

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2024/10/10/jets-tap-comrie-as-backup-goalie-to-hellebuyck>

Jets tap Comrie as backup goalie to Hellebuyck

By: Mike McIntyre

The Winnipeg Jets have finally decided on who their backup goaltender will be.

In a bit of a surprising move, Kaapo Kahkonen was placed on waivers Thursday afternoon, clearing the way for Eric Comrie to at least start the season serving as the understudy to Vezina Trophy winner Connor Hellebuyck.

Kahkonen will report to the Manitoba Moose as long as another team doesn't make a claim by Friday afternoon. The only cost would be picking up his one-year, \$1 million contract.

Comrie is signed to a two-year deal that pays him \$825,000. He's not expected to see a ton of action behind the workhorse Hellebuyck, who stopped all 30 shots he faced in Winnipeg's 6-0 victory over the Edmonton Oilers on Wednesday night to begin the 2024-25 season. Comrie and Hellebuyck are good friends away from the rink and previously worked together for three seasons starting in the fall of 2016.

Coming into training camp, Kahkonen was viewed as having the inside track. The 28-year-old from Finland is a former American Hockey League goaltender of the year who has played in 139 career NHL games with the Minnesota Wild and San Jose Sharks.

Comrie, 29, was drafted by the Jets in 2013 and holds numerous franchise records with the Moose. He's appeared in 57 career games with Winnipeg, the Detroit Red Wings, New Jersey Devils and Buffalo Sabres.

The Jets will now be down to 22 players on the active roster, which is one under the maximum. They also have three players on injured reserve — defencemen Ville Heinola and Logan Stanley and forward Jaret Anderson-Dolan.

Kahkonen's demotion would allow the Jets to bank slightly more cap space, given his higher salary, which could prove beneficial by the trade deadline. Perhaps the organization is also hoping — because of the bigger salary hit — he'd be less likely of the two netminders to be claimed.

Should he get to the Moose, Kahkonen would serve as a job-share partner with young prospect Thomas Milic, who is coming off a terrific rookie season. Winnipeg would then likely send Domenic DiVincentiis to the ECHL to start his pro career coming out of junior. Manitoba opens their season this weekend in Iowa.

MOVE ALONG, FOLKS: The Jets are trying to play faster on the ice this season, and now they're hoping fans will be able to move a little quicker as well as they flock downtown to watch the hockey team play starting with Friday's home opener against the Chicago Blackhawks.

A new contactless security screening at Canada Life Centre is designed to keep the traffic moving.

True North has partnered with Evolv Technology for their AI-based Evolv Express, which the organization says will bring a “guest-first approach to venue entry, allowing fans to move through screening at their natural walking pace without always needing to empty bags or pockets.”

Winnipeg is the 11th NHL market to adopt contactless security screening.

“We know that guests’ experience at Canada Life Centre is about more than the great entertainment on the ice or on the stage, and we are continually working to make big and little changes that will improve their time in our venue,” Kevin Donnelly, Senior Vice President of Venues & Entertainment, said in a statement.

“Our new Evolv Express technology has made venue entry more convenient and a lot quicker and is especially reducing lines during peak entry times for high-attendance events.”

Evolv uses sensor technology and AI to differentiate between threats and everyday types of metal people may have, such as cellphones and keys.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/10/10/miller-brings-the-boom>

Miller brings the boom

Physics as much a factor as size and strength when Jets blue-liner unleashes cannonading slapshot

By: Mike McIntyre

Grip it and rip it? Not quite.

There were 924 players who appeared in at least one NHL game last season. Nobody fired a puck harder than Colin Miller’s 102.59 mph (165 km/h) howitzer during a game in January between his then-New Jersey Devils and the Dallas Stars. In fact, that’s the fastest recorded slap shot in three years of data tracking by the league.

The now Winnipeg Jets defenceman is hardly the biggest or strongest player, standing 6-1 and weighing 200 pounds. He’s not some young phenom or can’t-miss prospect, either, as the 31-year-old was a fifth-round draft pick now skating for his sixth team over the past decade.

How, then, is this journeyman player able to blast the biscuit better than any of his peers? Miller’s top shot last year was more than 12 mph (19 km/h) faster than the average high for all NHL players. So, too, was his overall average shot speed. He had eight shots measuring more than 100 mph (160 km/h) in a league where the average is zero.

“I really don’t know,” Miller told the Free Press with a chuckle during a chat this week. “The physics, maybe? I don’t know. That would be interesting to see.”

It certainly would be, which is why we went digging. Especially after Miller’s terrific preseason in which he scored three goals on blue-line blasts. Acquired at the trade deadline last year from the New Jersey Devils, Miller figures to bring the boom as a fixture on Winnipeg’s back-end.

Turns out Miller was on the right track — there really is a science to it, even if he can't fully explain how he's created his not-so-secret weapon.

That's where someone such as Alain Haché comes in. The 54-year-old is an experimental physicist who teaches at the University of Moncton. He's also a huge hockey fan and a longtime beer league goaltender who is the author of *The Physics of Hockey and Slap Shot Science*.

"Certainly size will help. Zdeno Chara, for example, had the advantage of size (6-9, 250 pounds)," Haché explained of the now-retired Boston Bruins defenceman who could shoot with the best of them. More wingspan and more muscle means more rotation in the windup, which can cause the puck to move quicker.

"But if you look at (Miller's) size, he would be average height and size. Maybe for a defenceman even on the lower side. So, size is not on his side."

That's where technique plays such a vital role.

"It's how you perfect the mechanics of the slap shot" said Haché. Timing is everything, with the trick being finding the sweet spot between the blade and the puck.

"You'll notice they never have a direct hit on the puck, a direct collision. That's just fundamental physics. If you have a direct hit between the blade and the puck, the puck would never be able to go faster than twice the speed of the blade, and that would put a serious limit on how fast it can go," said Haché.

Watch any pro player up close and you'll see they usually strike the ice first, ideally about a foot behind the puck. A few inches in either direction can make a world of difference.

"That stores what we call elastic energy or potential energy, and then the limit becomes not twice the speed of the blade (as with a direct impact), but the amount of energy that the player has. So that depends on his speed and his mass. And the speed can be much higher," he said.

Other factors such as the length of stick and the flex of stick play a role.

"He's a CCM guy!" Jets defenceman Neal Pionk is quick to chime in when asked how Miller does it. "He swings hard and gets good contact on it too. He uses the flex of his stick really well. You all see it, he's got a really good shot and hopefully he's able to use it a lot this year."

Miller has been shooting pucks pretty much since he could walk, growing up in the hockey crazed community of Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.

"We used to go to a tennis court. We had a little set-up there, me and my friends. We'd shoot pucks in the summer. That's probably where it kind of came together," he said.

"We just had different drills we would do, screwing around. I think it was more that. I don't know if I can really explain it. Obviously with maturity, getting older, things change so maybe that helped, too."

You'd think Miller would be lighting the lamp with regularity, yet he's only scored 39 times over 513 career NHL games. Stars goalie Scott Wedgewood stopped his hardest shot last year, for

example. That speaks to how difficult it is in today's game to beat a goalie clean from the blue line, which is something Jets head coach Scott Arniel can attest to.

Long gone are the days when a player such as Dave Babych, a former teammate of Arniel's with Jets 1.0, could hit double-digits with his eyes closed. Goaltenders are bigger and better than ever and shot blocking has also become an art form.

"There's a lot more teams defending with five layers. You gotta get it by people. Forwards are going to get in lanes, or the D in the net front," said Arniel.

However, fear can be a powerful thing, so someone like Miller can be a valuable asset.

"When you have a cannon like that, there's a tendency to maybe not quite get in that lane, maybe take little steps to the side," said Arniel.

"If you have some kind of trait that's really good, and that shot being one of them, try to get it off as much as possible. That's what we've talked about since he came last year and certainly all of camp. If you have a chance to get a lane, get an alley, pound that puck, because it's not just the shot going in, it's the rebound, it's the craziness that happens after that shot, if there's a rebound, the puck spits out, then we can kind of track that as well. He's got to use it as much as he can."

Haché said another key to slap shot success is what is known as the "bounce effect." In simple terms, the faster something is coming at you — whether it's a hockey puck or a baseball — the easier it can be to hit it harder. A one-timer, for example, can typically do more damage than a stationary shot in the same way a batter who barrels up a 100 mph pitch can go much deeper than hitting a ball off a tee.

"The energy of it coming towards you is actually helping you," said Haché. "So if a defenceman is receiving a pass and does a one-timer, it should theoretically be a faster shot."

Miller's current defence partner, Haydn Fleury, has said he's going to try to feed him as much as possible, which seems like a sound strategy.

"You can count on one hand the number of times you see a big slapshot in a game. It's not really that many," said Miller, who might just challenge the career-best 10 goals he scored in the 2017-18 season with regular playing time this year.

He's going to keep firing away and hoping for the best, even if he can't fully explain how he is to shooting a puck what Connor McDavid is to skating.

"You know players don't think about physics at all. They don't read physics papers. It's just all practice," said Haché.

"They discover what is the best thing just by trial and error. Some players just pick it up better than others. It's not all about size or weight or strength, but you certainly have to develop a very good technique."

Global Winnipeg

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

ANALYSIS: Winnipeg Jets' dominant 3rd line unique in NHL

By John Shannon CJOB

Imagine getting a second chance to fulfil your dream of coaching in the National Hockey League, standing behind the bench, and being able to look down and see 17, 62, 22.

No, those aren't lottery numbers (although, I might just try them). That's Adam Lowry, Nino Niederreiter and Mason Appleton. A line like no other in the NHL. A line that just might be the most complete in the league. Seven more points for the trio on Wednesday, in addition to setting the complete tone of the game for the Winnipeg Jets' total domination in Edmonton.

You know, there's been a ton of talk on this radio station about the Jets' third line — a moniker I have taken issue with. Lowry, Niederreiter and Appleton are as much a third line as I am the Bombers' starting quarterback.

"Third line" indicates that there are two lines better on this club. And that just isn't the case.

There was a time and place in hockey where great lines had great nicknames — the Goal-a-Game Line, the Scooter Line, the West Coast Express, the Grind Line.

Adam Lowry, Nino Niedereitter and Mason Appleton deserve to be acknowledged as the most complete line in the game. They are "the 200-Foot Line."

They can score, they can hit, they can check. They can be put on the ice in any situation and thrive. There is no group in the NHL like them.

And give Kevin Cheveldayoff some credit. It has been on the general manager's watch that Adam Lowry has grown into a monster of a player, and a captain, plus trading for Niederreiter at the deadline in 2023 and reacquiring Appleton, after losing him to the Seattle Kraken in the expansion draft.

Make no mistake, coach Scott Arniel is already the envy of the National Hockey League, just because he can call on the third line, or rather, the 200-Foot Line, any time he sees fit.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10806592/eric-comrie-wins-backup-job-winnipeg-jets/>

Eric Comrie wins backup job as Winnipeg Jets place Kaapo Kahkonen on waivers

By Russ Hobson Global News

Eric Comrie has won the Winnipeg Jets backup goaltender job.

The club addressed their three-goalie situation a day after their first win of the season by placing goalie Kaapo Kahkonen on waivers.

Comrie served as the backup to Connor Hellebuyck in their season-opening win over the Edmonton Oilers on Wednesday. The Jets kept three goalies on their opening night roster because Hellebuyck left the team for a few days earlier in the week for personal reasons to deal with family stuff.

Kahkonen was signed as a free agent over the summer on a one-year contract worth a million bucks.

He's played five NHL seasons with Minnesota Wild, San Jose Sharks, and New Jersey Devils.

If Kahkonen clears waivers on Friday, he'll likely be assigned to the Manitoba Moose, but the Jets could still opt to keep three goalies on their 23-man roster.

The Moose have two goalies on their opening night roster which was set earlier on Thursday in Thomas Milic and Domenic DiVincentiis.'

Daily Faceoff

<https://www.dailyfaceoff.com/news/winnipeg-jets-depth-could-take-them-far-in-2024-25>

Winnipeg Jets' depth could take them far in 2024-25

By Colton Davies

After the Winnipeg Jets 6-0 stomping over the Edmonton Oilers, it was evident that the Jets have a depth squad that could elevate them even further throughout the 2024-25 season.

Last year, the Jets would end up going 52-24-6 with 110 points, finishing second in the Central Division and tying their franchise record for the most wins in a single campaign – only to be defeated in five games by the Colorado Avalanche in the opening round of the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Today on Daily Faceoff Live, hosts Frank Seravalli and Tyler Yaremchuk discuss the Jets 6-0 win, their star players and why the depth could help them reach new heights.

Tyler Yaremchuk: This Jets team, you look at that forward group and I think they have a very very solid bottom-six, did I maybe underestimate the Jets and they will be a very competitive team in the Central?

Frank Seravalli: Well 100% they will be a competitive team and that Jets third line of Appleton, Lowry and Niederreiter absolutely ate the Oilers' lunch. That highlighted the depth they had. This was also our first look at Connor Hellebuyck this season and he is still good, like we knew he was but this was still our first look since the Jets' disappointing playoff run. Will this team be hyper-competitive and get back to 100 points, yes. What's clear is the Jets are a team that works hard and will be in a position to win each game because of their depth.