

Winnipegjets.com

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-balanced-attack>

Three things - Balanced attack

Winnipeg had goals from six different players in a 6-0 win in Edmonton

By Jamie Thomas

Connor Hellebuyck recorded his 38th career shutout in a 6-0 win for the Winnipeg Jets over the Edmonton Oilers to open the 2024-25 season. Winnipeg blocked 29 shots and got goals from Adam Lowry, Mason Appleton, Rasmus Kupari, Dylan Samberg, Kyle Connor and Mark Scheifele. Appleton (1G, 2A), Lowry (1G, 1A), Nino Niederreiter (2A), Scheifele (1G, 1A) and Josh Morrissey (2A) had multi-point nights. Winnipeg will head home to face the Chicago Blackhawks on Friday in the home opener at Canada Life Centre.

LOWRY LINE DOMINANCE

To no one's surprise, the Jets checking line of Adam Lowry, Nino Niederreiter and Mason Appleton put Winnipeg in a good place in the first period. The Jets captain opened the scoring by grabbing his own rebound and banking the shot off the pad of Stuart Skinner and into the net almost 15 minutes into the game. With 1:25 left in the opening frame, Niederreiter's spinning pass from the half wall found Appleton streaking in and he beat Skinner to the far post for a 2-0 Winnipeg lead after 20. The Lowry line would finish the night with a combined seven points and a +9.

"Oh yeah, they can do it all. They just proved that tonight, skies the limit for them," said Connor Hellebuyck.

"When they're clicking and chemistry is going they can have multiple sides of their game, and it's fun to watch."

HELLEBUYCK SAVES KEY TO SECOND PERIOD

Right at the start of the second, Connor Hellebuyck denied Connor McDavid and followed that up with the rebound stop on Viktor Arvidsson. That was huge for the Jets as they scored twice in 20 seconds to make it 4-0. At 4:17, Josh Morrissey would send a seeing eye pass right onto the stick of Rasmus Kupari for his first goal as a Jet. Dylan Samberg would continue the scoring coming in from the left point at 4:37. As for the Jets goaltender, he had been away from the team dealing to spend time with his family before leaving for Edmonton yesterday. Hellebuyck did a great job locking in right from the get go.

"That's not easy. Any time you have things going on with your family and your personal life — we're all just thinking about their family," said Adam Lowry.

"To be away from the team — obviously family comes first — but to come back and to have the game he did...he's been so incredible throughout his career for us and we don't expect any different."

RECORD SETTING NIGHT FOR CONNOR

Jets forward Kyle Connor came into Wednesday night having scored in six straight season-openers and that had him tied with Cam Atkinson, Yvan Cournoyer and Mud Bruneteau for the longest streak of consecutive season opening games with a goal in NHL history. Connor would

break the record at the 9:33 mark of the second, walking in on the power play and ripped a laser to the far post to make it 5-0. The Jets power play went 2-for-3 on the night.

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/10/09/jets-scorch-oilers>

Jets scorch Oilers

Total team effort sees Winnipeg dominate Stanley Cup favourites in season opener

By: Mike McIntyre

EDMONTON — Now that's how you start a new hockey season — and maybe silence a few critics in the process.

The Winnipeg Jets got off to a scorching start on Wednesday night, running the Edmonton Oilers out of their own building with a dominating 6-0 victory. The same Edmonton Oilers, we remind you, who are the odds-on favourites to win the Stanley Cup after coming one game short last season.

Led by new head coach Scott Arniel, the Jets were the ones who looked like contenders despite the fact they're not a very popular pick among pundits. Perhaps running back nearly the same team that finished last year with 110 regular season points, good for fourth-overall in the league, wasn't such a bad idea after all.

"Coming into this building, obviously it's the first one of the year. You go through training camp and you're sort of building and you're trying to put all of the pieces together. I just thought we were real solid as a team," Arniel said outside the team's locker room inside Rogers Place.

"We came out and one line went out and did what they needed to do, the next line came out and did the same thing. Lots of good stuff and to win it the way we did was big. Against that team, it's a road win in a tough barn. We'll take that and move on."

It's important to remember this is the smallest of sample sizes. But hope springs eternal, and there was much to like from what was truly a team effort. You had balanced scoring from all over the lineup. Solid special teams. An obvious commitment to defending and elite goaltending from the reigning Vezina Trophy winner.

"They got a lot of expectations over there. Expectation can kill you if you don't know how to handle it," Connor Hellebuyck said following his 38th-career shutout. "And we came in with our game, with our mindset that we're going to stick to our game plan, and I think we executed it perfectly.

Hellebuyck was dialed in, stopping all 30 shots he faced. He's big and boring when he's at his best, and that was certainly the case in this one. He was also emotional following the game, having just returned to the team on Tuesday after attending to a serious family matter for several days.

"It's been a crazy week. It's been tough on the whole family but the boys played great for me, and they've been really supportive this entire time," he told the Free Press, his voice cracking.

"I really cherish these moments, and I cherish my time with family. Hope they're doing alright."

Let's dig a little deeper on what else worked so well.

1) *THE TRUE "SECOND LINE" COMES THROUGH*: Water coolers have been drained and ink has been spilled when it comes to chatter and speculation about who would be Winnipeg's second-line centre this season. Brad Lambert? Cole Perfetti? Vlad Namestnikov?

Turns out the answer has been staring us in the face all along.

Fact is, Adam Lowry is the de facto No. 2 man in the middle behind Mark Scheifele, based primarily on usage. Whether they're on the road or at home with last change, Arniel (and those who have held the job before him) typically try to get Lowry on against the other team's best.

That usually means his ice time at the end of the night, especially when there's some penalty-killing duties involved, is elevated to the point he's absolutely a top six forward.

Nobody is expecting Lowry and his linemates to produce like a second line, but it sure is nice when they can do more than just keep the opponent at bay and chip in with some offence.

Lowry got the party started on Wednesday as he banked a loose puck in off the pads of Oilers goaltender Stuart Skinner, who was a fish out of water in his own crease. Nino Niederreiter and Mason Appleton — with his 100th career NHL point — had the helpers.

"It was a great save by Skinner on the first [shot] to get a toe on it. I just tried to get it back out front. Fortunately, it found it's way to the back of the net. It took me a little while to realize that it went in. I'll take them however I can get them," said Lowry.

That line struck again later in the first period as Neal Pionk made a terrific stretch pass to Niederreiter, who fed a wide-open Appleton. The Jets winger, who is in the last year of his current contract, ripped a hard shot past Skinner to make it 2-0.

As they continued to keep the likes of Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl in check, Lowry and Appleton then set up defenceman Dylan Samberg for Winnipeg's fourth goal.

Seven combined points and a clean sheet in their own end is a tidy night at the office for the "shutdown" trio, to say the least.

"They can do it all. They just proved that tonight, sky's the limit for them," said Hellebuyck. "When they're clicking and chemistry is going they can have multiple sides of their game, and it's fun to watch."

2) *THE DROUGHT IS OVER*: Rasmus Kupari had the dubious distinction of going 0-for-last season when it came to goal scoring, appearing in 28 games and chipping in with just a single assist. Although the 24-year-old cracked the opening-night roster, it's safe to say his spot in the lineup is far from guaranteed.

Fact is, the likes of David Gustafsson (a healthy scratch Wednesday) and young prospects such as Brad Lambert and Nikita Chibrikov, among others, are knocking on the door. The pressure is on.

So how did Kupari respond to the challenge? By lighting the lamp, naturally, for the first time in a Jets jersey.

Jets all-star defenceman Josh Morrissey made an all-world cross-ice pass to find Kupari, who beat Skinner from in tight. It's his 10th career NHL goal, in game No. 159, with the first nine all coming with the Los Angeles Kings, who drafted him 20th-overall in 2018.

That's one way to keep the competition at bay.

"He's such a good person," Lowry said of Kupari. "We see his skill on display every day in practice but for him to convert and get that to go in, it's gotta be a good feeling for him. And we were all really excited for him."

3) *HISTORY IS MADE*: Death, taxes... and Kyle Connor scoring on opening-night. The Jets winger entered play having scored in six straight season premieres, which had him tied for the longest such streak in NHL history.

Connor now stands alone, as he scored 29 seconds into Winnipeg's first power play of the season. Cam Atkinson (2014-2019), Yvan Cournoyer (1973-1978) and Mud Bruneteau (1940-1945) previously shared the record with him.

"That's pretty remarkable," said Lowry. "I can't even fathom that, to be honest."

The other big development here was Winnipeg's revamped power play coming through. The puck and player movement was dizzying, with Scheifele and Morrissey setting Connor up for the goal which chased Skinner from the Edmonton net at 9:33 of the middle frame.

Winnipeg then added a second power-play tally late in the third period as Gabriel Vilardi and Nikolaj Ehlers set up Scheifele to finish off the rout.

No doubt new assistant coach Davis Payne, who is in charge of the PP, loved what he saw.

4) *BACKUP GOALIE*: It's a question that is rarely asked of an NHL coach once the starting netminder is known: Who's your backup going to be tonight? Arniel found himself answering that Wednesday morning with the Jets in the unusual position of carrying three goaltenders on their 23-man roster.

We know that's not going to last. With Hellebuyck away for those few days, Winnipeg wanted to have two puckstoppers at practice.

Expect someone to go on waivers in the next day or two. It had long been assumed Kaapo Kahkonen had the inside track over Eric Comrie, so what to make of the fact it was Kahkonen parked in the press box and Comrie dressed as the No. 2 against the Oilers?

We shall see. Both require waivers in order to be sent down to the Manitoba Moose, and you can bet the organization will be holding its breath that another team doesn't make a claim.

5) *EXTRA, EXTRA*: Connor, who won the Lady Byng trophy for most sportsmanlike player in 2023, may already be out of the running. He took Winnipeg's first penalty of the year by delivering a hard slash to Draisaitl, who had delivered a hard hit.

Jets defenceman Haydn Fleury took a deflected puck to the face in the second period, leaving a pool of blood behind. He returned for the third period after being patched up.

Winnipeg spent the night in Edmonton rather than charter home late. They'll travel Thursday and get set for a four-game homestand which begins Friday night against the Chicago Blackhawks.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/10/09/stuart-killing-it-in-edmonton>

Stuart killing it in Edmonton

Former Jets blue-liner finding success mapping Oilers shorthanded strategy

By: Mike McIntyre

EDMONTON — Mark Stuart was one of the Atlanta originals, a popular blue-collar player whose hard-nosed style and willing to sacrifice any part of his body for the greater good certainly resonated with Winnipeg Jets fans.

Who can forget the chants of “Stuuuuuu” resonating through the downtown rink after the rugged defenceman had dropped the gloves with an opponent or stepped in front of a blistering slapshot during the six seasons he patrolled the blue line?

“Winnipeg will always hold a special place in my heart,” Stuart told the Free Press on Wednesday. “I played for some great coaches. Played with some great teammates. Met my wife there. My kids were born there. There are a lot of ties we have.”

Including ones that have led to his current gig. Now 40, the Minnesota product is settling in for this third season as an assistant coach with the Edmonton Oilers, who welcomed his previous NHL employer to town for the 2024-25 regular season opener inside Rogers Place.

Although the likes of Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl get most of the ink around here, don't overlook the contribution Stuart has made to the club. He is in charge of a penalty kill unit that went a remarkable 94.3 per cent last spring and was a huge reason the Oilers made it to Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Final, ultimately losing 2-1 to the Florida Panthers.

“It's a funny thing, you have your structure, you have your way you want to do things. But power play or penalty kill, you get on a run and confidence is so big,” said Stuart.

“And we were fortunate we got on a run. The guys did an amazing job. I was blessed taking over the kill. They're good killers and good goaltending, so I was blessed with good pieces to work with.”

Stuart was put into the role only after the team got off to an ugly 2-9-1 start last year and head coach Jay Woodcroft and assistant Dave Manson were shown the door. Kris Knoblauch and Paul Coffey were brought in as replacements to join Stuart and the other remaining assistant, Glen Gulutzan.

“It was a roller-coaster for sure at the start. Nobody really expected — certainly nobody in here — for it to start like that. It wasn't easy,” said Stuart. “But we were able to turn things around. It ended up being a lot of fun. A pretty heartbreaking ending, but everything leading up to that was amazing.”

While he obviously wanted to be the one sipping champagne out of the Stanley Cup, seeing his former bench boss in Winnipeg, Paul Maurice, finally win the big one was a bit of a silver lining.

“What a career he’s had and is continuing to have. To coach that many games and for that long and with the success he’s had, it doesn’t surprise you seeing a guy like him win,” said Stuart. “He’s definitely put in the time to deserve something like that.”

Funny enough, it was the decision by Maurice during the 2016-17 season to make Stuart a frequent healthy scratch that ultimately set the next stage of his career.

“When you’re going through that, you don’t want to say the end is near, you’re trying to work as hard as you can to get back in the lineup and extend your career, but the thought does come in,” he admitted.

“You’re up watching games, you’re looking at it a little different and thinking about all that. You start to pay attention to things you probably didn’t pay as much attention to before. That’s what planted the seed for me.”

Stuart was bought out of the final season of his contract the following summer and headed over to Germany to play one final pro season before hanging up his skates. He returned to Winnipeg a year later and was hired by True North to be in charge of team services with the Manitoba Moose.

“I’m so glad I did it, looking back. I just got an appreciation for what everyone around an organization does. You communicated with everyone and get to know how everything works behind the scenes,” said Stuart, who played 367 of his 673 career regular-season NHL games with Winnipeg.

He was quick to credit then Moose head coach Pascal Vincent, who invited him to sit in on all player and coaching meetings to gain valuable experience. The following year, Jets assistant coach Todd Woodcroft accepted the head coaching gig at the University of Vermont and invited Stuart to join him on the bench.

That ultimately paved the way for Todd’s brother Jay to bring him to Edmonton at the start of 2022-23. Stuart said he leans on his own playing experience to help shape the penalty kill, which the players can no doubt appreciate. He’s not only talked the talk, but walked the walk.

“At the end of the day you can coach as much as you want, but the players are the ones going out there and doing it,” he said.

“Dave (Manson) is a smart coach, good coach, good person. He’s the one who implemented the penalty kill and kind of laid the foundation for it. Obviously you go through a firing and things change. It’s not an easy or fun thing. But I ended up taking over the kill. I really enjoyed it. It was big for me to come to this level from college and learn from some really good professional coaches and see how they did things.”

After coming so close to a championship, Stuart said his competitive fire is burning hotter than ever.

“You’re never going to forget that, but there’s also a time where you’ve gotta turn the page. Because every single team in this league, no matter how it ended for them — even the Florida Panthers, they’re hungry, they’re hungry to chase it again,” said Stuart.

“A little bit drawing on some experience, which is important, for sure. But turning the page a little bit and having a little bit of a reset, because it’s going to be a marathon starting (Wednesday night).”

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/billeck-jets-lowry-line-has-ingredients-to-return-to-elite-status>

BILLECK: Jets' Lowry line has ingredients to return to elite status

By Scott Billeck

There was a time not long ago when Adam Lowry’s line was legitimately one of the most dominant in the NHL.

They suppressed chances against and created so many for themselves that they flew in rarified air, soaring with lines led by Patrice Bergeron and Anze Kopitar.

Predictions after one game are always silly, and you could make many of them after Winnipeg’s 6-0 win on Wednesday in Edmonton. But this is less of a prophecy and more of an educated guess.

Assuming they stay together, Lowry, Mason Appleton and Nino Niederreiter can etch themselves onto this season’s Mount Rushmore of elite trios.

And they’ll do it quietly.

It’s never flashy with them. It’s lunch pail-type stuff.

Just watch Lowry’s opener from Wednesday. The line helps create an offensive zone turnover and then begins to do what it does best: grind the puck down low until it finds a stick out front.

It was Lowry’s this time, scoring on a second-chance opportunity that they often create—textbook stuff.

“It’s not a tough recipe with those guys, it’s get pucks in and get after them and go make people turn pucks over with their pressure,” head coach Scott Arniel told reporters post-game. “The best part, too, is that you can rely on them when they don’t have (the puck). They do a great job. They don’t spend a lot of time in their end of the rink. That’s where the offence comes from.

They can also surprise you.

Mason Appleton’s goal that followed in the first period came off a lengthy heads-up pass from Neal Pionk to Niederreiter, who spun and fed a cross-ice pass to Appleton to make it 2-0.

It’s hard work. It’s skill. And above all, it’s chemistry.

“That line in the first period there, scoring the two goals, it took a little bit of the wind out of Edmonton’s sails there,” Arniel said. “For us, it got us really up on the bench. It got everybody going.”

They’ve often been Winnipeg’s best line. And going by minutes and usage, they’re easily the team’s second line behind Mark Scheifele’s.

They started Wednesday’s game, set the early tone and emerged as the top dogs, taking every bit of wind from Edmonton’s sails in the first period to set the tone for the blowout.

“Those guys are going to play the right way, get you off to a good start, hopefully, in the sense that they’re going to run into people,” Arniel said. “Those three play heavy, play hard. So it just kind of jets the rest of the group on board and recognizing how they have to go as well.”

- It’s not known the personal reasons why Connor Hellebuyck had to be away from the team over the weekend, but judging by his emotional response to reporters after Wednesday’s game, he was dealing with a lot. You get a good idea of just how dialled elite athletes can force themselves to be, shutting out off-ice issues to produce elite performances. This one just happened to be a 30-save shutout, the 31-year-old’s 38th of his career.

- Whatever Hellebuyck’s family is dealing with, we hope for the best. “It’s been a crazy week,” he told reporters in Edmonton. “It’s been tough on the whole family but the boys played great for me, and they’ve been really supportive this entire time. I really cherish these moments, and I cherish my time with family, so hope they’re doing alright.”

- Winnipeg’s two power-play goals had one thing in common. Speed. Connor’s goal to make it 5-0 in the third made six passes in nine seconds, spanning both sides of the ice and up top at the point in the Oilers zone. The movement ensured Connor could work through the screen set in front of him and that the player wasn’t already in a position to take away the lane.

- Scheifele’s power-play tally later in the frame saw Connor quickly pass out to Gabriel Vilardi to gain the zone. Connor drew a defender away from the developing play behind him, giving Vilardi a lane across the ice to feed Ehlers, who had found some soft ice just inside the blue line. Scheifele skated into the middle for Ehlers to dish a quick pass that Scheifele needed only to redirect past Calvin Pickard.

- Arniel on the power-play success: “The mindset Davis (Payne) has been throwing at them is to attack the net as quick as possible. Don’t let the penalty kill get into structure. Once that shot happens, it creates the explosion and what happens off of that. Great example, with KC and that shot coming off of there. That’s a good look with (Ehlers) being right there (in the slot) and Gabe (Vilardi) being on that backdoor. We had numbers and it was a great shot.”

- Rasmus Kupari’s first goal in 70 games, a tally dating back to Jan. 3, 2023, must have felt good for the Finn. It was his first in a Jets uniform. And his teammates seemed just as excited.

- Lowry had this to say to reporters after the game about his fellow centre: “Looking back to last year, you ask him, there was an adjustment period, kind of in and out of the lineup. He gets hurt, and it’s not that he had trouble finding his footing, but we were playing so well it was tough to find minutes. He’s such a good person. You would kind of never know he’s not playing. He comes to the rink with a great attitude. He had a great summer. That’s one thing I noticed in camp, the decisions he was making on the ice. There’s a maturity to his game that’s taken a

step forward. It's going to be critical, getting contributions up and down our lineup. You've seen what he's been able to do on the PK in the preseason. We see his skill on display every day in practice but for him to convert and get that to go in, it's gotta be a good feeling for him. And we were all really excited for him."

- Connor's historical seven-straight season opener with a goal was unfathomable to Lowry after the game. Connor set himself apart from the three others he came into the game tied with, including Cam Atkinson, Yvan Cournoyer and someone called Mud Bruneteau. The first name 'Mud' was popular on social media, including well-executed from local Jets fan @avatarrant – "You know your game is on another level when you start showing up in stats with guys named Mud." Well played.

- Here's Lowry on Connor: "That's pretty remarkable, honestly. He's one of the most consistent goal scorers in the NHL. He does it in a variety of ways, but he always finds a way to end up on the scoresheet and impact games. He doesn't need a lot of space. He doesn't need a lot of time. It's going to be critical that he continues this consistency for our team to succeed. To get one on the power play, the power play looked awesome tonight. It's remarkable for him to have seven straight. I can't even fathom that, to be honest."

- Connor has a 50-goal season in him. He scored 47 a couple of years back. He likely would have hit 40 last year if not for his knee injury. If he stays healthy, watch out.

- Hadyn Fleury's a beast. He took a puck straight off the head in the second period, leaving him bloodied and forcing him from the game. He returned for the third and didn't hesitate to lay down and make a crucial block that kept Hellebuyck's clean sheet intact.

- The last word goes to Arniel, who won his first official game as head coach of the Jets, and first in more than a decade since his last head coaching stint in the NHL: "It's nice. Obviously, it's great. Just to kind of get the season off on a good note. I did have a sleepless night, just worrying about some of these guys on the other team there and how powerful they are as a group. You want to go through camp, you want to make sure you have a good start to the year and this is a good way of doing it."

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/jets-start-season-with-bang-hammer-oilers-6-0>

Jets start season with bang, hammer Oilers 6-0

By Scott Billeck

Death, taxes and Kyle Connor scoring in a season opener.

It was one of a handful of legitimate storylines the Winnipeg Jets produced in a 6-0 demolition of the Stanley Cup finalist Edmonton Oilers on Wednesday night at Rogers Place.

Connor became the first player in NHL history to score in seven straight curtain raisers, getting Winnipeg's new-look power play off to a great start when he ripped his first of the year in the second period.

Connor's goal, which capped Winnipeg's third-goal second period, sent Stuart Skinner to an early shower.

The Oilers No. 1 gave up five goals on 13 shots in a season opener he'll soon want to forget.

That wasn't the case for reigning Vezina winner Connor Hellebuyck, who stopped 30 for his 38th career shutout to begin his defence of the league's best goalie title.

Mason Appleton got his contract year off to a heck of a start, scoring a goal and helping on two others as he surpassed the 100-point mark for his career.

Rasmus Kupari, who had to fight for his job in training camp, scored for the first time since Jan. 3, 2023—a 70-game drought for the Finn—and a first as a Jet.

Adam Lowry, Dylan Samberg and Mark Scheifele also scored for the Jets, who will host the Chicago Blackhawks in their home opener on Friday at Canada Life Centre.

Meanwhile, Winnipeg's new-look power play scored twice on three attempts, while their penalty kill was perfect, killing off Edmonton's only opportunity.

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/5832692/2024/10/10/winnipeg-jets-oilers-score-hellebuyck/>

Four key takeaways from Winnipeg Jets' stunning season-opening win over Oilers

By Murat Ates

EDMONTON — Connor Hellebuyck's voice wobbled momentarily, then caught itself in time to talk about the people who matter most to him.

"It's been tough on the whole family but the boys played great for me, and they've been really supportive this entire time," Hellebuyck said at Rogers Place in Edmonton following the Winnipeg Jets' season-opening 6-0 win. "I really cherish these moments, and I cherish my time with family, so hope they're doing all right."

Hellebuyck missed Monday's practice, departing Winnipeg to be with his loved ones during an undisclosed but clearly important family matter. He returned to Winnipeg on Tuesday, just in time to have a limited practice after the Jets' main group was done for the day. He was a full participant in Wednesday's morning skate, however, and took care of his teammates to the tune of a 30-save shutout against the reigning Western Conference champions.

From long before the opening faceoff, Hellebuyck's teammates did their part to take care of him.

"When he got back from the airport yesterday, I think everyone kind of had a little moment with him," said Jets captain Adam Lowry, who scored Winnipeg's first goal and added an assist. "Just to check in on him. Make sure he's doing OK. Make sure (his wife) Andrea's doing OK. I think that's one of the great things about playing in those smaller markets — it's a tight-knit community. In turn, it makes us a tight-knit team."

Hellebuyck's family matter was one of a few items that gave the Jets' season opener extra emotional importance. Head coach Scott Arniel had already won 15 games behind the Jets bench, but those were accumulated while Arniel wore the "interim" label; his predecessor and mentor, Rick Bowness, missed 25 games over the course of two seasons. This time, after

spending more than a decade working to re-establish himself as an NHL head coach, Arniel's win came with that interim tag removed. It's a milestone that neither Arniel nor his players took lightly.

"We're really excited for Arnie," Lowry said. "We knew it was going to look like, with him kind of having the interim tag last year at certain points when Bones was away. To see him come in, I feel he's put his own unique stamp on the team."

"They deserve it," Hellebuyck said of Arniel and the Jets' full coaching staff. "They work so hard, and I put a lot of hours in, so you can see things like this. It's, you know, it's just an honour to be part of (his first win)."

Winnipeg's first game of the season taught us about more than the team's feelings of closeness. The Jets went toe-to-toe with the Stanley Cup favourites and kept Connor McDavid, Leon Draisaitl and company on their back foot.

Here are the most important takeaways from Winnipeg's season-opening win.

1. Why Lowry's line starts games — it goes well beyond matchups

On the first shift of the season, Lowry won the game's opening faceoff, leading to a dump into Edmonton's zone. Mason Appleton got a jump on the forecheck, laying a hit on Ty Emberson as Nino Niederreiter took away Emberson's outlet. The puck headed up the left wing boards as if to clear but Lowry was there, tracking back, playing his role as the Jets' third forward to positional perfection. It was a textbook start to a game that needed a textbook start; despite the 6-0 scoreline, the Oilers are an obvious threat.

"Those guys are going to play the right way (and) get you off to a good start," Arniel said, "In the sense that they're going to run into people. Those three play heavy, play hard. So it just kind of gets the rest of the group on board and recognizing how they have to go as well."

In short, Lowry's line is the standard bearer. If you ever want to understand how the Jets are meant to forecheck, backcheck or defend their own zone, Lowry's line is the one you should study. By starting them against the Oilers, Arniel established the Jets' style of play for the entire team. Lowry's line generated offensive zone time — the meaningful kind, with genuine threats to score — on multiple shifts before they opened the scoring.

"They can do it all. They just proved that tonight," Hellebuyck said of Lowry, Niederreiter and Appleton. "The sky's the limit for them. When they're clicking and chemistry is going they can have multiple sides of their game, and it's fun to watch."

Appleton is a player whose ice time often gets singled out as a coaching critique. It seems strange to some that Lowry's line is the Jets' de facto second line — not Cole Perfetti, Vladislav Namestnikov and Nikolaj Ehlers — and Appleton's time on ice rank tends to draw the most heat.

The thing is, Appleton makes a lot of the kinds of plays that coaches like. He eats checks to get pucks out. He forechecks with good positioning and purpose. His offence doesn't tend to match his second-line role, but that's a weakness shared by Lowry and Niederreiter as a general rule.

Just not on this night.

Winnipeg's second goal was the product of a Neal Pionk stretch pass to Niederreiter, who promptly spun a pass to Appleton making a perfectly timed cut up the left wing boards. The play was clearly scripted, it was executed perfectly, and this time Appleton's finish was up there with that of Winnipeg's top players.

Appleton finished the night with three points while Niederreiter and Lowry had two each. The Jets' third line of Perfetti, Namestnikov and Ehlers had a good first shift, wherein Perfetti found Josh Morrissey for a scoring chance in the circle, but otherwise failed to create any offence and was mostly hemmed in its own zone.

We'll be referring to Lowry's line as Winnipeg's second line from here on out.

2. Winnipeg's top forwards are all gas, no brakes

Mark Scheifele had the game's first true scoring chance — a breakaway made possible by an Evan Bouchard mishandle at the Jets' blue line. He'd eventually score a power-play goal, set up by a crisp Gabriel Vilardi zone entry (in Vilardi's 200th NHL game) and a perfect Ehlers pass.

Most of Scheifele's night was spent matched up against McDavid at five-on-five — a matchup the Oilers wanted — and it exposed a trouble spot we've harped on before. Despite their offensive brilliance, there are times when Scheifele and Kyle Connor simply don't get the puck out of their own zone. McDavid's line outshot the Jets 6-1 with Scheifele on the ice and took 14 shot attempts to the Jets' three. McDavid is his own animal, sometimes going one-on-four and winning, but Winnipeg's top line left holes in its forecheck that the Oilers exploited for scoring chances.

In the end, it didn't matter because Connor was automatic in a way that even McDavid wasn't.

Whereas McDavid went coast-to-coast by beating Scheifele and Vilardi up the ice on a breakout, then beating Colin Miller one-on-one, then feathering a pass to Zach Hyman for a tap-in attempt that didn't work out, Connor set a goal scoring record.

Connor's power-play goal 9:33 into the second period was the seventh straight time he's scored a goal in a season-opening game — the longest such streak in NHL history. The only times he hasn't scored in the Jets' season opener, he wasn't playing in it — he was playing for the Moose.

Lowry was at a loss for words trying to explain it.

"I can't even fathom that, to be honest," Lowry said. "He's one of the most consistent goal scorers in the NHL. He does it in a variety of ways, but he always finds a way to end up on the scoresheet and impact games."

The Scheifele and Namestnikov lines managed to be even in terms of plus/minus, despite the Jets' 6-0 win. I don't think too many people will complain about the lack of five-on-five production if the power play keeps looking like this:

3. Morrissey can still dance with the best of them

Winnipeg's Norris Trophy candidate doesn't get enough credit for the defensive part of his game. He believes that the best defencemen in the world can play top minutes against top players in addition to posting eye-catching offensive numbers.

On Thursday, Morrissey had his hands full with the McDavid line but managed to outscore it thanks to Lowry's first-period goal. Morrissey didn't get an assist on that play, despite sending the Oilers zone into chaos with a slap pass at the top of the zone.

He left the scorekeepers no choice with this second-period pass to Rasmus Kupari.

Kupari played 28 games for the Jets last season and one more for Manitoba; he didn't score in any of them, making this perfect one-timer Kupari's first goal for the Jets organization. The 2018 first-round pick is meant to be more than a fourth-line player — he has the size, speed and hands to create more offence — but has often looked one read behind the play since arriving in Winnipeg.

Between this goal and the preseason assist he picked up on Pionk's highlight reel goal, it looks like the game might be slowing down for him.

"That's one thing I noticed in camp, the decisions he was making on the ice," Lowry said. "There's a maturity to his game that's taken a step forward. It's going to be critical, getting contributions up and down our lineup. You've seen what he's been able to do on the PK in the preseason. We see his skill on display every day in practice but for him to convert and get that to go in, it's gotta be a good feeling for him. And we were all really excited for him."

4. All-Hermantown second pair can help Jets win games

This season, Dylan Samberg and Pionk could be anything from the reason Winnipeg outperforms all expectations to the weakness that other teams exploit. For Samberg, it's his first full-season attempt at top-four minutes. For Pionk, he's often been chaotic defensively despite producing five straight 30-plus point seasons. He's also going from a veteran top-four solution in Brenden Dillon to a promising, smart, but less experienced partner in Samberg.

Pionk put Winnipeg's defensive corps this way in a recent one-on-one.

"Someone's gotta step up. All of us across the room, at some point, we were given the keys. 'All right, it's your turn to step up. It's time for you to get more ice time. It's time for you to prove yourself,'" Pionk said. "We have a couple of guys in the locker room that will do that this year and I'm confident we can get it done."

Pionk, 29, has known the 6-foot-4, 215-pound, 25-year-old Samberg since Samberg was an undersized high school defenceman for the Hermantown Hawks. Their families know each other well, having brought many a casserole to Hermantown's outdoor rinks on a blustery day.

"I've watched him since he was a squirt hockey player," Pionk said. "Since he was little, if you'd believe it. He's a freak athlete. Some people don't know that about him. Obviously you see his golf game but any game we play, whatever it is, whatever he picks up, he's usually the best at it. I know he can translate that onto the ice. He'll be able to give us a little more this year and I'm sure he will."

How's this for a first act?

Samberg's first game as a top-four defenceman ended with a goal, a plus-two rating, a key shot block and a last-second puck retrieval behind Hellebuyck that preserved Hellebuyck's shutout. He played 23:21 — the second-most ice time of all Jets skaters — despite missing a shift after getting hit by a puck in the third period.

“A lot of the time last year, Arnie was harping on me: Even when you make a good play in the defensive zone, it’s not over yet,” Samberg said in a recent one-on-one. “You’ve got to make that next play.”

Between Samberg’s pinch on his goal and Pionk’s stretch pass that led to Appleton’s beauty, the Jets’ second pair had a solid night making “that next play” in Edmonton.

Canadian Press

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/jets-rout-oilers-with-shutout-win-in-opener/>

Jets rout Oilers with shutout win in opener

By Canadian Press

EDMONTON — Mason Appleton had a goal and two assists as the Winnipeg Jets trounced the Edmonton Oilers 6-0 in the season-opener for both teams Wednesday.

Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck made 30 saves for his 38th career shutout.

Adam Lowry and Mark Scheifele each had a goal and an assist for Winnipeg, while Nino Niederreiter and Josh Morrissey each contributed a pair of assists.

Also scoring for the Jets were Rasmus Kupari, Dylan Samberg and Kyle Connor.

Edmonton outshot Winnipeg 30-20. It wasn't the start the Oilers wanted after reaching the Game 7 of the Stanley Cup final last season before losing out to the Florida Panthers.

Takeaways

Jets: Winnipeg’s Kyle Connor scored in his team’s season-opener for an NHL-record seventh consecutive year. He walked in from the top of the circle on the power play midway through the second period and whipped a shot off the post and in. Three players had scored in six straight season-openers: Cam Atkinson, Yvan Cournoyer and Mud Bruneteau.

Oilers: Leon Draisaitl, who will become the highest paid player in the NHL next season, carried into the game a franchise-record, eight-game point streak in season-openers (tied with Filip Forsberg and Morgan Rielly), but wasn't able to extend that streak.

Key moment

Winnipeg’s two goals in a 20-second span gave the visitors a 4-0 lead less than five minutes into the second period. Kupari ripped a shot past Oilers goalie Stuart Skinner and while that was still sinking in, Niederreiter passed through traffic Samberg, who lifted the puck over Skinner’s shoulder and into the net.

Key stat

Skinner’s first opening-night start in his three seasons in Edmonton was forgettable. He allowed five goals on 13 shots and was pulled at the mid-mark for backup Calvin Pickard. The Jets scored four times on their first 10 shots.

Up next

Jet: Start a four-game homestand with Friday's home opener against the Chicago Blackhawks.
Oilers: Host the Blackhawks on Saturday in the second of four home games to start their season.

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10802543/analysis-winnipeg-jets-season-begins-playoffs/>

Winnipeg Jets crush Oilers 6-0 for impressive season-opening win

By Christian Aumell & Russ Hobson Global News

It's hard to imagine the season starting any better for the Winnipeg Jets.

Taking on the defending Western Conference champions in their building, the Jets steamrolled the Edmonton Oilers 6-0 thanks to their depth, special teams, and their reigning Vezina Trophy winner in goal.

The Jets scored twice in the first period and tacked on three more in the second and never looked back. Winnipeg had goals from six different players and 12 players had at least a point.

"I just thought we were real solid as a team there," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. "We just came out and one line went out and did what they needed to do. The next line came out and did the same thing, and lots of good stuff. And obviously to win it the way we did is big against that team.

"It's a road win in a tough barn and we'll take that and move on."

It was the second time in the last three seasons the Jets were victorious in their season opener.

Connor Hellebuyck was in fine form despite missing the last two days of practice for personal reasons to deal with family stuff. He stopped all 30 shots he faced for his 38th career shutout and got a little emotional afterwards.

"It's been a pretty crazy week," Hellebuyck said. "It's been tough on the whole family, but the boys played great for me and they've been really supportive this entire time, so I really cherish these moments. And I cherish my time with family. So, hope they're doing alright."

Mason Appleton had a three-point night with one goal and two assists. Kyle Connor set an NHL record by scoring in his seventh straight season opener.

"It's remarkable for him to have seven straight," said captain Adam Lowry. "I can't even fathom that, to be honest."

Winnipeg scored twice on their three chances on the power play.

The Jets didn't beat the Oilers in regulation at all last season.

"To come into Edmonton, we know the roster they have there," Lowry said. "They're a great team and to get the first win of the season, right away it's a good feeling and we're gonna look to build on that for Friday night."

Story continues below advertisement

Haydn Fleury had to leave the game temporarily in the second period after taking a shot up high, but returned for the start of the third.

Winnipeg got the first chance to score just over a minute in when Mark Scheifele found himself on a breakaway but he was turned aside by Stuart Skinner.

It stayed goalless until the 14:56 mark of the first when Lowry banked in a rebound from a tough angle off the pad of Skinner to open the scoring.

Lowry's line doubled the lead with 1:25 to go. A great stretch pass from Neal Pionk to Nino Niederreiter got the puck into the Edmonton end, then Niederreiter found a streaking Appleton who buried a shot under Skinner's glove to make it 2-0.

Edmonton nearly got on the board before the period expired but Zach Hyman hit the post.

Early in the second, the Jets blew the game wide open thanks to a pair of goals from unlikely sources.

After a long shift in the Edmonton end, Josh Morrissey sent a great backdoor pass to Rasmus Kupari who banged it past Skinner to make it 3-0 at the 4:17 mark. It was his first goal as a Winnipeg Jet and first in the NHL since Jan. 3, 2023 as a member of the Los Angeles Kings. It was also just his 10th career goal in his 159th NHL game.

Just 20 seconds later, Dylan Samberg made it 4-0 when he finished off a Jets rush in transition by taking a pass from Appleton and burying it top-shelf. Samberg scored just one goal in 78 games last season and only three in his 156 game NHL career coming into the night.

Winnipeg kept piling on when they got their first power play chance of the night. Connor wired a wrister past Skinner just 29 seconds into the man advantage to make it 5-0.

Skinner was pulled for Calvin Pickard during the second media timeout of the period, his night ending after allowing five goals on 13 shots.

While the offence piled up stats, Hellebuyck stayed sharp in goal, stopping all 25 shots he faced through the first 40 minutes.

Scheifele got in on the fun with just under six minutes remaining in the game, deflecting a crisp pass from Nikolaj Ehlers past Pickard on the power play to make it 6-0.

The only thing left to determine at that point was whether Hellebuyck could get the shutout and he succeeded, stopping all seven shots he faced in the third.

The Jets will now return home to play their home opener Friday night against Connor Bedard and the Chicago Blackhawks. Puck drop is just after 7 p.m. with pregame coverage starting at 5 p.m. on Power 97.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/button-jets-third-line-set-competitive-tone-and-exploited-oilers-weakness%7E3008715>

Button: Jets' third line set competitive tone and exploited Oilers' weakness (VIDEO)

After getting blown out in their second straight season-opener, Craig Button joins SportsCentre to break down what happened to the Oilers on Wednesday night, and explain what the key factors were in the Jets' dominant win.