top, watches the second period of Game 1 of the NHL hockey Stanley Cup Finals against the Edmonton Oilers, Saturday, June 8, 2024, in Sunrise, Fla.

10. What do you think the likelihood of Brad Lambert playing 41 games next season is? Do you agree that Lambert needs significant playing time in the NHL for a portion of the season to continue his development? — Lee

WIEBE: It's a massive summer ahead for the 30th overall pick in the 2022 NHL Draft. He had an excellent season with the Manitoba Moose of the AHL. Not only did he show he was capable of playing centre at the pro level, he was highly productive (21 goals, 55 points in 64 games) and during a conversation during the season, Moose head coach Mark Morrison praised Lambert for his diligence to improve in the defensive zone. Lambert doesn't turn 21 until December, so further improvements are necessary. One of the biggest questions about the Finnish forward is whether the Jets will look to promote him into the second-line centre role or use him on the wing at the NHL level. That could depend on the off-season moves, but many signs point to Lambert battling to be with the Jets in the fall. When it comes to the over/under of 41 games, as of right now, I will take the over. That Lambert needs a significant amount of ice time to continue his development is accurate. Given his age and experience level, it doesn't have to come primarily at the NHL level. However, for a team looking to get faster, Lambert is the type of player that

can drive the pace and provide some valuable offence as long as he continues his progression. There will be some growing pains ahead, but the onus will be on Lambert to leave no doubt that he's ready for the next step during training camp.

11. Given what you know today, what is Elias Salomonsson's NHL floor and ceiling? — Craig

WIEBE: Salomonsson is coming off a fantastic season in the Swedish Hockey League that included playing an important role on a championship team with Skelleftea IFK. Mike will have more on this topic in a story this week. Right now, the right-handed shooting blue-liner remains one of the most intriguing prospects in the Jets' system. He suited up for Sweden at the 2024 World Junior Hockey Championship. Salomonsson, who turns 20 at the end of August, is set to play his first season in North America and though the likelihood is that he'll require some additional seasoning at the AHL level, it would surprise few if he makes his NHL debut next season at some point. He's a mobile defender who has skill and plays with some edge, which makes him the type of D-man most teams are looking for. The ceiling is that the second-round pick in 2022 is going to end up being an impactful NHL player for a long term. Could he grow into a future partner on the top pairing with Morrissey? That's probably the ceiling. Although he's not a high point producer, Salomonsson figures to be someone who could fit nicely in a shutdown role, perhaps with someone like Dylan Samberg. The floor? Probably a more than capable third pairing guy who could be used higher on the depth chart when necessary.

12. Hope you don't mind a random question... do you happen to know the dates of this year's Jets Development Camp? Thanks! — Cathy

MCINTYRE: Don't mind at all! From what I understand this year's camp will run from July 3-7 at the Hockey For All Centre. The first day is looking to be off-ice testing and physicals/medicals, while the final four days should involve a mix of on-ice activities (open to the public) and off-ice ones. I'm personally looking forward to seeing the likes of defenceman Elias Salomonsson and forward Rutger McGroarty, in addition to some/all of the players the Jets draft on June 28-29 in Las Vegas. If you've never come down, it's a great opportunity to watch some of the stars of tomorrow up close, with no shortage of opportunities for photos and autographs. McGroarty stole the show last summer, and I'd expect he'll do the same again this time around.

[Mixed emotions for Maurice Love him or hate him, ex-Jets coach on verge of hoisting Stanley Cup with Panthers](#)

By: Mike McIntyre

If Winnipeg Jets fans and former coach Paul Maurice were to post their relationship status on Facebook, the most likely option would be "It's complicated."

There are countless people around here who still love everything he did for the club and the community, despite the dubious way his nine-year tenure ended in December 2021. There are others who hold him in contempt, believing he overstayed his welcome and nearly ran a promising roster right off the road.

Depending on which side of that spectrum you might fall, you're likely either cheering wildly right now or holding your nose at the fact Maurice and his Florida Panthers are one win away from

capturing a first-ever Stanley Cup. They now have four cracks at it, starting Saturday night in Edmonton.

One thing is beyond dispute: Maurice is now an incredible 7-0 vs Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl in his playoff career. He clearly possesses the secret sauce when it comes to containing the dynamic duo.

Perhaps much of what he managed and learned while behind the bench with the Jets when they swept the Oilers during an empty-arena, first-round pandemic series in 2021 is now paying dividends on an even bigger stage with the Panthers holding a 3-0 edge.

Maurice has twice been to the Final — with the Panthers last season, and with the Carolina Hurricanes in 2002. Both ended with him watching the opponent parading the silver chalice around the ice. It sure looks like third time is going to be the charm.

Maurice sits near the top of most NHL coaching records. His 1,848 regular-season games are second only to the great Scotty Bowman. His 869 wins are fourth all-time, trailing only Bowman, Joel Quenneville and Barry Trotz. (And, as his vocal critics will readily point out with glee, his 736 losses are No. 1 by a healthy margin).

The one glaring gap on the 57-year-old hockey lifer's resume has been a championship.

"As you age, you get a different perspective on life and what's important and valuable," Maurice said at the beginning of this best-of-seven series. "I need to win one. No, it's not going to change the section of my life that's not related to hockey at all. But that's the truth. That's how I feel. I'm 30 years into this thing. Wouldn't mind winning one."

Maurice's best qualities, the ones we saw in spades here in Winnipeg, are shining through right now.

He's a Hall of Fame soundbite, delivering gem after gem while behind the podium. Whether it's self-deprecating jokes about his potty mouth or stating that his feelings don't matter "because this isn't the Oprah Winfrey show," Maurice is at his best when the cameras and microphones are in his face.

The sport itself is better when Maurice is front and centre. It's obvious his demeanour has a calming effect on his players, especially when the pressure really ramps up.

Of course, you have to do more than talk a good game to have success at the highest level. Maurice is reminding everyone he can be a heck of a motivator and leader of men, as proven by the way he has his Panthers playing for a second spring in a row.

Consider this: They've gone an incredible 15-5 in these playoffs so far against the Oilers, the New York Rangers, the Boston Bruins and the Tampa Bay Lightning. Those four teams went a combined 196-99-33 during the regular season and finished first (Rangers), seventh (Bruins), ninth (Oilers) and 13th (Lightning) in the standings this year.

Florida, which tied Winnipeg for fourth, is just mowing down quality competition.

Sure, it helps to have a goaltender like Sergei Bobrovsky playing out of his mind and a Selke Trophy winner such as Aleksander Barkov making life miserable for McDavid and Draisaitl. If

you want to blame a bench boss when things aren't going well, you have to tip your cap when the opposite occurs.

"He's such an amazing coach. He's the best one I've had," forward Matthew Tkachuk told reporters recently.

"He's gotten me to become a better player than when I first started here. I've got nothing but good things to say about him. I've got a ton of respect for him, and I think all the players, first and foremost, you really want to win it for yourself and your teammate next to you. But I think a guy like Paul, it means a lot to him, from all of us, seeing what he's done for us the past two years. We definitely want to get it for him."

Maurice could never quite get it done in Winnipeg, coming closest in the spring of 2018 when the Jets made it to the Western Conference Final, won the first game in convincing fashion against Vegas, then seemingly ran out of gas and watched the Golden Knights reel off four straight wins, then lose in the final to Washington a couple of weeks later.

That was supposed to be the start of something special around here, with the bar raised to new, exciting heights. Instead, it was the beginning of the end for Maurice's tenure, a slow and, at times, painful burn that ended with his stunning resignation.

There's no sense in recycling everything that went wrong, but it was clear he had lost the room. That's been proven by all the talk that has followed in the last couple seasons about fixing the broken culture that was running wild and contributing to puzzling stretches of truly erratic, unpredictable play.

Maurice deserves to wear his share of that. The buck stopped with him, and his message had obviously grown stale. Of course, we've now seen interim coach Dave Lowry and his successor, Rick Bowness, run into many of the same issues, suggesting there's plenty of blame to go around.

The bottom line is Maurice and the Jets needed to go their separate ways. And they did, in a somewhat messy fashion.

The hope following every break-up is that sides will eventually find themselves in even better situations. Although the jury is still out on that in Winnipeg despite some serious flirting with success this past season. Maurice and his new puck partner are now stealing the show at hockey's big dance.

No doubt that's got a lot of folks around here with conflicted feelings right now.

Winnipeg Sun

Jets' Scott Arniel finds right mix of success, experience and enthusiasm with assistant hires

By Scott Billeck

Scott Arniel had a laundry list of items to check off after a weeks-long search for a pair of assistants to join him on the Winnipeg Jets bench.

Past success and experience were among them, but enthusiasm had equal footing.

Luckily for Arniel, who last month was given a second chance at a head coaching gig he wasn't sure would ever come again, Dean Chynoweth and Davis Payne came equipped with all that and more.

"I phoned a few of the players that had played for these guys, a few assistants that had worked with them, a head coach, and it was amazing the trait that came back about both of these guys was their enthusiasm, their excitement for coming to the rink and their relationship with the players," Arniel said. "I liked that. I like to hear that."

Chynoweth and Payne round out Arniel's coaching staff heading into the 2024-25 season.

"They're excited to come to Winnipeg, and that was one of my questions," Arniel said. "I talked with people from all over, and I would say to them, 'If I offered you this job tomorrow, would you and your wife and your family be willing to come to Winnipeg?'"

"They looked at our hockey team and they saw tremendous potential moving forward here. And they were saying that before I even asked."

Chynoweth and Payne join assistant Marty Johnston and goalie coach Wade Flaherty, both retained by the team after the club appointed Arniel to the helm following Rick Bowness's retirement last month.

Arniel said Monday he interviewed more than a dozen candidates before deciding on five or six who would get a second meeting.

Chynoweth has spent the past three seasons on Sheldon Keefe's staff with the Toronto Maple Leafs being let go recently.

The penalty-killing specialist helped the Leafs to the eighth-best kill in his first year, slipping to 12th the following season and down to 23rd in 2023-24.

Before that, his work with the Carolina Hurricanes saw the team finishing in the top 10 in his three seasons with the club (eighth, fourth and sixth, respectively, from 2018-2021).

His penalty-killing style has been dubbed "power kill" by the analytics community.

Its aggressive approach of challenging at the blue line, forcing the puck into poor areas for a power play to work, and its coordinated pressure lend to more shorthanded chances without sacrificing what a penalty kill is tasked with doing.

"Not that we're here to score shorthanded goals—we gotta keep it out of our net—but I think there's a hybrid out there of the two systems being played," Arniel said. "He's got a real good grasp on that."

Chynoweth played 241 NHL games with the New York Islanders and Boston Bruins after being drafted 13th overall by the former in 1987.

His coaching career began near the turn of the century in the IHL before spending nearly a decade as a head coach in the WHL with Seattle and Swift Current.

His first NHL stint as an assistant came with the New York Islanders in 2009. After going to the AHL for a few years, Chynoweth returned to the big leagues with Carolina in 2018.

During his playing days, Chynoweth spent parts of five seasons playing alongside Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff in AHL Springfield and Capital District, along with a handful of games with IHL Salt Lake.

Payne, meanwhile, was among the candidates who lit up Arniel's phone after the Jets promoted the latter.

"He's had great success over the years, not only with the power play but with the young guys," Arniel said.

Payne spent the past five seasons with the Ottawa Senators, a team rebuilding its roster and utilizing their fountain of youth, including Tim Stutzle, Brady Tkachuk and Thomas Chabot.

Before that, the power-play specialist worked with Jack Eichel and the Buffalo Sabres and Anze Kopitar in Los Angeles.

"He's worked with some top-end guys," Arniel said. "And he had names of guys, young guys, that he brought up specifically that he had worked with back with Los Angeles and Stutzle and (Drake) Batherson in Ottawa."

Payne was an Edmonton draft pick in 1989, going 140th overall in the seventh round, playing just 22 NHL games, all with Boston, before retiring from pro hockey in 2000.

His coaching career began later that year as an assistant in the ECHL. He won an ECHL championship with the Alaska Aces in 2005-06 with former Manitoba Moose head coach Keith McCambridge.

His first taste behind an NHL bench came as a head coach in St. Louis from 2009 to early in the 2011-12 season, when he was fired after a slow start and missing the postseason in each of his first two years.

He re-emerged the following season as an assistant to Darryl Sutter in Los Angeles and won the Stanley Cup with the Kings in 2014, defeating the New York Rangers, where Arniel was an associate coach.

Meanwhile, Arniel doesn't plan to touch the brake pedal until after the Jets' rookie camp concludes in early July.

Since his late-May appointment as Winnipeg's fourth head coach since relocation in 2011, the 61-year-old has kept his right foot pinned to the floorboard.

"I'm still wondering if I'm actually going to take my foot off the gas and relax for a month," he said Monday. "Right now, I'm still on a high. I'm excited. I've been talking hockey every day."

That included seven of his Jets on Monday, chatting with his players about the hirings.

The NHL draft comes first, then the opening of free agency on July 1.

“I don’t think (the excitement’s) going to wear off at all,” Arniel said. “I do need to shut down so I’m ready for (next season). I’ll take it from there.”

After walking out on Jets, Paul Maurice a win away from Stanley Cup glory

By Scott Billeck

You never want to count your chickens before they hatch, but only one team has successfully overturned a 3-0 series deficit in the Stanley Cup Final.

The odds are stacked against the Edmonton Oilers emulating the 1942 Toronto Maple Leafs against the Florida Panthers. Only four teams in the NHL’s 100-plus-year history have done it in the playoffs, never mind when the playoff bracket is reduced to two.

That means longtime Winnipeg Jets bench boss Paul Maurice is favoured to capture his first Stanley Cup in his 26-year NHL coaching career.

He’s been close before, with his Carolina Hurricanes losing in five games to the Detroit Red Wings in 2002 and then in same number last season as his Panthers succumbed to the Vegas Golden Knights.

Third time’s a charm.

Only two-and-a-half years ago, Maurice walked out on the Jets, resigning from the post he had held for parts of nine seasons after suggesting they needed a new voice.

If you count interim coach Dave Lowry, Maurice’s replacement for the remaining months of that ugly season, the Jets will be on their third new voice this fall after Scott Arniel replaced the retiring Rick Bowness in May.

“They haven’t quit on me,” Maurice said at the time. “But they need somebody that can get them to that next place.”

Maybe Maurice just needed a different cast.

It didn’t take long for the 57-year-old to end up back on his feet, taking over the Panthers job from interim coach Andrew Brunette, who wasn’t retained after leading the Panthers to the Presidents’ Trophy in difficult circumstances in the wake of the Kyle Beach saga, which saw veteran coach Joel Quenneville fired.

Maurice felt he pushed the “rock pretty far up that mountain” in Winnipeg before leaving.

He’s the only coach since the team returned in 2011 to lead the Jets past the first round, with a remarkable run to the Western Conference final in 2018 – the benchmark around these parts.

It’s true that Maurice walked into a promising situation in Florida, but he’s taken the Panthers to the next level with a style of play he always tried to implement in Winnipeg.

He's received his fair share of criticism over the years, and he holds the NHL record for losses as a coach.

But no one is complaining about his lines or defensive pairings right now. And as early as Saturday night in Edmonton, he could be hoisting Lord Stanley's mug.

Bobrovsky gives Jets hope

Conventional wisdom at the time Panthers starter Sergei Bobrovsky signed his seven-year, \$70-million deal in Florida during the summer of 2019 was the team had a few years to win the Cup with him between the pipes.

Save for an epic collapse, Bobrovsky is going to do what the 1996 Panthers came up short trying: bring the franchise its first mug.

The hardware won't stop there, either, as he's the frontrunner for the Conn Smythe in the fifth season of the contract.

'Bob' has had an incredible run.

He's produced two of the most unbelievable saves in recent playoff memory: his improbable reaching-back glove save in the first round on Tampa's Matt Dumba and his stretched-out, game-saving left pad stop in Game 3 on Thursday to deny Edmonton an equalizer late in the third period.

He produced a 32-save shutout against the Oilers in Game 1 and is riding a .956 save percentage in the Final – unbeatable numbers.

So why does this matter 2,000 kilometres north of the Sunshine State?

Connor Hellebuyck's seven-year extension kicks in next season, and conventional wisdom suggests that the Jets need to strike while the iron is hot, meaning they need to win before Father Time comes knocking.

Bobrovsky's stellar play has suggested otherwise, however.

The deal was largely mocked at the time. Some figured it was one of the Panthers' biggest mistakes.

And yet, five years into it and on the cusp of the Cup, no one's laughing anymore.

It hasn't been smooth sailing for the 35-year-old.

Bobrovsky backstopped five straight first-round eliminations in his first five appearances in the playoffs, with some performances that didn't look dissimilar to Hellebuyck's tough showing against Colorado this year. And only last season did Bobrovsky finally sniff past the second round.

This year is his 14th NHL season. He's won the Vezina twice, as Hellebuyck will have when the NHL awards are handed out later this month.

Hellebuyck just finished his eighth full season as a starter, and has another seven ahead of him to engineer something different.

The good news for Jets fans is Bobrovsky is proving it's possible.

The Athletic

[Winnipeg Jets mailbag: Buyout possibilities, Brad Lambert's path to playing time and more](#)

By Murat Ates

The Winnipeg Jets' goal next season is to get 5 to 10 percent better on all fronts — difficult to do from 52 points, 110 wins and roster uncertainty — but the \$88 million salary cap gives them the opportunity to be ambitious.

Jets fans see the opportunity and want to know what Kevin Cheveldayoff can do with it. Will he buy out a veteran defenceman? What kind of Nikolaj Ehlers trade might lead to a net positive? Can the Jets get more cap efficient if Brad Lambert makes the team — and how is Lambert tracking compared to previous forward prospects?

We cover those topics over the course of this month's two-part mailbag. We also compare Winnipeg's roster to Stanley Cup champions going as far back as 2006 to explore one fan's question about Mark Scheifele versus No. 1 centres on championship teams, dig into video to explain why Winnipeg's penalty kill trails the league's elite, talk about player development and scouting, check in on Paul Maurice and much more.

Here we go.

Note: Submitted questions may be edited for clarity and style.

Will the Jets use a buyout to get out of either the Nate Schmidt or Neal Pionk contracts? — Alexander H.

Winnipeg showed via Blake Wheeler's buyout last season that it's willing to use buyouts under the right circumstances.

In Wheeler's case, those circumstances were his \$8.25 million cap hit, \$2.75 million buyout cost and the desire by both parties to give Wheeler a fresh start. The Jets were on the hook for \$2.75 million last season and will be again in 2024-25 — a gentle reminder that even successful buyouts come with a lasting cost.

Nate Schmidt and Neal Pionk come with much simpler backstories. There's no dramatic arc from criminally underrated dominance to late career, leaguewide acclaim, or from brash, young and quick-witted youth to sometimes nail-spitting, sometimes brightly lit captaincy. There is no fall from dominant to complementary or the uncomfortable feelings that come with it. Any discussion of a fresh start is about finances and efficiency and not about legacy. Pionk's buyout would cost the Jets \$2 million in cash this season and next, thus saving \$4 million in cap space in 2024-25 and costing \$2 million in cap space in 2025-26. Schmidt's buyout would cost the Jets

\$1.6 million in cash this season and next, thus saving \$3.2 million in cap space this season and costing \$1.6 million in cap space in 2025-26.

Enough, Murat. Will the Jets use a buyout or not?

I think Schmidt is the far more likely buyout of the two. My interpretation comes mostly from ice time and opportunity; Pionk has been used almost exclusively as a top-four defenceman, while Schmidt has done most of his work on the third pair. That's a value statement by the organization and I wonder if the analysis could end here.

I also think about Pionk's age (29 in July) and Schmidt's (33 in July.) I think about each player's acquisition cost (Pionk was accompanied by a first-round pick but arrived in Winnipeg for Jacob Trouba, while Schmidt cost the Jets a third-round pick when acquired from Vancouver.) I think about sunk cost and the idea that Winnipeg has already invested a lot in the idea of Pionk as a top-four defenceman. The Jets may feel inclined to keep investing in that idea.

The easiest play would be to hold on to each player and wait for their contracts to expire next summer. That's less efficient in the short term, though, so I can talk myself into the Jets needing the cap space from at least one buyout if they mean to be competitive.

A lot of this will also depend on Winnipeg's luck signing Brenden Dillon, who seems open to Winnipeg but keen to explore unrestricted free agency, and Dylan DeMelo, whose exit interviews contained a strong desire to stay. No outcome is guaranteed for either player at the moment.

I suppose the Jets could also wait until camp, make sure that Ville Heinola or Elias Salomonsson can handle Schmidt-esque duties on the third pair and second power-play unit, and then waive Schmidt, but the cap savings would be minimal: Winnipeg would be on the hook for all but \$1.15 million of his cap hit.

This would be an easy decision if I viewed either player as replacement level or sub-replacement level. I don't see either as a top-four solution anymore but I see both as capable of exploiting bottom pairing minutes. If I were Winnipeg, then, I would explore as many ways as possible to make the team better without paying players to play somewhere else. I'd be leery of paying UFA prices for similar players, meaning the best-case solutions would have to come via Salomonsson or Heinola (or trade, whether this summer or after building up cap space throughout the season.) There are no guarantees on those fronts, as much as I would advocate for Winnipeg to explore them.

Will the Jets buy out either player? Maybe, and if they do my guess is Schmidt. Should they? Only if they've identified ways to get better that avoid similar cap inefficiency — or if they see next year's cap going up, too. They're a year away from freedom on both fronts. I can't find the move that pays off so well, so soon that demands their early exit. Maybe Cheveldayoff can, though, and therein lies Jets fans' hopes.

What do you think the chances are that Brad Lambert earns a full-time spot on the team next year? — Evan T.

I think about your question often, Evan, and my answer is that the odds are high.

In fact, the only way I think Lambert gets stuck in the AHL for the majority of 2024-25 is for the Jets to re-sign Sean Monahan and retain Ehlers and commit to the same old-school “top-six plus checking line” approach to player deployment.

But let’s talk about Lambert. He’s taken every realistic step forward available to him since being assigned to the WHL one and a half seasons ago. At 19, Lambert dominated the WHL, scoring 38 points in 26 regular season games before adding another 26 points en route to Seattle’s WHL championship win. He then scored an impressive 55 points in 64 games for Manitoba in his first full AHL season, adding an assist in his April NHL debut.

Players who achieve point-per-game offence in the AHL at 20 come with strong odds of top-six NHL success — and, for a fun comparison, let’s put Lambert’s trajectory side-by-side with fellow December birthday, Kyle Connor.

Kyle Connor
71 pts, 38 GP, NCAA
44 pts, 52 GP, AHL
57 pts, 76 GP, NHL
Brad Lambert
64 pts, 43 GP, WHL
55 pts, 64 GP, AHL
TBD

I want to be clear that I’m manipulating at least some of this data. Connor’s post-draft season at Michigan was the stuff of Wolverines legend, with Connor leading all NCAA players in points as a freshman; Lambert’s WHL season was spectacular but not on the same level.

I still like the comparison because I see Lambert as a fast, dynamic, offence-first player whose second-year AHL production tracks almost perfectly with Connor’s at the same stage in his career. Matching Connor’s NHL output is a lofty goal — I’m a little leery of using this comparison, thinking it wiser to let Lambert consolidate his big step forward before establishing these expectations — but there’s no denying Lambert’s quality. He scored like a future top-six NHL player would score, producing and then slumping and then producing again, all while playing big minutes as a centre. (A more recent example than Connor? Cole Perfetti, whose draft-plus-two AHL scoring rate was similar to Lambert’s and who was promoted to the NHL in his second season.)

If Lambert emerges as a scoring option for next season’s Jets, he’ll match Connor’s 2017-18 trajectory, and if you recall your history, Lambert doesn’t even need to make the team out of camp. Winnipeg assigned Connor to the Moose for four games to open 2017-18, soon realizing he was too good for that league and promoting him for good on Oct. 16.

I’m talking out of both sides of my mouth (so to speak) by saying “it’s not fair to compare Lambert to Connor” and then comparing Lambert to Connor at length. Even if Lambert dazzles at camp, I think we should use a tremendous amount of caution before declaring him a play-driver or difference-maker at the NHL level — his defensive impact is unlikely to be strong. (Mind you, that would make him more like Connor as opposed to less.)

And yet, the more I look at things, the more certain I feel that there’s an NHL path available to him.

Monahan's return is possible but not guaranteed. Ehlers' return strikes me as unlikely. Even if both players return, there's no guarantee that Arniel stacks his best offensive players on two lines while using Adam Lowry, Mason Appleton and Nino Niederreiter as a checking line the same way Rick Bowness did.

The Jets PK was brutal in the playoffs, can we get a dissection of where the breakdowns occurred on the PP goals against, and if small tweaks are necessary, or a complete overhaul is required? — Thomas H.

The following relies heavily on my lens and may not be supported by your special teams coach of choice. Bear with me as I run through a series of beliefs.

The goal of a power play is to score. Thus the goal of a power play is to create dangerous scoring chances. Thus the goal of a power play is to take shots on a goaltender who is moving, can't see or is overwhelmed by rebounds.

Some amount of time will be lost on faceoffs and entries, but: While the power play is set up, in zone, the job of the penalty kill is to reduce the number of shots wherein the goaltender is moving, can't see, or swarmed in front.

It's not as simple as saying "pressure more" or "stay compact." Pressuring the puck carrier takes away time and space but changes the shape of the penalty kill, opening up seams. Staying compact takes seams away, reducing the amount of lateral movement for the goaltender, but it also gives up time and space and can lead to a shooting gallery.

I think a penalty kill needs to be able to pressure the puck carrier with aggression and tenacity and the confidence that it can retreat to structure when possession is established. And that's where Edmonton destroys Winnipeg.

The Oilers pressure more than the Jets did and return to structure better than the Jets do. The Oilers take away opportunities before they happen by hounding the puck carrier and still manage to take away the most dangerous seam passes through the middle of the ice. Whether it's the Panthers, Stars, Canucks or Kings, puck carriers playing against Edmonton don't get time to work with — and even if one puck carrier beats his defender, their next puck carrier doesn't get free time or space the way you'd expect.

How? We'd have to ask Mark Stuart, the Oilers' penalty kill coach, and he's a little occupied right now. Bowness was on Sportsnet a couple of weeks ago and explained Edmonton's "trap down" system with Kevin Bieksa in detail, though, so we'll take our lead from him.

The Oilers' defencemen have the same job as Winnipeg. Whether you're Darnell Nurse or Dylan DeMelo, your job is to protect the front of the net. This isn't necessarily by gluing yourself to a net-front forward and tying up sticks — often, it comes in the form of stepping into shooting lanes, particularly from the flanks, and recovering to the net-front after the shot. I point this out because sometimes I see complaints about defencemen "abandoning" the net front to play what looks like a zone defence, stepping into a shooting lane. That's their job, whether on an elite PK like Edmonton's or a struggling one like Winnipeg's.

The difference in efficacy is a little bit about how well those defencemen block shots and a lot about how they recover to the net front after those shots. Edmonton's weakside defencemen

(the defenceman on the side of the ice without the puck) do a good job of collapsing to the net front and winning battles after a shot takes place.

Winnipeg gave up a lot of playoff goals on rebounds, deflections and rebounds after deflections because Colorado beat Winnipeg's defencemen (and forwards) to pucks down low.

It's not just that, though. The Oilers forwards take a different PK approach than Winnipeg's do and execute their tactics much better than Winnipeg does.

The Oilers' top forward pressures the puck carrier with aggression and recovers to the middle with pace that Winnipeg doesn't match. The Oilers' bottom forward holds space in the slot and adjusts to take passing seams away with an efficacy that Winnipeg doesn't match.

When you watch this Avalanche goal in Game 3, notice Nathan MacKinnon opening up a shooting lane between Monahan and Vladislav Namestnikov by playing catch with Mikko Rantanen.

You might argue that Pionk has a play to knock the shot down or that Valeri Nichushkin does a particularly great job taking away Connor Hellebuyck's eyes — and fine. But the Oilers aren't opening up seams to shoot through because they're playing so much faster and taking more disciplined lines back to the middle of the ice when they need to.

The Oilers pressure the puck all over the defensive zone and protect the middle better than the Jets do. Their system asks for it and their players deliver — particularly their forwards who combine speed, aggression and the discipline required to get back to the middle after pressuring at the top or on the flanks. Their defencemen are tying up more sticks and getting more clears than the Jets did — even when the strong side defenceman has stepped away from the net-front and into the shooting lane.

The Jets have hired Dean Chynoweth to run their penalty kill next season and it looks like good news: Chynoweth's Maple Leafs PK ranked 12th from when he was hired in 2021-22 through 2023-24 when he was let go, doing a much better job of preventing shots from the middle of the ice than Winnipeg did. Aggression was the hallmark of Toronto's penalty kill, according to my colleague Jonas Siegel, meaning the Jets forwards might need to get faster between now and September to play Chynoweth's preferred systems.

The Jets also added Davis Payne, who last worked on D.J. Smith's Ottawa Senators staff and was a part of the Kings' Stanley Cup-winning staff in 2014. The power play will be Payne's domain; Ottawa ranked 20th in that regard during his Senators tenure.

Global Winnipeg

[Winnipeg Jets hire Davis Payne, Dean Chynoweth to round out coaching staff](#)

By Kelly Moore Global News

The Winnipeg Jets have announced the hiring of a pair of experienced assistant coaches in Davis Payne and Dean Chynoweth to round out their staff for the 2024-25 season.

The hirings come exactly three weeks following the promotion of Scott Arniel from associate to head coach, and confirmation from GM Kevin Cheveldayoff of a mutual parting of ways with former assistant coach Brad Lauer.

At that same news conference, Cheveldayoff also announced Marty Johnson and Wade Flaherty would be remaining on staff.

“After a thorough interview process, I feel we’ve found two great individuals to help push our team forward,” Arniel said in a team news release. “Both Dean and Davis bring with them a great deal of enthusiasm as well as a tremendous amount of team success and experience on the development side of coaching, having worked with veteran and young players alike.”

Arniel also pointed out that each of the new hires brings a portfolio of Top 10 success on special teams, and that had to be a key consideration for the Jets, who finished in the bottom third of the NHL in each category this past season.

Chynoweth, 55, was an assistant to Sheldon Keefe the past three years in Toronto, while 53-year-old Payne spent the past five seasons on the coaching staff of the Ottawa Senators.

Before his time with the Maple Leafs, Chynoweth also served as an assistant coach with the NY Islanders (2010-12) and Carolina Hurricanes (2018-21). The two-time Memorial Cup champ with Medicine Hat (1987, 1988) and first-round pick of the NY Islanders (13th overall, 1987) also has extensive head coaching experience at both the Western (Seattle, Swift Current) and American (Lake Erie, San Antonio) Hockey League levels.

Payne has previous NHL head coaching experience with St. Louis. He went 67-55-15 as the bench boss of the Blues from midway through the 2009-10 season to early in the 2011-12 campaign. The former Edmonton Oilers draft pick (seventh round, 140th overall in 1989) spent the following five seasons (2012-17) as an assistant with the Los Angeles Kings, where he was part of the 2014 Stanley Cup champions. Payne then served as an associate coach under Phil Housley in Buffalo from 2017-19 before joining Ottawa.

Payne will run the forwards and be placed in charge of improving a Jets power play that ranked 22nd last season. Chynoweth will handle the defense and be tasked with bettering a penalty-killing unit that finished 21st overall in the league in 2023-24.

ANALYSIS: Jets GM has his work cut out for him on the free agency front

By Kelly Moore Global News

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With less than two weeks remaining before the free agent market opens for business, there are significant question marks for the Winnipeg Jets, but GM Kevin Cheveldayoff is far from alone in that regard.

This past week featured the first activity on the restricted and unrestricted free agent front since the start of June, when reports surfaced that Carolina signed defenceman Jalen Chatfield to a three-year, \$9-million deal, and Rangers forward Kaapo Kakko accepted New York’s \$2.4-million qualifying offer.

Neither team has officially confirmed either contract, by the way.

Yes, there have been some other one-way deals completed prior to May 31, like former Jets backup goalie David Rittich in LA, Chicago inking Lukas Reichel, and Kurtis MacDermid in New Jersey. But none of those would be considered “significant.”

As we potentially head into the official start of the business season this week, maybe in less than 48 hours if Florida recovers from that Game 4 debacle on Saturday night, there are just over 400 players who fall into the category of pending restricted and unrestricted free agent, or entering the 2024-25 season on an expiring contract.

Of the 170 or so players who are eligible to test the free agent market on July 1, 21 of them are involved, in one way or another, in the Stanley Cup Final.

Winnipeg has seven pending UFAs and another seven players who are part of the expiring contract club, in addition to the RFA deals needed for Cole Perfetti, David Gustafsson, and Logan Stanley.

So yes, Cheveldayoff has his work cut out for him. But check CapFriendly — while you still can — and you’ll find there are at least a dozen or so GMs of the other 15 teams who made the playoffs in the very same boat.

It might be a little early for “that ship has sailed” proclamations, with all parties seemingly in no hurry to be first out of the gate.