

## **Winnipegjets.com**

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/ville-heinola-injury-update>

### ***Ville Heinola Injury Update***

***"It hits you in the gut, especially after what happened last year."***

By Mitchell Clinton

WINNIPEG – Ville Heinola must be wondering if he's cursed.

Nearly one year after he fractured his ankle in a preseason game on October 5, 2023 – the final exhibition contest before the regular season – that same surgically repaired ankle is causing him to miss more time.

An infection showed up in the 23-year-old defenceman's bloodwork from Wednesday's physicals. Heinola skated on Thursday despite a bit of swelling in the area, but will now miss time due to an injury that Winnipeg Jets head coach Scott Arniel describes as something that "isn't day-to-day."

Arniel said he had many conversations with the Finnish product in the summer.

"He was so excited about coming back. As I said to him, it's a setback, but these are things that make you stronger," Arniel said. "It hits you in the gut, especially after what happened last year."

Both Arniel, and previous head coach Rick Bowness, have said publicly that Heinola had earned a spot in the opening night roster with his play in five preseason games last fall. The ankle injury put him out for 12 weeks, and Heinola spent 41 games in the 2023-24 season with the Manitoba Moose accumulating 10 goals and 27 points.

The plan going forward isn't clear cut, according to Arniel.

"We'll just come back around this in maybe a week or so and see where he's at," he said. "Hopefully we can get it fixed 100 per cent and go from there."

### ***ICE CHIPS***

Simon Lundmark, another defenceman, missed Thursday's session as well after blocking a shot on Thursday.

The 23-year-old could skate again as early as Saturday, but Arniel said the team will see how Lundmark is feeling when he gets to the rink.

Henri Nikkanen missed his second straight day of on-ice sessions due to illness.

## **Winnipeg Free Press**

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2024/09/20/old-man-niederreiter-adds-teaching-role-to-list-of-duties>

***Old man Niederreiter adds teaching role to list of duties***

By: Ken Wiebe and Mike McIntyre

Jets winger Nino Niederreiter was joking about being the elder statesman on the roster after the departure of D-men Brenden Dillon in free agency when asked a question about how he sees his role evolving this season.

“I guess I’m the oldest guy on the team, which seems a little strange and weird,” said Niederreiter, who turned 32 on Sept. 8. “What I’ve got to know over the years, helping out the younger guys, if I see a guy going through a slump, kind of pick him up and be the positive input in the locker room. I think that’s something I feel I should do this year.”

Versatile forward Vladislav Namestnikov will turn 32 in November.

Niederreiter was at his entertaining best on Friday after scoring a deflection goal, bringing his hockey stick to his left ear – as if he was listening to what his instrument would be telling him after finding the back of the net.

Might Niederreiter break that celebration out in a game situation later this season?

“Hopefully, let’s see what happens,” said Niederreiter. “I just want to help the team as much as I can, and hopefully can score a few goals this year. But overall, we have to win somehow, and that’s the most important thing.”

Niederreiter was involved in a charity game this summer in Switzerland in what was played at the highest accessible point in Europe.

“That was an unbelievable experience. I mean, they call it Top of Europe, which was amazing,” said Niederreiter. “They flew us all up with the helicopters, and it was what’s a great setup, let’s put it that way.”

Niederreiter scored a pair of goals in the contest, including one that opened the scoring.

One difference from last season for Niederreiter is that his contract situation is settled, after signing a three-year extension on Dec. 4 that includes an AAV of \$4 million.

The security won’t change his mentality, though.

“When you don’t have a contract, you obviously worry about it. You don’t know what’s next. You don’t know what to do. Same time, you want to produce, you want to make sure you put up as many points as you can and you want to help the team. But whenever you’re in a contract year, it’s always on your mind. It’s not something you can just put aside because it has to do with the future. Obviously lucky, got a chance to sign it last year, an early extension, which is very fortunate. Coming into camp this year, you just focus on being yourself.”

#### *Barlow has narrow focus*

Jets 2023 first-rounder Colby Barlow is set to make his preseason debut on Saturday against the Minnesota Wild.

Barlow was involved in training camp last fall, but didn’t get the full experience as he got sick early and never got into any exhibition action.

"I'm definitely taking my vitamins. Just trying to stay healthy," said Barlow, who got into three American Hockey League games with the Manitoba Moose at the end of last season. "Not getting sick, taking care of my body, making sure nothing's tweaking, nothing's feeling bad. So I could take this all in and give it all I have every single day."

There's been plenty of speculation about the Ontario Hockey League future for Barlow, should the forward prospect eventually be returned to junior by the Jets.

Barlow chose not to report to OHL training camp earlier this month, preferring to continue his offseason plan with Gary Roberts before heading to Winnipeg.

"As a family, and myself, we just thought it would be beneficial to me to keep working out, keep skating with the guys in the program. It's nothing to do with Owen Sound, they've given me the world, they've been absolutely awesome. I just thought, going into this camp I want to be focused."

Several observers have speculated Barlow could be on the move to the Oshawa Generals to join Anaheim Ducks prospect Beckett Sennecke.

Does Barlow expect to eventually be traded by the Attack?

"Just kind of see how it goes," said Barlow. "I'm just worried about being here. Taking it day by day at Jets camp."

Barlow built a strong relationship with former Jets prospect Rutger McGroarty during development camp in 2023, so it was natural for him to be asked about the trade with the Pittsburgh Penguins for fellow forward Brayden Yager.

"Yeah, it's kind of not really any of my business. I wish the best for him," said Barlow. "Great we got Yags, I know Yags pretty well. We're good buddies. I wish both players well as we move forward."

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2024/09/20/heinolas-surgically-repaired-ankle-infected>

### ***Heinola's surgically repaired ankle infected***

Winnipeg Jets defenceman Ville Heinola can't buy a break.

The 23-year-old, who suffered a fractured ankle in the final preseason game last year to cost him a spot on the NHL roster, is once again dealing with a serious medical issue. This time, it's an infection that has developed in the surgically repaired ankle.

Issues came to light earlier this week as a result of blood tests done during player medicals at the start of training camp. Swelling also began to develop as Heinola participated in the first on-ice sessions Thursday.

"Not so good. Got some bad news on him," Jets coach Scott Arniel said Friday. "This isn't day-to-day, so we'll just come back around this in the next week or so. A little bit more serious than what we thought."

Arniel said the organization doesn't know yet what the next steps may be. Another surgery could be an option.

"It hits you in the gut, especially after what happened last year," said Arniel. "It's a setback, but these are things that make you stronger."

What does this mean for the battle on the Jets' blue line?

With Heinola on the shelf and the Jets expecting to start with seven D-men, free agent signings Haydn Fleury and Dylan Coghlan are expected to move up the depth chart as they battle with Logan Stanley for a spot in the opening-night lineup.

"Right now, everybody gets pushed up one notch," said Arniel. "It's theirs to go out and grasp."

Heinola was also under consideration to run the second power play unit, but that job figures to belong to either Neal Pionk or Colin Miller for the time being.

Jets defence prospect Simon Lundmark missed Friday's workout after blocking a shot on the first day.

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

### ***Contract up in air, but Jets' Appleton ready to roll***

By: Ken Wiebe

Mason Appleton is well aware of his contract status, but isn't expending much energy wondering what the future is going to bring.

While there's been plenty of speculation over what could be on the horizon for fellow pending unrestricted free agents such as forwards Nikolaj Ehlers and Alex Lafallo or blue-liner Neal Pionk, the Winnipeg Jets right-winger simply reported to training camp and is ready to hit the ground running.

"For me, I'm just going to let my play and our team's play take care of itself and from that point, you're going to get what you get in the offseason," Appleton said during a one-on-one chat on Friday afternoon after the second day of on-ice sessions of Jets training camp. "I'm not thinking about that really at all. I'll let the chips fall where they fall."

Appleton was exposed to the business side of the game early in his career, as he was chosen in the NHL expansion draft by the Seattle Kraken.

But the sixth round pick (168th overall) of the Jets back in the 2015 NHL Draft doesn't think there are many parallels to potentially becoming a UFA for the first time.

"To me, it's two different things," said Appleton, who carries an AAV of \$2.167 million this season. "In free agency, you can control a lot more than you could in an expansion draft. I can't really compare those two (things)."

There's no doubt that Appleton would like to remain with the Jets beyond this season.

“In my perfect world, I’d love to work something out with them,” he said. “Obviously, you don’t want to rob them and you don’t want them to rob you. You just want a fair deal that both sides can leave super happy with. If that happens, whenever that is, that would be awesome.”

Appleton, 28, certainly helped his negotiating cause last season, when he recorded career bests in goals (14), assists (22) and points (36) while appearing in all 82 games for the first time in his professional career.

But the early exit in the opening round series with the Colorado Avalanche prevented Appleton from fully soaking in the fruits of his labour.

“Individually, it was a solid year but at the end of the day, you can’t get how the season ended out of your mind,” he said. “That trumps everything for me. Having that sour taste motivated me to get better. The consensus in our room was that we were all going to push ourselves and push each other to get a little better and get over that hump.”

To start training camp, Appleton has been skating alongside Adam Lowry and Nino Niederreiter on a unit that enjoyed plenty of success last season – both in terms of playing a shutdown role and chipping in some complementary offence.

“It seems as though that’s the way it’s going to go. Those are two guys that I love playing with,” said Appleton. “We all had really good years last year and we’re hungry to get back at it again and prove ourselves to be one of the best third lines in the league. We pride ourselves on doing the little hard things every single night that go unnoticed and shutting down some of the opposition’s best. From there, trying to find ways to create offence and score goals. We can do a little bit of everything, so that’s who we are as a line and what we’ll continue to be.”

As for what he zoned in on during the offseason, Appleton followed a familiar formula.

“For me, it’s a lot of the same. Getting better at some little things,” he said. “At this point of my career, you know what you are as a player but you’re trying to get stronger on pucks, better in tight spaces with pucks, be quick out of the corners when taking pucks to the net, staying over the puck. Things that allow me to be a little more efficient down low with the puck, because that’s the bread and butter of our line, with the way we can possess the puck and stay on it and keep it away from the opposition.

“Obviously, I’m still trying to work on my strength and speed because you’ve got to keep pushing those things, making them better and fine-tuning that aspect. You’re not reinventing yourself. Your weaknesses, you’re trying to improve and your strengths, you’re trying to make them even stronger. You’re just trying to evolve a little bit.”

Along with trying to build on his increase in offence, Appleton will be tasked with trying to help the Jets’ penalty kill show marked improvement.

Jets head coach Scott Arniel appreciates the consistency Appleton brings to the rink.

“We know what we’re getting out of Apple,” said Arniel. “He’s embraced that role with (Lowry). Everybody has kind of got a role to play throughout the season and he recognizes that.”

Appleton’s intensity is constantly on display.

“He’s a very competitive guy. It even shows in practice, he doesn’t like making mistakes,” said Niederreiter. “He’s sometimes very hard on himself. He wants to be successful, which is something that’s great to have on the team and great to have on a line because we push each other to be better and better every day. That speaks for him as a person and as a player.”

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/09/20/jets-goalie-hopeful-an-epicurean>

### ***Jets goalie hopeful an epicurean***

By: Mike McIntyre

Get him away from the rink and you’ll likely find Kaapo Kähkönen preparing a fancy meal or sampling a fine wine.

“I like cooking a lot. I enjoy it. I enjoy a glass of wine with a meal, and kind of the history and culture around it as well,” the 28-year-old Finnish goaltender told the Free Press in a wide-ranging one-on-one chat Friday.

“There’s so many cool things about that. I’ve obviously been fortunate to travel around the world and see different places and wine is something that connects people.”

Kähkönen is now hoping his good taste extends beyond grub and grapes to his choice of hockey clubs after signing a one-year contract with the Winnipeg Jets this past summer.

From the outside, it might seem like a curious choice. Why would any netminder want to come and serve as the understudy to four-time Vezina Trophy nominee and two-time winner Connor Hellebuyck? Isn’t that a bit like being the Maytag repairman, given the heavy and very productive workload the No. 1 masked man carries?

“Clearly, they’ve been a good team over the last few years. The goalies here have all had success lately. As a goalie, you look at those things and you think where did that come from?” Kähkönen explained.

“What I’ve heard and what I’ve seen now is the goaltending coaching here, the whole set-up and everything is phenomenal.”

For all the hits Winnipeg may take as a less-than-desirable destination for plenty of free agents, it would appear the opposite is true for puck-stoppers. The Jets are viewed as a goalie factory — not only for what Hellebuyck has become, but for the career years recent back-ups Eric Comrie and, most recently, Laurent Brossoit have had while in town.

Goaltending coach Wade Flaherty plays a big part in that.

“He’s been great to be dealing with the first few days here. Obviously, it’s early. But a very warm welcome,” said Kähkönen.

“From a team’s perspective, guys are working hard buying in, That’s awesome to see. I just saw it as a great opportunity to go to a great team and win some games, which I obviously haven’t been doing a lot lately the last couple years. That would be awesome to go back in the playoffs and make a run.”

Indeed, it's been a rough couple of years for Kähkönen playing for the worst NHL team. A personal 15-40-10 record with the sad-sack San Jose Sharks has been tough to swallow for the 2014 fourth-round draft pick of the Minnesota Wild.

"That's what I love the most is winning. There's just nothing like it in the locker room after the game with the guys. That's just what drives me," said Kähkönen. "That's something I'm really looking forward to accomplishing with this team this year."

First, he's going to have to earn the backup spot. For the first time in years, there's a crease competition underway. Comrie is back with the organization for another go-around and will be trying to prove he deserves another NHL shot after a couple of difficult campaigns with the Buffalo Sabres.

Either Kähkönen, who is making US \$1 million or Comrie, who inked a one-year pact for US \$825,000, will be placed on waivers with the intention of being assigned by the Jets to the Manitoba Moose as an insurance policy of sorts, provided another team doesn't put a claim in.

The battle heats up this weekend with Kähkönen expected to start in net Saturday night as the Jets host his original big-league team, the Wild, in their first of six preseason games. Comrie will get the net on Sunday as the Jets visit Edmonton to face the Oilers.

"I would describe him as calm and cool. I don't think he ever gets too worked up one way or the other," was the scouting report offered by Mason Shaw, who is also attending his first Jets training camp this year after signing a free agent deal this summer.

The two began their pro careers together with the Iowa Wild of the AHL in 2018-19. The following year, Kähkönen was named the AHL's goaltender of the year.

"Just a tremendous competitor and a tremendous goalie," said Shaw.

Kähkönen has certainly had NHL success at Canada Life Centre. Last season, he stopped 38 of 39 shots as the Sharks came to Winnipeg and lost 1-0.

"I remember, we came here after the All Star break. The Jets had played a few games, and we just got out of the break, and I was cramping hard," he said of seeing plenty of rubber that night. It was a similar story in a 2022 game when he turned aside 27 of 28 shots in a 2-0 defeat (the second goal was into an empty-net).

No doubt he'll be hoping the team in front of him at the downtown rink can provide a bit more offensive support this season.

Count Jets coach Scott Arniel is among those excited to see what Kähkönen can do for the club.

"Not a lot of guys want to come in and follow a guy that plays 55, 60 games (like Hellebuyck), but he was pretty keen to come. I think that, for him, he's still a young goaltender that's trying to establish himself," said Arniel.

Kähkönen will no doubt be looking to follow a similar path to Brossoit, who excelled last year in limited backup duty with the Jets but parlayed that into a two-year deal with the Chicago Blackhawks this past summer that included a massive raise to US \$3.3 million annually.

“Every goalie obviously wants to play every single game. That’s no different with me. But I’m not stupid,” Kähkönen said of the situation in Winnipeg with Hellebuyck.

“What he’s doing here for quite a long time, he’s been amazing for this team and organization. So, yes, you have to be patient. I understand the situation. You know what I always found, too, is when you get to see a great player, a great athlete, a great goalie from up close, that can really be a great thing to be able to watch him as well.”

In the meantime, look for Kähkönen to potentially add some extra flavour to upcoming road trips as the team’s unofficial food critic and sommelier. Ideally, they’ll be plenty to celebrate along the way — and maybe the ultimate sip next June from a very special Cup.

“Same as winning a game or spending time with guys in the room, what I enjoy is sitting down for a meal with friends or family and enjoying quality time,” he said.

“I’ll kind of see what the guys are doing here. I don’t want to be too aggressive. But I like when guys like wine, too. It’s cool to talk about it and taste. Obviously during the season you have a day off, try to take it easy, rest. Take care of yourself. A glass of wine here or there won’t be bad.”

## **Winnipeg Sun**

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/jets-heinola-out-indefinitely-after-infection-in-surgically-repaired-ankle>

### ***Jets' Heinola out indefinitely after infection in surgically-repaired ankle***

By Scott Billeck

Ville Heinola’s training camp has screeched to an unfortunate halt for a second straight season.

The 23-year-old Finn will miss extended time due to an infection in his surgically repaired ankle. The infection flared up over the past couple of days and was diagnosed after his bloodwork from Wednesday’s physicals was returned to the team.

“It’s not good,” Winnipeg Jets head coach Scott Arniel said. “I don’t know what the next steps are. Doctors are going to have to look at it a bit more.

“This isn’t day-to-day, so we will come back to this in the next week or so. It’s a little bit more serious than we thought.”

The infection’s origins can be traced back to last season’s training camp, when Heinola broke his ankle in the final pre-season game.

That injury, which cost him more than half the season, required surgery, and a screw, to repair.

Arniel revealed Friday the infection stems from the screw.

Heinola was absent from Friday’s afternoon session, which sparked concerns over a possible injury.



When camp opened on Thursday, Heinola was a full participant, skating in the morning group and showing no signs of any ailment.

The 2019 first-rounder was the frontrunner to secure a third-pairing job on the left side of Winnipeg's blue line this season.

"It hits you in the gut, especially after what happened last year," Arniel said. "I've had great talks with him over the summer, two years ago, this year. He was so excited about coming back. As I said to him, it's a setback, but these are things that make you stronger. Hopefully, we can get it fixed 100 per cent and go from there."

Heinola signed a two-year, \$1.6 million extension this past off-season, shedding his waiver exemption status that previously allowed the team to send him back to the minors without having to clear waivers.

Prior to his ankle break last year, Heinola's strong camp earned him a spot on Winnipeg's opening-night roster, which Arniel reaffirmed on Thursday.

"I just told him, and as I talked to him this summer, use that as the motivation," Arniel said. "I challenged him last year to come in and fight for one of those jobs, and he did. He came ready. 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."

Heinola, meanwhile, was excited for the chance to win the job again.

"I've been waiting for this moment for a long time," Heinola said after a captain's skate last week. "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."

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

#### *OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS*

As unfortunate as Heniola's injury is, it opens up an opportunity for someone else to step up and grab.

"Everybody gets pushed up one notch," Arniel said. "It's theirs to go out, perform in practice and show that they can play the exhibition games. Some of these D are going to get another look. It's theirs to go out and grasp."

Hadyn Fleury, who has a history with Jets assistant Dean Chynoweth, appears to be emerging as a candidate to play on the left side.

Fleury was partnered with Neal Pionk on Thursday and again for Friday's session, suggesting the team is taking a long look at the 28-year-old former seventh overall pick.

That look may get even longer now.

Dylan Coghlan, Logan Stanley, and Colin Miller are battling for the open job on the right side of the third pairing. Miller, having been paired with Dylan Samberg, seemingly has frontrunner status through the first two days of camp.

With that said, Arniel said Thursday not to read too hard into the lines or defensive pairings.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/jets-notebook-niederreiter-embracing-senior-member-designation>

### ***JETS NOTEBOOK: Niederreiter embracing senior member designation***

By Scott Billeck

Thirty-two is hardly the age you think of when it comes to a patriarch.

But when you're playing in a young man's league, it can make you feel like a senior citizen pretty quickly.

Nino Niederreiter has been feeling that way a bit these days.

"I guess I'm the oldest guy on the team, which seems a little strange and weird," Niederreiter said Friday.

With Brenden Dillon and Nate Schmidt, both 33, departing over the off-season, Niederreiter inherited the title of the team's most senior member.

It's a role he seems fine with running with.

"What I've got to know over the years, helping out the younger guys — if I see a guy going through a slump, kind of pick him up — and be the positive input in the locker room," the winger said. "That's something I feel I should do this year."

Niederreiter has held veteran status in the NHL for some time, and is 113 games shy of 1,000 for his career heading into his 14th NHL campaign.

And he enters this one without uncertainty surrounding his future.

At this time last year, Niederreiter was looking for a contract extension from the Jets. One came in early December, a three-year, \$12 million deal.

There is less stress this time around.

"When you don't have a contract, you obviously worry about it," he said. "You don't know what's next. You don't know what to do. Same time, you want to produce, you want to make sure you put up as many points as you can and you want to help the team. But whenever you're in a contract year, it's always on your mind. It's not something you can just put it aside because it has to do with the future."

"Coming into camp this year, you just focus on being yourself."

Niederreiter's summer was highlighted by some time in the mountains, where he participated in the World's Highest Hockey Game in the Alps.

Niederreiter, along with fellow Swiss-born NHLers Jonas Siegenthaler and Nico Hischier, was helicoptered to Jungfrauoch, the highest accessible point in Europe, in August to play the game at 3.454 metres above sea level.

"It was an unbelievable experience," Niederreiter said. "They call it. 'Top of Europe', which was amazing. The way they set up everything up. There was remarkable, and it was hard to breathe, I gotta say."

Niederreiter's focus has shifted to helping set the tone alongside linemates Adam Lowry and Mason Appleton.

"We've got to definitely be leaders in the team," Niederreiter said. "We have to play the system to a 'T' and make sure we bring it each and every night. We've got to be the energy line, make sure we play simple. We've got to try and get the momentum on our side when we have to. Those are the things we have to do to be successful."

Here are a few other notes from Friday:

- Colby Barlow spent part of his summer training with former NHLer Gary Roberts. Mark Scheifele has used Roberts in the past, and Barlow was joined by fellow prospect Brad Lambert, who packed on eight pounds of muscle there.
- Barlow wouldn't say much about not reporting to Owen Sound's training camp, which was reported last month. Barlow, who serves as the team's captain, is likely looking at a trade to a contender in the OHL for his final junior season. Said Barlow: "As a family, and myself, just thought it would be beneficial to me to keep working out, keep skating with the guys in the program. It's nothing to do with Owen Sound, they've given me the world, they've been absolutely awesome. I just thought, going into this camp I want to be focused."
- Cole Perfetti was not harmed by two big extensions signed in the NHL on Friday.

Fellow 2020 draft pick (18th overall) Dawson Mercer signed a three-year extension with the New Jersey Devils at a \$4 million AAV. Mercer is forward like Perfetti and is coming off a quote-unquote down year statistically, not unlike Perfetti. Unlike Perfetti, Mercer has played all 82 games in his first three years in the league. Mercer went from a career-best 56 points two years ago to 33 last season.

The other extension went to Utah's Dylan Guenther, the ninth overall pick in 2021. Guenther, who still has one year remaining on his entry-level deal, signed a massive eight-year, \$57.14 million deal (\$7.14 million AAV). Guenther has played just 78 NHL games and played half of last year in the minors before putting up 18 goals and 35 points in 45 games.

We will see where these latest comparables take the negotiations between Perfetti and the Jets. Perfetti is open to a long-term extension, something he's seen many of his peers sign this offseason.

- Mark Scheifele said last week that one thing that earns his respect is young players willing to stay out on the ice and work after formal practices are over. Brayden Yager appeared to get the message. He was out with Scheifele long after most had vacated the rink, working on movements with the puck.

## **The Athletic**

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

### ***What we saw and learned on Day 2 of Winnipeg Jets training camp***

By Murat Ates

WINNIPEG — Coaches make plans. The hockey gods laugh.

For the second straight season, Ville Heinola has an ankle injury that will almost certainly keep him out of the Winnipeg Jets' opening-night lineup. Heinola, who had surgery last year to repair a broken ankle suffered against Ottawa in Winnipeg's final preseason game, now has an infection in that same ankle. The infection related to the screw that was inserted as part of his surgery has caused swelling in Heinola's ankle and needs treatment before Heinola can play again.

"It hits you in the gut, especially after what happened last year," Scott Arniel said following Day 2 of training camp. "He was so excited about coming back."

It's not a short-term injury. Arniel said Heinola will be re-evaluated next week. Surgery is a distinct possibility, with the screw and infected tissue being removed, with antibiotics to address the infection. Heinola will probably miss several weeks of playing time, although we won't know for sure until the doctors get a closer look. For the 23-year-old left-handed defenceman who skated with Colin Miller on Thursday and whose roster spot was a virtual certainty, it must feel like a haunting case of *deja vu*.

For Logan Stanley, Haydn Fleury and Dylan Coghlan, it must feel like opportunity. Stanley was already expected to make the team out of camp and now it looks like the No. 6 job belongs to him. For Fleury and Coghlan, though, their odds of making Winnipeg's team just skyrocketed. If Stanley opens the season in the starting rotation, the Jets will need either Fleury, 28, a right-handed veteran of 268 NHL games, or Coghlan, 26, who has played 106 NHL games, to step onto the big club. This weekend's preseason games against Minnesota and Edmonton were already going to be important for Brad Lambert, Colby Barlow, Elias Salomonsson and other top prospects; the stakes soar with a job so clearly on the table.

Heinola's diagnosis was the most striking piece of negative news from Day 2 of Jets camp. One overwhelmingly positive storyline is about Adam Lowry and Mark Scheifele and their treatment of Jets youth.

*'When it comes from their peers, that's powerful stuff'*

Mark Scheifele held court with Brayden Yager for several minutes after Friday's practice sessions were complete, outlining passing drills and then executing them with his 19-year-old teammate. For several minutes, Scheifele and Yager took turns passing pucks from the left faceoff circle to Gabriel Vilardi's office beside the net, with the pass recipient walking the puck in front of goal before shooting. Scheifele and Yager are both right-handed shooters, meaning they

can attack the net on their forehand coming out of the left corner. Vilaridi is the master — see his wide variety of power-play assists — but Scheifele is a pro and Yager made an excellent student.

In between drills, Scheifele would give Yager pointers, seeming to want Yager to move the puck toward the middle of the ice with his first touch, taking the pass off the heel of his stick. He cheered when Yager incorporated his tips, emphatically celebrating Yager's successes. I watched until it was time for Arniel's scrum, leaving the stands to the sound of Yager's shot-making, and couldn't help but think that this was exactly the same kind of thing Adam Lowry had done with Colby Barlow and Brad Lambert earlier in the day.

There was an era under Winnipeg's previous leadership group when Jets veterans were far less welcoming of young players. Blake Wheeler was many good things as Jets captain; one old-school approach he took was maintaining a sort of power distance between himself and Winnipeg's younger players.

To see Lowry and Scheifele integrating top prospects so enthusiastically — and to know that Josh Morrissey and Connor Hellebuyck are doing the same with defenders and goaltenders, respectively — was to be inspired by Winnipeg's new leaders. It's possible that none of Yager, Barlow, Elias Salomonsson, Thomas Milic, Dom DiVincentiis and even Lambert make the Jets roster out of camp. They're still valued members of the organization and the leadership group has made a point of making them feel valued, no matter their place on the depth chart. I believe this sort of behaviour leads to long-term success, however difficult its impact might be to measure.

I asked Arniel if he'd had any role in the leadership we saw on the ice.

"I've talked to all our veteran group about being mentors," Arniel said, "(But) I'm not saying I had anything to do with that. They did that all on their own."

Arniel did speak with Lowry, Morrissey and Scheifele in the offseason and they did discuss what it means to be leaders on an NHL team. The extracurricular sessions they ran on Friday were all their doing, though, and little details like the way Yager taking the puck off the heel of his stick led to just a few extra inches of puck protection are things only veterans like Scheifele can teach.

"Anytime you can have that, whether it's teaching somebody how to handle the puck to make a play, whether it's Low talking to them about certain situations, whether it's goalie type things, if it's Helly talking to these young guys, that just speeds up the process," Arniel said.

"A coach can tell them all sorts of things as they move along, as they grow, but when it comes from their peers themselves, that's powerful stuff."

*Stock watch: Five players that have caught my eye*

*Kevin He* tried to warn us: He's not just a 30-plus goal scorer in the OHL. He's not just the first player born in China to be drafted into the NHL, either. He's as feisty as they come, giving no ground to players bigger and stronger than he is in high-traffic areas.

"I'm a hungry player. I want to win," He said at the draft in Las Vegas. "I always play with a chip on my shoulder. I'm skilled as well. I can skate well and shoot."

It's all there in the quote, but it was a treat to watch the 18-year-old forward drive the net and fire a pair of shots a foot off the ice, scoring post-and-in on one and straight into the net on the other. It was even more fun to watch him engage in one-on-one net-front battles with a collection of Jets opponents. That level of competitiveness adds dimension to He's game and gives him versatility that increases his odds of becoming an NHL player. He could make the Jets as an energy player, contributing on any line, as opposed to being limited to a top-six role. He'll go back to OHL Niagara this year and look to improve upon a season that saw him score 31 goals and 22 assists in 64 games.

*Nikita Chibrikov* is 21 and feeling more confident on and off the ice. Chibrikov's English language skills are solid, his shot is as dangerous as ever and he's not afraid to get into battle situations in the corners. In some ways, that makes Chibrikov a best-case, better-developed version of He (although Chibrikov's shooting is hard to match) — it's easy to see him making the NHL anywhere in the top nine even if he doesn't develop into a dominant top-six scorer. Chibrikov particularly excels at taking hits to make plays that move the puck out of his team's zone and into the opponents' end; I see the AHL in his immediate future, a return to the NHL sometime this season, and an opening-night job in 2025.

When *Jacob Julien* and *Kieron Walton* were taken in the fifth and sixth round of the 2023 and 2024 drafts, respectively, each player seemed like a bit of a project to me. Julien had only played part of his draft season in the OHL, scoring nine goals and seven assists in 40 games, while Walton's 43 points in 65 games looked more impressive but still unlike the totals posted by more highly touted prospects.

Julien had a tremendous post-draft season in the OHL, scoring 78 points in 67 games en route to an OHL championship with London. Now 20, the 6-foot-4 forward looks AHL-capable to me and more promising as a long-term NHL prospect, too. Walton, 6-foot-6 at 18, will return to junior but stands out for his ability with the puck; he can take passes and make them in tight quarters.

The next step for both of these players is to make their play and then have a plan for the next one; chaining reads together, one after the other, so as to make the most of every second of available ice time is something AHL veterans do better than OHL stars — and the NHL is exponentially faster in this regard.

*Lambert and the difference between impressive and impactful*  
This brings us to Brad Lambert.

Lambert's speed and skill make him a disproportionate generator of hype. In 2022, at his first camp, Lambert dazzled with a goal and an assist in an array of high-speed moves. His speed was most evident at three-on-three in overtime against Edmonton, while he looked like an instant fit on the power play. Back then, though, Lambert was still 18 and prone to tunnel vision as he carried the puck up ice. His speed put him in positions to look dangerous but his decision making was that of a raw rookie — which he was, and which was reasonable.

That was the season Lambert got his swagger back, though, dominating the WHL and winning the league championship with Thomas Milic. He's only continued to develop in the intermediary time and now makes decisions at a level that has him knocking on the door of an NHL job.

I asked Arniel about the difference between a player at Walton's stage of development versus that of an AHL player versus that of an NHL regular — and he waxed delightedly about Lambert's growth.

"The two practices that we just had, there's a lot of compete in them in the sense that you're going head-to-head," Arniel said. "You're either going head-to-head with somebody of your equal peer or you're going against one of those veterans and they can embarrass you at times. But it's interesting how a lot of guys can start that way and then, as the week goes on, they start to catch up to what the speed is."

As Arniel spoke, Danny Zhilkin came to mind. I'd noted him going right at Neal Pionk in a couple of drills with the fearlessness and competitiveness of a professional as opposed to that of a junior.

Arniel went in a different direction.

"When they catch up to what (NHL players are doing), that's when you see young players that really start to excel," Arniel said. "Just an example: Lambert two years ago. Last year. This year. You see him now, if he's going head-to-head — not yet, but if he goes ahead against Scheif, you can see that he's grown. He realizes, 'How do you angle better? How do you put yourself in position so you don't get caught in a speed situation (against the wrong player) or a physical situation against a Lowry?'"

That's the thing, isn't it? When we watch Lambert against his peers, he's too fast for them to handle. He's faster than NHL players, too, but veteran defencemen can handle him when they take the right angles, overpower him or skate more physical routes.

But he's gaining on them. And the more effectively he plays to his strengths, the more NHL-ready he'll be. Watch for it in his first preseason game this weekend — how does Lambert solve problems for himself and create them for his opponents?

"These guys learn as they go," Arniel said. "But the best part is you hear them comment, 'Wow. I didn't know that they were that fast. I didn't know that things happened so quick.' It's what you hear all the time from junior to pro hockey, American League hockey to the NHL game. It is a faster level every (step.) They learn on the fly and it's interesting because some great young players learn to pick it up quick and then they get themselves up to speed faster."

I think Lambert is NHL-ready — or darned close. If all goes according to the coaches' plan, there will be a lot of NHL competition standing between him and a roster spot on opening night. Plans go awry; opportunity emerges. One of the best stories of camp will probably be Lambert showing us how much more ready he is to seize that opportunity today than he's been at any point before now.

### **Global Winnipeg**

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10766888/not-good-news-for-ville-heinola-on-day-2-of-winnipeg-jets-camp/>

### ***Not good news for Ville Heinola on Day 2 of Winnipeg Jets camp***

By Kelly Moore Global News

It's like déjà vu for Winnipeg Jets defenceman Ville Heinola — and not in a good way at all.

Jets head coach Scott Arniel delivered the bad news following the completion of Day 2 of training camp at Hockey For All Centre when he told reporters Heinola has an infection in the ankle he broke last fall and will be sidelined for at least a week.

“This isn't day to day. We'll come back on this in about a week or so and see where he's at,” Arniel said. “But it's a little more serious than what we thought. It gets you in the gut after what happened last year.”

Arniel was making reference to Heinola being on the verge of making the Jets 12 months ago, only to suffer a broken ankle in Winnipeg's second-last exhibition game against Ottawa

The 23-year-old Finnish blue liner had some swelling around the ankle prior to the start of camp, but a team spokesperson told reporters the cause wasn't determined until blood work results came back from medical testing on Wednesday.

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Defenceman Simon Lundmark was also sidelined for Friday's afternoon skate after getting hit with a shot on Day 1 and is considered day to day.

But the larger concern is for Heinola who will have to wait to see what the next course of action will be from the Jets medical staff. “I'm not a doctor and I don't play one on TV,” quipped Arniel. “I've had great talks with him (Heinola) over the summer and he was so excited about coming back. It's a setback and these are things that make you stronger.”

The misfortune for Heinola means some adjusting for the Jets on the blue line because it was anticipated that Winnipeg's first-round pick in the 2019 NHL Entry Draft would form a third defence pair with veteran Colin Miller.

“Like I said yesterday, I don't know where we're going to be when we open up against the Edmonton Oilers for our first game in October — it's injuries, it's play. So right now everyone gets moved up one notch,” Arniel said. “It's theirs to go out and perform in practice and show that they can play. In the exhibition games, obviously some of these D are going to get another look. It's theirs to go out and grasp.”

That group would include the likes of veterans Logan Stanley, Haydn Fleury and Dylan Coghlan as well as highly regarded rookie prospect Elias Salomonsson.

And that opportunity will begin with Saturday's 7 p.m. pre-season opener at Canada Life Centre against the Minnesota Wild — a game Arniel confirmed that Heinola was supposed to play in.

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<https://www.sportsnet.ca/videos/leagues/nhl-video/>

***Jets' Heinola suffers ankle-related setback in second straight season***



Sportsnet's Sean Reynolds discusses the details of Winnipeg Jets prospect Ville Heinola being sidelined by an infection in the same ankle he had surgically repaired last season.