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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-tough-second-period-in-st-paul>

Three things - Tough second period in St. Paul Appleton, Perfetti and Chibrikov record multi-point nights vs. Wild

By Jamie Thomas

The Winnipeg Jets looked good in both the first and third periods in St. Paul tonight but it was the second that hurt them in an 8-5 loss to the Minnesota Wild. Cole Perfetti had a couple of points (1G 1A) in his preseason debut. Mason Appleton, Nikita Chibrikov, Brayden Yager and Morgan Barron scored the other goals for the Jets who are now 1-2-1 in the preseason. They will return to action next Wednesday at home against Calgary.

1. GREAT START FOR THE ROAD TEAM

The Jets sent a less experienced roster to St. Paul to give some of their younger players an opportunity to show their stuff. After giving up the games first goal, Cole Perfetti evened things halfway through the opening frame. The Jets were on the power play and Perfetti wristed a shot past Marc-Andre Fleury with the 22-year-old scoring in his preseason debut. Winnipeg outshot Minnesota 12-10 in the first.

2. WILD VETS TOOK OVER

The second period is where Minnesota really took over. Ben Jones scored shorthanded to make it 2-1 2:07 into the middle frame. 2:25 later, Mason Appleton batted a puck out of the air to even the game once again. But that's as good as it would get, as the Wild would score six unanswered goals over a stretch of 14:56.

3. JETS DON'T ROLL OVER

As impressive as the Wild were in the second, the Jets did not just shut it down in the third. Winnipeg responded with three unanswered goals of their own as Nikita Chibrikov scored on the power play at 5:46, Brayden Yager at 17:24 and Morgan Barron at 18:26. It was nice to see two of the Jets top prospects Chibrikov and Yager helping with the offensive surge in the third and for the team as a whole to fight back.

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/09/27/helly-gets-the-hook-after-wild-light-up-jets-vezina-winning-goalie>

Helly gets the hook after Wild light up Jets' Vezina-winning goalie

By: Mike McIntyre

Connor Hellebuyck waited for what he felt would be the perfect time to get the preseason underway, opting to be a spectator for the first three games played by the Winnipeg Jets.

We're not sure what went down Friday night in St. Paul was what the reigning Vezina Trophy winner had in mind.

Hellebuyck was beaten on the first shot he faced 92 seconds into the game, then watched seven more pucks get by him during a stunning second period as the Minnesota Wild cruised to a 8-5 victory.

This had the potential to a one-sided affair, given Winnipeg left most of its regulars at home in favour of a younger, more inexperienced lineup than Minnesota. It was surprising how quickly this one went from a tightly contested battle (1-1 after 20 minutes) to a blowout (8-2 after 40 minutes).

Fun fact: Friday marked the nine-year anniversary of a 8-1 loss in Minnesota in which then coach Paul Maurice — furious that the Wild had its top power play unit out late in the contest — sarcastically said “it was just an honour to be in the same building with them tonight.”

There was no such bite from Scott Arniel after this one, but the new bench boss will have plenty of material to work with as he and his staff look to make a large swath of roster cuts this weekend.

Winnipeg is now 1-2-1 in the preseason.

1) *WHAT THE HELLY?* On the bright side, maybe Hellebuyck got this one out of his system. Better now than when it really counts, right?

He never really seemed comfortable in his crease and was routinely fighting the puck and his positioning. The original plan was to play him the full 60 minutes, but he got the hook after two periods. His final numbers were 29 shots against, 21 saves.

Thomas Milic finished off the third and stopped all six shots he faced.

Look for Hellebuyck to play most, if not all, of the final two preseason games next week to try and fine tune the details that didn't look quite right on this night.

2) *PERFETTI POUNCES:* Cole Perfetti — fresh off signing his two-year contract extension earlier this week — looked sharp in his debut.

He scored a nice power play goal midway through the first period, finishing off a play that began with a strong Nikita Chibrikov forecheck and a solid Alex Lafallo net drive, and then added an assist later in the game.

He played on a line with Alex Lafallo and Brad Lambert. Expect his next outing to include likely linemates Nikolaj Ehlers and Vlad Namestnikov, who sat out this game.

3) *FORWARD FOCUS:* There's plenty of competition to fill out a few forward spots on Winnipeg's roster, and this game included most contenders.

None of Axel Jonsson-Fjallby, Mason Shaw, Dominic Toninato, Rasmus Kupari or Colby Barlow really stood out. Barlow, for example, had an egregious giveaway that quickly ended up in the back of Winnipeg's net.

After a strong game Wednesday against Edmonton, Brad Lambert had a bit of a quiet outing while matched up against stiffer competition, taking a slashing penalty on his first shift that led to

Minnesota's first goal and going minus-two in just over 18 minutes of ice time, winning 7-of-15 faceoffs.

One exception was Chibrikov, who followed up his nifty helper with a goal of his own in the third period, ripping a wicked one-timer past Marc-Andre Fleury with his team on a two-man advantage. He was very noticeable. So, too, was Brayden Yager, who scored on a rocket of a shot late in the third period and was dangerous offensively all game.

Morgan Barron added another late tally to make the final a bit more respectable.

4) *BLUE-LINE BATTLE*: Ville Heinola and Logan Stanley were supposed to be battling for the same job in Winnipeg's starting six. Instead, both players are now out at least a month after undergoing surgery this week. Heinola (infected ankle) was joined by Stanley (torn meniscus), which now creates some unexpected competition on the back-end.

Friday's game included contenders Haydn Fleury, Dylan Coghlan and Elias Salomonsson.

While all had some rough moments, Fleury — who is the favourite to start the year on the third pair with Colin Miller — made a nice play to set up Mason Appleton for Winnipeg's second goal. Coghlan also had a helper.

5) *EXTRA, EXTRA*: Winnipeg went 2-for-6 the power play while surrendering two shorthanded goals. Minnesota went 2-for-3.

Joel Eriksson Ek (two goals, three assists), Kirill Kaprizov (two goals) and Mats Zuccarello (one goal, one assist) led the way for the Wild.

Iafallo, Toninato and Neal Pionk all served as assistant captains in this game with Winnipeg's actual leadership group of Adam Lowry, Josh Morrissey and Mark Scheifele sitting out.

The Jets will take today off and return to practice on Sunday. They are expected to get down to a single group. With 41 players currently in camp, including the injured Stanley and Heinola, a number of cuts are coming.

Winnipeg finishes the preseason with a home-and-home against the Calgary Flames on Wednesday and Friday.

6) *BIG GESTURE FOR LITTLE*: Bryan Little is coming home. The longtime Jets forward will sign a one-day contract with the organization to officially retire from the NHL. The symbolic gesture will take place Oct. 20, with Little honoured that day as the Jets host the Pittsburgh Penguins at Canada Life Centre.

Little was the 12th-overall pick of the Atlanta Thrashers in the 2006 NHL Draft and played all of his 843 NHL games as a member of the Thrashers/Jets organization. He had 521 points (217G, 304A).

Little's career ended in 2019 when he suffered a catastrophic ear/head injury after being struck by an errant shot off the stick of Ehlers. His remaining contract was eventually traded to the Arizona Coyotes — allowing the Jets to bank cap space they used for other moves — before it officially expired at the end of last season.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2024/09/28/601176603>

Jets D-man Pionk still grieving loss of close friend Johnson

By: Ken Wiebe

Neal Pionk fully realizes the grieving process is far from complete.

The Winnipeg Jets defenceman endured the sudden loss of best friend Adam Johnson — who died following a gruesome skate cut last October during a pro hockey game in England — and there's no denying the tragedy hit him hard.

As much as Pionk used his time at the rink as a release and even a way to honour Johnson, a longtime teammate in junior and college hockey and roommate, the emotional toll was heavy.

"It was horrible. I would say it's the biggest loss I've had to this day," said Pionk, who was in the lineup for the Jets on Friday night against the Minnesota Wild. "I still have both of my parents, all of my grandparents. I'm fortunate and lucky. That one hurt the most that I can remember.

"Just going through it, with the way that it happened, was brutal. Just the whole total shock of it."

There's no manual when it comes to dealing with a personal loss of this magnitude, so Pionk did his best to lean on his loved ones and his teammates to try and push through as best as he could.

Having the opportunity to spend time with Johnson's parents and fiancée this summer was incredibly helpful. Johnson grew up in Hibbing, Minn., while Pionk hailed from nearby Hermantown.

"I went up to the charity golf tournament that we had in his name and celebrated his birthday — or what would have been his birthday at his house," said Pionk, who is preparing for his sixth season with the Jets. "Saw his mom, saw his dad. That stuff is really good. It's a healing process. It's slow, but it's necessary."

That process is ongoing, though Pionk conceded that having a number of people on the Jets' roster that either played with Johnson or knew him helped provide an outlet when he needed one.

"We could share stories and stuff," said Pionk. "When we went up to his golf tournament, sitting on the first tee box, he's supposed to be there. It's one of those things. Usually he showed up for off-ice training and we'd have some banter going on — and he wasn't there this year.

"That was an adjustment. That was the wave you went through during the summer. And I'm sure it will come back again. It's the healing process and I'm glad that I have good friends around me."

Another life event that helped bring some additional joy to Pionk's life was the birth of his daughter, Stevie Mae, in late July.

"It's fantastic," said Pionk. "I get home from the game (on Wednesday) night and I can't fall asleep because I have to change her diaper at 2:30 in the morning. I do it and for one of the first

times, she cracks a big smile after I do it. After all of the long nights you go through, you get a little reward like that. There's nothing better."

Being in a more positive state of mind should be beneficial for both Pionk and the Jets.

Even before the Jets depth on defence was being tested by training camp injuries to both Ville Heinola and Logan Stanley, a productive season from Pionk was essential.

Pionk has been leaned on heavily in a Top-4 role on defence since he was traded to Winnipeg by the New York Rangers along with a first round pick (that ended up being Heinola) for Jacob Trouba in June of 2019.

Pionk's tenacious style of play immediately caught the attention of the fan base, though there have been stretches of uneven results, especially during the past two seasons.

Although Pionk has often been hesitant to discuss his health, there's little doubt that he hasn't been at full health down the stretch at various points in each of those past two seasons — playing through a broken foot in 2022.

Thanks to a strong summer of training, Pionk is back to 100 per cent physically and ready to attack the season.

Pionk suited up in his first preseason action on Wednesday against an inexperienced Edmonton Oilers lineup and chipped in a nifty backhand goal and recorded three assists in a 6-1 victory.

Following the game, he was quick to point out the backhand pass from Rasmus Kupari and the unheralded net drive from Parker Ford rather than take any credit for his ability to beat Stuart Skinner off the rush.

"Should we start (negotiations) now?" Pionk quipped, referring to his status as a pending unrestricted free agent on July 1. "It was a good start. I don't care who you're playing or what kind of roster you have or they have, it's more about the habits. Points are the points, that doesn't necessarily matter, it's more about how you feel and certainly there are some things I've got to clean up, but there were some good things too."

The more good things Pionk does this season, the better his negotiating position will be but that will be on the backburner for him.

The last time Pionk was a pending free agent — albeit a restricted free agent with arbitration rights — he played some of the best hockey of his career and cashed in on a four-year contract that carried an AAV of US\$5.875 million per season.

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/09/26/hellebuyck-locked-in>

Brayden Yager's enthusiasm, attitude a breath of fresh air for Jets

By Jacob Stoller

WINNIPEG — The circumstances leading up to Brayden Yager’s arrival were less than ideal for the Winnipeg Jets.

It was the final chapter in a summer-long standoff that saw the Jets’ 2022 first-round pick, Rutger McGroarty — who was traded in a 1-for-1 deal for Yager with the Pittsburgh Penguins — refuse to sign an entry-level contract with Winnipeg. McGroarty’s departure cut deep around these parts. Jets fans are no strangers to players wanting out but this one was different. McGroarty became a fan favourite at development camp two summers ago, going out of his way to take several pictures and sign autographs after on-ice sessions. The way he conducted himself — speaking to reporters about the team’s prospects evolving together and being destined to become best friends — made it seem like he was all-in on Winnipeg. Until he wasn’t.

But yet again, general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff pulled a rabbit out of a hat in acquiring Yager, the 14th selection in the 2023 draft, despite having little leverage. Not only is the 19-year-old an impressive prospect in his own right — having recorded 95 points last year en route to leading the WHL’s Moose Jaw Warriors to a Memorial Cup berth — but he genuinely wants to be a Jet.

“I don’t know too much about [McGroarty’s] situation but all I know is that I’m super excited. I hope that the fans are excited, too,” Yager said in a 1-on-1 interview with Sportsnet following a Jets skate on Sept. 21. “I want to be here. It’s really cool seeing how the fans are and the reaction to the city when camp gets going. Being a Canadian kid and getting to play in a Canadian market — it’s such a great opportunity.”

Yager’s enthusiasm is a breath of fresh air for a market that struggles to attract free agents and sits atop most NHL players’ no-trade lists.

“The day we made the trade and I gave him a call, I [thought] he was going to come through my phone. He was so excited,” said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. “His mom and dad, in the background, were so excited. He’s a kid that’s pretty thrilled about staying in Canada.”

Those who know Yager well describe him as having ‘zero ego.’

Warriors coach Mark O’Leary remembers being struck by how excited Yager was to come to Moose Jaw after they selected him third overall in the 2020 Bantam Draft. Moose Jaw is one of the WHL’s smallest markets, with a population of just under 34,000 people.

“Moose Jaw is sometimes not for everyone, either, especially if you’re coming from certain weather standards in the winter time, I mean, we have some pretty rough winters here,” O’Leary told Sportsnet. “But in his WHL draft year, there was zero hesitation from him when it came to being part of Moose Jaw. I see that as no different than with Winnipeg.”

But when O’Leary thinks back to those early days with Yager, the main thing that pops up is his work ethic and determination to be a complete player. Players with Yager’s toolkit — which is highlighted by his quick-release wrist shot, strong skating stride and instincts — aren’t always keen on being 200-foot players. But Yager was different.

“He has the physical tools to do it. It starts with his skating. You watch his first two or three strides and he’s got that pop that allows him to separate off the rush but it also allows him to jump checks quick when he’s down low. His ability is one thing but really, it’s just about his willingness and determination to play on both sides of the puck,” O’Leary explained. “We even

saw it when he was 15 and 16 years old. Everybody has the ability to play both sides of the puck. There's good players that are smart enough to do it, have the speed to do it and know how to do it but they don't have that willingness to do it. Brayden has that. He made a decision a long time ago that he wants to be a guy that's relied upon in any situation."

Yager's complete game played a big part in him representing Canada at the 2023 World Juniors. Alan Letang, Canada's bench boss, had coached Yager the previous summer at the U18 Hlinka Gretzky Cup, where Yager recorded nine points in five games. In six tournament games, he carved out a role as a trusted bottom-six forward, recording two goals, five points, a team-high +6 rating and while he predominantly played on the wing, he was clutch in the faceoff dot.

"That tournament is such a 19-year-old tournament. But as an 18-year-old, he was such a reliable player for us on our third line," Letang told Sportsnet. "He knew he had to be good on faceoffs and in his own end. He's got that professionalism in him."

Letang calls Yager a 'hockey junkie.'

"He would seek one of the coaches out daily. Whether it was an assistant coach to drop pucks so he could work on faceoffs, or asking a coach about a little detail on the power play," Letang said. "He seeks out information and help to grow his game. He's one of those players you don't get all the time."

It's no wonder Yager hit it off with Jets forward Mark Scheifele early into camp. The latter is always staying out late after practice to hone his craft and on the second day of Jets training camp, the two stayed out on the ice well after practice ended.

"He was working with (Josh) Morrissey on some deception work on the flanks. I was kind of just lurking around and he asked me if I wanted to join in," Yager said. "When you get an opportunity to learn from guys like that, you can't turn that down. I ended up staying out there for a while with him and working on different things. I was just trying to pick his brain and learn as much as I can."

Scheifele and Morrissey — two long-time clients of skills guru and Hall of Famer Adam Oates — don't just share a passion for skill development with Yager. The two are staples in the community. Morrissey sits on the board of the True North Youth Foundation and Scheifele runs the Mark Scheifele Hockey Club & Golf Classic, which raises money for families in need of financial assistance to register their children in sports.

Yager is cut from the same cloth.

"I remember taking Brayden and his parents to meet his new billets when he was 16-years-old. I'll never forget this. His dad pulled me aside and asked about Brayden getting involved in the local minor hockey. He wanted to make sure that there was humility to everything," O'Leary said. "Brayden was coming in as a highly touted prospect but it was important to him and his family that he gave back. Over the next couple of years, Brayden was heavily involved in Moose Jaw minor hockey. He went out on the ice with kids regularly. And you can imagine the type of impact that has on kids around Moose Jaw."

With Yager not being AHL-eligible this season, odds are he'll be back with the Warriors for the 2024-25 season. Yager has fared well with the Jets in two pre-season games — recording one

goal, one assist and winning 51.28 per cent of his faceoffs — but he doesn't appear to have an inside track on an NHL job, especially with the emergence of Brad Lambert.

But Yager's not far off from becoming an NHL regular. And he says the prospect of playing in front of one of the league's most passionate fanbases only adds more motivation.

"I've seen some of the videos of the whiteout and it's probably one of the coolest atmospheres in sports," Yager said. "I really am going to strive to be a part of that one day and be on the ice when everyone's dressed up in white."

Canadian Press

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/bryan-little-to-sign-one-day-contract-to-retire-with-winnipeg-jets/>

Bryan Little to sign one-day contract to retire with Winnipeg Jets

By Canadian Press

The Winnipeg Jets announced Friday they are signing Bryan Little to a one-day contract, allowing the centre to retire with the franchise he spent his entire NHL career with.

The Jets said in a release that they will celebrate Little's career on Oct. 20 when they host the Pittsburgh Penguins.

"It's a great honour that I can retire as a member of the Winnipeg Jets and end my playing career with the organization where I was drafted and played my entire NHL career," Little said in the release.

"I had the privilege to play in Winnipeg and in front of the amazing fans for nine seasons, so I'm grateful for the opportunity to thank the Jets, their fans and the city of Winnipeg. It will truly be a full-circle moment for my family and I to celebrate my retirement in the building where I have so many special memories."

Little was selected 12th overall by the Atlanta Thrashers at the 2006 NHL draft.

He played 843 games with the Thrashers/Jets franchise — the second-most in club history — and recorded 521 points (217 goals, 204 assists) and 293 penalty minutes over his career.

He added four goals and eight assists in 27 playoff games, all coming after the team moved from Atlanta to Winnipeg before the 2011-12 season.

The 36-year-old, who was born in Edmonton and raised in Cambridge, Ont., last played on Nov. 5, 2019, when he sustained a perforated eardrum after being hit by a slapshot from Jets teammate Nikolaj Ehlers in a game against New Jersey.

The team said at the time he needed 25-30 stitches to close a cut around his left ear. He had missed the first nine games of the 2019-20 season with a concussion before that injury.

The Jets traded Little's contract and the rights to Nathan Smith to the Arizona Coyotes on March 21, 2022, for a fourth-round draft pick.

His rights were transferred to a new club based in Salt Lake City, Utah, along with the rest of the Coyotes' assets, on April 18.

"Bryan Little is a crucial part of the history of this franchise and was a key contributor to the Winnipeg Jets throughout his time in the NHL," Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff said. "He was a humble, hardworking player that cared about his teammates and was a quiet, but important leader in the dressing room.

"Bryan demonstrated tremendous professionalism throughout his time here and it is a true shame that his career was cut short due to injury."

Internationally, Little was part of the Canadian team that won gold at the 2007 world junior championship.

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/minnesota-wild-cruises-past-jets-with-seven-goal-second-period>

Minnesota Wild cruises past Jets with seven-goal second period

By Scott Billeck

It was nine years ago Friday when former Winnipeg Jets head coach Paul Maurice produced one of the classic quotes of his career.

His Jets were crushed 8-1 in Minnesota on Sept. 27, 2015, and Maurice had a line for the ages.

"It was just an honour to be in the same building with them tonight," Maurice quipped.

What might he have said after Winnipeg's 8-5 defeat in the same building? It probably wouldn't have disappointed.

Lately, it's usually around American Thanksgiving when the Jets are leaking gravy in Minnesota.

They've been on the wrong end of some lopsided defeats around the holiday season in recent years.

On Friday, the inexperienced lineup Winnipeg sent to St. Paul got roasted like a Thanksgiving turkey, giving up seven second-period goals in the rout.

Things may have been different without that 13-minute span in the middle frame.

Kirill Kaprizov and Cole Perfetti traded power-play goals in the first period before Ben Jones made it 2-1 shorthanded, only for Mason Appleton to answer to tie it 2-2 early in the second.

The Wild's goal parade commenced from there.

Joel Eriksson Ek, Mats Zuccarello, Liam Ohgren, Eriksson Ek again, Kaprizov again, and Marat Khusnutdinov punished Winnipeg.

Minnesota scored seven times on 19 second-period shots. Through two periods, Connor Hellebuyck, making his first start of the preseason, allowed eight goals on 29 shots.

Hellebuyck's night was over after two periods, which wasn't the plan for the reigning Vezina winner. In relief, Thomas Milic got his first taste of pre-season action.

Nikita Chibrikov, Brayden Yager and Morgan Barron scored for Winnipeg in the third. Minnesota took their foot off the gas.

The Jets will be tossing that game out with the bath water.

They won't be icing that roster for Game 1 of the regular season on Oct. 9 in Edmonton.

Here are a few thoughts from Friday's loss:

- During Cole Perfetti's negotiation process, I had heard from someone who skated with him that was certain the 22-year-old was poised to take the next step this season. Through the first 10 minutes of the first period on Friday, you could see what he meant. Perfetti's second shift was a clinic on moving his team up the ice. His goal came after he corralled a tough pass from Alex Lafallo before shovelling it into the back of the net.

- If Chibrikov doesn't make the roster, it won't be because he doesn't deserve it. He most certainly does. He's an Energizer Bunny out there. He just keeps going. And going. And going. His forecheck on Winnipeg's first power-play attempt nearly ended with the team scoring. And he had the second assist on Perfetti's opener, making a quick play down low to Lafallo. Chibrikov does a bit of everything. He's not big, but he'll play a rough-and-tumble game. He'll be your pest, getting under someone's skin. And then he has the kind of skill that you'd be fine with having him play higher up the lineup. Decisive, has a great shot. Fearless. He can play a top-six role and a bottom-six one seamlessly. Sounds like the type of guy you find room for. Not sure how you don't.

- Chibrikov's third-period power-play marker came off a one-timer. The kid can do it all. Perfetti set up the goal nicely.

- Yager scored in the third. A rocket. Perfetti led the Jets into the offensive zone again and nearly connected on a 2-on-1 prior. Yager has had an impressive camp. He's heading back to junior this season but he's quickly making folks forget about Rutger McGroarty.

- Call it a learning moment for Colby Barlow. You can't backhand a puck through the middle of the ice in the NHL and expect good things to come of it. They didn't after Zuccarello made him instantly regret that decision in the second period. Judging by his reaction right after the goal, Barlow knew the error of his ways. A smart player making a young player's mistake.

- Hadyn Fleury showed some really good jump in the offensive zone on Appleton's goal. He circled with the puck down the right side of the Minnesota zone before throwing it in front for Appleton, crashing the crease, to pounce on.

- Hellebuyck said this on Thursday: "I really just need to get into a game and see where my mind's at, how my reads come in. So far, if, I'm predicting, it's going to be really good, but it's one of those things where you've got to get into a rhythm, and then you really get dialled in." I

wouldn't be worried about Winnipeg's No. 1. You wouldn't blame many of those goals on him anyway.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/bryan-little-to-sign-one-day-contract-retain-as-a-winnipeg-jet>

Bryan Little to sign one-day contract, retire as a Winnipeg Jet

By Scott Billeck

One of the most respected players in Winnipeg Jets history will retire with the club next month.

Bryan Little will sign a one-day contract with the team to officially end his playing career on Oct. 20 against the Pittsburgh Penguins, when the 36-year-old will be celebrated.

"It's a great honour that I can retire as a member of the Winnipeg Jets and end my playing career with the organization where I was drafted and played my entire NHL career," Little said in a release from the team on Friday.

Little played his entire 843-game career—second most in franchise history—with the Jets organization after being drafted 12th overall in 2006 by the Atlanta Thrashers.

He piled up 521 points (217 goals, 204 assists) and 293 penalty minutes over his career, adding another four goals and 12 points in 27 playoff games.

"Bryan Little is a crucial part of the history of this franchise and was a key contributor to the Winnipeg Jets throughout his time in the NHL," Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff said in the release. "He was a humble, hardworking player that cared about his teammates and was a quiet, but important leader in the dressing room.

"Bryan demonstrated tremendous professionalism throughout his time here and it is a true shame that his career was cut short due to injury."

Little's career came to an abrupt halt on Nov. 5, 2019, when an errant shot from Nikolaj Ehlers hit him in the left side of his head. The blow resulted in a perforated eardrum and 25-30 stitches to close a wound around his left ear.

Just a week before, Little had scored the game-winner in overtime to lift the Jets past the Calgary Flames at the Heritage Classic at Mosaic Stadium in Regina.

Little returned to practice that January, but further tests and medical advice from the team's physicians ended any comeback attempt. He had surgery that February to repair his injured eardrum.

In March 2022, the remaining years on Little's six-year contract were traded to the Arizona Coyotes along with prospect Nathan Smith.

"A great guy, first and foremost," Mason Appleton told reporters on Friday. "When you think about a true pro, Little's kind of exemplified that in every single aspect. He was a guy who worked extremely hard every single day, never too high, never too low. Just went about his business, just a blue-collar worker."

Little waived his modified no-trade clause to allow the Jets to make a move, freeing general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff from playing salary cap gymnastics with Little's contract after Little had been moved to long-term injured reserve.

Cheveldayoff spoke of how much that helped the organization back at last season's NHL trade deadline.

(Assistant GM) Larry Simmons and I were talking about it in the greater group with the pro scouts and, actually, I think Mark Chipman was even in there as well at that time," Cheveldayoff said. "We wouldn't have been able to be in the situation that we're in to accrue cap space if it weren't for Bryan doing that.

"It brings you back. We still have a picture in the dressing room of the outdoor game goal that he scored. He's a big part of this organization, and he's always going to be a big part of this organization."

Little's contract expired this past summer.