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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/he-truly-is-special>

"He truly is special"

Jets teammates talk about Connor Hellebuyck ahead of his big night

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – Connor Hellebuyck will be celebrated Friday night when the Winnipeg Jets take on the San Jose Sharks at Canada Life Centre.

Hellebuyck is off to a fantastic start to the 2024-25 season and was named the NHL's second star for his efforts last week. Thanks to a sparkling 3-0-0 record with one shutout, a 0.66 goals against average and a .976 save percentage. His last start was another 2-1 win in which he stopped 26 of 27 shots, which prompted this comment from teammate Mark Scheifele.

"Phenomenal. He's amazing. He truly is special," said Scheifele on Sunday night.

"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."

The seven years refers to the length of the extensions that both Scheifele and Hellebuyck signed last October with the Jets. Which means seven more years of Hellebuyck's teammates trying to meet the challenge of finding different ways to describe how good the Vezina Trophy winner is.

"We've grown accustomed to him being so elite. A perfect example of that he could get the jacket every night after a game or after a win. He gets a shutout in game one and he's allowed one goal in the next two games. It's one of those things that you have to shake off because that's almost the performance you expect of him now," said captain Adam Lowry.

"So, it doesn't get old describing his play generally I benefit from that. That big glove save he made against Chicago (in the home opener). I was out there for that one on the PK. Sometimes it's hard-to-find new ways to describe his level of play but at the same time we're pretty lucky that we get to witness his greatness every day in practice and what he's able to do in games."

Someone that has witnessed the greatness of Hellebuyck is Jets goaltending coach Wade Flaherty, who has been along for the ride since the very beginning.

"I do remember watching him when the Moose came back (to Winnipeg), and he was playing for the Moose. So, I knew there was something special there," said Flaherty.

"When he joined us with the Jets, you could just see it in practice. His compete and just his yearning to learn the game and obviously it was a pleasure working with him when he was young because we would do video and work on drills and the dialogue we would have about goaltending. You always knew there was something special, but I don't think you could ever say 'I knew he was going to be this or that' but you knew there was something special there."

Hellebuyck is closing in on 300 career wins, has two Vezina Trophy's, a William Jennings Trophy and he's been to four All-Star games. Despite all he has already accomplished and will

accomplish over his career, Flaherty says he is most proud of the fact that Hellebuyck never comes on the ice and goes half speed.

“Every day he comes on the ice and wants to get better at something and honestly that’s something pretty special when you have a goaltender that has accomplished the things that he’s accomplished and he’s a star,” said Flaherty.

“He will play 65 plus games and will come on the ice and battle every day. He’s very competitive and at the end of the day that’s what you want in the position. He’s a little bit low key on the side and obviously winning the Vezina, there’s many, many things.”

During a game, you will rarely see Hellebuyck lose his cool. No matter what the score is or if he lets in a goal, his emotions remain at the same level. That coolness remains through good times and bad times.

“Usually, he’s pretty good if guys make blocks on the PK, clear a rebound out front or tie up a stick. He will acknowledge that between periods, during the period he’s pretty dialed in. Part of what makes him so great if you make a mistake in front of him, he’s not going to hang you out to dry. He’s not going to single you out, make you feel small and kind of belittle you,” said Lowry.

“He will build you up. He’ll say ‘Don’t worry about it, go get the next one. I got your back.’ He’s so good about building up his teammates and more often than not he’s the one we should build up. He bails us out, he plays incredible pretty much every game he plays. He’s had an unbelievable career to this point.”

Josh Morrissey confirmed that Hellebuyck rarely gets mad but admitted the times where the 31-year-old loses his cool.

“I don’t think I’ve seen him really mad unless they take away the chocolate chip cookies on the plane. Those were gone and he was mad. The pizza that we get on the road sometimes was gone the other day, he wasn’t too happy,” joked Morrissey.

“Or when he lets in any goal. Even when that happens it’s usually a scientific thought behind it. ‘Ok, how did that go in and how am I going to figure out how to make that save in the future?’ Just a real humble guy, down to earth person, family man. Obviously with his kids now.”

Morrissey and Hellebuyck have pretty much been together from development camps and now as stars on the Jets. Then there is someone like Alex Lafallo who is entering his second season with the Jets and while he appreciated Hellebuyck’s abilities going up against him as a member of the Los Angeles Kings.

“Just a really good goalie and he always made big saves on me. But coming here, he’s awesome from the get-go,” said Lafallo.

“Great guy on and off the ice so it’s pretty cool to get to know him at the level he’s been playing at all these years.”

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/10/17/hellebuyck-already-in-mid-season-form>

Hellebuyck already in mid-season form

By: Ken Wiebe

Connor Hellebuyck isn't the type of person who gets swept away by early success.

Statistics are something the Winnipeg Jets all-world goaltender pays attention to, but it's not how he measures his performance.

While Hellebuyck has an appreciation for history and some of the personal milestones he's chasing, he doesn't let those things interfere with his ultimate goal.

When the two-time Vezina Trophy winner holds court on Thursday afternoon, he's not revelling in the numbers he's put up to help the Jets get off to a 3-0 start for the first time in franchise history.

"I really don't like comparing years because every year I feel like I get so much better and my details get so much stronger. Honestly, the structure is a little more dialed in," said Hellebuyck, whose team welcomes the San Jose Sharks to Canada Life Centre on Friday as they continue a four-game homestand. "Stats are stats. It fluctuates. We're at a high right now. Everything averages out. The main thing is that we're winning."

To say Hellebuyck is on a high is an understatement.

He's already posted a shutout and allowed only two goals in three starts, with two of those games requiring overtime.

By turning aside 81 of 83 shots on goal that he's faced, Hellebuyck has posted a gaudy .976 save percentage and a miniscule goals-against average of 0.66.

It's important Hellebuyck recognizes those numbers should average out, but his ability to perform at an elite level has been a staple since he became the full-time starting goalie during the 2016-17 season.

Since posting a .907 save percentage that season, Hellebuyck hasn't been below .910 and he's routinely been above .920 — including his career-best of .924 during the 2017-18 campaign.

Save percentage isn't the be-all and end-all for statistics and Hellebuyck has also found himself frequently at or near the top of goals saved above expected by sites that track that information, including MoneyPuck.

"The way that I am seeing the game is mid-season form right now. Things are just clicking," said Hellebuyck, whose career save percentage sits at .917. "I've got a real good read on the game and, mentally, I'm not overthinking. I'm not overthinking anything. I'm just out there playing and having fun. That stuff matters."

The Jets' commitment to team defence and lowering the high-danger scoring chances they allow in front of Hellebuyck has helped that process along, but it's not always a seamless transition for a netminder to go from being on a team that surrenders a higher volume of shots to one that is much stingier defensively.

"They're both difficult games, but I've always thought that if you want to be an elite goaltender, you have to be able to manage both games," said Hellebuyck. "That being said, it's being focused and really being confident in not getting a whole lot of action but still feeling it."

Hellebuyck is up to 508 NHL games in his career and he's set to make his 500th start on Friday.

Now 31 and starting the first year of the seven-year, US\$59.5-million contract he signed last October, Hellebuyck understands the importance of the experience he's gained during his first nine NHL seasons.

In the goalie world, Hellebuyck is viewed as someone with an elite ability to anticipate how the play is developing in front of him.

"Guys get trickier and guys get a little sneakier with what they're trying to do. They don't give away what they're trying to do, so the reads are always changing and evolving," said Hellebuyck, noting that's an area that always requires further fine-tuning. "I never say that I've got something down. I'm always trying to learn what little tips from what areas of the ice are dangerous, statistically who is shooting from where and when and why?"

"There's a lot that goes into studying film that's not just structure and details."

Hellebuyck loves to dissect those intricacies of the game and the movements that accompany the reads he's making in real time.

"I was in there for the video sessions, and the way he breaks down the game is second to none," said Jets backup goalie Eric Comrie. "His hockey knowledge and what he sees in games, it's special. A lot of people can learn from that."

When asked if he keeps a book on his opponents, Hellebuyck gave the type of answer which was meant to keep reporters — and those opposing shooters — guessing.

"No. I don't have a book and even if I did, I wouldn't tell you guys," said Hellebuyck, who has 278 wins and 38 career shutouts. "I can't really answer that question fully. I'm never really studying a guy, individually. I'm studying what a player is doing in that specific scenario and why and what's open. These are all things you have to be able to take in with a flick of the switch."

As a followup question, a reporter wondered if there was any correlation to playing poker — where playing the odds is often part of the decision-making process on any given hand that is played.

After explaining he's not really good at poker because of the energy he spends perfecting his craft, Hellebuyck thought it was a fair comparison.

"It's similar, in that there's a lot of statistical analysis that goes into poker. I guess you could use that in goaltending, but I think it's more of a feel thing," said Hellebuyck. "When I say it's a statistical thing, it doesn't mean that he's going to do that 50 per cent of the time. It just means

the odds are he's probably going to do this if his body's leaning that way and if the angle of his blade is a certain way."

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/10/17/stanley-seeks-consistency-not-sympathy>

***Stanley seeks consistency, not sympathy
Jets towering blue liner working his way back from knee injury***

By: Ken Wiebe

Logan Stanley has overcome enough injuries in his career to fully comprehend he couldn't afford to spend much time feeling sorry for himself after enduring his latest ailment.

The Winnipeg Jets defenceman was preparing for his second game of the preseason when he felt a pop in his knee.

Stanley knew right away it required some attention and it was determined that surgery was necessary to repair an issue with his meniscus.

"It was a pretty harmless thing," said Stanley, who was a full participant in Thursday's practice session. "A couple of days later, I was having surgery. It was pretty unfortunate and I was pretty bummed out for a few days, but you get over it and get back to work."

Stanley came to training camp with an opportunity to compete for regular work on the Jets' third pairing.

With Colin Miller firmly established on the right side, Stanley was hoping to claim the job beside him and show he's ready for regular duty.

Instead, he found himself facing another obstacle.

The departure of Brenden Dillon in free agency meant there was more opportunity for Stanley on the left side of the defensive depth chart.

Given Stanley's size and ability to play a rugged style, he could help compensate for the loss of that part of Dillon's game while Dylan Samberg moved up the lineup to handle the minutes that were available on the second pairing with Neal Pionk.

"He's a good leader, a good teammate and someone that I looked up to. Big shoes to fill," said Stanley. "(Dillon) obviously played an old school, heavy game and that's what I need to try to do to be an everyday NHLer. For me, it's trying to do that every night consistently."

Jets head coach Scott Arniel said Stanley recognizes the style he'll need to play in order to earn his ice time.

"He knows. He's been in this league long enough that he knows he has to blend a little bit of all of that," said Arniel. "We expect our defensemen to make plays, we expect them to defend a certain way — stick detail, support your partner, that sort of thing — but he also knows he has size and when he can be a force."

There have been times in Stanley's career when he's shown the ability to impact the game with a big body check and he's a willing combatant when the situation calls for it.

Knowing when those elements are best suited is part of his quest for consistency.

"I've talked to him, I'm not a big staged fight guy," said Arniel. "I want him to, if I'm allowed to use this word, piss off the opposition's best players. If he does that, people will come running for him and he can pick his spots.

"The guys that do the best job, they just irritate the top players to the point where those guys don't like seeing those guys line up on the face-off against them. That's what heavy guys do. They make it hard on the opposition."

Arniel said the Jets aren't considering a conditioning stint with the Manitoba Moose of the American Hockey League once Stanley is fully cleared for game action.

"No, not really. He's been on the ice quite a bit here," said Arniel. "It's not like it's a crazy distance without playing. He can get enough reps here in the last couple days with practice. The conditioning will be the big thing, and he seems to be in a good spot right now with that."

Arniel doesn't have a timeline established for Stanley's return, noting the medical team will monitor his progress over the coming days.

The earliest Stanley would be expected to be an option is next week when the Jets open up a three-game road trip against the St. Louis Blues, Seattle Kraken and Calgary Flames.

The Jets have an open space on the 23-man roster to activate Stanley when he's ready to go.

The Jets preference is to keep a 22-man roster to help bank cap space leading into the NHL trade deadline, but that's a moving target given the health of Stanley and Ville Heinola, who continues to work his way back from an ankle injury.

"We already lost a goalie on waivers," said Arniel. "At the end of the day, we'll see where the market is at and do what's best for our team."

No easy space

The Sharks took on Connor Bedard and the Chicago Blackhawks on Thursday night, but Arniel made it clear his squad isn't expecting an easy night.

The Sharks added plenty of experience during the offseason, including former Jets winger Tyler Toffoli, forwards Alex Wennberg, Barclay Goodrow, Ty Dellandrea and defenceman Cody Ceci.

They're also integrating 2023 first-round pick Will Smith (who was chosen fourth overall) into the lineup after he left Boston College after his freshman season.

The Sharks played the Jets tough last season, with each of the three meetings decided by one goal — a 2-1 loss for the Jets that was followed by a 2-1 win and a 1-0 shutout victory.

"It's a San Jose team that's vastly different than what we saw last year," said Arniel. "You can't take any opponent lightly. You can't think you're going to get any easy ones."

Unfortunately, 2024 first overall pick Macklin Celebrini suffered a hip injury and won't be in the Sharks lineup on Friday.

Celebrini had a goal and an assist in his NHL debut and his recovery is considered week-to-week.

Goalie goal

Minnesota Wild goalie Filip Gustavsson provided a highlight-reel moment Tuesday when he fired the puck into the empty net against the St. Louis Blues for the first goal of his NHL career.

Jets backup goalie Eric Comrie was among the many who took notice and he quickly texted with Connor Hellebuyck after seeing the goal circulate on various platforms.

"Honestly, I was really happy for him. It's really cool," said Comrie. "It was a power-play goal. Apparently, (Gustavsson) is going to be in the power-play meetings now. I've gone for it when I was a kid, but I didn't get it though."

Comrie said he hasn't attempted a shot at an empty net in a game situation since his minor hockey days, but spent some time practising for it if the situation arose during his time with the Buffalo Sabres the past two seasons.

"I would love to do it one day," said Comrie. "I don't know if I'll ever get the chance."

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/comrie-rejoins-jets-looking-to-restart-career-behind-hellebuyck/>

Comrie rejoins Jets looking to restart career behind Hellebuyck

By Jacob Stoller

WINNIPEG — Eric Comrie is a prime example of the old 'student of the game' cliché.

Many will overlook the characterization, chalking it up as another buzzword — like a 'good 200-foot game,' or a 'full 60-minute effort' — that coaches spew. But ask Comrie to analyze a hockey play and you'll understand why calls himself a "hockey nerd."

Following Saturday's practice, the Winnipeg Jets goaltender was asked to break down the intricacies behind two goals scored during his team's first two games. First, he described how Mason Appleton's goal against the Oilers' Stuart Skinner in the season-opener was an excellent shot — right below the glove, above the pad — and all the more lethal given that a cross-slot pass created it. Then, he contextualized how a goal Connor Hellebuyck surrendered to the Blackhawks' Ryan Donato was a hard save to make.

"When you're coming down the wing like that, you're changing the angle without knowing it because you're skating toward the goalie and you're really expecting, as a lefty, (for the puck) to go far side," Comrie explained. "That's the easier shot as a lefty. For him to hit that low blocker shot, that's a special shot to be able to hit that area. It's a small window to hit. It's a really good shot and it's really hard (to save) because the angle changes so much for every single stride

that he takes, it's getting exponentially bigger and bigger. You're creating a lot more angle to score on with that shot.”

The Jets are hoping Comrie — who inked a two-year, \$1.65-million contract this summer — can rebound as Hellebuyck’s understudy after a disappointing two-year stretch with the Buffalo Sabres. It’s a gamble, not just because of Comrie’s recent track record but also because giving him the job out of camp led to Kaapo Kahkonen, who has a more padded NHL resume, being scooped up off waivers by the Colorado Avalanche. And with Hellebuyck being a near-lock to represent Team USA at the 4 Nations Cup, the Jets need stability at the backup position more than ever.

“We’ve got some interesting back-to-backs. We’ve got some interesting four (games) in six night (stretches) on some of these road trips coming, so we’ll have to handle that, obviously with (Comrie) in mind,” head coach Scott Arniel said.

The ingredients are there for Comrie, who returns to Winnipeg for what is technically his fourth stint with the club (if you count the two times he was re-claimed off waivers), to succeed.

“I think the biggest thing is that he had a great relationship in the past, both with (Hellebuyck) and with (Jets goaltending coach Wade Flaherty),” Arniel said.

Those bonds are a big reason why Comrie wanted to return to Winnipeg.

“Wade Flaherty’s one of the best goalies coaches in the NHL and Connor Hellebuyck is the best goalie in the NHL,” the 29-year-old said. “For myself, to be around that every single day, it’s a special thing.”

Comrie’s best stretch of NHL action was with Winnipeg during the 2021-22 season. In 19 games, he posted a .920 save percentage and ranked second in Goals Saved Above Expected per 60 minutes (0.603) among goalies who played at least 15 games, according to MoneyPuck.com.

Stylistically, Comrie is similar to Hellebuyck. He doesn’t boast high-end athleticism — contrary to Kahkonen, who is more of a typical butterfly goalie — but he relies on his instincts to read shooters and react accordingly to make saves. As he showed three seasons ago, Comrie can be a dependable backup when in control.

His time with the Sabres didn’t go as well.

While Comrie was, statistically, one of the NHL’s worst goaltenders throughout the 2022-23 and 2023-24 seasons, he battled a pair of lower-body injuries and was hung out to dry most nights in Buffalo.

Flaherty and the Jets have a track record of revitalizing backups, the prime example being Laurent Brossoit. After posting a .913 save percentage in 54 games with Winnipeg between the 2018-19 and 2020-21 seasons, Brossoit’s save percentage dropped down to .906 in 35 games with the Vegas Golden Knights over the next two seasons. Brossoit, like Comrie, promptly re-joined the Jets and went on to have a bounceback year, posting a .927 save percentage in 23 starts last year.

All hail Helly

While the Jets try to stabilize the backup role, Hellebuyck has looked dialled in to start the season.

The reigning Vezina Trophy winner was named the NHL's second star of the week after posting an astounding .976 save percentage, 0.66 goals against average and one shutout through Winnipeg's first three games.

"I think the way I'm seeing the game is mid-season form right now," Hellebuyck said Thursday. "Things are just clicking. I've got a really good read on the game and mentally, I'm not overthinking."

How Stanley's inevitable return impacts lineup

Logan Stanley shed his yellow no-contact sweater at Jets practice on Thursday.

Stanley had knee surgery in late September and was anticipated to miss a minimum of four weeks. The Jets will have 23 healthy skaters once the six-foot-seven blueliner is cleared to play but Arniel stated during camp that the team was aiming to have a 22-man roster. Having just one extra forward and defenceman would allow general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff to accrue cap space, providing him more room to add players later in the season.

Running a 22-man roster would likely mean that either Haydn Fleury or Dylan Coghlan would be placed on waivers. Coghlan is more likely to be the odd man out as Fleury will probably still rotate on the blue line even once Stanley returns.

San Jose Hockey News

<https://sanjosehockeynow.com/celebrini-will-not-play-in-winnipeg-mukhamadullin-closer-to-return-than-celebrini/>

Celebrini Won't Play in Winnipeg, Mukhamadullin Closer to Return Than Celebrini

By Sheng Peng

CHICAGO — Macklin Celebrini is eligible to come off IR for Friday's game against the Winnipeg Jets...but he won't.

That's what San Jose Sharks head coach Ryan Warsofsky told San Jose Hockey Now today.

"He's progressing well. He's still in this week-to-week phase. I think he's taking steps in the right direction," Warsofsky, who previously hadn't ruled out Macklin Celebrini from Friday's game, said. "But we'll get a better feel when we get home here on Saturday."

Warsofsky says that Celebrini, dealing with a hip injury, is not skating yet back at home in San Jose.

The San Jose Sharks have a hectic schedule over the next few days, taking on the Chicago Blackhawks on Thursday night and the Jets on Friday on the road, a home game against the Colorado Avalanche on Sunday, then the beginning of a four-game road trip in Anaheim on Tuesday.

We're not sure of Celebrini's status yet for Sunday or the upcoming road trip.

But Warsofsky did comment on Shakir Mukhamadullin's lower-body injury, which the San Jose Sharks defenseman has been nursing since the beginning of training camp.

"I would say Shakir is closer than Mack," Warsofsky said, about Mukhamadullin possibly being ready to make the upcoming road trip. "He's skating. When we get back from [this] road trip, we'll discuss what the next steps are, but he's moving in the right direction."

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10817950/winnipeg-jets-hellebuyck-night/>

ANALYSIS: One trophy yet to win for Jets' celebrated goalie

By John Shannon CJOB

If you're going to the game Friday night, hopefully you get a chance to take a picture with some of that silverware that Connor Hellebuyck won last season.

The Jennings and Vezina trophies will be in the house, reflecting the Winnipeg Jets goaltender's great work last season. And you can't help but smile to know that big number 37 will be in the Jets' net for the next seven seasons — for a reasonable cap hit of \$8.5 million.

Hellebuyck wanted to be in Winnipeg — wanted to be a Jet — and quite frankly, that makes building a contender in the Central just a little bit easier. The negotiation last summer wasn't very public, there was no rancour, no rumours, no bitterness. Just the way both sides wanted it.

You might suggest it has helped this group create organizational stability beyond the goaltender. There is a real calming influence knowing that Hellebuyck — and Mark Schiefele, for that matter — have decided they want to play in Winnipeg long-term, maybe even for the duration of their careers. It's a great message for teammates, the franchise and the city.

And while the sample size is small, it's hard not to think Hellebuyck and Schiefele have been the team's best players out of the gate.

Just remember goaltenders and their contracts are the topic du jour in the NHL right now. Jeremy Swayman's contract in Boston (eight years at \$8.25 million) got Linus Ullmark a similar salary in Ottawa, and Jake Oettinger the exact same contract in Dallas. Swayman's negotiation was ugly, as is the current haggling between the New York Rangers and Igor Shesterkin.

Hellebuyck is a Jet. End of story. The next step for him is to perform at that Vezina level in the post-season, like he did in 2018 — and for the regular-season silverware to be replaced by that other big trophy, the Stanley Cup.

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/jets-stanley-leaning-on-lived-experience-as-he-battles-back-from-latest-injury>

Jets' Stanley leaning on lived experience as he battles back from latest injury

By Scott Billeck

Logan Stanley has the unfortunate ability to lean on experience when working his way back from an injury.

He much rather would showcase some of his other skills, but his reality over the past few years has prevented that.

The 6-foot-7 defenceman took to the ice with the Winnipeg Jets on Thursday with a regular jersey on, indicating that the 26-year-old was permitted to take contact for the first time in several weeks.

Stanley has been out since something went 'pop' in his knee during the early days of training camp, landing him on the surgeon's table.

"I was pretty upset," Stanley said. "It was a pretty harmless thing. I was just getting ready to play the game and doing my regular warmup and felt a little pop. A couple of days later, I was having surgery. It was pretty unfortunate, and I was pretty bummed out for a few days, but you get over it and get back to work."

Along with his lengthy injury history, much of that being to blame for just 44 games played over the past two seasons, Stanley found support from his family and teammates.

"All of the guys felt for me a little bit, in that sense," Stanley said. "They were all good, though. They kept the spirits high. Then family, for sure. My family at home and then, mom and dad. I spent a lot of time with (girlfriend) Reiley and my daughter. That was fun. Unfortunate, but fun at the same time."

Head coach Scott Arniel wouldn't put a timeline on Stanley's season debut.

"That was the first day with the proper jersey," Arniel said. "The biggest thing is we'll see how he is (on Friday) when he wakes up in the morning. If there is any discomfort or if we move on to the next day. We'll just take it day to day from there."

"It was so unfortunate that Stan missed training camp. We have to make sure here that the first game, whenever that is, that one his conditioning is up to speed and his timing is ready to go. He has to be excited. We're excited to see him."

Arniel wants Stanley to be consistent when he returns and said he doesn't foresee a conditioning stint with the Manitoba Moose before he gets into an NHL game.

"I want him to, if I'm allowed to use this word, piss off the opposition's best players," Arniel said. "If he does that, people will come running for him, and he can pick his spots. The guys that do the best job, they just irritate the top players to the point where those guys don't like seeing

those guys line up on the face-off against them, or coming over the boards every time they step on the ice.”

There will soon be competition for that left-side spot on the third pairing, with Ville Heinola still working his way back from ankle surgery that came around the same time as Stanley’s procedure.

So far, fellow first-rounder Hadyn Fleury has been doing a fine job opposite Colin Miller.

What Arniel wants out of Stanley is a little of what made Brenden Dillon so formidable.

It’s a mandate Stanley understands.

“Big shoes to fill,” Stanley said. “(Dylan Samberg) has done a great job so far, but there are a few guys that want to help fill those minutes and fill that hole.”

It’s a tough job over an 82-game season, Stanley said. It’s even more challenging when it’s been difficult to stay healthy.

“Just how hard it is on the body,” Stanley said. “Dilly was very well conditioned, in good shape and took care of himself. Just a true professional and it showed every night. He brought the same game every day.

“For me, it’s trying to do that every night consistently. I learned a little bit from him and hopefully I can that into my own game.”

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/jets-hellebuyck-looking-forward-to-sharing-vezina-jennings-with-fans>

Jets' Hellebuyck looking forward to sharing Vezina, Jennings with fans

By Scott Billeck

If you get to touch the Vezina Trophy on Friday, know you’ve held it as often as two-time winner Connor Hellebuyck.

It’s one of two pieces of hardware — the other being the William M. Jennings Trophy — that will be at Canada Life Centre for ‘Hellebuyck Night’ on Friday.

“I was thinking about it (on Wednesday night) when I heard that the trophies are going to be in town,” Hellebuyck said on Thursday. “I wanted to see them. I was thinking that many people probably don’t get a chance to touch it. I won it and I didn’t get the chance to touch it the first time. It took me a second time to finally get to hold it.

“And I was thinking that this is such a big hockey community. I think being able to bring those trophies here and give them a little piece of history is pretty cool and to be part of that is special.”

If you’re wondering why a two-time winner has only put his mitts on it once, consider that Hellebuyck accepted the award virtually after the 2019-20 season was halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 31-year-old finally got his blocker and glove hands on it in June, when he accepted it in person at the NHL Awards in Vegas.

“When I got to look at it, it was a pretty surreal experience,” Hellebuyck said. “First, I wanted to hold it and feel how heavy it was. It was pretty heavy. I mean, the ones they give you are about [gestures with his hands to indicate a model trophy maybe a foot tall] that big, so seeing it in person blew my mind a little bit.

“And seeing some of the old names that you remember growing up watching them, hearing about them, and some of them are idols. It’s a pretty cool experience to be on there with them.”

Hellebuyck became just the 23rd goalie in the NHL’s 100-plus-year history to win the award on multiple occasions.

If he keeps up his early form to start the current year, he could be the 13th to win it more than twice.

“The way that I am seeing the game is mid-season form right now,” Hellebuyck said. “Things are just clicking. I’ve got a real good read on the game and, mentally, I’m not overthinking. I’m not overthinking anything. I’m just out there playing and having fun.”

His numbers are nothing short of superhuman: a perfect 3-0-0 record, a .976 save percentage, a 0.66 goals-against average, and one shutout.

Not one to compare years, Hellebuyck pointed to the collective team’s ability to hit the ground running to start the season.

“That makes probably the biggest difference between year to year, game to game, is how good the guys are playing in front of me,” he said. “There’s a big emphasis in the camp to really get our structure down and really get it done right. Not just going in and working on little things. No. Get it done and get it right. The guys have really done that. They’ve dug in and made sure everything is in the right spot and the reads are right. Chemistry is there.

“We’ve been going at this for about three years now. Just every year you get better, know what to expect from yourself and from each other. Pretty much the same group year after year. As you build that chemistry, things get easier.”

Under the defence-first system that Rick Bowness introduced a few years ago, he’s facing less shot volume these days.

Last season was the first time — not including COVID-impacted seasons — since his rookie year where he saw fewer than 1,800 shots come his way.

“They’re both difficult games, but I’ve always thought that if you want to be an elite goaltender, you have to be able to manage both games,” Hellebuyck said regarding higher and lower shot volumes.

“That being said, it’s being focused and really being confident in not getting a whole lot of action but still feeling it. It’s one of those things where you’re in a game, you’re reading it and you’re watching it constantly. It still kind of gives you a feel for what’s going to happen. The second

your body gets a little cold and you're not feeling it as much, you have to have that confidence that you're reading it and feeling it correctly."

Meanwhile, the very popular Chuck Hellebuyck (Connor's dad) will attend his son's night on Friday, as will the goaltender's agent, Ray Petkau.

It's a big night, but Hellebuyck is hoping there will be a larger one later this season.

He's just 22 wins away from 300, and now just a pair of shutouts from 40, which would give him the goaltending triple-crown of 500 games played, which he achieved last year, along with the 300 wins and 40 clean sheets.

"If that happens, I think everyone's going to come in for that," he said. "That's kind of what we're planning on."

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Changes the Jets' Second Line Needs to Make Amid Offensive Woes

By Jake Tye

The Winnipeg Jets have been rolling with wins in all three of their opening games but have faced a lengthy five-day layoff that may challenge the team to stay loose and continue playing its game.

One of the subtle things the team will be looking to improve on in the meantime is its second line. Winger Nikolaj Ehlers has played decent so far with a pair of assists through the first three games while playing less than 15 minutes on average per game.

His linemates Cole Perfetti and Vladislav Namestnikov haven't done as much, with the pair combining for no points and both averaging less than 14 minutes on the ice per game.

The line has been more of the third line for the team, as they are playing more minutes than the team's fourth line but less than the Jets deadly third line of Nino Niederreiter, Mason Appleton and captain Adam Lowry. That trio has singlehandedly helped the Jets win games so far this season like when they combined for seven points in the season opener versus the Oilers.

Perfetti should eventually breakthrough for some points, as he's been able to put pucks on net with five shots this season, which is tied for fourth-most on the team. With the help of NHL Edge, we can see that he needs to generate more meaningful chances as he has just one shot this season in mid-to-high danger areas of the ice.

Perfetti has spent more time in the defensive zone (42.7%) and less in the offensive zone (39.5%) this season, placing him below the 50th percentile in both categories. Last season, he was the opposite as he finished in the 83rd and 85th percentiles, respectively.

Namestnikov also needs to improve his zone times as he finished in the 83rd percentile for even-strength offensive zone (42.7) last season but ranks below 50th (39.1) this season. He'll need to find his legs on the ice, as he finished with eight speed bursts over 35 kph and 89 bursts between 32-35 kph last season, placing him in the 86th and 65th percentiles, respectively.

Namestnikov's top skating speed was 36.84 kph, ranking in the 81st percentile. However, this season, he has yet to exceed 33.62 kph, ranking below the 50th percentile with only two bursts in the 32-35 kph range and no bursts over 35 kph.

They need to get better breakout opportunities so that they spend more time in the neutral and offensive zones while getting better at maintaining offensive zone time so they can get those mid-to-high danger opportunities that the other lines are finding.

Last season, the second line logged just over 194 minutes together, allowing the fewest unblocked shots against—120—of any Jets line that played more than 155 minutes. They ranked 21st in the league for this category and their strong defensive play should help mitigate the impact of their current scoring inconsistencies.

As long as they can eventually figure out how to find more scoring chances while still pushing play out of their own end and forcing poor shots from opponents, the team should still find value out of this line.