

**Winnipegjets.com**

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-lowry-line-takes-over-in-third>

***Three things - Lowry line takes over in third  
Jets sweep four game homestand with 6-3 win over Pittsburgh***

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – The Winnipeg Jets closed out their four game homestand with a 6-3 win over the Pittsburgh Penguins. The Jets joined the Rangers as the second team with 24 goals through their first five games of the season. Winnipeg remains the only unbeaten team in the NHL at 5-0. The Jets got goals from Vladislav Namestnikov, Adam Lowry, Mason Appleton, Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor and Nino Niederreiter. Eric Comrie stopped 38 shots in his Jets season debut. Winnipeg will now head out on a three-game road trip that starts Tuesday in St. Louis.

***BIG DAY FOR LITTLE***

Before this afternoon's game against the Penguins, the Jets had a special ceremony for Bryan Little who signed a one-day contract so that he can retire as a Jet. He ranks in the top five in franchise history in games played (2nd: 843), goals (5th: 217), assists (3rd: 304), and points (4th: 521). Little also holds the distinction as the first member of Jets 2.0 to score a hat trick. Little joined the team when they came out on the ice before the opening faceoff in a nice gesture from the organization.

"He was happy, his family was super happy. Anytime you can honour someone the way we did it I thought was top notch," said Mason Appleton.

"Litts doesn't know everyone in this room, but we did our best to make him feel like he was at home. We can't say enough about who he was as a person, he was a great pro here for a long time."

***EHLERS WAKES UP JETS***

The Jets got off to a slow start in the second period allowing back-to-back goals to Kevin Hayes (1:30) and Lars Eller (5:21) to fall behind 2-0. But during a delayed penalty, Nikolaj Ehlers spotted Kyle Connor in the slot and Connor's fourth of the season woke up the Jets. Just over five and half minutes later, Mark Scheifele would score off a Colin Miller rebound to tie it at two. Ehlers would go back to work stealing the puck from Lars Eller and spotting Vladislav Namestnikov who gave the Jets the lead for the first time at 3-2 heading into the final period.

***LOWRY LINE GOES TO WORK IN THIRD***

With the game tied at three in the third, Adam Lowry's line went to work. Just over four minutes into the period, Lowry would win an offensive zone faceoff and head to the net and tap in a seeing eye pass from Mason Appleton for a 4-3 Jets lead. Appleton scored the insurance goal 3:21 later, Appleton tried to hit Neal Pionk as the Jets defenceman went to the net, but his pass went off a Penguins stick and in. Niederreiter scored an empty net goal to round out the scoring.

"It's awesome. They know how to grind and grind and grind and they know how to put the puck in the back of the net as well," said Eric Comrie.

"But once again, it's all four lines doing what coach tells them. It's just line after line after line and I don't think people understand just how special that is."

**NHL.com**

<https://www.nhl.com/news/pittsburgh-penguins-winnipeg-jets-game-recap-october-20>

***Jets pull away in 3rd against Penguins, stay undefeated  
Lowry breaks tie to give Winnipeg 5th consecutive victory to start season***

By Darrin Bauming

WINNIPEG -- Adam Lowry scored the game-winning goal in the third period, and the Winnipeg Jets remained undefeated with a 6-3 victory against the Pittsburgh Penguins at Canada Life Centre on Sunday.

The Jets trailed 2-0 in the second before scoring three goals in a span of 7:11.

"That was [pretty sloppy] for us," Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel said. "That 6-on-5 goal, and that 4-on-4 goal (to tie the game 2-2), that's all of a sudden. We weren't great in that period, but we found a way to get ourselves back into it. I thought in the third period we came out and played the way we needed to play."

Mason Appleton had a goal and an assist for the Jets (5-0-0), who remain the only undefeated team in the NHL. Eric Comrie made 39 saves in his first start of the season.

Lars Eller scored twice, and Alex Nedeljkovic made 31 saves in his season debut for the Penguins (3-4-0). The goalie was activated from injured reserve and assigned to Wilkes-Barre/Scranton of the American Hockey League on Thursday and recalled by Pittsburgh on Saturday.

"They've got some high-powered offensive guys that can make you pay for it, and they did just that," Nedeljkovic said. "They got a couple bounces as well. All in all, we played fine, but obviously not good enough to win."

Kevin Hayes scored on the power play to give the Penguins a 1-0 lead at 1:30 of the second. Rickard Rakell's cross-slot pass found Hayes at the side of the net for a one-timer.

"I thought we did some good things," Penguins captain Sidney Crosby said. "Obviously we're just giving too much up. I think we can't give up what we've been giving up and expect to win consistently. Defensively we've got to find another level."

Eller put Pittsburgh ahead 2-0 at 5:21, finding a loose puck on the rebound of a redirected shot from Erik Karlsson.

Kyle Connor cut it to 2-1 at 12:18 on a 6-on-5 advantage from a delayed penalty call. Moments after Nikolaj Ehlers was tripped inside the Penguins zone, he set up Connor for a shot from the inside the face-off dot.

"I thought we did a good job answering once they had that lead on us," Appleton said. "Just kind of a game of waves and momentum changes. Glad we stuck with it and fought until the end there."

Mark Scheifele tied it 2-2 at 17:36, jumping on a rebound from Colin Miller's point shot.

"[The Jets] are pretty consistent with their game," Crosby said. "Even when we got the lead, I thought they didn't open up. They just kept playing the same way. Credit to them, they were able to get back into it. When you get a lead like that, some teams will open up and they didn't. And we've got to find a way to get that next one without giving up what we gave up."

The Jets took a 3-2 lead with Vladislav Namestnikov's redirection of Ehlers' pass from the edge of the crease at 19:29.

"The one thing about Pittsburgh, they have a lot of veterans, a lot of guys who know how to play," Arniel said. "They strip pucks really well, and I thought they did a really good job with that. We were trying to be cute with the plays we were making. It was really more about execution, and then our compete."

Eller tied it 3-3 at 1:39 of the third with a sharp angle shot from the bottom of the circle, beating Comrie glove side.

Lowry put Winnipeg ahead for good when he tapped in Appleton's pass that made it 4-3 at 4:20. Appleton extended the Jets' lead to 5-3 at 7:41, and Nino Niederreiter scored into an empty net at 17:30 for the 6-3 final.

**NOTES:** The Jets are the fifth Canada-based team in the past 30 years to win each of its first five games to start a season, joining the 2019-20 Montreal Canadiens (nine), the 2019-20 and 2021-22 Edmonton Oilers (five apiece), the 2005-06 and 2007-08 Ottawa Senators (six and five, respectively) and the 1994-95 Quebec Nordiques (five). ... Penguins goalie Tristan Jarry was a healthy scratch, and Joel Blomqvist was the backup. They plan to keep three goalies on the roster during their four-game road trip that resumes at the Calgary Flames on Tuesday. ... Connor (four goals, one assist), Scheifele (five goals, three assists) and defenseman Josh Morrissey (one goal, six assists) each extended his season-opening point streak to five games.

### **Canadian Press**

<https://www.chrisd.ca/2024/10/20/winnipeg-jets-pittsburgh-penguins-game-story-win/>

### ***Comrie Thrilled to Be Back in Net Helping Unbeaten Jets Soar***

By Judy Owen, The Canadian Press

Eric Comrie was glad to help keep the good times rolling for the Winnipeg Jets.

The backup goaltender made 39 saves in a 6-3 victory over the Pittsburgh Penguins Sunday that kept the Jets the NHL's only unbeaten team with five wins in as many games.

"It's awesome," Comrie said of picking up his first win after Connor Hellebuyck was given a rest following four consecutive starts.

"The team played great in front of me so that made it really easy on myself."

Adam Lowry, Mason Appleton, Kyle Connor, Mark Scheifele, Vladislav Namestnikov and Nino Niederreiter, into an empty net, scored for Winnipeg.

Nikolaj Ehlers, Colin Miller and Josh Morrissey each contributed two assists in front of 13,760 fans at Canada Life Centre.

Appleton, who also had an assist, credited Comrie with being sharp when needed.

“(The Penguins are) a veteran team who capitalize on turnovers and lulls like that,” Appleton said. “They obviously had their pushes, but Coms did a great job of slowing their momentum down.

“If he didn’t make some of those saves, I don’t know if we’re winning that game.”

Comrie, 29, is in his third stint with the Jets, who drafted the Edmonton product in 2013 in the second round (59th overall).

He spent three seasons with the organization starting in 2016. He then went to the Detroit Red Wings and New Jersey Devils, returned to Winnipeg for one season and played for the Buffalo Sabres the past two seasons.

Sunday was Comrie’s 58th NHL game, and first start for the Jets since April 2022.

“He was great,” Jets coach Scott Arniel said. “Those first two (Pittsburgh) goals were open nets, kind of our breakdowns that led to that.

“At the end of the day, we’re going to need to rely on him lots this year because of the Four Nations Cup and the compact schedule that we have. I really liked what we saw. He seems composed. There were a lot of scrambles around him, pucks around, and he found a way to find those loose pucks. It was great to see.”

Pittsburgh (3-4-0) got a pair of goals from Lars Eller and one from Kevin Hayes.

Alex Nedeljkovic stopped 31 shots for the Penguins, who began a four-game road trip.

He was the third different starter in as many games. Tristan Jarry (healthy scratch) had started last Wednesday’s game against Buffalo but was pulled in favour of rookie Joel Blomqvist, who got the nod to start Friday’s game against Carolina. Nedeljkovic was called up from a conditioning stint in the AHL to start against the Jets. All three goalies are on the road trip.

“You worry about what you can control, do your best and put yourself in a good situation mentally to have success, and when your name’s called you try to make the most of your opportunity,” Nedeljkovic said.

“Joel’s been playing really well, he’s been keeping us in games and he’s been deserving of the net. At this level that’s what’s going to happen. Whoever’s playing well and winning games, or giving us a chance to win consistently, is going to get the net.”

There was no scoring in the first period, but the teams combined for five goals in the second.

Hayes, on the power play, and Eller made it 2-0 five minutes into the game. The Jets replied with three goals from Connor, Scheifele and Namestnikov in the final eight minutes of the period.

After Eller's second goal made it 3-3 at 1:39 of the third, Lowry and Appleton scored just over three minutes apart and Niederreiter sealed it with an empty-netter at 17:30.

### ***SPECIAL RECOGNITION***

Former Winnipeg Jets forward Bryan Little skated onto the ice with players before puck drop and was honoured for his contributions to the Jets/Atlanta Thrashers franchise.

The popular centre, Atlanta's first-round pick (12th overall) in the 2006 NHL draft, signed a one-day contract last month to retire as a Jet after playing his entire 843-game career with the organization.

Fans and players cheered loudly during a video tribute and ceremonial puck drop, when Little's wife and daughter dropped the puck between Little and Penguins star Sidney Crosby.

Little suffered a career-ending ear injury after being hit by a puck shot by Ehlers in a November 2019 game against New Jersey. His contract was traded to the Arizona Coyotes in March 2022. His rights were then transferred to the new Utah hockey Club earlier this year and the contract expired July 1.

### **Sportsnet.ca**

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/kings-score-four-goals-in-third-period-to-beat-ducks/>

### ***Though not deployed like one, Jets' Ehlers shows ability to be game-breaker***

By Jacob Stoller

WINNIPEG — In a game where seven different Winnipeg Jets registered points, Nikolaj Ehlers' two assists on Sunday afternoon — in the team's 6-3 win over the Pittsburgh Penguins — stood out above the rest.

Subtly, those two primary assists were the driving force behind Winnipeg overcoming Pittsburgh's initial 2-0 lead.

Ehlers drew a tripping penalty at the 7:54 mark of the second period, prompting Winnipeg to pull Eric Comrie for a six-on-five during the delayed call. Ehlers picked the puck back up at the blue line and surveyed around the left wing before threading a perfect pass — through a cluster of four Penguins skaters — to tee up Kyle Connor for a one-timer that put Winnipeg on the board.

Ehlers' second apple, which gave Winnipeg a 3-2 lead heading into the third period, was another precise pass. During a four-on-four sequence, Ehlers chipped the puck past Lars Eller, who was attempting to exit the zone, cut into the slot, outwaited a sprawled-out Matt Grzelyck and zipped the puck over to Vladislav Namestnikov, who was in prime position to redirect the puck into the net.

Jets coach Scott Arniel referred to Ehlers as a game-breaker post-game.

"If other teams ever forget about Nik, he usually burns them," Arniel said. "He has such speed and quickness — that opens up lanes and opportunities for other guys."

But the Jets don't deploy Ehlers like a game-breaker.

Ehlers, whose seven points tie him for second in team scoring, finished Sunday's matinee with just 12:57 minutes on the ice. Morgan Barron, David Gustafsson and Alex Lafallo — Winnipeg's fourth-line trio — were the only Jets skaters to log less minutes than Ehlers.

The 28-year-old pending UFA's ice time has long been a hot topic in Winnipeg, and judging by how Winnipeg's first five games went, it appears that discourse won't be dying down any time soon. Winnipeg's "third line" of Adam Lowry, Nino Niederreiter and Mason Appleton has been deployed more at five-on-five than the Jets' "second line" of Ehlers, Cole Perfetti and Vladislav Namestnikov. While it's encouraging to see Ehlers on the team's first power-play unit, it's fair to question scarce five-on-five deployment.

The Danish winger was one of the NHL's most efficient five-on-five producers over the last three seasons, ranking eighth in five-on-five primary points (2.18) among skaters that played at least 500 minutes since the 2021-22 season.

Unfortunately for Ehlers, given that he's not on the team's top line — where Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor and Gabriel Vilardi reside — he and his linemates duke it out with Lowry's line for minutes. And not only is Lowry's line elite at shutting down opponents but, stylistically, they're more aligned with the Jets' defensive identity.

"We're kind of a defence-first mindset type of team. We would rather win a game 2-1 or 3-2," Jets forward Mason Appleton explained after Winnipeg's near-touchdown scoring spree.

#### *Jets Honour Bryan Little*

Bryan Little signed a one-day contract with Winnipeg on Sunday, allowing him to officially retire from the NHL with Winnipeg.

Little, a Jets 2.0 icon, suffered a severe ear injury on Nov 5, 2019 that cut his career short. Originally a 2006 first-round pick of the Atlanta Thrashers, the now 36-year-old ended up spending nine seasons with Winnipeg.

"Coming from Atlanta, where it was a whole different (situation), we were struggling to get people in the arena and playing in front of six or seven thousand people," Little said during a press conference an hour before the game. "To come play in a Canadian city where the fans and the city are so passionate about hockey and about the Jets, that's what every player dreams of. You want to play in that atmosphere. This kind of became our second home."

Little, suited up in full equipment, led the Jets onto the ice ahead of the game. Mason Appleton said the players didn't know that ahead of time, which made for a nice surprise.

"We got off the ice from warmup and he was just sitting in his old stall, throwing his gear on," Appleton said. "He had Ehlers kicked to the corner; he took back his spot. Just threw his gear on and led us out there."

#### *Other Thoughts*

- Neal Pionk had another solid outing. Pionk — who played 21:20 minutes and registered one assist, two shots, three blocks and three hits — was a force at both ends of the rink.

Defensively, he killed plays at ease — he had a nice sequence where he defended Evgeni Malkin eloquently one-on-one during the first period — and offensively, he joined the rush on several occasions. The 29-year-old has one goal and six assists in his first five games.

- Eric Comrie was excellent in his first start of the season, stopping 39 of 42 shots.

“Coms did a great job. They’re a veteran team who capitalizes on turnovers and lulls like that. They obviously had their pushes, but Coms did a great job of slowing their momentum down,” Appleton said. “If he didn’t make some of those saves, I don’t know if we’re winning that game.”

The Jets have discussed monitoring Hellebuyck’s workload — due to his inevitable appearance at the 4 Nations Faceoff — but the two-time Vezina winner is known to take pride in shouldering a heavy workload.

“I was joking with a couple guys. I was like, “Don’t show Helle Miikka Kiprusoff or Marty Brodeur’s old stat-lines on games played because it used to be 76-80 games,” Comrie said. “I don’t want to go that long between games.”

### **Winnipeg Free Press**

<https://ca.sports.yahoo.com/news/winnipeg-jets-aim-stay-undefeated-130000474.html>

#### ***Jets win fifth straight to start season Power past Penguins to extend team record streak***

By: Mike McIntyre

The Winnipeg Jets keep climbing to new heights. And it appears they are enjoying the view from above.

A 6-3 victory over the Pittsburgh Penguins on Sunday in front of 13,760 fans at Canada Life Centre extended a franchise-best start to 5-0-0 and leaves them as the NHL’s only unbeaten team. It also marked a 13th-straight regular-season triumph dating back to last year which is tied for the 11th-longest in league history and only four off the all-time mark.

“It’s a long season and it’s hard to get guys to continually do it every night. But the biggest thing I’ve said about the buy-in is the results that come from it,” Jets coach Scott Arniel said of the mentality of his group.

There had been a pair of routs (6-0 over Edmonton, 8-3 over San Jose) and a pair of low-scoring overtime thrillers (2-1 over Chicago, 2-1 over Minnesota) to start the new campaign. The latest outing presented a different challenge, with Pittsburgh opening up a 2-0 lead by the midway mark of the second period.

No problem for these resilient Jets, who fought back to grab the lead before the intermission and then pulled away down the stretch with six different skaters scoring. They also got a terrific performance from backup goaltender Eric Comrie, who made 39 saves in his first start of the season.

“We’re kind of a defence-first mindset type of team. We would rather win a game 2-1 or 3-2, but to have the ability to win a game 6-5 or 5-3 or something like that, it shows that we’re diverse and we have scoring up and down the lineup,” said Jets forward Mason Appleton.

“We also have guys committed to play the right way for 60 minutes. That was a product of winning a game a different way than it might look like on a different night. At the end of the day, it’s a good win and we’re going to keep it going.”

Let’s dig a bit deeper into this one:

1) Long time coming for Comrie: The 29-year-old has recorded a dozen wins over his career during two previous stints with the Jets, with the most recent one coming back in April 2022. He had to wait a while for his first chance during his latest stop in Winnipeg, with Vezina Trophy winner Connor Hellebuyck getting the first four starts.

Comrie did everything you could ask from a backup, looking calm, cool and collected despite facing a barrage of shots from a veteran Penguins squad that was trying to erase the stink of a 4-1 loss on Friday to Carolina. He had no chance on the three pucks that beat him and kept the Jets in the game until their offence kicked into gear.

“Super happy to be back and play in front of these guys,” Comrie said following the game.

“This group is unbelievable. I don’t think people understand how good they are in front of you, how much they buy into the system, how much they believe what coach is telling us. It’s rare to have that when the whole team buys in, it’s really special.”

Comrie, for our money, was the first star of the game.

“Coms did a great job of slowing their momentum down,” said Appleton. “If he didn’t make some of those saves, I don’t know if we’re winning that game.”

2) Electric Ehlers: If you are looking for a turning point to this game, a good place to start is with Nikolaj Ehlers.

With Winnipeg down a pair of goals, he got his team going by setting up Kyle Connor for the first goal at 12:16 of the middle frame. It happened during a delayed penalty against Pittsburgh — drawn by Ehlers — who fed a perfect cross-ice pass to Connor for his fourth of the year.

After Mark Scheifele tied it with his team-leading fifth at 17:36, Ehlers then set up linemate Vlad Namestnikov at 19:29 to put his team ahead for the first time.

“He’s a game-breaker,” said Arniel. “We have weapons, but other teams if they kind of forget that Nik is on the ice it usually burns them. He’s got such speed and quickness that that opens up lanes and opportunities for other guys.”

Ehlers, a pending unrestricted free agent next summer, now has five points in his past two games. We’ve got him down as the second star.

3) Set play becomes key play: The Penguins weren’t going away quietly, with Lars Eller ripping a wicked wrister over Comrie’s shoulder and under the crossbar just 1:39 into the third period to tie it 3-3.



But the Jets regained the lead, this time for good, at 4:20 of the final frame during what Appleton revealed was a set play. With a faceoff in the Penguins zone, Adam Lowry won the puck back to Josh Morrissey, who fired a hard pass at Appleton who had charged to the front of the net.

The idea would be to try and get a deflection, but the puck actually hit his skate and/or stick and went right to Lowry, who scooped it home for the eventual game-winner.

“I thought we did a good job answering,” said Appleton. “That was another big goal. Just kind of a game of waves and momentum changes. Glad we stuck with it and fought until the end there.”

Appleton — our third star of the game — then gave the Jets some breathing room a few minutes late when his pass attempt was deflected by a Penguins defender past goaltender Alex Nedeljkovic. Just like Lowry, it was his second goal of the year.

The other winger on that so-called shutdown line then finished things off as Nino Niederreiter scored into an empty-net for his first of the season. Not only was the trio of Lowry, Appleton and Niederreiter effective at keeping both Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin off the board, but they managed to turn the tide and score three goals of their own.

4) Lineup shuffle: Comrie for Hellebuyck wasn't the only change to a winning lineup that had been identical through the first four games.

Forward David Gustafsson replaced Rasmus Kupari, centring the fourth line between Alex Lafallo and Morgan Barron. And defenceman Logan Stanley was activated from injured reserve and took Haydn Fleury's spot on the third pairing with Colin Miller.

“I don't know it's ever the right time,” Arniel said. “I just wanted to get them in. I thought at home here, an afternoon game, some fresh legs was an opportunity to do.”

5) *Extra, extra*: There was a brief but loud “Where Is Rutger” chant, followed a few minutes later by “Yager's Better,” during the third period. That's in reference to the Rutger McGroarty for Brayden Yager swap of top forward prospects this past summer.

McGroarty, for those asking, is currently in the American Hockey League, where he's gone without a point in his first two games. The Penguins sent McGroarty down after he failed to record a point in his first four NHL games. Yager, meanwhile, is off to a sizzling start with the Moose Jaw Warriors of the WHL, now with 13 points (7G, 6A) in his first seven games.

The Jets will practice on Monday morning before hitting the road for a three-game trip which starts Tuesday night in St. Louis.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/10/20/bryan-little-celebrated-by-jets>

***Bryan Little celebrated by Jets  
Longtime centre signed one-day contract for official retirement ceremony***

By: Ken Wiebe

Bryan Little never really felt comfortable as the centre of attention, but the opportunity to be saluted for his services was something he won't soon forget.

The longtime Winnipeg Jets centre signed a one-day contract with the organization before officially retiring on Sunday.

Little met with the media and took a stroll down memory lane before suiting up in full gear for a surprise lap on the ice with current members of the Jets before he was honoured and took part in a ceremonial faceoff with Pittsburgh Penguins captain Sidney Crosby.

“That was so cool,” said Little, when asked what it was like to be in a Jets’ uniform for the first time since suffering a head injury in a game against the New Jersey Devils on Nov. 5, 2019.

The near-capacity crowd at Canada Life Centre roared when Little came out of the tunnel and those inside the building continued to show appreciation as a highlight video from Little’s career was shown on the scoreboard.

“The only team I’ve played for. And I owe a lot to them,” said Little. “This isn’t just where I worked. The people around here were my family and my friends. A lot of the best memories that I have playing hockey were with this team and in this city and in front of these fans.”

When asked for some of his favourite memories with the Jets, Little referenced the first exhibition game against the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Although Little wasn’t in the lineup, he said the reaction of the hometown crowd gave him and his teammates a glimpse of what playing in Winnipeg was going to be like.

“Coming from Atlanta, where it was a whole different (situation), we were struggling to get people in the arena and playing in front of six or seven thousand people,” said Little. “To come play in a Canadian city where the fans and the city are so passionate about hockey and about the Jets, that’s what every player dreams of. You want to play in that atmosphere.”

Little also recalled suiting up in the first regular season game against the Montreal Canadiens in 2011 and the first playoff game in Jets 2.0 history against the Anaheim Ducks in 2015.

Another magical memory occurred at Mosaic Stadium in Regina in late October of 2019 when he delivered the overtime winner against the Calgary Flames in the Heritage Classic.

“That one was really special because I didn’t get to play in the outdoor game here in Winnipeg and I was pretty disappointed with that,” said Little. “To get to be a part of that and score the OT winner and have my family there to see it, that was really special. And I got a bunch of great pictures from that game too. It’s something I will always remember.”

Technically, Little ended his career as a member of the Arizona Coyotes, as his contract was dealt to the desert in March 2021 to help the organization get out of long term injured reserve.

Little’s willingness to waive his no-movement clause to help the Jets was another of the many selfless acts.

“We did have to ask him for something to help us in that regard. He graciously did it,” said Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff, who won a Calder Cup with the Chicago Wolves with Little’s help in 2008. “It just showed again he was willing to give another assist any time he could.”

Little was the consummate professional and became a fan favourite before even suiting up in a game with the Jets because he decided to change from the No. 10 he wore with the Atlanta Thrashers, knowing that Dale Hawerchuk made the number famous during the early stages of his Hall of Fame career.

Little centred the Jets' top line with Blake Wheeler and captain Andrew Ladd upon his arrival and he became part of the fabric of the organization.

"Just the way he goes about his business. He was never looking for the limelight," said Cheveldayoff. "He was one of those unsung guys that would do anything. He gave everything he had for the team before himself. That's what made him a real special individual."

In many ways, Little was the conscience of the team.

Whether things were going well or if the Jets were going through a rough patch, Little was willing to provide insight on what he saw.

The 12th overall pick of the Thrashers in the 2006 NHL Draft was a productive player and remains second in franchise history for games played (843) and third in assists (304) and fourth in points (521).

"He doesn't know everyone in this room, but we did the best (we could) to make him feel like he was at home," said Jets right-winger Mason Appleton. "I can't say enough about who he is as a person. He was a great pro here for a long time. He was someone that we all learned from — no matter if you were a young guy, an old guy or a coach, it didn't matter. (Little) did everything the right way, every single day."

Although it's been a few years since Little made the decision to stop playing, he was emotional when asked about coming to terms with the choice after seeking multiple second opinions.

"It was really difficult. It was one of those things that, at the end of the day, you think a decision like that and your health would be easy. It wasn't," said Little. "It's all I ever really had known growing up and playing hockey my whole life. I had to think more about my future and my health when I'm older. My family as well. I was seeing so many people, I think I was just searching for someone to say it's OK and it's safe. I could never really find that. It was tough, but I don't regret making that decision now."

Little has found an outlet for his competitive juices in the sport of triathlon.

"Canadian winter is coming up, so it's a long break now until next year. I'm surprised more guys don't do that," said Little. "It keeps me busy and it keeps me in shape. It's a lot of fun."

Little left the door open to get involved in the game down the road.

"Hockey was such a big part of my life and I've enjoyed being away for a little bit," said Little. "I think in the future it would be nice to get back into the game in some capacity. I'm not sure what."

## **CBC Manitoba**

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/bryan-little-retires-with-winnipeg-jets-1.7357748>

### ***'In my heart I never left': Bryan Little gets the spotlight to mark end of hockey career***

By Gavin Axelrod · CBC News

Longtime Winnipeg Jets forward Bryan Little was back in town Sunday as the only franchise he ever suited up for honoured him to mark the end of his hockey career.

Little played 843 games with the Thrashers/Jets franchise, which is the second-most in club history. In September, the Jets announced the 36-year-old would sign a one-day contract with the team, allowing him to retire as a member of the team.

"In my heart I never left, I was always a Jet," Little said during a news conference before puck-drop in Sunday's Jets game against the Pittsburgh Penguins. "This kind of made it official."

Little ranks fifth in franchise history with 217 goals, third with 304 assists and fourth with 521 points.

In 2014 he recorded the franchise's first hat trick since its move to Winnipeg, and in 2019 he scored the game-winning goal in overtime at the Heritage Classic in Regina.

"That one was really special," said Little. "I didn't get to play in the outdoor game here in Winnipeg and I was pretty disappointed in that, so to be a part of that and score the OT winner and have my family there to see it, that was really special."

But on Nov. 5, 2019, Little sustained a perforated eardrum after being hit by a slapshot from Jets teammate Nikolaj Ehlers in a game against New Jersey. It ended up being the last NHL game he ever played in.

Little's contract was traded to the Arizona Coyotes, which is now the Utah Hockey Club.

Speaking Saturday, Little said someone had asked him about the idea of signing a one-day contract and retiring with the Jets.

"It always felt weird to be part of the Coyotes," he said. "I talked to ... the trainer there once a year for a physical or something on the phone."

But he also said stepping away from the game wasn't easy, but said he doesn't have any regrets.

"At the end of the day I think I had to think more about my future and my health when I'm older and my family as well," he said.

"It wasn't [an] easy decision. At the end of the day I was seeing so many people, I think I was just searching for someone to say it's OK and it's safe, and I could never really find that."

Outside the rink, Jets fans applauded Little's time with the team.

"He was an unsung hero who did a lot in the community behind the scenes without a lot of fanfare," said Patricia Chaychuk. "And I'm glad he came back to get the recognition he deserves to get."

Andrew Ritchot agreed.

"I know his career ended in such a weird way, so it's really nice to have him have a moment with the fans," he said. "Because he was a fan favourite."

Meanwhile, Little said getting to retire with the Jets was special.

"This isn't just where I worked," said Little.

"The people around here were my family and my friends and a lot of the best memories I have playing hockey were with this team, in this city and in front of these fans."

### **Winnipeg Sun**

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/jets-survive-second-period-scare-to-keep-perfect-start-intact>

#### ***Jets survive second-period scare to keep perfect start intact***

By Scott Billeck

There were moments on Sunday afternoon when it looked as if the Winnipeg Jets' perfect record to start the season would receive its first blemish.

As it turns out, there weren't enough for the Pittsburgh Penguins to make that a reality.

On a day the Jets honoured long-time centre Bryan Little, his former teammates earned a 6-3 decision over Sidney Crosby and the Pens to improve to 5-0-0. Winnipeg is the only remaining undefeated team in the NHL.

Eric Comrie, starting his first game for Winnipeg since April 2022, made 39 saves for the win.

Kyle Connor, Mark Scheifele, Vladislav Namestnikov, Adam Lowry, Mason Appleton and Nino Niederreiter shared the goal-scoring column for the Jets while Nikolaj Ehlers, Colin Miller and Josh Morrissey each recorded two assists.

Lars Eller tallied twice, and former Jets forward Kevin Hayes also scored for the Penguins.

Alex Nedeljkovic picked up the loss, allowing five goals on 36 shots in a losing effort.

Hayes and Eller gave Pittsburgh a 2-0 lead before the midway mark of the second, with the Pens taking advantage of Winnipeg's sluggish start to the period.

The comeback began at 12:18 when Connor scored his fourth — and for a third straight game — on a delayed penalty to pry back some momentum.

Scheifele tied it just more than five minutes later with his fifth, and Namestnikov tucked one in from the back door with 31 seconds left in the period to give Winnipeg a 3-2 lead heading into the third.

Eller would tie it 1:39 into the final frame, but Lowry's second of the season gave Winnipeg the lead back at 4:20. Appleton's second added the insurance marker at 7:41, and Niederreiter sealed it with his first of the year into the empty net with 2:30 remaining.

Winnipeg's power play, which came into the game operating at a healthy 50 per cent, went 0-for-2.

Meanwhile, Logan Stanley and David Gustafsson got in their first games of the season. Stanley spelled Hadyn Fleury, while Gustafsson replaced Rasmus Kupari.

The Jets now embark on a three-game road trip, with the first stop coming Tuesday in St. Louis.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/billeck-ehlers-showed-sunday-why-arniel-needed-him>

### ***BILLECK: Ehlers showed Sunday why Arniel needed him***

By Scott Billeck

When Scott Arniel made it clear this past spring that he wanted Nikolaj Ehlers to remain with the Winnipeg Jets, he had his reasons.

Sunday was a hell of a reminder as to why.

Ehlers turned a second period that was heading south quickly for the Winnipeg Jets into one in which they emerged ahead on the scoreboard.

It started on a delayed penalty, one Ehlers drew. He quickly returned to his feet, was handed the puck, and then moved down the left side of the Penguins zone, waiting until Kyle Connor moved into the slot from off the bench as the extra attacker before feeding him.

That goal cut the deficit in half and was the catalyst in what would eventually turn into a 6-3 win, keeping Winnipeg the only remaining undefeated team in the NHL.

After getting caved in for much of the second period to that point, Ehlers wrestled back a bit of momentum.

The team rode it, with Mark Scheifele scoring just over five minutes later to tie the game.

Then Ehlers engineered the go-ahead goal with 31 seconds left, giving the Jets a 3-2 lead heading into the third.

He did so by first getting a bit lucky on a hesitant pinch from the point. Give the Dane credit: he thought about taking care defensively, covering off Neal Pionk, who had been in the play below the net.

Ehlers won the race to the loose puck, took it to the middle of the ice, outlasted Matt Grzelcyk, who had dropped down to try and block the shot, and set up Vladislav Namestnikov for the easy backdoor tap-in.

Wizardry from Ehlers.

The 28-year-old caught a bit of flack after a slow start in the first couple of games. He has five points in his past two now and seven early in the year.

“He’s a game-breaker,” Arniel said after the win. “He’s a guy that offensively, we have weapons, but other teams, if they kind of forget that Nik is on the ice, it usually burns them.

“He’s got such speed and quickness that opens up lanes and opportunities for other guys. He’s done that a couple games now where he’s using his explosiveness to either pull away from people or get to corners.”

As Arniel would go on to say, it’s tough to defend.

That’s why Arniel needs him. He knows how to use him.

He’s a veteran on this team and a part of its broader leadership corps. But most importantly, he’s a playmaker that can take over a game.

Ehlers’ detractors will point to his lack of success in the playoffs. Should the Jets qualify for the postseason this year, one would suspect he’ll dampen some of that chatter.

And credit to Ehlers, who took ownership of his and his line’s play early on and did something to change it.

That second line (or third, depending on how you view it), is starting to come together.

That will only help the team.

Here are some other thoughts on Sunday’s win:

- Full marks to the Jets organization for their handling of Bryan Little’s return to Winnipeg. Little was (and still is) a class act, and the way the Jets honoured him was befitting of that. Having Little lead the team out onto the ice in full gear before his ceremony — wearing the team’s Heritage jersey that they wore when he scored the overtime winner in Regina in 2019 — was really nice for Little and his family, including his young daughter, Parker, who dropped the puck for the ceremonial faceoff with Sidney Crosby.

- Mason Appleton said he didn’t think Little wanted to do it, but he had no choice. “We kind of forced him out. The camera was going to be on him the whole time, so it was only right that he led us out there.”

- Little will likely look back on that and be happy he did it. The last memory on that ice surface was him being helped to the room after taking a puck to the side of his head. No one knew then that it would cost him his career. He got the send-off Sunday that was robbed from him five years ago.

- Winnipeg's fans — 13,670 in attendance on Sunday — did a great job saluting Little, who sits second in franchise history with 843 games played. You could tell Little was touched by it, and during a commercial break during the second period, Little got a chance to thank them as he spoke to one of the team's in-game hosts.

- From a reporter's point of view, Little was always a voice you could go to in the room. Good or bad games, Little never shied away from answering questions, including the tough ones.

- Here's Comrie on the Bryan Little tribute on Sunday: "That was awesome, it was a lot of fun. He's such a great guy, it was awesome. He's an important part of this team. He's always been a quiet guy, but when he says something, it holds a lot of weight. Just seeing him and being around and giving a little speech before the game, and see him get a little emotional on the ice, it meant a lot to us. It almost made me a little emotional, too. It was great to see. I'm just so happy that he got to go out there."

- And here's Arniel: "That was great. First time kind of doing it that way for the organization and having the guy in equipment skating out there. He was extremely nervous. It was unbelievable, a guy that's played that long being nervous about the whole night that his wife and daughter could be here to celebrate with him. I thought it was a great tribute. And then we all saw him up in the suite there and speaking again and getting the ovation. That was great from our fans to be able to recognize him and I'm sure he's pretty appreciative of it."

- The fans also deserve credit for their ruthlessness. The "Where is Rutger?" and "Yager's better" chants harkened back to some of the iconic chants heard inside Canada Life Centre. Former Jets prospect Rutger McGroarty, who was traded to Pittsburgh this past summer after telling the Jets he wouldn't sign with them, wasn't on the trip to Winnipeg. McGroarty was sent down to the minors last week.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/in-my-heart-i-never-left-bryan-little-given-heros-welcome-in-return-to-winnipeg>

### ***'In my heart I never left': Bryan Little given hero's welcome in return to Winnipeg***

By Scott Billeck

Bryan Little searched high and low for someone to tell him it was OK.

Doctors and specialists came and went, but he never heard what he wanted to hear. That it was safe to return to playing hockey — the game he knew and loved.

"It was really difficult," Little said Sunday inside a packed media room at the Canada Life Centre.

With a dozen or so family members in tote on Sunday, Little said he had to think about them and his own long-term health.

"I was seeing so many people," he said. "I was just searching for someone to say it's OK and it's safe. I could never really find that. It was tough, but I don't regret making that decision."



Little signed a one-day contract with the Jets on Sunday to retire as a member of the only organization he knew as an NHLer. The moment came just shy of the fifth anniversary of his career-ending ear injury.

Little took an errant shot to the side of his head on Nov. 5, 2019, during the third period of a game against the New Jersey Devils. It took nearly 30 stitches to close the wound after being rushed to hospital. He required surgery a couple of months later to repair a perforated eardrum.

He briefly returned to practice later that season, but doctors didn't think playing again was a good idea. His career was over.

"You think a decision like that and your health would be easy," Little said. "It wasn't. It's all I ever really had known growing up and playing hockey my whole life."

Sunday in downtown Winnipeg gave Little a chance to thank those who had supported him through 843 games, the second-most in franchise history.

Little took to the ice with his former teammates, wearing the same Jets jersey he donned when he scored the overtime winner at the Heritage Classic in Regina a few days before his career was halted. The 37-year-old took a few twirls, akin to a rookie lap, before being honoured with a tribute video and saluted by the fans who got to thank him back.

This time, he didn't leave the ice in distress, even if there were a few tears shed.

"Everyone that knows me knows that I don't like to be the centre of attention and be in that spotlight," Little said. "But I'm definitely honoured to be a part of that. It's going to be one of those memories that I'll also remember for the rest of my life. I'm very excited and looking forward to it. I'm glad my family is here to share that memory with (me)."

Little's daughter, Parker, dropped the puck for the ceremonial faceoff with Pittsburgh Penguins forward Sidney Crosby. The two shared some words, and Little embraced Mark Scheifele, Adam Lowry and Josh Morrissey on his way off.

"This is the team and organization, it's the only thing I've known, the only team I've played for," Little said. "I owe a lot to them. This isn't just where I worked. The people around here were my family and my friends."

"A lot of the best memories that I have playing hockey were with this team and in this city and in front of these fans. I remember when it was brought up, maybe the possibility to do something like this could happen, that I was super excited to do this and come back here."

Jets co-owner Mark Chipman and general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff looked on as Little spoke to the media. Few players mean more to the fabric of the Jets than Little. He's revered so much that, while not officially retired, no one since has worn Little's No. 18 since his injury.

"Not many players get to play for one organization as a player for their entire career," Cheveldayoff said. "He deserved to be a part of this, give him some closure."

Cheveldayoff and Little's relationship extended back to the 2007-08 season when Little played for the AHL's Chicago Wolves. Cheveldayoff was cutting his teeth as a general manager, and Little was trying to get back to the NHL. They won the Calder Cup that season.

“He had just gone through a full year in the National Hockey League and didn’t know if he was that keen on coming down,” Cheveldayoff said. “But he said that was some of his most special memories, winning a championship and being with those guys that really helped him in his pro career.

“You could tell right from the start when he got there he was a real conscientious two-way player. A lot of young players coming in are offence, offence. But he really understood the game and gained the coach’s trust right away to play.”

Drafted by Atlanta 12th overall in 2006, Little became one of the faces of the Jets after relocation in 2011.

“(Andrew) Ladd, Little, (Blake) Wheeler,” Cheveldayoff said of Winnipeg’s former top line. “You talk about those times, as an organization, that was our No. 1 line. You’d see that on the scoresheet quite a bit.”

But one of Little’s biggest accomplishments, Cheveldayoff said, came later in his career.

“One of Bryan’s greatest things was working with (Patrik) Laine and (Nikolaj) Ehlers,” the GM said. “He gave the coach an opportunity to have a very responsible player out there and let two young players go and do their thing, knowing somebody is always going to be there to do the details or to take care of their own end.

“When you have young players in the organization, those are the players you need to help those young players grow. If they don’t have that mentorship or they don’t have the trust to put that line out there, it’s hard to get guys out there.”

And Little always handled the tough moments well, too.

In back-to-back years in 2017-18 and 2018-19, Cheveldayoff acquired a second-line centre, bumping Little down a couple of lines as the Jets reinforced their squad ahead of the playoffs.

“Just tell me where to play, tell me what to do,” Cheveldayoff said of Little’s response. “Tell me where to go. Put me on wing. There was never ever a moment where he or anyone would say, ‘Why? What’s going on? I just want to win. Do what we need to do. I just want to win.’”

It was the same answer when Cheveldayoff called Little in 2022 and asked him to waive his modified no-trade clause, allowing Winnipeg to trade his contract to Arizona to alleviate the salary cap gymnastics Winnipeg had to play with Little on long-term injured reserve.

“He graciously did it, without ever asking (for anything),” Cheveldayoff said. “It just showed again he was willing to give another assist any time he could.”

Little joked Sunday that it always felt weird to be a member of the Coyotes.

“In my heart, I never left,” Little said. “I was always a Jet. And (signing the one-day contract) made it official. In my mind, my heart was always here.”

These days, Little’s busy doing Ironman marathons, which allows his competitive juices to keep flowing.

“I’m surprised more guys don’t do that,” Little said. “It’s pretty fun to do. (former Boston Bruins captain Zdeno) Chara is in them now, doing Ironmans and marathons and stuff like that. It keeps me busy and it keeps me in shape.”

Is a return to hockey in some capacity in the cards?

Not yet.

“Hockey was such a big part of my life and I’ve enjoyed being away for a little bit,” Little said. “In the future, it would be nice to get back into the game in some capacity.”

### **Pittsburgh Post-Gazette**

<https://www.post-gazette.com/sports/penguins/2024/10/20/winnipeg-jets-alex-nedeljkovic-mike-sullivan-erik-karlsson/stories/202410140149>

### ***Penguins bleed goals again, get lit up by Jets in Alex Nedeljkovic's first start of the season***

By Matt Vensel

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — Albeit briefly, the story again was who was not in net.

In fact, Tristan Jarry wasn’t even in uniform here as his saga continued Sunday.

That development had social media buzzing about his future with the Penguins, with some fans celebrating and others speculating what might be next for him.

Then the puck dropped at Canada Life Centre and with a 6-3 loss to the Winnipeg Jets came the sobering reminder that it might not matter who is manning the net for the Penguins going forward if they continue to pretend to defend like this.

From The Point: Joe Brand, new Penguins broadcaster in town, has enjoyed his ‘baptism’ so far. For the third game in a row, it was a shooting gallery on one of Pittsburgh’s goalies. This time, it was Alex Nedeljkovic, who was shelled for five goals on 36 shots.

“We just unraveled and gave them free looks,” Marcus Pettersson said with a sigh.

Thing is, Nedeljkovic actually played OK in his first start of the season. He kept the Penguins in it for a while. They led 2-0 midway through the game, then everything fell apart. The undefeated Jets pumped five shots past him in the second half.

The Penguins, who were again plagued by defensive breakdowns and lost battles at the net front, have allowed four or more goals in five of their seven games.

Sure, there were a couple of bad bounces in Sunday’s loss. However, the Penguins permitted another 21 shots from the slot. The Jets doubled them up in odd-man rushes, with eight total. And with the Penguins struggling to cleanly exit their zone, the Jets had a whopping 15 scoring chances off of turnovers, per Sportlogiq.

“We’ve got to do a better job of not beating ourselves,” coach Mike Sullivan said. “In certain instances, we implode a little bit. I think that’s the biggest takeaway.”

Sunday afternoon, the latest implosion came midway through the second period.

Pittsburgh pulled ahead 2-0 early in the second, starting with a power-play goal.

Kevin Hayes scored that one, his third goal through seven games. He then pointed emphatically toward Rickard Rakell, who set him up with a slick backdoor pass.

Lars Eller tucked in a rebound behind Jets goalie Eric Comrie a few minutes later.

The game turned when Kyle Connor scored 6-on-5 on a delayed Penguins penalty. That was the first of three Winnipeg goals in a span of 7 minutes, 11 seconds.

“We maybe took a little bit of a breath the last couple of minutes,” Nedeljkovic said. “They’ve got some high-powered offensive guys that can make you pay for it.”

Mark Scheifele whacked in a rebound to tie the score. That was a bad break for the visitors. The puck pinballed off of Nedeljkovic and Ryan Graves right to Scheifele.

Vladislav Namestnikov gave the Jets the lead with 31 seconds left in that period.

Nikolaj Ehlers did most of the work on the go-ahead goal. During 4-on-4 play, he pinched down the wall to prevent Eller from poking the puck past him. Then Ehlers got Matt Grzelcyk to flop onto the ice before sliding it across to Namestnikov.

Sullivan said the Penguins too often burnt themselves by thinking offense first.

“It starts with just the right mindset,” he said. “We’re quick to try to jump on the offense when we don’t have the puck, and we end up putting ourselves and our teammates in tough spots. We’ve got to have more of a mindset of playing defense first and recognizing when we don’t have control or there’s a question of control.”

Eller’s second goal pulled the Penguins back even at 3-3 early in the third period. That goal was an awesome individual effort, with a slim-angle snipe of Comrie.

Alas, that only briefly halted the onslaught. Adam Lowry pounced on a rebound less than three minutes later, then Mason Appleton pushed the Jets’ lead to 5-3.

The Appleton goal was the back breaker. Pettersson turned over the puck trying to make a stretch pass through the neutral zone. The Jets went the other way, and Pettersson accidentally deflected Appleton’s pass between Nedeljkovic’s pads.

Nino Niederreiter added an empty-netter, as the Jets doubled up the Penguins.

The Penguins were trying to regroup after a lifeless loss to the Carolina Hurricanes on Friday. After that game, Eller criticized the team’s energy level and effort. Kris Letang said Pittsburgh simply got outworked in that 4-1 defeat on home ice.

Both Sullivan and captain Sidney Crosby felt the effort level was where it needed to be Sunday. Crosby said the Penguins just have "to find a way to be a bit smarter."

Said Crosby: "We did some good things. Obviously, we're just giving too much up. I think we can't give up what we're giving up and expect to win consistently."

### *Ice chips*

- Joel Blomqvist backed up Nedeljkovic on Sunday. That meant Jarry was a healthy scratch. Perhaps attempting to downplay that storyline, Sullivan declined to name his starting goalie prior to the game. The coach almost always will reveal that.
- Heading into Sunday's matinee, Sullivan blenderized his forward lines. Drew O'Connor was promoted to the top line. Jesse Puljujarvi got a chance to play with Evgeni Malkin. Their third line was Anthony Beauvillier, Eller and Cody Glass.
- Michael Bunting was a healthy scratch. He had just one point in the first six games of the season and did not provide much of a spark in other ways. Bunting also took an accidental but costly double minor during Friday's loss to the Hurricanes.
- Valtteri Puustinen made his season debut with Bunting sitting in the press box. He played less than 10 minutes, was a minus-1 and didn't record a shot on goal.
- Ryan Shea got back in the Pittsburgh lineup, replacing Jack St. Ivany on the blue line. He and partner Graves were on the ice for two of Winnipeg's goals.
- Eller has a team-best four goals on the year, plus two assists in seven games.
- Bryan Rust got banged up trying to score late in the first period and missed two shifts. But he was good to go for the start of the second and finished the game.
- Jets fans chanted "Where is Rutger?" and "Yager's better" during the third period. That was aimed at Rutger McGroarty, who declined to sign with Winnipeg this offseason. The Penguins sent fellow prospect Brayden Yager to the Jets to acquire McGroarty, who is currently playing for their American Hockey League club.

### *Stat n'at*

2 — Only two teams, Colorado and Nashville, have given up more goals per game.

### *They said it*

"It felt like we were in control when we had that 2-0 lead," Pettersson said. "On the road, against a good team like that, you just can't unravel like we did there."

### *Coming up*

The Penguins flew to Calgary after the game. They will practice there on Monday ahead of Tuesday's matchup versus the Flames at the Scotiabank Saddledome.

**TSN.ca**

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/jets-improve-to-5-0-as-they-celebrate-bryan-little-s-retirement~3014175>

***Jets improve to 5-0 as they celebrate Bryan Little's retirement (VIDEO)***

Bryan Little signed a one-day contract so he could retire as a member of the Winnipeg Jets. Not only did the team honour him before the game but they also were able to celebrate a win over the Penguins that kept them undefeated and improve to 5-0.