

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/09/19/theres-a-new-sherriff-in-town>

There's a new sherriff in town Arniel quick to put his stamp on Jets

By: Ken Wiebe

Scott Arniel didn't need an alarm to help get him out of bed on Thursday.

This was a moment he'd been waiting patiently for, for more than a decade for those of you keeping track at home.

As the new head coach of the Winnipeg Jets made the drive to the Hockey For All Centre, he couldn't wait to step onto the ice to put his team through its paces.

Arniel had made a speech to Jets players the night before during a team dinner, but now the on-ice portion of the journey was upon him.

"I was up early," said Arniel. "I was pretty pumped to get this going."

You can certainly understand why.

Since the adopted Winnipegger was named as the successor to Rick Bowness on May 24, Arniel has been knocking things off an extensive checklist to help him be ready for his first training camp running the team.

"I had a list of about 30 things, but I got everything checked off. What we had talked about doing or wanting to get done, we got it done," said Arniel. "So that's the biggest thing, to be prepared."

Preparation is a quality Arniel has long possessed and Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff recognized it dating back to the summer of 2022, when he was the runner-up for the head coaching job and eventually came on as an associate.

Cheveldayoff also recognizes the benefits Arniel should enjoy as he attacks his second opportunity to be an NHL head coach.

"I think that coaches will tell you it's just how much that they've learned, the delta of what they've learned about themselves," said Cheveldayoff. "And if they're honest with themselves about their first opportunity or prior opportunity, and most of them are, they grow from it and they learn. Coaches, they obviously live in glass houses, but they learn from that. They learn their shortfalls and if they're humble enough, they grow from it."

During his session with reporters on Thursday, Arniel reiterated his admiration for Bowness, but also bristled a bit at a question relating to how the retired bench boss handled callups and put them in particular roles last season when injuries arose.

“I’m not going to go specific on names. And I don’t mean to be disrespectful, and I have a ton of respect for Bones, but I’m not doing what Bones did,” said Arniel. “I’m doing what I’m going to do.”

Arniel answered the question calmly, but his message was clear: Bowness is still a valuable resource and played a vital role over the past two seasons, but there’s a new sheriff in town and some things are going to be done differently.

While the first run of line rushes and defence pairings can sometimes provide a few clues on possible deployment, Arniel was quick to point out it was not necessarily a tell that he had Mark Scheifele between Kyle Connor and Gabriel Vilardi and Adam Lowry between Mason Appleton and Nino Niederreiter.

“It’s just my history, kind of on other teams. When those guys can come out in the first couple of days and get their touches amongst each other, it kind of gets them up and running,” said Arniel. “I’ve also seen it the other way where you put a veteran with a couple of young guys and it gets very frustrating. For those guys, it was more just familiarity playing amongst each other. Things change as the games come and we’ve got two that come real quick here. I just wanted to have those guys that have played together do that. We split the D up so there was a different look to it but it will all kind of work itself back to who will play with who.”

He was also asked for his thoughts on roster size and whether he preferred the construction to include 14 forwards and seven defencemen or 13 forwards and eight D-men, like the Jets carried for much of the past two seasons.

“We would actually like to get to do 13 (forwards) and 7 (D-men),” said Arniel. “At the end of the day, I think that we want to try to have a rotation where our seventh guy is getting a little bit more. (Carrying 22 players on the roster), it certainly helps you cap-wise if you can go 13 and 7 but we’ll just kind of see where we’re at the end of training camp.”

Arniel’s familiarity with the group from the past two seasons is an obvious bonus, but he’s also eager to put his own stamp on the team.

“We’re not going to change the way that we play without the puck. There are some things I want to tinker with offensively, some things to do with our breakouts and what-not but I don’t want to get specific about it,” said Arniel. “The big thing that I talked to our group about was our compete. I just think there’s another level that we need to get to.”

“You can’t play half-assed. You can’t try to just get through the first part of the season not defending. We talked about being a really good defensive team, so that when we get to the playoffs, we’re used to that. It’s the same thing with compete. You can’t just come to the playoffs and say ‘I’m going to compete harder.’ I want that now.”

That message was certainly heard and now it’s about ensuring the actions of the Jets match those words.

“It was kind of like he’s been our head coach all along, to be honest,” said Jets defenceman Dylan DeMelo. “Obviously, a lot of the same principles we had last year, our foundation pieces when it comes to the D-zone and back tracking. We had a great year in the regular season defensively, allowing the least amount of goals in the league compared to where we were two-to-three years ago is a huge step for this group.

“We understand that was a huge part of our success and why we had such a successful regular season. That’s a non-negotiable for our group. That’s now the standard. That’s where we have to continue to push. We can’t rest on our laurels, it’s a whole new season and it’s not like all of a sudden, you’re just going to be the top defensive team again. It’s going to be a lot of hard work.”

That work is already underway and the task for the next few weeks is to incorporate Arniel’s ideas in time to hit the ground running when the regular season arrives on Oct. 9 in Edmonton.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/09/19/perfetti-a-no-show-contract-talks-unresolved>

***Perfetti a no-show; contract talks unresolved
Contract stalemate a concerning situation for Jets***

By: Mike McIntyre

It’s not a crisis just yet. These are still early days, after all. But it would be fair to classify the Cole Perfetti contract stalemate as a concerning situation for the Winnipeg Jets.

The 22-year-old forward, a restricted free agent looking to build off a breakout season, was nowhere to be found Thursday as training camp got underway.

How did it get to this point?

“I think every situation is unique,” explained general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff. “That’s probably what makes it difficult at times. You look at comparables in situations like this, players that are RFAs coming out of their first contract going into their second contract. It’s tricky sometimes to get on the same page.”

This isn’t an entirely new experience for Cheveldayoff, as he was at the helm for similar impasses with current Jets Kyle Connor and Josh Morrissey and former players Jacob Trouba and Patrik Laine. Trouba’s dragged on well into the season, while the other three were resolved within a matter of days.

“I had a conversation with Cole’s representative (Thursday) morning. We’re looking at things and trying to make it work,” said Cheveldayoff, who declined to get into any specifics of those chats.

“I don’t know that necessarily helps the process. It’s never been my style to do that. I’ll try and stay true to that.”

Perfetti is represented by KO Sports, headed up by Kurt Overhardt, which also represented Trouba.

Perfetti was not present at the Jets team dinner Wednesday night in which Scott Arniel, who takes over for retired bench boss Rick Bowness, addressed the troops.

"It's unfortunate that he's not here but others get to step up. And that's kind of our camp," said Arniel.

"We've got a lot of jobs... And I told them last night that there's opportunities and through hard work, how they practice, and the exhibition games themselves, guys are going to get a chance to play and show us what you have."

Perfetti, the 10th pick in the 2020 NHL draft, is coming off a year in which he set personal bests in goals (19), assists (19), points (38) and games played (71). But he also battled consistency issues at times and was a healthy scratch for several games, including the first four playoff contests.

Finding a term and a salary that makes sense for both sides has become a sticking point. Is there disappointment it has reached this point and wasn't dealt with during the off-season?

"You're always looking to hit the ground running in all aspects of things. Certainly with (Scott Arniel)'s first training camp and important teaching things that happen early in camp," Cheveldayoff said.

"We play exhibition games coming up quicker than normal on Saturday and Sunday afternoon. Things happen fast, day by day, so you hope it gets done."

Morrissey has been down this road before, as he was without a new deal when training camp began in 2018.

"I obviously missed the first few days of camp the one year, and jokingly said I didn't have to do the fitness testing that year. So he's saving his legs, I guess," Morrissey said Thursday

"But obviously, bottom line, everyone's in their own situation. Everyone, it's different. Every contract situation is different. No two are the same, in my view, and every, every process that one goes through. So whatever he needs as a teammate. I'm just trying to support him. Obviously, we'd love to have him back as soon as possible and get him on ice to get building with the group."

Perfetti is one of four RFAs still without a deal, joining Boston Bruins goaltender Jeremy Swayman, New Jersey Devils forward Dawson Mercer and St. Louis Blues forward Nikita Alexandrov

Cheveldayoff said this isn't personal, noting the organization "thinks the world of Cole," who represented the Jets last week at the NHL media tour in Vegas.

“That’s the hardest part. Personally, I’d give these guys the moon. They’re awesome guys and I’d love to have the ability to pay them everything they want and deserve,” said Cheveldayoff.

“In a salary cap world, you have to make business decisions. It’s done through the back and forth, it’s done through comparables. Hopefully, you just try and find something that works for both sides.”

The key to a resolution, he said, is for both sides to continue talking or corresponding and presenting different points of view.

“Hopefully, something hits home on both sides that we can grasp on to,” he said.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2024/09/19/morrissey-focused-on-improving-leaving-disappointments-in-the-past>

Morrissey focused on improving, leaving disappointments in the past

By: Mike McIntyre and Ken Wiebe

Like several members of the core group before him, Winnipeg Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey shared a few thoughts Thursday about the disappointment of last spring’s first-round playoff exit against the Colorado Avalanche.

The alternate captain was emotional when he spoke to reporters after the deciding game, expressing the importance of learning from the heartache to help the group push forward. Now, speaking with media following the first on-ice session of training camp, Morrissey made it clear he wasn’t interested in living in the past, even if it provided some additional motivation.

“I don’t think it ever really goes away for me. Obviously, it was a tough end and it takes a couple of weeks to collect your thoughts but, for me, it was pretty much in my head all throughout the summer,” said Morrissey. “Just not being satisfied with having a great regular season and all that kind of stuff and trying to improve and work on things.”

Morrissey is coming off consecutive seasons in which he garnered plenty of votes for the Norris Trophy. After notching a career-high 76 points in 2022-23, he posted an impressive 69 points while taking great pride in improving his defensive metrics.

“Two years ago, I had a massive offensive jump. I want to keep that and improve and to have my defensive game at its highest end, too,” said Morrissey. “And not trade one for the other but try to have both. I was really happy with how our whole team defensive game improved last year. Obviously, individuals benefit from that.

“But I was happy with my commitment to both ends of the puck. So, my thoughts were how can I continue to evolve offensively, defensively, watch some things (on video) that I can use and just try to learn something to improve my game. Looking at that and trying to work on some special teams. That’s obviously an area that we worked on improving and that I want to improve on myself personally, too — some things to improve on the power play.”

NAMESTNIKOV'S PAINFUL SUMMER: The last time we saw Vlad Namestnikov on the ice, the veteran Jets skater had collapsed in a pool of blood after taking a slap shot to the face from teammate Nate Schmidt during Game 4 of the playoffs in Denver.

He'd ultimately spend the night in hospital with a fractured cheekbone and miss the following contest at Canada Life Centre, which Colorado won to end Winnipeg's season.

"It was probably a couple of months that I didn't feel good at all. Constantly pain in the cheek," Namestnikov said Thursday of the recovery process.

"Now it's good. Ready to go."

The veteran is a top candidate to start as Winnipeg's second-line centre this season, a role he played at various times last year with success. Others in the mix would include young prospects Brad Lambert and Brayden Yager.

"My mindset doesn't change. I'm coming into camp, working hard and earning that spot," said Namestnikov.

The way last year ended left a mark — both literally and figuratively.

"It definitely left a sour taste in everyone's mouths. We had a great regular season and to end it like that was disappointment," said Namestnikov.

"I know everyone in this room is hungry for more and pretty much we have the same group. We're going to battle in camp and battle all season and try and make the playoffs here."

BIG IMPACT: He's far from the biggest guy on the ice. But Nikita Chibrikov always seems to stand out in a crowd.

Just ask 6-6 forward Kieron Walton, who found himself flat on his back Thursday after the 5-9 Chibrikov dished out a heck of a hit during a training camp battle drill.

"I'm not scared about that. I'm not the biggest size but I try to do all the work that big guys do," Chibrikov told the Free Press when asked about his feisty nature.

The 21-year-old from Russia is coming off a terrific rookie pro campaign with the Manitoba Moose which included making his NHL debut in Game 82 for the Jets and scoring a goal. He had a great showing last weekend at the Young Stars Classic in Penticton — with two goals and an assist in three games — and has carried that momentum into camp.

"It's more confidence for me. Feeling more comfortable. Everything is better. My hockey, my mind, outside of the rink, my language," said Chibrikov

"I feel good. I'm ready to make the next step."

LUCIUS TAKES NEXT STEP: Forward prospect Chaz Lucius was a full participant in Thursday's session after sitting out all three games of the Young Stars Classic.

The 18th-overall selection from the 2021 NHL Draft has dealt with a number of tough injuries during the past several seasons and is eager to get into some game action after he suffered an ankle injury in January.

Lucius is going to need ample time at the American Hockey League level this year to get himself back into the groove, but the Jets are going to be patient with him as he pushes forward in the development process.

"He shed the non-contact. It will be a slower process for him to get back to (being) game ready. We will kind of take it day by day with him," said Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff.

"Excited to see him out there. He generally looks like he's moving well. The surgery he had was not a traditional one, not an easy one, one that when he had it, the doctors were very cautious about saying the rehab was going to be very intense."

READY FOR GAME ACTION: Saturday and Sunday mark the first two preseason games for the Jets and head coach Scott Arniel acknowledged he would be dressing fairly youthful lineups against the Minnesota Wild and Edmonton Oilers.

It also means some of the depth players signed as free agents in the summer, such as forwards Mason Shaw and Jared Anderson-Dolan and blue-liners like Haydn Fleury and Dylan Coghlan will likely have a chance to start making an impression in the battle for jobs.

"I think we'll give them all a chance," said Arniel. "Some of them I've coached against, but I'd really like to see them in our mix. I think that the one thing, we know with free agency, it was a tough draw for us. The one thing we did as an organization is improve our depth. We have a lot more players that are NHL-ready to go. Some of those guys you mentioned, they're going to be right in the thick of things. Just like with the battle on defence, those guys fighting for those last few spots. We give them the ice time, let them go out and make their point."

Arniel was also asked about defenceman Ville Heinola and if making the team out of training camp last fall before suffering the ankle injury might give him a leg up in the competition.

"I just told him, and as I talked to him this summer, use that as the motivation. I challenged him last year to come in and fight for one of those jobs, and he did. He came ready," said Arniel. "I said the same thing to him this year. It's unfortunate what happened to him last year, and the other thing is we had zero injuries really on our back-end last year."

"So he didn't really get a chance, especially with us having eight D here. This year, he's in a battle with some other guys. Come in, put his best foot forward. I think he gained confidence last year by how he played. He knew he played well and he gave himself a chance."

Arniel also gave a glimpse of his goalie plan, noting Connor Hellebuyck would likely be in line for two-and-a-half games, with those coming during the final four outings.

Kaapo Kahkonen and Eric Comrie will each get a start during the weekend games against the Wild and Oilers.

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/dont-read-too-much-into-the-camp-opening-lines-jets-arniel-says>

Don't read too much into the camp-opening lines, Jets' Arniel says

By Scott Billeck

It must be hockey season because some social media users were left aghast at some of the line combos they saw as training camp got going for the Winnipeg Jets on Thursday.

Two things, folks: It's Day 1 of camp, and head coach Scott Arniel said not to read too much into those lines.

"It's just my history, kind of on other teams, when those guys can come out in the first couple of days and get their touches amongst each other, it kind of gets them up and running," Arniel said, referring mainly to his veteran contingent.

"I've also seen it the other way where you put a veteran with a couple of young guys, and it gets very frustrating. For those guys, it was more just familiarity playing amongst each other. Things change as the games come and we've got two that come real quick here. I just wanted to have those guys that have played together do that. We split the D up so there was a different look to it but it will all kind of work itself back to who will play with who."

Indeed, the Jets host their first pre-season game at Canada Life Centre on Saturday before travelling to Edmonton for the second half of the weekend back-to-back on Sunday afternoon.

The lineups for both games are expected to be youth-heavy, giving Arniel and his coaching staff time to evaluate the kids.

"There's guys here that maybe in other years might not get an exhibition game and they're probably, more than likely, almost everybody ... Don't quote me on the everybody, but it's going to be real close to everybody getting a game," Arniel said.

Eric Comrie and Kaapo Kahkonen, the two goalies battling to be Connor Hellebuyck's understudy, will each get a full game over the weekend.

Hellebuyck, meanwhile, wants two-and-a-half games and wants to play against NHL-heavy lineups. So expect the reigning Vezina winner to see most, if not all, of his action in the second half of Winnipeg's six-game pre-season slate.

Arniel, who is already more forthcoming than his predecessor, also revealed that, in a perfect world, he'd like to enter the season with a 22-man roster comprised of 13 forwards, seven defencemen, and two goalies.

"We want to try to have a rotation where our seventh guy is getting a little bit more," Arniel said. "It will just be a situation and we'll see. If we can get to the end of camp, guys certainly have to go through waivers, and we're going to have to fight that battle, too. (Carrying 22 on roster), it certainly helps you cap-wise if you can go 13 and seven."

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/jets-notebook-josh-morrissey-looking-for-next-step>

JETS NOTEBOOK: Josh Morrissey looking for the next step

By Scott Billeck

Josh Morrissey made a massive jump in his offensive game two years ago.

Last year, he sacrificed some of that offence to improve defensively, buying into the team-defence philosophy former head coach Rick Bowness used to help the Winnipeg Jets surrender the fewest goals in the NHL.

Now, Morrissey wants the best of both worlds.

"I want to keep (that offensive play) and improve and to have my defensive game at its highest end, too, an not trade one for the other but try to have both," Morrissey said Thursday. "I was really happy with how our whole team's defensive game improved last year. Obviously, individuals benefit from that. But I was happy with my commitment to both ends of the puck.

"So, my thoughts (during the offseason) were how can I continue to evolve offensively, defensively? Watch some things (on video) that I can use in and just try to learn something to improve my game. Looking at that and try to work on some special teams stuff. That's an area that we worked on improving and that I want to improve on myself personally, too – some things to improve on the power play."

Here are a few other odds and ends from Thursday:

- Nikita Chibrikov continued to turn heads, laying the boom on 6-foot-6, 211-pound forward Kieron Walton during the morning session. Chibrikov is listed as nine inches shorter and 50 pounds lighter than Walton. No matter. "I'm not scared about that," Chibrikov said. "I'm not the biggest size, but I try to do all the work that big guys do. It doesn't matter for me. I feel like I should do it, in the corners or blocking shots. It doesn't matter."
- Head coach Scott Arniel told Ville Heinola to use last season's impressive training camp to his advantage this year. "I challenged him last year to come in and fight for one of those jobs, and he did," Arniel said. "He came ready. I said the same thing to him this year. I think he gained confidence last year by how he played. He knew he played well, and he gave himself a chance."

- Vladislav Namestnikov said it took a couple of months before his face felt normal again after taking a Nate Schmidt howitzer to the cheek during the first round of the playoffs. “Constantly pain in the cheek,” he said. “It’s not fun. Very painful. Hopefully, it doesn’t happen to anyone.”

- If a young player will secure a spot in Winnipeg’s lineup, they’ll do it on merit. “It’s all about the Jets winning,” general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff said. “Every decision we have made and we are going to continue to make is going to be about trying to put the Jets in the best opportunity to win. The National Hockey League is a very tough league to develop in. You can have a great five weeks, 10 weeks, two months and have one bad month or a couple of bad weeks and the mental side can be very, very tricky for any player.”

<https://winnipegson.com/sports/jets-gm-cheveldayoff-would-offer-perfetti-the-moon-if-it-were-up-to-him>

Jets' GM Cheveldayoff would offer Perfetti the moon if it were up to him

By Scott Billeck

Kevin Cheveldayoff would give his players the moon if given the option.

But with a salary cap to navigate, business decisions must be made, contributing to Cole Perfetti’s absence as Winnipeg Jets training camp began earnestly on Thursday.

“They’re awesome guys, and I’d love to have the ability to pay them everything they want and deserve,” Winnipeg’s general manager said after the team’s morning session. “In a salary cap world, you have to make business decisions. It’s done through the back and forth, it’s done through comparables. Hopefully, you just try and find something that works for both sides.”

Both camps spoke briefly earlier in the day.

“We’re looking at things and trying to make it work,” Cheveldayoff said.

“You’re always looking to hit the ground running in all aspects of things, with (head coach Scott Arniel’s) first training camp and important teaching that happens early in camp. We play exhibition games coming up quicker than normal on Saturday and Sunday afternoon. Things happen fast, day-by-day, so you hope it gets done.”

Cheveldayoff was mum on any further details, electing to stay true to his tight-lipped style. He doesn’t believe negotiating in public helps move the process along.

What’s known is there’s a gap between where Perfetti values himself and what the Jets are willing to offer.

Winnipeg’s opening salvo fell short of the comparables Perfetti’s representation is basing its ask on, including a two-year, \$3.75 million AAV bridge deal that Ottawa’s Shane Pinto signed earlier this summer.

Both have played a similar number of games and produced a similar number of points during their respective young careers.

But it's not believed the team sees Pinto as comparable at all. For instance, Pinto is on his third contract, while Cole is looking for his second. The sense is that Pinto's AAV would have been higher had he not been suspended for the first half of last season for violating the NHL's gambling rules.

"The hardest part is that there's different levels of contract negotiations in this league," Cheveldayoff said. "RFAs (who) don't have arbitration rights. RFAs coming out of their first contract generally don't have arbitration rights, and that becomes a sticking point sometimes."

Perfetti's remained a consummate professional throughout the ordeal, including heading to Las Vegas last week as the team's representative at the league's North American media tour.

Perfetti has made it known that he loves the city and the organization and is open to signing a long-term contract with the Jets if they are willing.

A long-term deal hasn't been put on the table.

"Bottom line, everyone's in their own situation," Josh Morrissey said. "Everyone, it's different. Every contract situation is different. No two are the same, in my view, and every process that one goes through."

Morrissey missed the first few days of camp heading into the 2018-19 season before his contract situation as an RFA was resolved.

He joked Thursday that he didn't have to participate in fitness testing that season. And joking aside, Morrissey is there to support Perfetti if he needs it.

"We'd love to have him back as soon as possible and get him on ice to get building with the group, and I know that's probably what, nothing more than he wants," Morrissey said.

Winnipeg's stance is consistent with their past negotiations with other players.

The Jets need to achieve their targets, and this is the only time they'll negotiate with Perfetti without the 22-year-old holding arbitration rights.

Perfetti is coming off his first full season in the NHL after enduring back-to-back season-ending injuries during his rookie and sophomore campaigns.

Last year wasn't without adversity.

Perfetti went 23 games with just two points and was a healthy scratch 11 times in the second half of the season. He featured in just one playoff game.

Aniel said it's unfortunate not to have Perfetti at the start of camp, but the show must go on.

"Others get to step up," Arniel said. "And that's kind of our camp. I told them last night that there's opportunities and through hard work, how they practice, and the exhibition games themselves, guys are going to get a chance to play and show us what you have."

Arniel and Perfetti spoke a couple of times over the summer, with the new head coach mending fences the previous one damaged.

And those looking for an answer to when the standoff will end will be left disappointed.

"Generally both sides talk their way through things, or write their way through things with emails, or try and put different points across to each other," Cheveldayoff said. "Hopefully, something hits home on both sides that we can grasp onto."

Perfetti spent part of this Thursday mulling over his options regarding where to travel to continue skating while his contract situation plays out.

It can always change with one phone call. But a player looking to make alternative skating arrangements usually doesn't suggest a deal is close.

Winnipegjets.com

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/big-opportunity-for-heinola>

Big opportunity for Heinola

Heinola: "I've been waiting for this moment for a long time."

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – It was business as usual for Ville Heinola over the summer in Finland.

"It was good. Pretty busy," said Heinola.

"Training a lot. Working out. Fishing, of course. Golfing. It was a good summer."

The 23-year-old heads into this upcoming season with a huge opportunity in front of him. Brenden Dillon and Nate Schmidt have different addresses now and that means the log jam in the organization on defence has cleared up a little.

"Obviously, very excited. I've been waiting for this moment for a long time," said Heinola.

"Been grinding out every single day just to be ready when I get the chance to be in the top six. That's my only goal this year and working towards it."

Dillon's departure may be providing opportunity for Heinola, but the young defenceman will miss the 33-year-old around the room and on the ice. Dillon and fellow veteran blueliner Nate Schmidt provided a lot of support for Heinola over their time here in Winnipeg.

"I talked to them a lot. And we're all d-men, so it helps, too. I talked a lot with those guys, and I still talk a lot to Dilly," said Heinola.

"It's just having someone there and you know you can say whatever you want, and they're going to understand and listen to you."

Heinola and Dillon were paired together throughout training camp and the preseason the last two years. In fact, Dillon was visibly upset after Heinola fractured his ankle last October during his postgame interview following the Jets preseason finale on home ice against Ottawa. The new Devils defenceman chatted with winnipegjets.com about the situation.

"I really respect and have a lot of time for him and how fun that bubbly personality seems to have. It just sucked that injuries happen in all facets of life and unfortunately for him, just happened at the wrong time, biggest opportunity for him," said Dillon.

"An amazing training camp was getting some looks on the second power play and he just seemed to be running with it and an unfortunate turn in the corner. I'm sure a play that he has done a million times and next thing you know, there's surgery and he's out until January."

The Finn didn't play again until mid-January when he suited up for the Manitoba Moose. Heinola ended up with 27 points (10G, 17A) in 41 regular season games in the American Hockey League and added two assists in two playoff contests.

"It made me stronger mentally, for sure. Probably physically, as well," said Heinola.

"It's never easy going through an injury and all the things that comes with it. But I think I handled it pretty well and am more ready now than I was last year."

Being mentally and physically stronger is great for the Jets 1st round pick from 2019 and the confidence gained from his performance last fall can only help.

"I felt like I played well there," said Heinola.

"But it doesn't matter what I did last year or two years ago. What happens now matters, and that's what I'm focused on."

Dillon said he has been chatting with Heinola this summer and was happy to hear that the younger defenceman is healthy and looking forward to a positive successful year.

"Going to camps and seeing Ville and see him build his game and kind of grow his game. The sky is the limit when it comes to that ability to play in different situations. I think there is that adaptability for him to be able to find that niche of how he's going to be able to affect games," said Dillon.

“You gotta find a way whether he’s playing on the left side, or the right side and I don’t know what Arnie (Scott Arniel) has in store for him. But just the willingness to fit whatever puzzle piece he needs to be there to make this Jets team and to be an everyday player.”

Heinola has worked hard over the past couple years to focus on the defensive side of his game.

“I’ve gotten better at, last year especially, and the year before. I feel like I can do it all. I know my strengths and I know what I’m good at. Of course, I want to do those things well,” said Heinola.

“But I feel like if I play my game, I don’t really have to worry about those things. It’s more like proving to (the coaches) that I can do those other things, too.”

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/opening-of-camp-always-special-for-cheveldayoff>

***Opening of camp always special for Cheveldayoff
“It’s all about the Jets winning”***

By Mitchell Clinton

WINNIPEG – Excitement is usually the prevailing feeling on the first day of training camp, whether it’s felt by a fan in the stands, a player on the ice, or Kevin Cheveldayoff – who overlooked Thursday’s skates from the office level of hockey for all centre.

He addressed the team on Wednesday evening, during a team dinner that followed the players’ medical and physical evaluations.

“I’m not a guy that goes and makes addresses to the team, that’s the coach (responsibility). But I get an opportunity to speak with them yesterday and that’s an exciting time,” said Cheveldayoff. “The last time I would have spoken with the majority of them was at exit meetings last year. So I rekindled some of those conversations that we had with the majority of the guys, with respect to the work that they put in over the summer. The commitments that they made to be X per cent better, as an individual, so we can be X per cent better as a group.”

After all, what happened last year – no matter how memorable – happened last year.

The 110 points? Last year.

The William Jennings Trophy? Last year.

The 2024-25 version of the Winnipeg Jets is a different group. Sure, there are names that remain the same, but there are also those trying to make their mark.

“We didn’t win last year and naturally, there are some changes that always happen,” Cheveldayoff said. “That is the level of excitement that drives you in this game here. Can we get better as a group here? And looking at a different way of doing it now.”

During free agency, Cheveldayoff brought in Kaapo Kahkonen and Eric Comrie to battle it out in the crease behind two-time Vezina Trophy winner Connor Hellebuyck.

On the blue line, the names of Dylan Coghlan and Haydn Fleury join the battle for spots with drafted prospects like Logan Stanley and Ville Heinola. The story is also true up front, where Mason Shaw and Jaret Anderson-Dolan (with 82 and 131 NHL games, respectively) look to earn their opportunity in Jets colours.

The training camp roster is a mix of established NHL veterans and young talent eager to prove its ability to take on a bigger responsibility.

“That’s up to them to show that they are ready. That’s up to every player to show,” said Cheveldayoff. “Whether you’re a veteran guy or a young guy, it’s all about the Jets winning. Every decision we have made and we are going to continue to make is going to be about trying to put the Jets in the best opportunity to win.”

Cheveldayoff reiterated the difficulty for players to develop in the NHL. A strong two-week or two-month run can sometimes be undone by a mentally (or physically) taxing run of bad luck or injury.

All those decisions, questions about what’s best for a player’s development, the team as a whole, will be answered in the coming days. For now, Cheveldayoff is happy to see the players on the ice again - with Scott Arniel running his first camp as a head coach.

“I really believe that he was able to hit the ground running with respect to the relationship sides of things,” said Cheveldayoff. “He flew out to Calgary to meet with (Mark Scheifele), (Josh Morrissey), and (Adam Lowry). Again, just that excitement. That general giddiness of let’s get this going. That’s the whole coaching staff. There’s a different vibe, because in some ways they’re all still learning from each other and are going to take best practices from each other.”

Four of the eight teams from the Central Division made the postseason last season, with none of them achieving their ultimate goal. The path back to the Stanley Cup Playoffs isn’t any easier now, and Cheveldayoff wouldn’t expect it to be.

“You’ve got to eliminate eight teams in the regular season to get to the playoffs and if you earn that right to get to the playoffs, you go from there. That’s the focus that we talk about,” said Cheveldayoff. “That is the level of excitement that drives you in this game here. Can we get better as a group here? And looking at a different way of doing it now.”

ICE CHIPS

Cheveldayoff did provide an update on Cole Perfetti, who didn’t take part in the medicals on Wednesday or the skate on Thursday as he remains a restricted free agent without a contract.

“I had a conversation with Cole’s representative this morning. We’re looking at things and trying to make it work,” said Cheveldayoff. “At this stage of things the focus is on getting done. If it’s done, then it’s encouraging. If it’s not, there is work to be done.”

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/what-should-rfa-cole-perfetti-next-contract-look-like/>

What should RFA Cole Perfetti's next contract look like?

By Jacob Stoller

WINNIPEG -- It feels like Cole Perfetti should be signed by now.

When you've got a restricted free agent donning your jersey at the NHL Player Media Tour and representing your team at a charity fishing event, it's safe to assume he'll be at training camp, right? And mind you, this isn't like many of the dragged-out RFA negotiations Jets GM Kevin Cheveldayoff has dealt with — the player wants to be in Winnipeg.

"I love being in Canada. I love Winnipeg. I love the organization. I love playing there," Perfetti told Sportsnet's Luke Fox in Las Vegas.

Yet, two days into training camp, Perfetti remains unsigned.

While this may be, as one NHL executive told Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman, the "nicest contract dispute ever," it certainly isn't the easiest negotiation ever.

"Personally, I'd give these guys the moon. I'd love to have the ability to pay them everything that they want and deserve," Jets GM Kevin Cheveldayoff told reporters on Thursday. "In a salary cap world, you have to make business decisions."

And ultimately, Winnipeg has more leverage here.

In the short term, the Jets can proceed without Perfetti more than the latter can afford to hold out of training camp and possibly get off to a slow start to the season. As we've seen before with countless examples — be it when William Nylander signed on Dec 1, 2019, or when Trevor Zegras signed late in training camp last fall — players who miss extended parts of the season or training camp are prone to poor years.

Frankly, Perfetti can't afford a down year.

The 2020 10th overall pick is coming off a roller coaster 2023-24 campaign. After recording 29 points and averaging 14:25 of ice time in the first 40 games of the year, Perfetti posted just nine points, averaged 12:30 a night and endured a 15-game point drought through late January and all of February. Sure, he set career-highs in goals (19) and points (38) but given the way the first half of the season went, those point totals should've been higher.

So, what's the holdup in contract talks?

For one, Perfetti probably wants to feel appreciated. Not only did Rick Bowness quickly abandon the mission of having him as a centre just a few games into the year, but the Jets also

didn't give him much runway to get back into the lineup once he found his rhythm in the spring. It ought to sting when you're a healthy scratch in four of your team's five playoff games despite recording six points in your last six regular season contests.

Perfetti's camp is probably pulling a lot of 'coulda, woulda, shoulda' with these negotiations. Preaching that, if Perfetti had more of an opportunity, he would've produced at a higher clip. But for all the upside he has, Perfetti hasn't demonstrated enough to warrant the type of payday he's reportedly eyeing (more on that, in a bit).

And that's the crux of why the Jets are playing hardball. To understand things better, you've got to know the market. Let's take a look at some two-year bridge comparables.

Below is a list of six players with similar production to Perfetti before inking a two-year bridge deal. Note: We're only looking at players who, like Perfetti, don't have arbitration rights.

On the recent episode of 32 Thoughts: The Podcast, Friedman pointed out that Shane Pinto and Cole Perfetti's production has been quite similar, although he doesn't believe Winnipeg wants to hand out a \$3.75 million AAV to Perfetti. And they shouldn't. If Perfetti's camp is indeed using Pinto's contract as a comparable, the Jets are wise to push back. Sure, the two have recorded nearly identical point-per-game outputs throughout their careers, but Pinto proved himself as a top-six centre who can make an impact at both ends of the ice last season. Perfetti, on the other hand, was a middle-six winger.

As you can see, over the past couple of years, players of Perfetti's ilk have earned closer to \$3 million — not \$4 million — on a two-year bridge deal. Plus, once the New Jersey Devils re-sign Dawson Mercer — which they're supposedly close to doing — Perfetti's leverage will shrink even more. He won't have a leg to stand on if he asks for more money than a player with two 20-plus goal campaigns and a 56-point season under his belt. And odds are, given that he's mainly been deployed as a winger, Mercer will be making less than Pinto.

Perfetti's camp can preach upside and potential all they want but in contract negotiations — where comparables are king — it all comes down to the numbers.

Now, speaking of numbers, what about the benefits of locking up Perfetti long-term? With the cap set to rise, one could think that inking Perfetti to a lengthy pact that'd cover his prime years would be a wise move. But really, it's better in theory than it is in actuality. Perfetti hasn't proven enough to warrant a long-term extension.

There's a sizeable gap between Perfetti and the players above. Tim Stutzle, the 2020 third overall pick, signed an eight-year pact after scoring 58 points as a teenager. Lucas Raymond and Seth Jarvis secured the bag after posting 70-plus and 60-plus points respectively. Quinton Byfield recorded 55 points last year and was a fixture in Los Angeles' top-six. And Anton Lundell, whose regular season production is in-line with Perfetti, recorded 17 points in 24 playoff games this past spring. All of those aforementioned accomplishments are merit to banking on a player being worth big-time money at such a young age.

We still don't know what Perfetti is, yet. The 5-foot-11 forward is extremely cerebral and an excellent distributor, however, he's got just one fully healthy NHL season under his belt. We saw flashes of his brilliance last season but ultimately, right or wrong, he wasn't good enough to be trusted when it mattered most.

That's not to say Perfetti can't be a fixture for the Jets in the long and short term. But taking a gamble on him, at this stage of his career, just isn't worth it for the Jets.

And so we wait. But the longer this drags on, it's Perfetti who has the most to lose.

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/video/are-jets-close-to-completing-deal-with-perfetti/>

Are Jets close to completing deal with Perfetti? (VIDEO)

Daily Faceoff's Frank Seravalli joins Danielle Michaud on Sportsnet Central to discuss hot topics from NHL training camps including the contract situations revolving around Cole Perfetti and Mitch Marner, the injury to Thatcher Demko, and more.

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/5780484/2024/09/19/winnipeg-jets-training-camp-2024-day-1/>

What we saw and learned on Day 1 of Winnipeg Jets training camp

By Murat Ates

WINNIPEG — Scott Arniel's first stint as an NHL head coach didn't go the way he planned it.

After 45 wins and 70 losses, he was faced with an early exit from the head coaching fraternity he'd worked so hard to join. His players had tuned him out, so the Columbus Blue Jackets let him go halfway through his second season. It took him 12 years to earn a second shot at the top job.

It's no wonder that Arniel brought a sense of excitement and joy to his first "first day of camp" as Winnipeg's head coach. It was evident on the ice, palpable in his own interview and powerful enough to leave GM Kevin Cheveldayoff a bit more contemplative than usual.

"Coaches live in glass houses, but they learn from that," Cheveldayoff said at Hockey For All Centre on Thursday. "They learn their shortfalls and if they're humble enough, they grow from it. And I can tell that a (coach) like Arnie, during our conversations, sometimes it's a delicate question you can ask but his answers were full of, 'I've learned now from Rick Bowness. I've learned from (Alain Vigneault), I've learned from Peter Laviolette.'"

Arniel has conceded that he tried to put his stamp on things a bit too early and a bit too emphatically in Columbus. In Winnipeg, though, he has two years of familiarity with the roster that he inherited from Bowness. He spent the summer in steady communication with his

players, even flying to Calgary to meet with captain Adam Lowry and alternate captains Mark Scheifele and Josh Morrissey.

There is excitement here — in Arniel and in new assistant coaches Dean Chynoweth and David Payne.

“They’re all still learning from each other and are going to take best practices from each other,” Cheveldayoff said. “Certainly, for those three guys in the coaches’ room, there’s that level of excitement that you can really tell.”

Great, then. Arniel arrives at training camp with a superb opportunity. What’s he going to do with it?

After Thursday’s full day of drills, conversations with multiple players and news conferences by Arniel and Cheveldayoff, here’s what we’ve learned about the Jets — from Arniel’s line combinations to Cole Perfetti’s future to key roster battles, Brad Lambert’s chances of making the team and Winnipeg’s plans for its first two preseason games this weekend.

Connor, Scheifele and Vilardi are back together

Arniel resisted the urge for roster revolution with his Day 1 lines. Kyle Connor, Mark Scheifele and Gabriel Vilardi skated on one unit on Team Neufeld to start the day. Nino Niederreiter, Adam Lowry and Mason Appleton were together again on Team Lesuk later in the day.

Here’s a full list of Jets forward lines from Day 1, sorted subjectively by me.

Kyle Connor
Mark Scheifele
Gabriel Vilardi
Alex Iafallo
Vladislav Namestnikov
Nikolaj Ehlers
Nino Niederreiter
Adam Lowry
Mason Appleton
Morgan Barron
Rasmus Kupari
Axel Jonsson-Fjallby
Mason Shaw
David Gustafsson
Jaret Anderson-Dolan
Connor Levis
Dominic Toninato
Daniel Torgersson
Colby Barlow
Brad Lambert
Parker Ford
Nikita Chibrikov

Brayden Yager
Jacob Julien
Kevin He
Danny Zhilkin
Chaz Lucius
Ben King
Kieron Walton
Markus Loponen
Absent:
Cole Perfetti (RFA)
Henri Nikkanen (sick)

Has anything changed at all? It doesn't take a lot of work to plug Perfetti onto the second line, bump Alex Iafallo to Line 4, knock Axel Jonsson-Fjallby out of the top 12 and see a carbon copy of last year's lineup.

Arniel was quick to explain the reasoning behind reuniting so many of last year's lines.

"You know what? It's just my history on other teams: When those guys can come out in the first couple of days and get their touches amongst each other, it kind of gets them up and running," Arniel said. "I've also seen it the other way where you put a veteran with a couple of young guys and it gets very frustrating."

Arniel left the door open to change things up, likely after at least one round of cuts had been made. It may be that it's easier to mix and match NHL players — including those on the cusp, like Lambert — once there are fewer minor league and junior players on the ice. For now, though, it will be more of the same, and it looks as though Lambert, Nikita Chibrikov and other young talent have an enormous task ahead of them if they're meant to win jobs.

If we do see changes, my guess is that many of the standard Jets duos will persist: Connor and Scheifele could be joined by Nikolaj Ehlers, for example, but I'd be surprised to see them broken up. Lowry and Appleton could see a variety of left wingers, perhaps, but it's difficult to see them split.

Lambert will fight for a roster spot

There's no way Lambert will go through training camp without drawing acclaim. He was dominant at rookie camp, scoring three points in two games, and his speed stands out even among established NHL players. Whether he becomes the swingman for a slower, highly intelligent centre like Vilardi, finds chemistry with another speedster like Connor or Ehlers, or both, Lambert is going to impress Jets fans for a long time.

The only question is how soon.

Look at the forward lines above. Knowing that the roster will likely include 13 forwards, seven defencemen and two goaltenders on opening night, whose job will Lambert take? Ehlers isn't going anywhere at this stage and Perfetti will take a spot in the top six. If Lambert wins a job, bumping Vladislav Namestnikov and Iafallo to the fourth line, the Jets will be forced to waive

one of Rasmus Kupari or David Gustafsson. That's hard for me to envision, given Gustafsson's time with the organization since being drafted in 2018 and Kupari's road to Winnipeg via the PL Dubois trade. They're end-of-the-roster players on a team this deep; I just don't see them as expendable from Winnipeg's point of view.

Barring injury (or a stunning length of time without Perfetti), Lambert's only route to Winnipeg is through a camp so spectacular it forces the Jets' hand, with highlight-reel goal after highlight-reel goal ... or through the Manitoba Moose. Lambert doesn't require waivers to be demoted. His competition does. If he leaves any doubt at all in the coaches' minds, assigning him to the AHL will be the easiest path. Players do get hurt. Jobs do open up. Lambert may be destined to follow in Connor's footsteps, biding his time until seizing an opportunity from which he'll never look back. He's the same age that Connor was in 2017 when Mathieu Perreault's injury opened up an October roster spot. Lambert's AHL scoring is also similar to Connor's through the same stage in each player's career.

Winnipeg will take a long look at Lambert through multiple preseason games and give him every chance. The depth chart makes it obvious though; waivers-exempt players like Lambert and Chibrikov will have to be phenomenal to start the season in the NHL.

The Perfetti negotiations drag on

The moment Perfetti signs his next contract, he'll emerge as a front-runner for top-six minutes and first-unit power-play time. Each passing moment between today and Perfetti's next deal creates just a little bit more angst among fans. As negotiations drag on, Perfetti has gone from a tremendous offseason which included workouts with Scheifele, Morrissey and Lowry, to skating on his own in an effort to maintain his progress.

Cheveldayoff, meanwhile, says that he'd give Perfetti whatever he wanted ... if only he could.

"Personally, I'd give these guys the moon," Cheveldayoff said on Thursday. "They're awesome guys and I'd love to have the ability to pay them everything they want and deserve. In a salary cap world, you have to make business decisions."

So what's the holdup?

As Cheveldayoff puts it, negotiations like this one depend on each side making the case for comparables — similar players, at similar stages in their careers — to push conversations toward a contract that everybody can agree on. This isn't anything new and it's not rocket science but Cheveldayoff and Perfetti's agents are having trouble getting on the same page about which players constitute appropriate comparables.

I've argued that Shane Pinto's two-year, \$3.75 million AAV contract (signed this summer) and Gabriel Vilardi's two-year, \$3.4 million AAV contract (signed in 2023) make a lot of sense as a starting point. Vilardi had scored 78 points in 152 games prior to signing his deal, worth 4.12 percent of last year's cap maximum. Perfetti is two years younger than Vilardi was when he signed that contract but has scored 75 points in 140 games — a superior rate. Pinto and Perfetti have each played 140 NHL games, with Perfetti outscoring Pinto 75 to 70 despite being one year Pinto's junior. In some ways, it seems cut and dry to me: If there's a bridge deal to be

signed, Perfetti's should be in line with Vilardi's and Pinto's — perhaps even higher, if you're willing to credit him for achieving his point production at a younger age.

I don't think Cheveldayoff sees it the same way.

"There's different levels of contract negotiations in this league," Cheveldayoff said when I asked him about Pinto and Vilardi. "RFAs coming out of their first contract generally don't have arbitration rights and that becomes a sticking point sometimes. When players do have arbitration and they file, there's a deadline and there's a mechanism in place that contracts follow and you work towards that."

That explanation applies to Vilardi, who had arbitration rights last summer, but not to Pinto this summer. Still, it seems as though Cheveldayoff's point was that he doesn't view either player as a direct comparable for Perfetti. Elsewhere in the conversation, he spoke to a preference to focus on players exiting their ELCs and signing their second contract, like Perfetti is.

But most of those players from Perfetti's draft class — Anton Lundell (six years, \$5 million AAV), Seth Jarvis (eight years, \$7.42 million AAV), Quinton Byfield (five years, \$6.25 million AAV), Lucas Raymond (eight years, \$8.075 million AAV) — have signed long-term extensions. Perfetti has played fewer games and scored fewer points than all of the players on that list and comes with less hype at this moment but ranks third out of five in points per game. His camp may feel that it's reasonable to include him in that group — and ahead of New Jersey's Dawson Mercer, who has also played more games and scored more points but whose per-game rate trails Perfetti.

It can be awfully hard to convince a GM to pay for promise, based on scoring rates — particularly Perfetti's top-tier primary point rate — as opposed to results. I've still argued that Winnipeg would do well to sign Perfetti long-term before his point totals get too high. Think of Vilardi's next contract, for example — it's going to be a lot more expensive than a long-term deal would have been last summer. I think Perfetti is tracking well to make himself expensive on his third contract, despite lower point totals today.

And whatever I think about all of this, one thing seems clear. Cheveldayoff and Perfetti's camp are further apart in terms of which players constitute fair "comparables." Anything can change with a phone call but it seems like they have work to do before they get close on a deal. Just remember that this isn't terribly unusual; Kyle Connor and Patrik Laine missed parts of camp in 2019, while Morrissey missed the start of camp in 2018. It will get done, Perfetti will be welcomed back by his teammates and Arniel will be happy to plug him into the lineup. We wait.

Barring the unforeseen, the top seven defencemen seem clear

Sometimes it's good to remember that there's an element of "anything can happen" at training camp. Consider the case of Ville Heinola, who combined his offensive vision with defending that looked chaotic but effective to win a job last season ... and then didn't play a single NHL game.

"Last year, Ville Heinola made our team and then he was gone, broke his ankle and it changes things," Arniel said.

Heinola can be confusing in the defensive zone, winning battles without ever looking like he's winning those battles — such is the peril of playing at his size. Last season, he didn't return to the Jets from his ankle injury or even dominate the AHL when he arrived. He has shown NHL ability and has raised the overall level of his game to the point where a job seems well within his reach.

The Jets ran the following pairings on Day 1 of camp and I think there's an obvious top seven to start the season.

Josh Morrissey
Dylan Coghlan
Haydn Fleury
Neal Pionk
Logan Stanley
Dylan DeMelo
Ville Heinola
Colin Miller
Dylan Samberg
Elias Salomonsson
Dmitri Kuzmin
Simon Lundmark
Ashton Sautner
Tyrel Bauer
Dylan Anhorn
Dawson Barteaux

The Jets will depend heavily on Morrissey, Dylan DeMelo, Neal Pionk, Dylan Samberg and Colin Miller. Two jobs are open and I believe they'll belong to Heinola and Logan Stanley. If anyone can convince Arniel and defence coach Dean Chynoweth to go in a different direction, it will be Haydn Fleury or Dylan Coghlan, each of whom played NHL games last season.

Fleury, 28, has played 268 games for Carolina, Anaheim, Seattle and Tampa Bay, delivering perfectly adequate results as a third-pairing defenceman. Coghlan, 26, has played 106 games split between Vegas and Carolina, offering similarly solid results for a depth defender. Fleury and Coghlan are not low bars to clear. Both players have kept a cleaner defensive zone than either Stanley or Heinola to this point in each player's NHL career.

All of this leaves top defensive prospect Elias Salomonsson on the outside looking in — destined to start his North American career in Manitoba after a dominant year in Sweden. All of Fleury, Coghlan, Heinola and Stanley require waivers to be assigned to the AHL. Salomonsson doesn't.

One change Arniel wants to make?

“We want to try to have a rotation where our seventh guy is getting a little bit more (playing time),” he said.

Hellebuyck and the goalie plan

Arniel wants to have 22 players on the roster: 13 forwards, seven defencemen and two goaltenders.

This follows our pre-camp projections: Connor Hellebuyck will likely be backed up by Kaapo Kahkonen while Eric Comrie mentors Thomas Milic in the AHL and Dom DiVincentiis starts in ECHL Norfolk. It was still funny to hear Arniel's response when I asked if there's any chance he keeps three goalies on the roster.

"In all honesty, when you have a Vezina Trophy goalie, I haven't really thought about the goalies at all," he said. "It will be where we're at number-wise when we get to that point. If you have your 23-man roster, you have to look at that as well."

Kahkonen and Comrie should each get one start this weekend. The plan is for Hellebuyck to get into two and a half preseason games, leaving a couple of more starts for Kahkonen and Comrie to duel. No matter what happens, Winnipeg's net still belongs to Hellebuyck. It's easy to see him hitting 60 starts once again.

Canadian Press

<https://www.chrisd.ca/2024/09/19/winnipeg-jets-training-camp-young-players/>

Off-Season Departures Means Opportunity Knocks for Young Players at Jets Camp

By Jim Bender, The Canadian Press

The Winnipeg Jets have some huge holes to fill on both offence and defence this season.

They lost second-line centre Sean Monahan and winger Tyler Toffoli to free agency and promising centre/winger Cole Perfetti — a restricted free agent — has yet to re-sign.

That opens the door to such young blood as Nikita Chibrikov, Brad Lambert, Brayden Yager and others to crack the starting roster.

Chibrikov, 21, has been impressive in the early going, scoring two goals and adding two assists at the recent Young Stars Classic in Penticton, B.C.

"Yeah, it's more confidence for me," Chibrikov said after the Jets opened training camp at Winnipeg's Hockey For All Centre on Thursday. "Feeling more comfortable. Everything is better. My hockey, my mind, outside of the rink, my language."

The winger scored 17 goals and had 47 points in 70 games with the American Hockey League's Manitoba Moose last year.

"Oh, I feel good. I'm ready to make the next step," Chibrikov said. "Just try to do my best and show my game, work hard and compete, and to do everything for the team that I can. If I play good, the goals come to me."

The five-foot-nine, 160-pound Russian also got into the last Jets regular-season game last year and impressed with his tenacity while scoring his first NHL goal.

“I’m not the biggest size but I try to do all the work that big guys do,” he said. “It doesn’t matter for me. I feel like I should do it, in the corners or blocking shots. It doesn’t matter.

“I know it’s a part of the game and the show. I try to make a difference, to be a pretty good guy on the ice, a lot (more fun).”

The Jets also lost veteran defencemen Brenden Dillon (free agency) and Nate Schmidt (bought out), which opens at least one roster spot for the likes of Ville Heinola, Elias Salomonsson, Colin Miller and others.

Heinola, 23, actually cracked the roster last year before sustaining a fractured ankle.

“It’s exciting times for me,” he said. “There’s probably definitely some opportunities for me. It doesn’t change my mindset at all. It’s been the same every year when I want to steal someone’s job and make the team. That’s my only goal this year — to make the team and play well.

“Injuries are tough and they’re kind of part of this game. Hopefully, the body is good and everything goes well. I just want to be able to play my game and not worry about any injuries or anything like that.”

The six-foot, 181-pound Finn also worked on building up his muscle to accommodate being more physical.

“Obviously, the guys that were moving on were great teammates,” said defenceman Josh Morrissey. “They were veteran guys with a lot of experience in the league. So, now some other guys are going to have an opportunity that I’m excited about.

“How that shakes out I don’t know, but there are some guys that look great here at the start of camp and will have some opportunities to either elevate their role or make the jump to the big leagues.”

After general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff failed to acquire veterans to replace the departed Jets, he suggested that the young players should be excited for the challenge of making the club.

“A lot of them had a good summer of training,” he said. “We were able to see them midsummer at development camp in a lot of cases ... That’s kind of why you have that development camp — to kind of get a benchmark of where some people are at and then compare it to them when they get to training camp, see what kind of work has gone on in the summer there. You can see that a lot of guys have put in some meaningful time.”

New Jets head coach Scott Arniel issued a challenge to the new guys at a team dinner Wednesday night.

“I told them last night, there’s opportunities,” Arniel said. “Through how they practise and the exhibition games themselves, guys will get a chance to play and show us what you have ... Go play to your identity. Do what you do best. You’re all going to get seen in situations that normally, you may not be in and show us what you can do.”

NOTES: Cheveldayoff is still working on re-signing Perfetti ... The Jets host the Minnesota Wild in their first pre-season game on Saturday.

Global Winnipeg

https://globalnews.ca/news/10765934/analysis-winnipeg-jets-coach-arniel/?utm_source=%40globalwinnipeg&utm_medium=Twitter

ANALYSIS: New Winnipeg Jets coach Scott Arniel up to the job

By John Shannon CJOB

It came with little or no surprise to most that Scott Arniel became the Jets’ head coach this summer. Two years as associate coach on Rick Bowness’ staff and some fill-in time as head coach while Bowness dealt with some personal issues, it made so much sense for Arniel’s promotion.

And after a pretty good NHL career as a player, the Jets’ new bench boss has had a chance to learn from some of the best. Without a doubt, Lindy Ruff, Alain Vigneault, Peter Laviolette and Bowness have left an imprint on how manage the modern-day player.

Story continues below advertisement

You also have to hope that his experiences in Columbus, as the young — maybe too young — head coach of the Blue Jackets would help build his foundation. Sure, he made mistakes back then. But you learn from your mistakes.

It also doesn’t hurt that Arniel knows Winnipeg, the city, too. Playing and coaching here in three leagues, I’m sure, makes Arniel understand exactly what hockey means to a passionate, hardcore hockey town.

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All that said, this is the biggest stage Arniel has appeared on in his coaching career. This is a team that is expected to make the playoffs, and hopefully win more than one game in the postseason. This team has elite talent, some of the best at their positions in the NHL. It’s going to be up to Arniel to press the right buttons at the right time for this group to maintain its position in the Central, which might be the toughest in the NHL.

The transition from Bowness to Arniel should be seamless. Oh sure, the team won't play exactly the same way with the new head coach. But it should be much easier than bringing a new man in from the outside, like they have done in Toronto, Columbus or San Jose.

Scott Arniel's imprint on this team will take time, maybe two months of play, or more. And that will require patience — from the coach, the players, management — and yes, the fans.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10765279/winnipeg-jets-open-training-camp-without-cole-perfetti/>

Winnipeg Jets open training camp without Cole Perfetti

By Russ Hobson Global News

Another season of Winnipeg Jets hockey is now upon us as they officially opened their 14th training camp since returning to Winnipeg, but there was a notable absence.

Jets first round draft pick Cole Perfetti is still a restricted free agent after the end of his entry-level deal. The 22-year-old is coming off a three-year contract that paid him a little under a million dollars per year.

The two sides are still talking to hammer out a deal.

"I had a conversation with Cole's representatives there this morning," said Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff. "We're looking at things and trying to make it work.

"Things happen fast, day-by-day. So you hope that it gets done."

Perfetti went a long stretch in a scoring slump last season, but still had 19 goals and 19 assists in 71 games in his third campaign with the club.

"Personally, I'd give these guys the moon," Cheveldayoff said. "I'd love to have the ability to pay them everything that they want and deserve. In a salary cap world you have to make business decisions."

The Jets skated in the fog in two different groups at the Hockey For All Centre on Thursday. All the players passed their physicals but Henri Nikkanen wasn't on the ice as he's dealing with an illness.

With the off-season departures of Brenden Dillon and Nate Schmidt, there's some jobs up for the taking this year and Josh Morrissey expects it to be a competitive camp.

"There's some guys that look great here at the start of camp that will have some opportunity," he said. "To either elevate their role or to make the jump to the big leagues. That internal competition and depth is something that is huge for our team. I think it's probably as strong as it's been in awhile.

“The next few weeks will obviously determine how that shakes out for everyone, but it should be a really competitive camp.”

Of course it's the first camp under new head coach Scott Arniel and he's hoping to get every player at least one exhibition game.

Arniel had Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor and Gabriel Vilardi all skating on the same line, but said don't read too much into the line combinations this early in camp.

As Arniel puts his stamp on the team, he wants to see a higher compete level right from the start.

“You can't try to just get through the first part of the season not defending,” Arniel said. “We talked about being a really good defensive team, so that we get to the playoffs, we're used to that. Well it's the same thing with compete. You can't all of a sudden come to the playoffs and compete harder. I want that now.”

“You talk about great elite athletes — Michael Jordan, Tom Brady. All you hear is the competitiveness of those guys, how much they want to win. And that's the mentality I think that, that's the next step for us.”

And things might get even more competitive when it comes to roster spots for the regular season because the Jets new bench boss is considering the idea of going with just 20 skaters and two goalies when the games begin for real on October 9 in Edmonton.

“We would actually like to get to 13 and 7,” said Arniel in terms of the number of forwards and defensemen the team will carry. “We did carry eight D the last couple of years, but at the end of the day we want to have a rotation where our seventh guy is getting a little bit more. We'll see. We get to the end of camp and we'll certainly have guys who will have to go through waivers and we'll have to fight that battle too. It certainly helps you cap wise if you can go 13 and seven.”

The Jets have just two full skates before Saturday's first pre-season game against the Minnesota Wild where the Jets will dress mainly their youngsters.