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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-connor-s-turn-in-ot>

***Three things - Connor's turn in OT
Kyle Connor scores a power play goal in OT to beat Wild 2-1***

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – The Winnipeg Jets won their 11th straight regular season game going back to last season beating Minnesota 2-1 in overtime Sunday night. Kyle Connor scored the overtime winner on the power play and Mark Scheifele scored the other goal for the Jets who are now 3-0 to start the season. Connor Hellebuyck made 26 saves for the Jets who will not play until Friday when they host San Jose.

FLAIR FOR THE DRAMATIC

Coming off his two-goal performance on Friday night, Mark Scheifele carried that feeling into the game against Minnesota. With the Wild up 1-0 in the first period, and under three seconds remaining, Adam Lowry won the face-off right to Scheifele and the 31-year-old wired a shot far past Filip Gustavsson for his fourth of the season. It stayed 1-1 until overtime and with former Jet Zach Bogosian in the penalty box, Connor ended the game with a power play goal just 51 seconds into the extra period.

ANOTHER ONE

Connor Hellebuyck has allowed two goals or less in six of his past eight regular season starts, which are all wins. Hellebuyck has a 1.49 goals-against average and .951 save percentage in his past eight regular season games. His best save came with the game tied and Marco Rossi walked in and the Jets goaltender made a huge blocker stop. The 31-year-old has enjoyed the defence first mentality carrying over from last season.

"Phenomenal. He's amazing, he truly is special," said Scheifele.

"I'm very, very lucky to be on his team for this long and another seven more years."

SPECIAL TEAMS OK

The Jets haven't taken many penalties through the first three games of the season but when they have their penalty kill has been on point. Winnipeg is 5-for-5 so far in 2024-25 and went a perfect 3-for-3 tonight against Minnesota and they came up huge in the third period with the game tied, not allowing a single shot to a lethal Wild power play unit.

"Last year the story was we'd always come out on the wrong side of that or win in spite of the special teams," said Adam Lowry.

"It was nice to have them contribute in a positive manner."

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/minnesota-wild-winnipeg-jets-game-recap-october-13>

***Connor scores 51 seconds into OT to lift Jets past Wild
Scheifele gets goal, assist, Hellebuyck stops 26 of 27 for Winnipeg***

By Darrin Bauming

WINNIPEG -- Kyle Connor scored 51 seconds into overtime to give the Winnipeg Jets their third straight win to start the season, 2-1 against the Minnesota Wild at Canada Life Centre on Sunday.

"There's no give up, no quit in this group," Connor said. "No matter what it is, we're sticking to the same game plan we're calling. We're down 1-0 last game to Chicago (a 2-1 overtime win on Friday). We knew it was coming. Some nights it goes our way. We're able to find one with one minute to go (in the third period against the Blackhawks), we're able to get one there at the end (of the first period Sunday) and catch teams not being ready, too."

Connor won it with a snap shot from the right circle on a power play after Wild defenseman Zach Bogosian was assessed a holding the stick penalty with six seconds remaining in the third period.

"You saw it at the end, not many guys can stand still and put that shot like he does," Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel said. "He's a guy that shoots from all angles, all places. He did it the other night, actually, he had a couple off the mask, a couple off the shoulder. His release is so good that you want him to do that. You don't want him not to take his shots. When he's on, he's finding holes, he's finding places on the ice so he can get that shot away."

Mark Scheifele had a goal and an assist for the Jets (3-0-0), and Connor Hellebuyck made 26 saves.

"I'm very thankful for that guy," Scheifele said of his linemate Connor. "He's tremendous. He's an amazing player. That shot was absolutely phenomenal. I am very thankful for 'KC,' that's for sure."

Jake Middleton scored for the Wild (1-0-2), who have lost two straight but gained a point in each after a 5-4 shootout loss to the Seattle Kraken on Saturday. Filip Gustavsson made 33 saves.

"[Gustavsson] was unbelievable. He stood on his head," Middleton said. "And I feel horrible for him. I made a poor decision. With 15 seconds left, I change and I put my partner coming on the ice in a bad spot and we're down a man going into OT. Gus deserves a better outcome than that. He stood on his head for us all game."

Middleton gave Minnesota a 1-0 lead at 4:06 of the first period with a wrist shot from the right point that beat a screened Hellebuyck stick side.

"I thought that the competitive nature of the group, the battle in a fatigue state, I've got a lot of time for," Minnesota coach John Hynes said. "I told the team it's about a culture and a mindset, mental toughness and physical toughness. I thought we had that tonight, and at a high level. Coming in, we knew it was going to be a hard road game."

Scheifele tied it 1-1 with two seconds remaining in the first with a one-timer from the top of the right circle off a face-off win by Adam Lowry. Prior to the goal, the Jets pulled Hellebuyck for an extra attacker on the offensive-zone face-off.

“We played it exactly how we wanted to, actually,” Wild defenseman Brock Faber said. “A perfect face-off and a perfect shot, really. It’s unfortunate, and it’s almost like when two perfect plays like that happen back-to-back, it’s almost undefendable. It’s unfortunate, it’s a huge momentum swing. Obviously, those goals you can’t afford to give up, but it’s a 1-1 game going into the second, that’s how we looked at it. I think all in all we played it the right way, the puck just found its way into the back of the net.”

NOTES: Scheifele skated in his 800th NHL game. He also extended his goal streak to three games (four goals, two assists). ... Wild forward Joel Eriksson Ek (broken nose) and defenseman Jared Spurgeon (lower body) did not travel with the team to Winnipeg. Each is listed as day to day, but Hynes said Eriksson Ek is expected to be available against the St. Louis Blues on Tuesday. ... The Jets are 3-0-0 to start a season for the first time in franchise history. ... Hellebuyck has allowed just two goals in 180:54 through three starts this season.

Canadian Press

<https://www.chrisd.ca/2024/10/14/winnipeg-jets-minnesota-wild-game-story/>

Unbeaten Jets Aim to Keep Soaring, Building on Early Success

By Judy Owen, The Canadian Press

The Winnipeg Jets may be silencing some of their critics — at least in the early stages of this National Hockey League season.

Kyle Connor scored 51 seconds into overtime to lift the Jets to a 2-1 victory over the Minnesota Wild on Sunday, marking the first 3-0 start to a season in franchise history.

“It’s awesome. It’s great. Listen, I didn’t know that. Great to hear,” new Jets head coach Scott Arniel said of the accomplishment.

“We’ll move on. Hopefully, it’s four (wins next).”

Winnipeg finished fourth overall in the league last season with a 52-24-6 record, but were knocked out of the first round of the playoffs in five games by the Colorado Avalanche.

Not many fans and hockey pundits had Winnipeg hitting the highs they reached last season because of veteran players who moved on such as forwards Sean Monahan and Tyler Toffoli, defenceman Brenden Dillion and backup goaltender Laurent Brossoit.

But the Jets have come out of the gates swinging.

There was the season-opening 6-0 victory over the Oilers in Edmonton, followed by Friday’s 2-1 overtime win at home against the Chicago Blackhawks.

The stars of the show so far have been centre Mark Scheifele and reigning Vezina Trophy winner Connor Hellebuyck, who signed identical seven-year deals last year with an average value of \$8.5 million per year. The contracts kicked in this season.

Scheifele scored his fourth goal of the season against the Wild and added an assist in his 800th NHL career game. He leads his team with six points in a three-game point streak of four goals and two assists.

“He’s just playing at an elite level,” Arniel said of Scheifele. “When your best players can be your best players, that’s not just him. There’s a lot of guys playing at a high level right now.

“That’s good, because it’s gotten us out of the gate here. We don’t know how the season is ever going to start, so as a head coach I’m happy the best players are up and running. It just helps us to have success.”

Connor, who notched his 11th career overtime goal, said Scheifele has had an impact on his career and his teammates.

“It seems like he’s getting better every year,” Connor said. “The way he takes care of his body, it’s been a real privilege to have a front-row seat to watch him grow and the mentorship he’s had on everybody in this room, pushing to get better, striving.”

Scheifele was Winnipeg’s first pick in the 2011 draft (seventh overall) after the Atlanta Thrashers were bought and moved to become the Jets 2.0 version.

His goal against Minnesota netminder Filip Gustavsson was one players and the 12,916 fans at Canada Life Centre will remember for a long time.

With the Wild up 1-0 on Jake Middleton’s goal at 4:06 of the opening period, Hellebuyck was pulled with 2.9 seconds remaining in the period to add an extra attacker in Minnesota’s end.

Jets centre Adam Lowry won the faceoff against Matt Boldy and sent the puck back to Scheifele, who fired it under Gustavsson with 1.5 seconds left for the 1-1 tie and his 301st career goal.

‘I like the mindset that you’re going to push, you’re going to go for it,’ Lowry said. “You put a little bit of risk, but it’s a calculated risk.”

Minnesota head coach John Hynes agreed the play was a rare success.

“It doesn’t happen often, but I think if you look at it, it was really kind of just a bang-bang play,” Hynes said.

“So if that faceoff didn’t go clean right back and set on it, it doesn’t do it. Probably 99 per cent of the time, if a guy like (Wild forward Ryan Hartman) goes down to block it, it gets blocked. It was a well-executed play and it worked out.”

Hellebuyck has also opened the season with stellar play.

He made 26 saves against the Wild and has only allowed two goals on 83 shots over his three starts.

“Phenomenal,” Scheifele said of Hellebuyck. “He’s amazing. He truly is special.

“I am very, very lucky to be on his team this long and another seven years. That’s another guy I am very thankful for.”\

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/mark-scheifele-adds-to-storybook-jets-career-in-game-800/>

Mark Scheifele adds to storybook Jets career in Game 800

By Jacob Stoller

WINNIPEG — It was only fitting that Mark Scheifele rose to the occasion in his 800th career game.

“Elite players have a more of a calming influence in themselves,” Scott Arniel said after Saturday’s practice. “Where everybody else’s heart rate might be running at a 200, those guys are in those moments — in the last minute of a game — and they’re just normal.”

Scheifele’s play on Sunday — where the Winnipeg Jets defeated the Minnesota Wild 2-1 — was a prime example of that.

With 2.9 seconds left in the first period, Arniel pulled the goalie ahead of an offensive-zone faceoff. Scheifele was situated as the trigger man — behind face-off ace Adam Lowry — in a sequence that seldom pays off, given the limited time and space. But Lowry won the draw back to Scheifele. And No. 55 made no mistake, ripping a slapshot past Filip Gustavsson’s blocker to tie the game at one.

“With the two-and-a-half seconds left or whatever it is (2.9), you’re trying to hit that inside hole, the Ovi (Ovechkin) hole,” Lowry said. “You draw it up like that and it very rarely goes exactly according to plan. But it was a big goal for us and it ended up being the tying goal that got us to overtime.”

Scheifele drew a holding-the-stick penalty with six seconds remaining in the third period. The night almost ended on a damper when he turned the puck over 23 seconds into overtime, sending Marat Khusnutdinov with a clear lane to a breakaway. But Scheifele backchecked behind Khusnutdinov, stripping him of the puck deep into the defensive zone before the latter could get a shot off. Moments later, the Jets returned to the offensive zone and Josh Morrissey fed Scheifele in his office — the left-side face-off dot. He feathered a pass between the sticks of Khusnutdinov and Brock Faber to a wide-open Kyle Connor. Connor cradled the puck on the opposite faceoff dot and ripped the puck over Gustavsson’s shoulder.

It was yet another example of how Scheifele is among the NHL’s crème de la crème when the stakes are at their highest. Since the 2016-17 season, Scheifele is tied for third in overtime points (11) and tied for second in overtime goals (13). Through that same span, Scheifele is also tied for third in playoff goals per game (0.55) among players who skated in at least 30 playoff games.

It's early, of course, but the two-time NHL All-Star has kicked his game up a notch out of the gate, tallying four goals and six points in his first three games.

MR. 800

Hitting the 800-game mark is special in of itself, but the fact Scheifele has done it all in Winnipeg — where he was the first selection in Jets 2.0 history — is storybook. Especially considering Winnipeg went off the board to take him.

"A feather goes in the cap for the scouting staff and [Jets GM Kevin Cheveldayoff] to draft him," Lowry said. "I remember there was a lot of question marks when we took him over [Sean Couturier] and some other guys that were available. Not to say that [those players] haven't had great careers but I think [Winnipeg] made a great choice. Mark's kind of became the face of the Winnipeg Jets, with [Connor Hellebuyck, Kyle Connor and Josh Morrissey]. To have your first-ever draft pick have this storybook career with one organization, it's pretty rare. It's remarkable and we're really lucky to have him."

KC COOKING

We'd be remiss not to tip our cap to Connor, the yin to Scheifele's yang.

Tonight's overtime winner was another example of how automatic those two are, when they have time and space.

"KC, he's got quickness, he's got good burst," Arniel said postgame. "[Scheifele will] find him. Scheif is pretty good at passing and finding him when [Connor] comes in the offensive zone. KC does a great job of hiding, kind of darting in and darting out.

"KC does a great job of not staying in one spot, he's always on the move. And Schief finds a way to find him."

Connor registered eight shots tonight and four of them were scoring chances, according to NaturalStatTrick.com.

"He's a guy that shoots from all angles, all places," Arniel said. "He did it the other night, — he had a couple off the mask a couple off the shoulder — his release is so good that you want him to do that. You don't want him not to take his shots. When he's on, he's finding holes. He's finding places on the ice so he can get that shot away."

SECOND LINE STRUGGLES CONTINUE

It was yet another night to forget for the Jets' second line of Nikolaj Ehlers, Vladislav Namestnikov and Cole Perfetti. Over their first three games — while averaging just shy of 10 minutes per night — the trio has controlled just 16.1 per cent of the expected goal share when they're on the ice.

Arniel made a point to mention that the three were creating more in transition Sunday night. And they were. It was a stark contrast from the first two games, where it seemed like every sequence was being nixed before they got to the blueline.

"We met yesterday," Arniel said of the three. "Those guys are taking full ownership in where they're at but we're three games into it. I think that they're still growing amongst each other."

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/10/13/connor-works-ot-magic-to-propel-jets-past-wild>

Connor works OT magic to propel Jets past Wild

By: Ken Wiebe

Kyle Connor is no stranger to the overtime winner.

The only guy who has scored more in extra time in Winnipeg Jets history is the guy who passed him the puck for the 11th of his NHL career, longtime linemate Mark Scheifele (who has 12 OT winners).

Connor found a sliver of open space on the glove side of Filip Gustavsson and ripped home a shot just 51 seconds into overtime — with Minnesota's Zach Bogosian serving a minor for holding the stick — to propel the Jets to a 2-1 victory over the Wild on Sunday.

"Gabe (Vilardi) was actually back door and I found the goalie leaning, almost respecting that," said Connor. "A little bit of room, (so) I thought, 'Why not?'"

Connor finished with a game-high eight shots on goal and 10 shot attempts.

"Yeah he's a shot-volume guy. And then you saw it at the end, not many guys can stand still and put that shot like he does," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. "He's a guy that shoots from all angles, all places. His release is so good that you want him to do that. When he's on he's finding holes, he's finding places on the ice so he can get that shot away."

The Jets, who opened the season with three straight wins for the first time, are back in action Friday against the San Jose Sharks.

"It's awesome. It's great. Listen, I didn't know that. Great to hear," said Arniel. "We'll move on. Hopefully it's four (on Friday)."

Let's take a closer look at what transpired on Sunday:

THE BOLD MOVE – With 2.9 seconds to go in the first period and a faceoff in the offensive zone, Arniel opted to pull his goalie in favour of an extra attacker. Jets captain Adam Lowry won the draw and Scheifele blasted home a one-timer with 1.5 seconds to go to even the score, 1-1.

"You're trying to hit that inside hole, the Ovi (Ovechkin) hole. You draw it up like that and it very rarely goes exactly according to plan. But it was a big goal for us and it ended up being the tying goal that got us to overtime," said Lowry. "I like the mindset that you're going to push, you're going to go for it. You put a little bit of risk, but it's a calculated risk."

Arniel later revealed the cut-off point is around four seconds, so he didn't hesitate to send the extra player over the boards.

Scheifele, who was playing in his 800th NHL game, also approved of the decision.

“With that little time on the clock, it makes it next to impossible to get the puck down the ice unless you rip it like 300 miles an hour, which I don’t think is happening,” said Scheifele, who now has four goals and six points in three games. “It comes down to just the amount of time that’s on the clock. But I love it today.”

THE BRICK WALL – World-class goaltending has been a staple for the Jets during the Connor Hellebuyck era, but it’s impossible to ignore the role the Vezina Trophy winner has played in the quick start out of the gate.

Even with two of the three games going into overtime, Hellebuyck has allowed only two goals on 83 shots that he’s faced.

The numbers are incredibly gaudy so far, with Hellebuyck sporting a goals-against average of 0.66 and a save-percentage of .976.

“Phenomenal. He’s amazing. He truly is special,” said Scheifele.

For those keeping score at home, it’s been a pretty solid start for the players who signed matching seven-year extensions last October, with Scheifele and Hellebuyck having a big impact so far.

IDENTITY BUILDING – There were some folks wondering if the Jets would be committed to the sound defensive game that allowed them to capture the Jennings Trophy for giving up the fewest goals in the NHL last season.

While it’s still early, it’s evident the Jets haven’t forgotten the commitment required.

“We had to do a lot of teaching the last couple of years. A lot of repetitious things that became ingrained,” said Arniel.

To put it bluntly, the Jets know what it’s supposed to look like when they’re on top of their game.

“We’ve stressed it since Day 1. That’s kind of our identity,” said Connor. “Teams go out 30, 40, 50, 60 games into the year and they don’t know what kind of identity they are as a team. We have a good starting point from last year and building who we are and what that looks like. If it’s not there, we know what to get back to.”

PK PERFECT – After combining to take just two minor penalties in the first two games, the Jets were sent to the sin bin three times on Sunday but managed to kill off each of the minor penalties.

That leaves them a perfect five-for-five on the season. On the flip side, the Jets have three power-play markers so far this season — Connor’s against the Wild and two in the season opener against the Edmonton Oilers.

Although it’s a small sample size, that represents notable progress for a team that had improving its special teams near the top of its list of priorities going into the new season.

“Last year, the story was that we’d always come out on the wrong side of that or we’d win in spite of special teams,” said Lowry. “It’s nice to have them contribute in a positive manner.”

EXTRA, EXTRA – Former Jets D-man Declan Chisholm made his season debut for the Wild after missing the first two games with an illness. Chisholm, who was claimed off waivers by the Wild last season, skated on the third pairing with Jon Merrill and quarterbacked the second power play unit.

The Jets iced the same lineup for a third consecutive game, which meant defenceman Dylan Coghlan and forward David Gustafsson were the healthy scratches. The Wild were without two key contributors as centre Joel Eriksson Ek and captain Jared Spurgeon suffered injuries in Saturday's shootout loss to the Seattle Kraken.

It was a strong start for the Jets' primary affiliate as the Manitoba Moose swept the Iowa Wild to open the American Hockey League season. Forward Nikita Chibrikov led the way offensively, chipping in one goal and three assists for four points, while top defence prospect Elias Salomonsson had a goal and three points and centre Brad Lambert contributed three assists. In goal, Dom DiVincentiis made his pro debut on Sunday and turned aside 37 of 39 shots he faced in a 3-2 victory and Thomas Milic made 24 saves in the 6-4 win on Saturday.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2024/10/13/scheifele-shows-no-signs-of-slowng-down-while-hitting-milestone-800th-game-with-jets>

Scheifele shows no signs of slowing down while hitting milestone 800th game with Jets

By: Mike McIntyre

Mark Scheifele was feeling particularly thankful this holiday long weekend.

The first-ever Winnipeg Jets 2.0 draft pick scored his 299th and 300th career goals on Friday night to pull a victory out of the jaws of defeat for his team against the Chicago Blackhawks. Then, on Sunday, he celebrated his milestone 800th game with a "how did he do that" buzzer beater, then later set up linemate Kyle Connor for the overtime winner against the Minnesota Wild.

"It's obviously quite special. I am very honoured and blessed to have played in this league for this long," said Scheifele. "It's a tremendous honour. I have been lucky and very thankful to Winnipeg for having me for this long. It's very, very humbling."

There are only two players who have scored at least 300 goals while wearing a Jets jersey of any era. Fittingly, those are Scheifele and his former junior coach and mentor, the late Dale Hawerchuk.

"I drive by his statue every day and think about him," Scheifele said of the permanent monument that was erected in True North Square in 2022. "I know he's up there watching down; I hope he's proud."

Scheifele is just three games into his new seven-year contract extension that pays him US\$59.5 million, and the 31-year-old is off to his best start ever. Now in his 12th full season, and 14th overall, he'd never scored more than three goals in the first three games. He's already up to four, along with two assists, which has him among the NHL scoring leaders.

"It seems like he's getting better every year," said Connor, who joked that he now refers to Scheifele as an "old guy."

“The way he takes care of his body, it’s been a real privilege to have a front-row seat to watch him grow and the mentorship he’s had on everybody in this room, pushing to get better, striving. Healthy habits, eating, on the ice early at practice. He has a real brilliant mind in that way and he’s always curious and wants to get better. It’s been really fun to watch. He’s had a big impact on my career as well.”

Adam Lowry was in the same draft class as Scheifele. Against Minnesota, they joined forces for a wild goal that came off an offensive zone faceoff with just 2.9 seconds left in the first period and the Jets down 1-0. Lowry won the faceoff and drew it back to Scheifele, who ripped a wrist shot past Filip Gustavsson with 1.5 seconds left on the clock.

“That’s the old one-two Winnipeg original,” said Lowry, the second-ever Jets 2.0 pick.

“I don’t think you can say enough good things about Mark and the career he’s had so far and the progress that he still continues to make. He’s working on his game. He’s such a good guy in this room and bringing guys together, helping guys work on their game. He’s a student of the game.”

Lowry vividly recalls a lot of people questioning Winnipeg’s decision to take Scheifele with the seventh-overall pick, especially with some flashier names still available including Sean Couturier who went one spot later to the Philadelphia Flyers.

“I think they made a great choice,” said Lowry. “To play 800 games with one organization is certainly an accomplishment. He’s our No. 1 centre. He’s our offensive driver. He’s a guy that we look to for a lot of leadership. A feather goes in the cap for the scouting staff and (GM Kevin Cheveldayoff) Chevy to draft him.”

Scheifele was asked what he remembers about his first game with the Jets, which came in the fall of 2011. The Jets hosted the Montreal Canadiens and lost 5-1 to raise the curtain on a new era of NHL hockey in Winnipeg.

“I remember Hal Gill sitting on me at the blue line,” Scheifele said of the former Habs defenceman. “Obviously, the crowd for warmup was insane. I didn’t do a whole lot. I was pretty brutal that game. The nerves were there. But, one thing I do remember was Hal Gill sitting on me, and I’ll always remember that.”

Scheifele would play just seven games that year before he was sent back to the Barrie Colts for more seasoning under Hawerchuk’s watch. The next year, he had just four games before making a final trip to junior. He’s been a staple ever since, eventually taking over the No. 1 centre position from Bryan Little and never looking back.

“To have your first ever draft pick have this story book career with one organization, it’s pretty rare. It’s remarkable and we’re really lucky to have him,” said Lowry.

Scheifele’s had a career-high 84 points in 2018-19 and scored a career-high 42 goals in the 2022-23 season. It’s extremely early, of course, but he’s off to a sensational start in this new campaign.

“He’s just playing at an elite level,” said Jets coach Scott Arniel. “There’s a lot of guys playing at a high level right now. That’s good, because it’s gotten us out of the gate here. We don’t know

how the season is ever going to start, so as a head coach I'm happy the best players are up and running. It just helps us to have success."

Scheifele, who received a warm, sustained ovation inside Canada Life Centre for his latest milestones during a television timeout Sunday, hopes the best is still to come.

"Having the fans we have in Winnipeg, this community is so gracious to us and so awesome," he said. "To see them cheer like that really gives me the chills. It's a huge honour and hopefully (there's) many, many more."

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/jets-strike-gold-again-in-overtime-down-wild-2-1>

Jets strike gold again in overtime, down Wild 2-1

By Scott Billeck

Just call them the kings of overtime.

For the second time in as many games, the Winnipeg Jets used the extra frame to earn the two points.

Kyle Connor scored 51 seconds into the fourth stanza to lift the Jets past the Minnesota Wild 2-1 on Sunday night at Canada Life Centre.

"That shot was absolutely phenomenal," Mark Scheifele said. "I am very thankful for KC, that's for sure."

Connor, who had a game-high eight shots and 10 attempts, saw a sliver of space and unloaded.

"Gabe (Vilardi) was actually backdoor, and I found the goalie leaning, almost respecting that," Connor said. "A little bit of room. I thought, 'Why not?'"

The goal came on the power play after Zach Bogosian took a holding-the-stick call on Scheifele with 5.9 seconds left in regulation.

Scheifele, fittingly, served up the pass to Connor for the winner, repaying the favour after Connor found Scheifele on Friday night in Winnipeg's 2-1 win over the Chicago Blackhawks.

Scheifele scored his fourth goal of the season with two seconds left in the first period to cancel out Jake Middleton's opener.

The 31-year-old, who played in his 800th game on Sunday, has factored in each of Winnipeg's past six goals (four goals, two assists).

"I am very honoured and blessed to have played in this league for this long," Scheifele said. "It's a tremendous honour. I have been lucky and very thankful to Winnipeg for having me for this long. It's very, very humbling."

The goal came after head coach Scott Arniel pulled Connor Hellebuyck with 2.9 seconds left on the clock.

Adam Lowry won the faceoff back to Scheifele, who tucked it past Wild starter Filip Gustavsson with a second to spare.

“It’s actually something we’ve done for the last few years, we just haven’t executed it quite like that,” Arniel said. “As coaches, we’ve all done it. We’ve had players stand on the faceoff dot, start a clock, take a slapshot, get your hardest guy to shoot a slapper, see when it goes in the other net.”

Arniel said if there was a second longer left, he’d have kept Hellebuyck in, noting it takes just under four seconds in that scenario for the puck to get down the ice the other way.

“It’s something (Rick Bowness) implemented,” Arniel said. “I’ve done it in lots of other places. It was perfect. Low won it real quick, we got a good screen at the net and Scheif got it off quick.”

Scheifele’s now tied for first in league scoring with six points and recorded his 300th career goal on Friday, making him the second player in Winnipeg’s history to score 300 in Jets uniform after Dale Hawerchuk.

“It means a lot,” Scheifele said. “I drive by his statue every day and think about him. I know he’s up there watching down. I hope he’s proud.”

Hellebuyck made 26 saves for his third win of the year as the Jets improved to a perfect 3-0 for the first time since relocation in 2011.

The reigning Vezina winner allowed just two goals on 83 shots, good for a .976 save percentage and a 0.66 goals-against average.

Winnipeg’s penalty kill remained perfect on the season, going 3-for-3, and is now 5-for-5 through three games.

The Jets continue their four-game homestand on Friday when the San Jose Sharks come to town.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/billeck-jets-already-playing-to-their-identity>

BILLECK: Jets already playing to their identity

By Scott Billeck

If you’re looking for another item to be thankful for as a Winnipeg Jets fan at this apt time of year, consider this: your team has already identified its identity.

And they’ve leaned on it in their three wins to start the new season, including their back-to-back 2-1 overtime wins on Friday and, most recently, Sunday night against the Minnesota Wild.

Gone are the years of it taking half the season to sort out what it is.

These Jets have it down to a tee.

“We had to do a lot of teaching the last couple of years,” head coach Scott Arniel said after Sunday’s win. “A lot of repetitious things that became ingrained.

So much so, Arniel said, pulling back the curtain a bit, that the coaching staff had their players — their vets — address the broader team on what it looks like and what’s expected.

“It’s hard to learn in January or February or March how to play that way if you’re not doing it all year long,” Arniel said.

Speaking with Kyle Connor on Saturday, he feels the core guys have grown from year to year, learning from experiences, especially when it comes to their team defence.

This identity was so honed by the end of last season that the Jets won the William M. Jennings away for the fewest goals allowed.

Still, the team finished tied for fifth in five-on-five scoring, a dose of positive reinforcement that a team focused on defending first could still put up top offensive numbers.

The 52 wins in the regular season didn’t hurt the cause either.

And then they learned the hard way what happens when that identity is abandoned.

Their hasty five-game exit in the first round was a tough pill to swallow, but how they’ve hit the ground running this year shows they recognize they were the ones to blame, not the system.

Arniel hasn’t tried to reinvent the wheel. It’s his team now, but Rick Bowness’s fingerprints are there. That’s not a knock against the new head coach.

It was wise to build off the current foundation, not shake it up.

He and his coaching staff have improved the team elsewhere to bolster what they’ve built.

The Jets are still perfect on the penalty kill, and Sunday’s game was the first time they were tested more than once. They’re a perfect five-for-five.

The power play, which the Jets were on in overtime when Scheifele scored, is once again a weapon with three goals on seven tries.

With Connor Hellebuyck’s tremendous start to the year — two goals allowed, a .976 save percentage and a 0.66 goals-against average — it’s quite formidable in these early days.

A couple of more thoughts on Sunday’s game:

- Winnipeg’s line of Vladislav Namestnikov, Nikolaj Ehlers and Cole Perfetti hooked up a really nice shift early in the third period. It looked a little Adam Lowry line-esque. It established the zone, worked the cycle and created chances. This is what Arniel and the coaching staff are looking for. Peeling back the curtain for a second time during his post-game comments, he spoke of a meeting he had with the line on Saturday. “Those guys are taking full ownership in where they’re at but we’re three games into it. I think that they’re still growing amongst each

other and hopefully... the biggest thing is they just need to get rewarded. They need to get one in."

- Some of the discourse in Jetsland revolves around moving on from that line early, but there's a problem: Arniel likes his three other lines, especially his third and fourth units. Arniel is willing to give the line some runway to establish themselves as an effective trio. Bowness always seemed quick on the trigger to try something new, often not giving chemistry enough time to grow. If the Jets were 0-3 and their other three lines were scoring, there'd be a better argument. Right now, they have the luxury to let it mature. And the message to that trio would have been simple: "Figure it out."

- For what it's worth, Namestnikov's line got second-line minutes, playing an even 10 together in the game. Lowry's line, for reference, was 9:03, while Scheifele's line was 15:52.

- Few people had Rasmus Kupari taking this big of a step to start this season, but he continues to impress. It's made the fourth line tick. Alex Iafallo has been really strong, and Morgan Barron is his usually, steady self. They create and they give so little up. Arniel played them for 7:40 together on Sunday.

Happy Thanksgiving, everyone.