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***Morrissey primed for another big year
Morrissey has helped the Jets off to an unbeaten start to season***

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – Things are looking good in the Manitoba capital right now. The Winnipeg Jets are off to a 3-0 start and their first two games at Canada Life Centre were thrilling 2-1 overtime victories.

It's the familiar faces leading the way, Connor Hellebuyck, Kyle Connor, Mark Scheifele and Josh Morrissey. Friday, in the Jets home opener it was Scheifele ending the game beating Arvid Soderblom with a quick shot. The assists came from Connor and Morrissey, a combination Jets fans have seen many times in overtime over the years.

"We've got pretty solid chemistry, I think. Working off each other trying to create 2-on-2 scenarios with a little bit of isolation and then create a 2-on-1 off a 2-on-2 if that makes sense. Jump by somebody like Scheif did (Friday) and KC with his speed made a great pass," said Morrissey on the Ground Control podcast.

"I mean it was in a way similar to a goal we scored against the Oilers last year, just it was me passing not Scheif, almost the exact same set up. Both of those guys are just great at jumping by someone in a short span and it's definitely fun for me to play with those guys."

A 3-0 start has the hockey world talking about the Jets and that's a good thing especially with the 4 Nations Face-Off around the corner. Morrissey's name is front and centre on many roster predictions for Canada and it should be, the Calgary native has 145 points (26 G, 119 A) over his last two seasons.

Morrissey has been quarterbacking the Jets top power play unit for a while and now is back on the penalty kill, something he did a lot of when he first came to the NHL. The Jets had Dustin Byfuglien, Tyler Myers, Toby Enstrom and Jacob Trouba sitting in front of Morrissey on the depth chart.

"If I wanted to play I kind of had to learn the PK and that side of the game. Did that for a number of years and I enjoyed it, I thought I did well. I thought it added a lot to my game when growing up that wasn't a huge part of my game, the offensive side was," said Morrissey.

"Now to be back on the PK is exciting. Something that Arnie (Scott Arniel) talked about when he got the head coaching job, something that I wanted to do or be a part of. Certainly, I think any player wants to be out there more, more situations, more minutes. For me I want to be the best all-around player I can be. So, if they feel that's something I can help the team on the PK, I'll do whatever's asked of me."

One of Arniel's hires this offseason was assistant coach Dean Chynoweth, who comes from a hockey a huge hockey family in western Canada. His father, Ed, was the president of the Western Hockey League for over two decades. Chynoweth is in charge of the defence and the

penalty kill and while the two didn't know each other personally before Dean joined the Jets, there was a connection.

"Dean's niece is actually my brother's fiancé. I know their whole family well, I played with Dean's brother, Jeff's son Ryan growing up. They are a big hockey family with a ton of history in western Canada and the NHL and the WHL and everything else," said Morrissey.

"It was funny when Arnie called me and said 'Hey, we hired Dean Chynoweth.' He had no idea that I actually had never met Dean or talked to him but all the inner connections, it's been really fun working with him. He's got a ton of experience as a player. As a coach, he's worked with a lot of great defencemen."

Morrissey's brother Jake, also played in the Western Hockey League for Kelowna, Saskatoon, Vancouver and Medicine Hat. But once his major junior career ended, Jake chose to take a different path than his older brother and is currently in med school.

"Decided to go take advantage of the scholarship program and do his under grad in Calgary and then his masters. So, I think his goal has always been to go to med school and be a doctor. He's worked really hard, and I can say now that he matches brains with work ethic. (The) whole family and I are unbelievably proud of him," said Morrissey.

"As a younger brother, there were probably elements of him being under my shadow at times with my career and everyone talking about me. So, for him to have his thing and for it to be pretty amazing is wicked. Really pumped to see him kind of forge his path here and doing his thing."

Being from Calgary, Morrissey grew up close to the Rocky Mountains and still has a love of skiing.

"Definitely something I would love to do after my career. Of course, with the liability of it now, it's just not possible. But it was something that I enjoyed. We were a hockey family so Saturday, Sunday it was my game, practice. My brother both days," said Morrissey.

"So, we grew up skiing and then it became less and less frequent as we were teenagers but certainly, something I would love to get back into. Hopefully, many years down the line."

Winnipeg Free Press

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

Morrissey always improving

Jets elite D-man on a non-stop mission to be the best he can be

By: Ken Wiebe

Josh Morrissey is a hard marker.

Despite all the progress the Winnipeg Jets defenceman has made since he was chosen 13th overall in the 2013 NHL Draft, Morrissey has set a high standard and he's constantly doing things on and off the ice to push that ceiling just a little bit higher.

“He’s always had the drive and inner push. He wants to absorb so much knowledge and soak up the game as much as he can,” said Winnipeg Jets goalie Eric Comrie. “He’s going out with a purpose. There’s intent behind everything that he does. Not many guys have that trait. It’s what makes him so special.”

Morrissey has a lot of special traits in his arsenal and they’ve been on display frequently in the early stages of the NHL season as the Jets are off to a 3-0 start as they welcome the San Jose Sharks to Canada Life Centre on Friday as they continue a four-game homestand.

The Jets’ top blue-liner has been a force in all three zones, chipping in four assists while averaging more than 24 minutes of ice time.

It’s difficult to find an area of the game he’s not impacting, which is one of the reasons he’s grown into one of the best defencemen in the NHL.

“The thought process this summer was to continue to improve on all areas of my game,” said Morrissey. “Be more consistent with everything I can do, in any capacity that I can. Trying to grow every element of my game has been my focus and is what drives me every day as an athlete. It’s what is fun to me, striving to be the best player that you can.”

Much was made about the empowering conversation former Jets head coach Rick Bowness had with Morrissey after taking the job in the summer of 2022 and for good reason.

Bowness’ contention that Morrissey should work his way into the Norris Trophy discussion wasn’t a bunch of hot air either, it ended up being a prescient prediction — with the Jets’ minute-muncher finishing fifth (2022) and seventh (2023) in voting by members of the Professional Hockey Writers Association for the NHL’s top blue-liner.

“That’s a nice feather in your cap and makes you feel some validation for what you’re doing,” said Morrissey. “But at the same time, I am constantly judging my own game and looking at how I can improve and what areas I can get better at.”

Morrissey is quick to point out current head coach Scott Arniel (who was the associate coach on Bowness’ staff and in charge of running the defence) probably hasn’t been given as much credit as he deserves for his role with his progression.

“I’ve loved working with him. We mesh really well personality-wise,” said Morrissey, noting Arniel has also shown the ability to help him calm down when he’s running a little bit hot. “He pushes me and expects a lot out of me, just like I do out of myself. He knows when to rein me in and when to push me. I’m my biggest critic.”

The ability to self-evaluate and ask more of himself is something Morrissey has been open about since entering the league on a full-time basis in the fall of 2016.

His role and responsibilities have morphed over time to the point he’s now back to being involved in all situations — playing among the most minutes at even strength, quarterbacking the power play and returning to the penalty-killing unit.

“His instincts are just outstanding, I mean they are elite,” said Jets assistant coach Dean Chynoweth. “His anticipation, the way he moves around the ice, the way he can recover from

maybe a poor situation that he got himself into or had to cover for somebody else, just very elite.”

That’s part of the reason he’s among several players on the Jets’ roster who are expected to be involved in the 4 Nations Face-off in February.

Having the opportunity to suit up for Team Canada at this best-on-best tournament is something Morrissey uses as additional motivation.

“Obviously, it’s something that you think about. I’d be lying if I didn’t say it was on my radar and in my head,” said Morrissey, who recorded 26 goals and 145 points during the past two seasons. “The better player I can be for the Winnipeg Jets, day-in and day-out, will give me a better opportunity to try and make that team.”

Morrissey concurs that it’s an exciting time to be a skilled defenceman, with all of the emphasis around the NHL revolving around activating offensively and being heavily involved with the second wave of the attack.

He spends lots of time watching his peers, from Norris Trophy winners such as Quinn Hughes of the Vancouver Canucks, Cale Makar of the Colorado Avalanche, Roman Josi of the Nashville Predators, Erik Karlsson of the Pittsburgh Penguins and Victor Hedman of the Tampa Bay Lightning, among others.

“Stylistically, there’s a lot more motion in the O-zone and motion on the O-zone blue line,” said Morrissey. “Obviously, it suits my style and has allowed me to realize what I felt was always there.”

The ability to dance around a defender and make a slick play is something Morrissey has done numerous times during the past several seasons and it’s opened up a number of scoring opportunities for himself and his teammates.

“It’s like having another forward out there, the way he thinks the game offensively,” said Jets forward Gabe Vilardi. “Yet at the same time he’s so good in his own zone. He’s strong on pucks. He’s not the biggest guy, but he plays like a big guy and then, obviously, his skating that you guys can see.”

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/10/16/mcgroartys-first-appearance-in-winnipeg-on-hold-pens-ship-former-jets-pick-to-minors>

McGroarty’s first appearance in Winnipeg on hold; Pens ship former Jets pick to minors

By: Ken Wiebe

It looks like Rutger McGroarty will have to wait a little bit longer before playing his first game against the Winnipeg Jets.

The rookie forward was assigned to the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins on Wednesday, which means he won’t likely be suiting up for the visiting Pittsburgh Penguins when they come to town on Sunday.

McGroarty, who was chosen 14th overall by the Jets in the 2022 NHL Draft, requested a trade during the offseason and was eventually granted his wish as a deal was worked out for Moose Jaw Warriors centre Brayden Yager, the Pens' first-round pick in their 2023 draft.

Although McGroarty never gave a reason for the trade request, the belief was that he had some reservations about potentially spending some time in the American Hockey League — which is where he's ultimately heading to continue his development.

McGroarty had no points and recorded two shots on goal in three NHL games while averaging 11:37 of ice time.

The Jets travel to Pittsburgh for the second and final meeting of the regular season on Nov. 22.

Yager was named captain of the Warriors earlier this month and is off to a strong start to the Western Hockey League season, amassing four goals and seven points through five games.

PK rolling

Winnipeg Jets assistant coach Dean Chynoweth has been around long enough to know it's way too early for victory laps.

Chynoweth took over a penalty killing unit that was in need of a reboot and the early returns have been favourable, with five consecutive minors killed off to start the campaign.

"Well, I mean, it's been a work in progress. It's new to the guys here, because it is a little more aggressive, and there's some different responsibilities and triggers on it, but I've really liked how they bought into it," said Chynoweth, noting the Jets have been disciplined through three games.

Spreading the wealth

Chynoweth is also in charge of running the defence corps and one of the things we've seen in the early stages of the season is a fairly even distribution of ice time.

Josh Morrissey leads all Jets skaters at 24:19 per game, while Dylan Samberg is second at 22:27 (a sizable jump from the 15:38 he averaged last season while playing mostly on the third pairing).

Neal Pionk (20:37) and Dylan DeMelo (20:32) are both up over 20 minutes per game, while Haydn Fleury (15:13) and Colin Miller (14:58) are also getting plenty of ice time on the revamped third pair.

"I'm a big believer in quality over quantity," said Chynoweth. "With that, some guys have a figure in their head of how many minutes they'd like to play, and I kind of try to preach to them that the more important thing is having quality shifts, and then the quantity will come."

It's important to remember that three games is a small sample size and that one of those was a 6-0 blowout and the two others went into overtime, but the ability to not have to shelter the third pairing as much should ease the pressure on the Jets' top four defenders.

Speaking of quantity

After a relatively slow start in terms of games played, the Jets are about to end the month by playing seven times during 14 days to wrap up October.

While there are some benefits to having some additional practice time at the start of a season to help get systems up to speed, a busy stretch can also allow players to get into the groove of a new season.

“A nice rhythm? I don’t know,” said Jets forward Gabe Vilardi. “Ideally you don’t want to be playing every other day, especially with travel. But it’s just the scheduling this year. Everyone’s going to be going through their own things with that Four Nations thing, so we’ve got to just deal with it.”

The league will break in February for the Four Nations Face-Off, a mid-season tournament featuring the best players from Canada, the United States, Sweden and Finland.

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<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/where-hockey-matters-winnipeg-a-pleasant-surprise-for-jets-fleury>

'Where hockey matters': Winnipeg a pleasant surprise for Jets' Fleury

By Paul Friesen

It’s the most popular NHL city in one aspect: For being on so many players’ no-trade lists.

But Winnipeg gets a bad rap, based on Jets defenceman Haydn Fleury’s first impressions.

“Really surprised,” the 28-year-old said. “When you come here on the road you get a very short glance of the city. You only really see the hotel and the rink. But coming here, the area I live in is great, the people are so nice. Me and my wife have felt welcomed since the very get-go.”

From Carlyle, Sask., Fleury last summer signed a one-year deal as a free agent.

Jets forwards Mason Appleton, his teammate in Seattle for one year, Nino Niederreiter, a teammate in Carolina for two, and Vlad Namestnikov, with him in Tampa for one, assured him he was making a good move.

“They couldn’t say enough positive things about playing here,” Fleury said. “It’s cool to play in places where hockey matters. And the Jets are a really special part of this city.”

Fitting into the dressing room hasn’t been a problem either, he said. And not just because he knew a few players.

“I’ve gotten pretty good at it. This isn’t my first time doing it. The first thing is just be yourself. People always see authenticity.”

The Jets are Fleury’s fifth team in eight NHL seasons.

Through three games he’s been skating alongside Colin Miller on Winnipeg’s third pairing.

Assistant coach Dean Chynoweth, who was also with Fleury in Carolina, likes the early returns.

“They seem to have some chemistry,” Chynoweth said.

BUYING INTO THE P.K.

The Jets’ penalty kill may be perfect so far, but the man in charge of it calls it a “work in progress.”

“It’s new to the guys here, because it is a little more aggressive,” Chynoweth said. “And there’s some different responsibilities and triggers on it. But I’ve really liked how they bought into it. Now we haven’t had a lot of penalties. We’re going to get tested once we get going here again.”

Winnipeg has killed off five penalties so far, including one in the third period against Minnesota on Sunday that helped produce a 2-1 win in overtime.

“The one thing I tell them is this: the kill that we’re employing should be a momentum changer,” the coach said. “Every time we get the opportunity, or have to go out to kill a penalty, I want them to view it that way.”

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/a-healthy-head-and-a-home-jets-d-man-fleury-hopes-for-both>

A healthy head and a home: Jets D-man Fleury hopes for both

By Paul Friesen

Three games into his tenure with the Winnipeg Jets, defenceman Haydn Fleury has an interesting take on what the highlight has been.

“Probably getting hit in the head with the puck,” Fleury said on Wednesday, maybe half joking. “That was a memorable first game. Got lucky that it just hit me in the helmet.”

The eight stitches he picked up in Edmonton are already gone. Disappearing even faster was any fear the 28-year-old may have had about standing in front of the next blast from the opposing point.

“It comes with the territory,” he said. “It’s not going to kill me, so I might as well just get back out there and do it again. (We’re) not the smartest people out there, so might as well just keep stepping in front of more.”

It’s a pretty laid-back approach for somebody who’s already suffered four concussions playing pro hockey, two of them last year with Tampa Bay in a season riddled with injuries.

Fleury rattles off his most recent list of ailments like a grocery list.

“A couple concussions, a glut, a hip injury and then I broke my finger – all in the same year. The icing on the cake was running into Steve in Pittsburgh.”

That would be NHL official Steve Kozari. The pair collided during a game in April, sending the referee off the ice on a stretcher (he would return for the playoffs) and prematurely ending Fleury’s season (he did not).

“At the time it sucked,” Fleury said. “But getting the six months or whatever was a huge thing. It’s not the first time my season ended with a concussion. So getting as much time as you can between the original hit and the next potential hit is huge.”

Picking up this kind of knowledge from experience is a hard road to travel.

After a concussion caused by whiplash during his one season in Seattle, he began using something called an “iron neck” to strengthen his neck muscles.

“As I’ve had more I’ve started to look more into it and do everything I can to help,” he said. “Strengthening the neck is one of the biggest ones, one I don’t think people talk about a lot. But F1 drivers are big into the neck-strengthening stuff, football players are...”

“I’m lucky enough where I have bounced back pretty quick from the few that I’ve had. And it doesn’t affect me day-to-day.”

Fleury’s other concussion came while playing for Carolina, who drafted him seventh overall a decade ago.

Since then it’s been one thing after another, one team after another.

A trade sent the Saskatchewan native from Carolina to Anaheim late in the 2020-21 season.

Seattle claimed him in the expansion draft that July. Next came free-agent signings with Tampa Bay, where he spent the last two years, and Winnipeg (a one-year deal) this past July.

Four days before his 28th birthday, he was on his fifth team, still looking for a hockey home and a regular role.

“The jersey collection is getting up there,” he acknowledged.

This isn’t the way it’s supposed to go for top-10 draft picks.

Scouting reports on the 18-year-old Fleury were glowing:

Probably the second-most talented defenceman in this draft, behind Aaron Ekblad, one read. Comparable to Jay Bouwmeester of the St. Louis Blues.

Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey recalls playing against Fleury’s Red Deer Rebels in the Western League.

“Big guy, really strong skater,” Morrissey said. “He’s been on some teams where maybe there hasn’t been a ton of opportunity. I thought it was a nice fit to bring him in. Felt like he had a ton of upside, and I think he’s showing it.”

Winnipeg assistant coach Dean Chynoweth was with the Hurricanes for three of Fleury’s four seasons there and remembers some “growing pains” in the now 6-foot-4, 207-pounder’s development.

“And then obviously behind a very good defence there,” Chynoweth said. “So he was in and out of the lineup at times.”

In Tampa, too. Fleury played 29 games his first season there, 24 last year. And just one playoff game.

But playing behind and learning from stars such as Victor Hedman and Mikhail Sergachev has its benefits.

“Sometimes it takes moving around a little bit to different teams to realize what more you have to do,” Chynoweth said, agreeing there’s still untapped potential in Fleury.

So what’s this year all about for him?

“Continue to build,” he said. “Try not to make the same mistake twice. The mistakes you make, make them honest. And just play hard. Compete.”

Fleury acknowledges the pressure of expectation used to get to him.

Not anymore.

“It was maybe hard to live up to at first,” he said. “But the older I’ve gotten, I really try to worry about what I can do... stay off social media, and keep my inner circle tight. Over the last couple of years doing that, it’s been really helpful in just being mentally ready and blocking out everything else.”

That inner circle grew by one a few weeks back, when Fleury and his wife celebrated the birth of their second child.

Which brings us to the other highlight of his first month with the Jets: The three-year-old in the stands for his first game in Winnipeg.

“I hadn’t played in a home opener in a while, so that was something. My son was in the building, so that was really cool.”

What would also be cool: Staying healthy.

And finding a hockey home.

“I’d love to,” Fleury said. “I’m still hungry. I still feel like I have a lot to offer. Everything feels good. Brain feels great.”