

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/hellebuyck-named-second-star-of-the-week>

Jets riding early wave of success Undeclared team off to best start in club history

By: Mike McIntyre

They don't hand out trophies in October. The Winnipeg Jets, however, are savouring a hot start to the season, one that has them hanging near the top of the NHL standings and looking like a potential hockey heavyweight.

"The mood is great," veteran forward Nino Niederreiter said following Tuesday's up-tempo practice that came after a well-deserved Thanksgiving Monday off for the 3-0-0 squad.

"It's such a long season and you've got to make hay when the sun is shining. There's going to be tough times during the season in which things are not going well, so it's good to have a good start and a few early points."

The Jets are one of five teams to win three in a row out of the gate this season, joining the Dallas Stars, Vegas Golden Knights, Calgary Flames and Utah's yet-to-be named club. According to the NHL, there have been 91 teams to go three-for-three since 2005-06, with 60 of them going on to make the playoffs.

It's the first time the Jets have opened the season with three consecutive wins.

Winnipeg leads the league in fewest goals against (two) and also owns a share of the best power play (42.9 per cent) and penalty kill (100 per cent) so far.

Life is pretty good. In fact, the only real complaint has to do with the long wait between games. The Jets don't play again until Friday when the San Jose Sharks come to town.

"It's not ideal, that's for sure. Once you get going you kinda want to keep playing," said defenceman Dylan DeMelo. "But it's an opportunity for us to utilize this time to maybe iron some things out that maybe we want to improve on from the past three games."

Indeed, you won't see this group doing a victory lap at this stage. Not with 79 regular season games remaining and the expected ebbs and flows that typically come over the course of a lengthy campaign. There's enough to like over this small sample size to suggest it might be sustainable.

"There's lots of good things that happened, a lot of positive stuff," said coach Scott Arniel.

The team's two foundational players, Connor Hellebuyck and Mark Scheifele, are leading the way as they are in the early stages of their identical seven-year, US\$59.5-million contract extensions. Hellebuyck has stopped 81 of 83 shots he's faced, while Scheifele has been directly involved in six of Winnipeg's 10 goals.

"Those are players that drive themselves, just with their preparation and how they approach games. They want to be difference makers. That's what they're doing right now," Arniel said.

Other highlights include Adam Lowry's so-called shutdown line leading by example and the sterling special teams, which were a focal point during training camp given how lacklustre they were last season.

If you're looking for areas of improvement, generating more offence is at the top of the list.

"We definitely can be quicker throughout the neutral zone," said Niederreiter.

"I think that's something which we emphasize in practice right now to make sure we get between the blue lines and make sure we get pucks in deep and gotta find a way to get 'em back, also, and not just be like a rush team and be one-and-done."

Sure, they lit up the Edmonton Oilers for six goals in their season opener, but they've only managed one regulation goal in each of the last two outings against the Chicago Blackhawks and Minnesota Wild. Some three-on-three overtime magic accounted for the other two tallies.

"The one thing is we're nowhere close to what we consider our best," said DeMelo, who described a "workmanlike" attitude from the group despite this early success.

"To get these points early when we feel we still have lots to give is important. These points are important. I don't care if it's October and Game 3 out of 82. We're trying to get wins, we're trying to rack up as many as possible. We're happy with it, but we understand we've got a lot of work ahead of us here."

Getting the line of Vlad Namestnikov, Cole Perfetti and Nikolaj Ehlers going would also be a welcome development. There were some positive signs in the third period against the Wild, but that trio is still looking for its first goal of the season.

Arniel is using this week as an extension of training camp, with plenty of teaching and video review sprinkled in between some rest. Winnipeg's schedule is about to become very heavy, and you have to go all the way to Nov. 10 and 11 to find the next multi-day break between games starting Friday. The Jets will play 12 times in 23 days during that stretch.

"It's going to be an absolute grind after the homestand here," said DeMelo.

After hosting the Sharks on Friday, the Pittsburgh Penguins come to town on Sunday afternoon.

The Jets won the Jennings Trophy as the stingiest defensive squad in the league last year, which played a huge role in their 52-24-6 record that was fourth-best in the regular season. So far, they seem to be sticking to that identity.

"That's our bread and butter," said DeMelo.

"That's what's going to keep us in games. That's what going to give us success. That's a non-negotiable for our group. We have to follow that up. We can't just walk in and expect it's going to be there. We have to continue to work at it every day, make sure we take a lot of pride in it. That's our calling card."

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2024/10/15/jets-defence-a-big-part-of-offence>

Jets' defence a big part of offence

By: Mike McIntyre

There's an old adage that the best offence is a good defence. The Winnipeg Jets appear eager to put that to the test in more ways than one.

Not only is the club keeping opponents at bay — just two goals allowed through three games — they're also trying to activate the back-end in a big way.

Consider that in the most recent outing on Sunday afternoon against the Minnesota Wild, Winnipeg's six defencemen combined for a whopping 35 shot attempts. Fourteen of those ended up on net, while the other 21 were either blocked or went wide.

To put that in perspective, Minnesota's defenders had 17 total shot attempts.

"It's part of what we've stressed as a group the last couple of years," Jets coach Scott Arniel said Tuesday.

"I really like to make sure that our defence are being a part of the offence. When the other team has five guys packed in defensively, if you're not having your D mobile, if you're not having them getting the open ice, getting the spots, it doesn't help our three forwards."

Dylan Samberg has Winnipeg's only goal from a defenceman through three games, but it seems like only a matter of time before that changes.

"We like to use our D whether that's for the initial shot, or if it's to spread out the opposition," said Arniel. "Whether it's jumping in the rush or it's jumping in the cycle, that's part of what they're asked to do every night."

Jets defenceman Dylan DeMelo had a career-high 31 points last season under a similar aggressive approach and loves what he's seen so far.

"In the O-zone, we like to keep the puck and get it back to us and be able to get some motion and create some confusion in the D-zone for the other team," he said.

"I think it's a huge part of our success if we can bring some offence."

INJURY UPDATES: It's hard to miss Logan Stanley at the best of times, considering his towering 6-7 frame. He was especially visible Tuesday as he hit the ice decked out in a bright yellow sweater and matching socks for his first team skate in nearly three weeks.

Stanley is working his way back from a knee injury suffered late in training camp that required surgery. The expectation is he would miss at least four weeks.

"He's a guy that's well-loved in here. We missed him," said DeMelo.

"Really unfortunate injury for him. I know he was really looking forward to having a strong camp and kind of having a little bit of track to run with here. So it's great to see him out there and we look forward to having him back. He's a huge part of our team. Hopefully he can shed that yellow jersey and get some contact and get out there with the guys."

Stanley was moving well considering the ailment and will likely spend the next week or so getting his conditioning back up.

“He kind of snuck into a couple of five-on five-drills that he wasn’t supposed to,” Arniel said with a chuckle.

“But he’s too big of a target that I think everybody knew where he was all the time. But that’s the first day, and we don’t know tomorrow we might be stiff so, or we’ll just keep going day to day here. Nothing this weekend, obviously, but we’ll push this and see how he goes.”

The team’s other injured defenceman, Ville Heinola, has not yet resumed skating after undergoing surgery for an infected ankle the same week as Stanley. He’s been coming on to the ice in shoes following recent Jets skates to work on his stickhandling and shooting. A return prior to the end of October is unlikely.

Up front, forward Jaret Anderson-Dolan is in a walking boot after suffering a broken foot during a preseason game. He was originally put on waivers and assigned to the Manitoba Moose when he cleared, only to be recalled days later and put on injured reserve when the injury was detected. That allows him to still collect an NHL paycheque.

“He still isn’t on the ice yet and he’s still kind of still got a walking boot on, obviously, he’s still a little bit sore. We’re not even close on that one yet,” said Arniel.

Winnipeg is currently carrying 22 healthy skaters on the roster. A maximum of 23 is allowed by the NHL.

Arniel said he’d like to find a spot soon for the three players who have yet to suit up — backup goalie Eric Comrie, forward David Gustafsson and defenceman Dylan Coghlan.

“We’re going to find a way here,” he said. “It’s going to get busy here. I don’t want these guys coming out of training camp and not having a chance to play. Then it’s sort of a start all over process. We’re going to work at getting them in.”

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/friesen-sun-shining-winnipeg-jets-making-hay>

FRIESEN: Sun shining, Winnipeg Jets making hay

By Paul Friesen

Four days without a game is nearly unheard of for an NHL team and the Winnipeg Jets would rather not be hearing and talking about it this week.

When you’re unbeaten in three games, boast the league’s best special teams and are giving up just two-thirds of a goal per game — try cutting a puck into thirds and see how hard that is — a break in the schedule is about as welcome as one in the leg.

Yet, that’s the hand the Jets have been dealt.

"It's not ideal, that's for sure," defenceman Dylan DeMelo was saying on Tuesday. "Once you get going you want to keep playing. It would be nice if the schedule makers could throw a game in on the Tuesday or Wednesday here for us."

Instead, after taking Canadian Turkey Day off it was back to the drudgery of practice, almost like training camp all over again, players rubbernecking Friday's home game against the Sharks.

Some dared to peek beyond Friday and the Sunday home tilt against Pittsburgh that follows to an insanely hectic schedule that'll see them play 33 games in 66 days.

"Being on the run basically until Christmas," is how forward Nino Niederreiter put it.

One of these off-days this week would sure come in handy down the road.

"It's going to be an absolute grind after our homestand here," DeMelo said. "I think we hit all four time zones in an eight-day span... just roll with it the best we can."

What has this team rolling now is a continuation of some of the things they did so well last regular season, stingy defence at the top of that list.

Giving up two goals through three games makes Winnipeg the stingiest bunch in hockey.

"That's our bread and butter," DeMelo said. "That's a non-negotiable for our group. We had a fantastic year defensively. It was a huge part of our success. We have to follow that up. We can't just walk in and expect it's going to be there. We have to continue to work at it every day... that's our calling card."

Through three games, so is stellar goaltending and some serious production from their two brightest offensive stars.

With six goals between them, Mark Scheifele (four) and Kyle Connor (two) have accounted for 60% of the scoring.

Speaking of things that are unsustainable, the Jets' power play is clicking at a 43% rate, tied for the NHL's best going into Tuesday night, while their penalty kill is a perfect five-for-five.

DeMelo has a particular affinity for the latter, and it's not just the numbers he likes.

"It looks good, too," he said. "We're doing a good job with sticks, a good job with pressure... not allowing any easy entries. And obviously goaltending has been fantastic when we've had breakdowns. We have to continue to work at it and make sure we're sharp with it.

"A huge kill at the end of last game that helped us take it to overtime and then at the other end of it, the power play got the job done."

Complimentary hockey, if you will.

It has produced the first 3-0 start in franchise history.

“We have an identity and we have a mindset that we expect to win every night,” forward Gabe Vilardi said. “And that’s the way it should be. We’re 3-0, but it’s expected.”

Of course, for every team that goes three-for-three out of the gate, there’s one that trips and falls, only to pick itself up and prove itself over the long haul. Hello, Edmonton.

Here in Winnipeg, any first-week backslapping can easily be interrupted by those who never seem satisfied: Head coaches.

When you have a new one, they can be on especially high alert.

“Can’t criticize wins,” Scott Arniel allowed. “You have to find a way to get two points. You can win a game 6-0 and still have things that you want to work on. So there’s lots of good things that happened... we’ll take care of some of the other things.”

Taking care of these early games, including the next two — with the luxury of going into the weekend having slept in their own beds for eight consecutive nights — can have a significant payoff late in the season.

Sure, the first few weeks can be a feeling-out process.

But as Vilardi pointed out, nobody asks in March how you got your points in October.

Plenty of teams lament the ones that got away, though.

“You always go to the end of the year, and it’s like, ‘Oh, these two points could mean a lot,’” Vilardi said. “Hey, we’ve got six points. Six points right now that maybe at the end of the year we don’t need to get, or we’re in a different situation. They count the same at the end of the year.”

Or, as Niederreiter put it: “You’ve got to make hay when the sun is shining.”

It’s shining right now.

But that hay is still a long way from the barn.

“If you’re 0-3 and then start hitting the panic button because things are bad, or if you’re 3-0 and you start planning the parade, then that’s not the right mindset,” DeMelo said. “It’s a workmanlike attitude.”

<https://winnipegjournal.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/security-allowing-jets-scheifele-hellebuyck-to-focus-arniel>

Security allowing Jets' Scheifele, Hellebuyck, to focus: Arniel

By Paul Friesen

One year and one week ago, Mark Scheifele and Connor Hellebuyck signed matching seven-year, \$59.5-million contract extensions with the Winnipeg Jets.

Head coach Scott Arniel suspects it’s no coincidence those two have been money for his team over the first week of this season.

Long-term security and peace of mind, after all, can go a long way.

“Because it happened so late last year, probably it had them both a little bit not sure... how it was going to work out,” Arniel said on Tuesday. “This year, there’s zero thought on their minds about contract, zero thought about where they’re going to be next year or any of that stuff. For them, it’s probably been pretty peaceful.”

It’s certainly been peaceful behind Hellebuyck.

Giving up just two goals in three games earned the reigning Vezina Trophy winner the nod as the NHL’s second star of Week 1.

And if it weren’t for the five goals put up by Dylan Guenther in Utah, Scheifele likely would have cracked the top-three, too, as he scored four.

Arniel has been impressed with both, but not particularly surprised.

“I’ve seen them both play at this level before,” he said. “Helle is obviously getting a lot more (attention)... but I don’t think Scheif gets it quite as much around the league. There’s a player that’s taking a lot of pride in his 200-foot game.

“Those are players that drive themselves, just with their preparation... they want to be difference makers. That’s what they’re doing right now.”

STANLEY SIGHTING

Defenceman Logan Stanley was back at practice on Tuesday, but wearing a non-contact jersey as he’s still recovering from knee surgery.

“He snuck into a couple of five-on-five drills that he wasn’t supposed to,” Arniel said. “But he’s too big of a target that everybody knew where he was. We’ll push this and see how he goes... his timing needs to get there, his conditioning also has to get there.”

Stanley is not an option this weekend.

Forward Jaret Anderson-Dolan is even further away, as it turns out he suffered a broken foot blocking a shot in the preseason.

“It takes another week or 10 days, and then all of a sudden they go for an X-ray and find out it’s broken,” Arniel said. “We’re not even close on that one, yet.”

Arniel has healthy players (forward David Gustafsson, defenceman Dylan Coghlan) who have yet to see game action, and the lax schedule this week, combined with the Jets’ perfect 3-0 start, isn’t doing them any favours.

Coaches don’t like messing with winning lineups, after all.

“We’re going to find a way here,” Arniel said. “It’s going to get busy here. I don’t want these guys coming out of training camp and not having a chance to play. Then it’s sort of a start-all-over process.”

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10813784/winnipeg-jets-perfect-start-analysis/>

ANALYSIS: Jets perfect to start season, but have a long road ahead

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

It's been impressive to witness how the Winnipeg Jets have gotten out of the blocks. From the starter pistol in Edmonton to two overtime wins at home, the local NHL team has been perfect to date.

In fact, the areas they wanted to improve on from last year — like the power play and penalty kill — have gained traction early, and as a group, they've been fast, physical and disciplined.

But as veteran forward Nino Niederreiter deadpanned after practice Tuesday, "it matters at the end, not at the start." You understand the Jets know the race has just begun.

And while the quick sprint to an undefeated record in three games is exciting for everyone involved, Niederreiter profoundly reminded us that the next six months are an intense marathon.

Take, for instance, the daunting schedule in front of them starting Friday night against San Jose, a portion of the docket that leads off seven games in 14 days to close out October, and stakes out a course where they will play every other day for the next three-plus weeks.

It's an onerous test of endurance, no less, and perhaps the league's version of the great equalizer, one the Jets know could have them stay in stride or fall off the pace depending on how it goes and how they handle it.

Of course, the other aspect of a flawless record to begin a new season — and with two winnable games still remaining on this opening home stand — is the target it draws on your back with others eagerly looking to measure up against you. No doubt, the Jets are going to get the Sharks and Penguins' best this weekend.

As mentioned, it's been a good start for the Jets since hearing the starter pistol a week ago in Edmonton, and the subsequent pair of wins at home last weekend. But with a Winnipeg winter of hockey still to cover, they know there's a long way to go before they see the finish line, never mind cross it.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/jets-forced-to-cool-off-with-schedule-break-following-torrid-3-0-start-to-season%7E3011126>

Jets forced to cool off with schedule break following torrid 3-0 start to season (VIDEO)

The Jets have gotten off to a dream start with three wins through as many games but the team is cautious not to get too complacent, acknowledging there is still more to work on. A perfect opportunity to work on things presents itself with the team not playing again until Friday.