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Winnipeg Free Press

Kadri just what the Jets need ***Feisty veteran would add experience and grit as second-line centre***

By: Ken Wiebe

We have reached the point in the offseason where folks start pondering what permutations and combinations could be on the horizon.

With unrestricted free agency mostly taken care of — other than some veterans still waiting for an opportunity to bet on themselves or a team looking for a purchase or two from the discount aisle — rosters are mostly taking shape.

General managers around the NHL are teetering between vacation mode and stealth shopping, squeezing in some rest and relaxation when possible while also thinking about other ways to improve their respective hockey clubs before training camp arrives next month.

Where does that leave Winnipeg Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff?

He's taken care of most of his offseason to-do list, with the exception of locking down a new contract for restricted free agent Cole Perfetti.

With just under US\$6 million of cap space projected by Puck Pedia, there's room for a longer-term deal, provided both sides find common ground — though the most likely outcome remains a bridge contract.

That would allow the player to get a more complete picture of how incoming head coach Scott Arniel plans to utilize his skill set and give the organization another two years to get a better handle on Perfetti's longer-range projection — both in terms of impact and dollar figure.

There is still some question as to where Perfetti will fit best in terms of position.

Despite winning the second-line centre job with a strong training camp, Perfetti quickly found himself patrolling the wing before the NHL season was five games old.

During a recent interview with the Free Press, Arniel left the door open for Perfetti to get another crack at showing what he could do at 2C, though Brad Lambert and Vladislav Namestnikov are options to fill the void left after the departure of Sean Monahan in free agency.

Based on that conversation with Arniel, Namestnikov is the front-runner, though the new bench boss has been around long enough to leave ample wiggle room for things to develop during training camp (and beyond).

The second-line centre job has essentially been in flux since Paul Stastny was acquired prior to the NHL trade deadline in March of 2018.

There hasn't really been a homegrown player who got an extended run in that slot for the bulk of that time period since Bryan Little was forced to retire because of a head injury, though Andrew Copp did spend some time there over the years before he was traded to the New York Rangers.

It's easy to make the argument the Jets would benefit greatly from an internal candidate grabbing the job — whether that's a recent first-round draft pick such as Perfetti (2020) or Lambert (2022) or a versatile journeyman like Namestnikov.

History has shown the Jets aren't afraid to make a move to add experience and depth down the middle.

They've had varying levels of success in that department when you work your way down the list of players brought in to do that job, whether it be Kevin Hayes, Cody Eakin, Pierre-Luc Dubois, Stastny for a second tour of duty or Monahan.

It's impossible to know for sure which direction the Jets will be going this season, but one of the options would be to trade for a guy with either term or team control.

That's where things have the potential to get interesting.

While guys like Connor McMichael and Cole Sillinger would have appeal, it's also possible the Jets could give an in-house candidate the chance to solidify their spot on the depth chart and punt the decision to a later date.

When you consider the Jets are in win-now mode and have big-money extensions kicking in for Mark Scheifele and Connor Hellebuyck, bringing in a more experienced pivot with term has to be a consideration.

One name that could make a lot of sense — but probably more likely closer to the deadline or as a pre-emptive strike like Monahan was — would be Nazem Kadri.

Kadri is about to enter the third season of the seven-year, \$49 million USD contract he signed with the Calgary Flames in the summer of 2022.

He would provide more of a longer-range solution, unlike most of the previous deadline deals for pivots.

This is a player the Jets showed interest in before he ended up being dealt from the Toronto Maple Leafs to the Colorado Avalanche.

With the Avalanche, Kadri played a vital role on the 2022 Stanley Cup championship club.

One of his signature moments saw Kadri come back from a thumb injury to score the overtime winner in Game 4 to put the Avalanche up 3-1 in a series they would capture in six games.

Kadri has an abundance of skill and still plays with an edge.

On a Flames team that missed the playoffs, he still managed to produce 29 goals and 75 points to go along with strong possession numbers, while showing durability by appearing in all 82 games.

He's eclipsed 30 goals on two occasions and hit 20 or more four additional times.

Kadri will turn 34 in October, which means any trade for him will carry some element of risk — especially in the final years of the contract that includes a US\$7 million AAV and a full-no movement clause for the next two seasons — and shifts to a modified no-trade for the final three.

So, Kadri would need to agree to any deal to Winnipeg.

The feisty centre didn't envision being part of a rebuild when he signed with the Flames and he might be open to a new address depending on how things go this winter.

The Jets would also need to move out money to make a deal like this work, especially when you consider Nikolaj Ehlers and Kyle Connor will soon require raises to remain in the fold.

Kadri plays with a certain swagger the Jets could use a bit more of and his championship pedigree could have a positive influence on a team that's looking to end a string of playoff disappointments.

Kadri could also provide a jolt to the Jets power play, as he's produced 29 goals and 41 points with the man-advantage during the past three seasons.

Now, the addition of Kadri would bring a few complications on the salary cap front and some retention would be required, but perhaps the Flames could eat around US\$2 million per season to get the AAV down to US\$5 million?

With the salary cap expected to rise during the next several seasons, that level of reduction wouldn't make the final years of the contract nearly as onerous as they might otherwise be.

That's why it's something to be filed in the food-for-thought category for the time being.

[NHL offer sheets rarely amount to much](#)
[Oilers on hot seat after Blues court pair of restricted free agents](#)

By: Ken Wiebe

The reason offer sheets create such a ruckus is because they rarely work out.

That didn't prevent the hockey world from going berserk, especially on social media, after the St. Louis Blues announced Tuesday morning they had tendered offer sheets to a pair of Edmonton Oilers restricted free agents, defenceman Philip Broberg and forward Dylan Holloway.

No matter what happens over the next seven days — which is the period of time the Oilers have to match the offers or accept the compensation set out in the collective bargaining agreement — Blues general manager Doug Armstrong has shown the hockey world that he's not afraid to make a bold and calculated move to try to improve his team.

In a world in which looking to exhaust all options is commonplace, it's been a surprise tendering offer sheets isn't something more GMs try to weaponize.

In this case, the Blues recognize the Oilers were already in an uncomfortable position as it pertains to the salary cap — with Puck Pedia currently projecting them more than US\$7.225 million over the ceiling, provided Edmonton chooses to match.

The fellow first-rounders (Broberg, eighth overall in 2019) and Holloway (14th overall in 2020) had to agree to the terms with the Blues, which essentially forced the hand of the Oilers to make a decision on their respective futures.

Broberg or Holloway are currently complementary players with the potential to grow into more impactful roles. They're also the type of players teams such as the Oilers rely on to remain competitive.

Although both are beyond their entry-level contracts, they have spent ample time at the American Hockey League level and were more likely to cash in on the deal after this one.

Instead, the Blues are putting the Oilers in an onerous position.

By offering Broberg two years at US\$4.58 million, he would be receiving a significant raise but not an outrageous one for someone who is probably ready to play consistent top-four minutes.

As for Holloway, the two years at US\$2.29 million is a reasonable cap hit given where he's at in his development.

For a team already over the ceiling, however, keeping both players in the fold will be a challenge for the Oilers, who made several savvy moves to keep other forwards in free agency.

Given the hip issue Evander Kane was dealing with at the end of last season, a shift to long term injured reserve could provide some temporary relief, though the Oilers still need to clear space if they want to try and fit both players into the budget.

The Oilers bigger issue is moving forward, as Leon Draisaitl enters the final year of his contract and is looking for a massive raise that could be in the US\$13.5-million range and captain Connor McDavid is due a bump in two years from the US\$13.5-million he currently makes.

That's where the strategic element of the offer sheets becomes even more magnified.

So why not just match the offers and trade Broberg and Holloway?

That's not an option under the rules, which prohibits potential moves for one year.

Why does it make sense for the Blues?

Well, they're a team in transition looking to add talent and if successful, this would allow them to improve immediately — while only forfeiting a second round pick for Broberg and a third-rounder for Holloway.

Broberg is 6-4 and 211 pounds and while he's not overly physical, he's a capable puck-mover with ample offensive potential.

Holloway is a speedster who should eventually blossom into a middle-six forward who should regularly eclipse 20 goals.

For an Oilers team that just made it to Game 7 of the Stanley Cup final, keeping Broberg and Holloway in the fold is a priority but they don't have a lot of wiggle room to make that happen.

It's important to remember the only two successful offer sheets in the cap era were the five-year deal at US\$4.34-million the Oilers offered to Winkler product Dustin Penner when he was with the Anaheim Ducks and the one-year deal worth US\$6.1 million the Carolina Hurricanes offered forward Jesperi Kotkaniemi when he was with the Montreal Canadiens.

Penner was a productive player for most of his four seasons with the Oilers before joining the Los Angeles Kings in 2011, capturing his second Stanley Cup in 2012.

Kotkaniemi hasn't yet emerged as the player the Hurricanes had hoped for after signing an eight-year extension with a cap hit of US\$4.28-million but he's still 24 years old.

So what does all of this have to do with the Winnipeg Jets?

Other than the Blues being a Central Division rival and the Oilers being the team all Western Conference clubs will be looking to knock off its proverbial pedestal, not a lot.

Though it is worth noting once one offer sheet gets made, there's an insatiable craving for most members of the media to predict a plethora of other offer sheets could be on the horizon.

The only potential target on the Jets in this criteria is restricted free agent Cole Perfetti.

With \$5.8-million of projected cap space available to them right now, the Jets are in a much better position to match any offer that comes his way — whether it be a bridge deal like the ones offered to Broberg and Holloway or a longer-range pact with an AAV that could come in north of \$5.6 million.

There's no doubt the Jets are aware of the possibility, but they wouldn't need to perform any major surgery to the roster in order to make room to retain Perfetti.

Besides, the Jets view him as a core piece and the two sides will continue to work at a deal that doesn't likely include the public drama of an offer sheet.

Winnipeg Sun

Jets' head coach Scott Arniel confident after team's summit wraps

By Scott Billeck

Whether it was his own fault, something born out of circumstance, or a combination of both, Scott Arniel knew he wanted to do things a little differently if he got another shot at a head coaching gig in the NHL.

The last couple of weeks have been a direct result of Arniel's vision, a so-called summit that would bring everyone together—coaches, management, analytics staff, etc.—and, most importantly, end with them all on the same page.

"I came out of the last week, after watching their presentations, after listening to them talk, their experiences, whether as players, a team, how they go about their daily business, and I feel so, so confident in this whole group," Arniel said Friday.

Days were full of meetings with his coaching staff, including new recruits Dean Chynoweth and Davis Payne.

"We covered a lot of topics, and I really liked their participation and the messages that came out of all of those," Arniel said. "I feel great about those two guys coming in, and what (assistant coach Marty Johnston) and the role he's going to play again with (goaltending coach Wade Flaherty)," Arniel said.

Others were spent with the Manitoba Moose staff, including head coach Mark Morrisson and a swath of management staff—general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff, assistant GMs Larry Simmons and Craig Heisinger—and the team's analytics department, which is kept out of the limelight.

Indeed, analytics were a big part of the team's get-together after Rick Bowness's retirement.

Arniel's interest in analytics was first sparked while he was Alain Vigneault's right-hand man with the New York Rangers and reinforced when he was an assistant on Peter Laviolette's bench with the Washington Capitals.

Bowness was also a numbers guy, and while he, Arniel, and the rest of the coaching staff worked to improve the team's culture, they also endeavoured to use those analytics to help the team on the ice.

Much of that work was spent on the defensive side of the puck, where the Jets became one of the best defending teams in the NHL.

"We used analytics during that, but never really did a deep dive into them," Arniel said.

Part of the big team get-together was to help both sides better understand one another, paving a smoother road to transfer information from upstairs down to the bench, back up again and, ultimately, to the players.

"What information the analytics department is wondering about, what information I was looking for, what Davis and Dean had done in the past," Arniel said. "Just really getting a handle on all of the information that's out there that we were and weren't using, and trying to streamline it more than anything."

The amount of data teams can access is considerable and only grows with time. It's instant, too, with reports coming as soon as the team steps off the ice or between the whistles.

"It's just become another part of coaching," Arniel said. "There's a balancing act. There's still the eye factor, what you see as you're watching as a head coach, what you've experienced being around the game, the players and how they respond to it."

It can also be personalized to players and to what a coaching staff wants to focus on at any given time.

"I can take it all the way, let's say, to a power forward," Arniel said. "I can get analytics on how often he gets to the net front, how often he's getting second-chance opportunities, how often he's getting tip opportunities. And then we can go and use them for how he plays the game, and we go and compare (that data) to similar players."

Players have varying interests in the numbers, as it were, although overall interest has grown over the past several years.

But even for the player who doesn't care to learn the mathematical ins and outs, a coach can take, for example, a five-game set of numbers and point specifically to what a player was doing really well and what they weren't doing so well at.

Using Arniel's power forward example, he can point to a stellar five-game stretch in which that player regularly got to the net front and reinforce that desired approach to his play with the good things that occurred on the ice when he did.

"The other side, for me, is you use it both with your team and what your strengths and weaknesses are and also use it for your opposition," Arniel said. "When you go to play one of

those teams tomorrow, let's say, and it's against Dallas as an example, and Dallas is strong analytical here, here and here. This is an area where we can expose it, and we'll show some video of where we can expose, Dallas in this case, in these areas."

It's all an effort to get ahead of the curve, as Arniel puts it.

When he arrived with Bowness in 2022, they immediately concentrated on why the team gave up so much defensively.

They looked at why the scoring chances were coming and where they came from against the team before they got there.

The data helped improve the team from giving up the fourth most high-danger chances, or chances from the slot, in 2021-22 to the 12th fewest in Bowness's first year.

They showed marked progress in sealing off the guts of the ice, reducing the number of second-chance opportunities, and were a better team in the neutral zone.

"Last year, we looked at offensive second-chance opportunities, how often we were in the slot area, how much time we spent in there, and we improved that," Arniel said.

The Jets were tied for the most rebound goals scored (31) this past season with Boston, improving on their fifth-place finish in Bowness's first year and their 22nd ranking before the regime change.

The next step is making further offensive advancements, which are already being worked on ahead of training camp next month.

"I really feel good after what happened over the last (several days)," Arniel said regarding that.

The head coach's next step, meanwhile, is to take some time off after a whirlwind few months.

Move on, move forward

It hasn't just been Arniel picking up the phone and asking Siri to call Jets forward Cole Perfetti this summer.

The 22-year-old has lit up Arniel's phone, too.

And the head coach's message to his young star has been a simple one: move on, and move forward.

"Now, the two injuries years are behind him," Arniel said. "Now, last year, having a great regular season even with the circumstances at toward the end of the year, that's behind you. Now, it's move on, move forward here. Build on what you've learned from the past couple of years."

Arniel views last season as Perfetti's rookie campaign.

Technically, it was 2022-23, but Arniel said both of his season-ending injuries robbed the Whitby, Ont., product of experiencing the second half of the NHL season when the league elevates to another level, and the game buckles down as the stakes ramp up.

“I thought last year he did a fantastic job,” Arniel said. “Yeah, he didn’t play in the playoffs last year. That was a tough pill to swallow, and we talked about it. But these are all learning steps for him.”

Those chats have helped Perfetti feel comfortable with Arniel coming in. As we reported last month, those conversations have been positive, to the point where Perfetti is open to making a long-term commitment to the club.

One of the things Arniel has said to Perfetti is he’s getting an opportunity.

“An opportunity to play a big role with us,” the head coach said. “People have left our roster, and he’s going to get an opportunity to continue. And he’s got to continue to earn that chance and he knows that.

“He’s excited. I know he’s training hard. He really wants to come in and (take advantage). He’s pretty focused. From the day he left here, he’s been training like crazy, and he’s excited about the chance we are going to be giving him.”

“We need his goals, his speed”

Denmark’s shot at a spot at the 2026 Winter Olympics in Milan-Cortina will come at the end of the month for Nikolaj Ehlers and the rest of his fellow Danes.

Arniel said Thursday he’s excited for Ehlers’s opportunity to help his team book their ticket to Italy, and just as eager that he’s getting a head start ahead of training camp in the middle of September.

“He had a tough go the past couple of years at training camp,” Arniel said. “The last time this happened, he had a great start to the season. So knock on wood that this can be a good jumpstart for him.”

Because, as Arniel was quick to point out, they need his goal-scoring again.

Ehlers had five goals and four assists in three games to send Denmark’s hockey team to its first Games in China.

Ultimately, the NHL pulled out of the tournament due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but Ehlers started the 2021-22 season with 12 points in his first 17 games.

Arniel said Friday he can’t control what happens in the future. But if Ehlers is still with the Jets come training camp—and hopefully that happens—we need his goals, his speed, and his ability to play in that top six.

“Playing in these qualifiers, I know it’s going to be a big boost in getting him started, getting off and running and getting off to a good start in October.”

NHL.com

[NHL Top Players: Top 20 wings](#) [NHL Network reveals best of current crop](#)

By NHL.com

The ability to score thrilling goals, make eye-popping passes, and go to the net with superb skating are the hallmarks of an elite wing. NHL Network producers and analysts on Wednesday revealed their list of the top 20 wings in the League right now in the second of a nine-part series. Here is the list:

15. Kyle Connor, Winnipeg Jets

Connor led the Jets with 34 goals and had 61 points despite being limited to 65 games because of injury. He was first with 10 game-winning goals and tied with Josh Morrissey for the team lead in power-play points (19). The 27-year-old left wing has scored 241 goals since 2017-18, ninth in the NHL.

[Winnipeg Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck ranked #2 in their NHL Top 10 \(VIDEO\)](#)

Jets goaltender Connor Hellebuyck comes in at #2 on our Top 10 Goalies Right Now list as discussed by former goalie Cory Schneider and coach Bruce Boudreau.

The Athletic

[Mason Shaw reflects on time with Wild as he leaves for Jets: ‘I kind of made a home here’](#)

By Joe Smith

EDINA, Minn. — The bag propped over his shoulder, in Winnipeg Jets blue and silver, looked a bit strange.

But as Mason Shaw walked out of Braemar Arena following Wednesday’s Da Beauty League game, the Minnesota Wild fan favorite’s popularity clearly hadn’t waned.

“Mason! Mason!”

“We love you!”

Shaw, 27, had spent the first seven years of his career in the Minnesota organization. There was plenty of heartbreak and pain as Shaw suffered four ACL tears, but he came back strong each time. There’s a reason Shaw was the local chapter of the PWHA’s Masterton Trophy nominee, and why Wild staff considered him a “heart and soul player.”

And while Shaw signed a one-year, two-way \$775K deal with the rival Jets in July, not much has changed. He spent this summer in Minneapolis, where his girlfriend is from and where all his best friends — Wild teammates — live. They golfed. They had beers. Eventually, they'll part ways and then play against each other in two of the first three preseason games in September.

"Some guys here the last few years in Minnesota are going to be guys I'll hang out with the rest of my life," Shaw said. "This place is obviously very special to me. In the short time I've been here, I feel like I kind of made a home here."

Shaw played 82 games over parts of three seasons with the Wild, including 20 this past season after returning from his fourth ACL surgery. But both Shaw and Minnesota appeared ready for a fresh start, as he was not given a qualifying offer in the offseason. Shaw said he and Wild president and GM Bill Guerin spoke on July 1, Day 1 of free agency, and there are no hard feelings. "I respected their decision," Shaw said. "And they respected mine."

Shaw said he had a few similar offers in free agency — one-year, two-way kind of deals — and decided on joining the Jets. It's where he thought he'd be most comfortable.

He knows he'll hear it from fans for joining one of the Wild's biggest rivals.

"I just looked at the map to see what would be the shortest drive to get to the farm," Shaw said, laughing, referring to his hometown of Wainwright, Alberta. "Because that 18-hour drive back to Wainwright isn't very fun. I see the first two preseason games or three will be against the Wild. At the end of the day, it'll be about competing. Let's see what happens when the puck drops."

Mason Shaw signs autographs for fans after a Da Beauty League game. (Joe Smith / The Athletic)

Shaw feels like he's an NHL player, but he still has to fight his way onto a roster — again.

"I've got to go out and prove it," Shaw said. "I've got to prove my health isn't an issue, that I can play at the highest level. The summer has been huge for me. The way the season ended here, it was a big success to get back and what I've gone through. But I wasn't playing at the level that I wanted to. But the summer is going great and I'm going to give it my best shot."

While Shaw did contribute in the Wild lineup last season, mostly on the fourth line, he knew he wasn't back to where he needed to be. It's hard to get that footspeed back during a season.

"There were days in morning skates last year, obviously you're fighting to try to get in the lineup every night, right?" Shaw said. "You're giving it all you can. But you maybe don't have the step that you're used to. And I knew that was going to be the case, having done this too many times. But I feel like, you know, I'm over a year and a half from surgery, and I feel like I'm back to the Mason Shaw I know I can be."

Shaw spent most of the summer in Minnesota, though it was the first time he wasn't training with teammates at TRIA (he was allowed to work out there and rehab last summer while rehabbing from surgery, even though he wasn't technically under contract). Shaw hung out with a lot of his good friends here, from Matt Boldy and Brock Faber to Jake Middleton. Shaw played

in a group with Ryan Hartman and Jon Merrill in Thursday's Hendrickson Foundation golf tournament in Prior Lake.

Shaw also went home for a couple of weeks; his sister had a baby recently so he became an uncle. "It's something that resets you mentally and it's always good insight," Shaw said of going home. "You realize who you're playing for. Sometimes you feel on an island when you're going through this. But it was great to be back."

Shaw said he heard good things about the Jets organization from Nate Schmidt, who he's played in Da Beauty League with. Adam Lowry has reached out as well, with the two planning to golf together before camp. "There will be new people, new challenges, opportunities," Shaw said. "So it's a little bit nerve-wracking. But at the same time, it's exciting."

Shaw said he'll look forward to when the Wild are on the road in Winnipeg and he can have a beer and dinner with the guys. And those Minnesota fans, the ones he took photos with and signed autographs for Wednesday night, will always be in his heart.

"If you told me back in 2017 that I'd get part of 2-3 seasons with the Wild, shoot, I'd pinch myself, like you were lying," Shaw said. "Nothing but good memories. It's where the dream became a reality for me. I grew up a lot and got a taste of what the NHL is like. It's an addicting taste, and I want to keep it going."

"I can't say I had a 10 year-(run) like (Matt Dumba), but I feel like my time here was very special. It's exciting to see what the future holds, but, for now, this is home for many reasons. So many good people around me that are very special."

"I'll miss it for sure."