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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/impressive-start-for-jets>

Impressive start for Jets

Comrie: "The amount of buy-in we have here is impressive."

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – It's a 5-0 start and there are plenty of reasons to be excited about the play of the Winnipeg Jets.

After a 6-3 win over Pittsburgh on Sunday, Jets goaltender Eric Comrie summed up the reasons why he believes there is something different about this group.

"It's all four lines just doing exactly what coach tells them. Line after line after line. I don't think people understand how special it is.," said Comrie on Sunday night.

"The amount of buy-in we have here is impressive. I don't think I've really seen it anywhere else. The buy-in, shift after shift. You know what you're getting out there. It's special."

Comrie isn't wrong about the Jets four lines. Opening night and Sunday, it was the Lowry line. During the first two games of the homestand, it was Scheifele's line. Last Friday's blowout win over the Sharks, Namestnikov's unit played a large role.

"In our forward group, we're getting contributions from everybody. I think our D has been, thought there was a stretch where we weren't playing fast, but we got it back up to where we wanted to be. The D have been good not to spend too much time in our own end. I think last night's game was probably the first game that we've been out-zone-timed," said head coach Scott Arniel.

"Pittsburgh, you've got to give them credit. We weren't very good in the second. I think it grew that way. But I've just liked our consistency throughout our lineup. It's helped us look the same on every shift, going out and having that same mindset."

The Jets will begin their three-game road trip against the Blues who are off to a 4-2 start, then Seattle (4-2) on Thursday and they will close out the trip Saturday in Calgary (4-0-1).

"Yeah, getting out on the road. That's another area. We've talked about the division. We've talked about whether it was the East or whatever, but being good on the road. We've done a good job of that," said Arniel.

"We've got a lot coming here on the road in the next stretch. We do need to be good. I've said it before, there isn't a home way or a roadway to play. There's just the right way and that's what we have to do. We have to continue to play the right way."

Defenceman Colin Miller who had two assists in the win over Pittsburgh, believes that even that things are going well, there won't be any complacency in the room.

"I think it's a mature group," said Miller.

“They’ve had some win streaks before, this group, and I think it’s just about putting that behind you and focusing on the next game.”

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/arts-and-life/diversions/2024/10/21/jets-wont-sneak-up-on-anyone>

Jets won’t sneak up on anyone

NHL’s last undefeated team expects opponents to give them their best

By: Ken Wiebe

ST. LOUIS — When you’re the last undefeated team left standing, the ability to sneak up on teams disappears into thin air.

So, as the Winnipeg Jets open their first extended road trip of the NHL season on Tuesday against the St. Louis Blues, they recognize there’s a good chance they’ll be seeing the best of their opponent.

“I don’t think so. I think this is a first for me,” said Jets defenceman Colin Miller, who had two assists in Sunday’s 6-3 win over the Pittsburgh Penguins. “I think every team is looking for a good start off the start of the year. To have this start is great. We’re going on the road now against some teams that are playing some really good hockey. It’s just going to get harder.”

That’s the thing, even with an impressive 5-0 start, the level of competition isn’t going to be getting easier for the Jets anytime soon.

Case in point is the Blues, who entered the season with projections as a bubble team but are off to a solid 4-2 start.

The Jets are off to a 2-0 start against Central Division opponents this season, but they required overtime to beat the Chicago Blackhawks and Minnesota Wild.

“You run into each other so often and the dislike that grows over the years,” said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. “And the tough part is that we’ve had a great start, but everybody’s still sitting right there. They’re all right in the mix as well. So it’s just a very competitive division.

“There’s a lot of similarities about how we play, how we defend. There’s there’s some star studded players on a lot of the teams. And, yeah, it’s a tough division.”

As the trip continues, the Jets face the Seattle Kraken and Calgary Flames, who are one of the biggest surprises in the NHL so far.

There’s always a bonding element that comes along with the first road trip of the season, though Arniel will be looking for his group to stay committed to the style that has allowed them to get off to a strong start.

“There isn’t a home way or road way to play,” said Arniel. “It’s just the right way and that’s what we have to do. We’ve got to continue to play the right way.”

“We have to be good at what we do and be consistent at what we do. We’ve done that here in the last five and now we’ve got to go out on the road and do the same thing.”

Jets players aren’t worried about getting ahead of themselves after a strong start.

“I think it’s a mature group. They’ve had some win streaks before,” said Miller, noting that rallying from a deficit on several occasions has helped them feel comfortable in tight games, specifically battling back from a 2-0 hole on Sunday against the Penguins. “I think it was another good test for our group. I think coming back from that one, they were playing a strong game.

“We made some adjustments, obviously we weren’t happy with some parts of our game. We tried to change some things. It’s just about making those adjustments and we did a good job of it. Hopefully it can continue.”

Arniel was asked if he broke down the season into five or 10-game blocks and he made it clear he prefers to focus on what is in front of his team.

“Yeah. I’m not big on that,” said Arniel. “I’m more about the next game, the next opponent, and put the critique on what you’ve done in the last game or a couple, and then use it to get better and then move on. I just try to stay focused on and try to keep the group focused on what’s next.”

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/5855347/2024/10/21/jets-bryan-little-perfect-start-takeaways/>

Winning games, building identity: 5 takeaways from Winnipeg Jets’ perfect start to 2024-25

By Murat Ates

WINNIPEG — Bryan Little’s humble, team-first approach to hockey often defined Winnipeg’s identity as a team and a city alike.

His willingness to put others in the spotlight in place of himself, while quietly putting in character-defining hours of hard work, presented Winnipeg to the world in the way this community most wants to be seen. A unique, 588-game-long alignment — on top of 356 games with the Atlanta Thrashers, the franchise’s previous incarnation — wherein an athlete and his community were mirror images of each other was, and remains, a gift.

Now he’s on a quest to build an identity of his own.

“For my whole life, everyone — including me — saw me as a hockey player,” Little said Sunday. “I’m not quite sure what I’d be doing if I didn’t have triathlons.”

Little remains an elite athlete at 36, shifting his focus to non-contact sports after an errant shot attempt struck him in the head in 2019. Retiring was never his choice — never a reality he wanted to accept — and giving up control of that is a challenge Little has risen to as he pursues the next steps in his life.

“You’d think a decision (about) health would be easy, but it definitely wasn’t,” he said. “I think I was just searching for someone to say it’s OK and it’s safe, and I could never really find that.”

Speaking to reporters Sunday, Little left the door open to working in hockey in the future. He cracked jokes about his \$0 contract. He confessed to feeling out of place in the spotlight before taking to the ice with the Jets before a ceremonial faceoff. His daughter, Parker, dropped the puck. His wife, Brittany, stood with him. And, as Little pulled the puck back from Sidney Crosby and picked it up, the scene looked like many others we’ve seen at Canada Life Centre. Maybe that’s what his 1,000th game would have looked like, or the night he chose to retire, had it been up to him.

Little said his decision to retire as a Jet was easy.

“In my heart, I never left,” he said. “I was always a Jet and this made it official. My heart was always here.”

By the end of his tribute game, the same fans chanting Little’s name during the ceremonial puck drop gave themselves a gift of a different, more vindictive nature.

“Where is Rutger?” the crowd chanted. And then: “Yager’s better.”

There’s a lesson in that — and it says more about Winnipeg than it does Little or McGroarty. If you choose Winnipeg, Winnipeg loves you for life. It is a special badge of respect given to Dale Hawerchuk, Teemu Selanne and Teppo Numminen, re-established when Blake Wheeler and Dustin Byfuglien re-signed with Jets 2.0, and which will presumably be carried on by Mark Scheifele and Connor Hellebuyck.

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

And that’s lesson one of Winnipeg’s 2024-25 season. Whatever is happening around the Jets, their roster or their prospects, Jets fans are always at the heart of the story. With a 5-0-0 start to celebrate — and some clear strengths and weaknesses to dissect — here are five takeaways from Winnipeg’s perfect start to 2024-25.

Scheifele, Connor and Vilardi are winning games and the first line hasn’t clicked yet
When Mark Scheifele tied Sunday’s score 2-2 with a rebound goal, it was the first time all season Winnipeg’s top line of Scheifele, Kyle Connor and Gabriel Vilardi were all on the ice for a Jets goal at five-on-five.

Scheifele helped kick-start his own score-tying goal by joining Josh Morrissey and Dylan DeMelo for a battle below the Jets’ goal line — a three-on-three battle Scheifele won by getting inside position on Noel Acciari, scooping the puck to Connor and then taking off. Connor angled Acciari off to get the puck out of the Jets zone and then ate a check as he put the puck back onto Scheifele’s stick.

When the Jets were taking it to the Pittsburgh Penguins in the first and third periods of Winnipeg’s fifth straight win, Connor was on his defensive horse, too. Some of his trackbacks to the Jets’ zone won Winnipeg the puck, helping his line keep a clean defensive sheet in the

game. Even after Connor's pass, Scheifele was knocked over by defenceman Ryan Shea, but Vilardi's puck support ensured the Jets kept possession. Scheifele was then cross-checked to the ice by Ryan Graves but got up just in time to bat home Colin Miller's point shot to tie the score.

If you've been paying attention, you know Scheifele and Connor are scoring almost one goal each every single game.

Scheifele scored a power-play goal against the Edmonton Oilers to open the season. He scored Winnipeg's overtime winner against the Chicago Blackhawks after tying the score with just over a minute left in the third period. He's scored twice at six-on-five, including this end-of-period set play against the Minnesota Wild the Jets have been trying to execute for years.

Connor has been almost as productive, with power-play goals against Edmonton and Minnesota along with Sunday's opportunistic six-on-five one-time blast. Again, though, he's been limited to one five-on-five goal in Winnipeg's 8-3 rout of the San Jose Sharks on Friday.

What are we meant to make of all this?

In my opinion, two things are true: Connor, Scheifele and Vilardi are helping the Jets win games. Scheifele in particular has appeared to put the team on his back at key moments. And: They haven't been that good at five-on-five. The scoreboard with all three players on the ice is 2-1 opponents and the shot clock is 39-32 in favour of the other guys, too. The Jets have been a good five-on-five team overall, but their top line has saved its best and most dominant work for special occasions. This echoes last season, when all three players were productive but they ended up outscored by two goals when playing together as a line.

Sunday's goal against Pittsburgh didn't come in a perfect game. Scheifele's defensive zone giveaway to Crosby helped create Lars Eller's second goal of the game by hemming the Jets in their zone for a long shift. We might not see them outscore their opponents this season as a line — and this will test Scott Arniel's problem-solving ability — but Connor, Scheifele and Vilardi are still driving wins in an overall sense.

Ehlers is also driving wins, but ...

Nikolaj Ehlers has two goals and five assists for 7 points. He is tied with Josh Morrissey for second place in Jets scoring, 1 point behind Scheifele for the lead. His two goals helped key the Jets win against San Jose. Connor's goal against Pittsburgh, built on the penalty Ehlers drew and the pass he made, was one of a pair of goals he created.

Ehlers finished the Penguins game with 13 minutes of ice time, dropping his average to 14:45 — a career low. His first couple of games were not very good, and his line went through some soul-searching before its explosion against a depleted Sharks roster. Let's also be clear that Ehlers has "only" 2 five-on-five points himself and that the Jets are led on that front by Mason Appleton (5) and Neal Pionk (4).

It is still worth noting Ehlers' minutes haven't gone up despite his addition to the top power-play unit. His line with Vladislav Namestnikov and Cole Perfetti is the team's third line to start the year.

Samberg and Pionk are getting it done

Dylan Samberg has been a force on the Jets' penalty kill, as we knew he would be. He's getting clears, denying zone entries and blocking shots as well as he ever has, and I see a breakout season in store for him.

His partner Neal Pionk has been fast and aggressive at the blue line, helping Winnipeg turn defence into offence. He's also picked up a goal and five assists so far this season, leading to a stat line that looks great by traditional stats — 6 points, plus-three at five-on-five — and fancy stats alike. (Pionk had a tough night in his own zone against Chicago but is second only to Morrissey in Game Score among Jets blueliners, per Dom Luszczyszyn.)

For me, the obvious signs of Pionk at his best come at the Jets' blue line. Pionk is an asset if he's reading the play well, moving his feet well and combing those two skills to shut down entry attempts — and maybe even throwing a big hit or two along the way.

Power play is for real; PK is a work in progress

Winnipeg's penalty kill managed to be the last one in the NHL to give up a goal this season. I'm going to chalk that one up to team discipline.

The Jets' 18 PIM are the fewest in the league. They've been short-handed only eight times and have been scored on twice — once by ex-Jet Tyler Toffoli, once by ex-Jet Kevin Hayes. They're going to need more practice before Dean Chynoweth's high-pressure system bears fruit.

The power play has been the best in the entire league. Winnipeg has scored seven goals in 16 attempts — 43.8 percent — and the visuals support the results. Both units generate entries more often than not. In the zone, both units create plenty of motion. Davis Payne has given Winnipeg attacking options from both flanks, with all players open to multiple ways of attacking. The Scheifele-to-Vilardi-to-slot play is still there. So is the option where Vilardi finds Connor across the ice. But Ehlers has posted up beside the net and looked for Scheifele in the slot or Vilardi backdoor, too.

Winnipeg is also scoring pretty ones with barely any zone time at all.

Hellebuyck + Comrie = goaltending success

The superstar goaltender without a backup plan and the backup whose summer plan was to come home to Winnipeg are off to great starts in goal.

Hellebuyck is proving critics wrong — again. Eric Comrie has won his first Jets start, making 39 saves in the process. The only team with a better save percentage than Hellebuyck and Comrie's combined .946 so far this season is the Dallas Stars — the team whose 10 points tie Winnipeg atop the NHL standings.

The Jets' perfect 5-0-0 record would not be possible without big breakaway saves by Hellebuyck against Chicago and Minnesota and Comrie's workhorse night against Pittsburgh.

"I'm super happy to be back and play in front of these guys," Comrie said after Sunday's win. "These guys are awesome. 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."

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/5860549/2024/10/22/nhl-front-office-rankings/>

What are the NHL's Top 10 front offices? Here's how 40 executives voted

By Arthur Staple, Chris Johnston, Michael Russo and Scott Powers

There's been an award in place for the NHL's top general manager for 15 years. But the Jim Gregory Award, while a proper honor for the league's GM of the year as voted on by his peers, has its drawbacks in terms of evaluating a team's full front office's impact on sustained success.

The award is given out after the second round of the playoffs, and not surprisingly, it has gone to the GM of a team among the final four standing nearly every season.

So outside of that recency-bias-loaded time of the year, The Athletic decided to see what 40 high-ranking league executives — general managers, assistant GMs, senior advisers and scouting directors, spanning just about every organization — felt were the league's best-run clubs.

The execs were asked to rank the league's top five front offices, with first-place votes worth 10 points, second-place seven, third-place five, fourth-place three and fifth-place one. They were granted anonymity for their votes and comments, to allow them to speak freely, and were not allowed to vote for their own teams.

It's not a shock to see the past four Stanley Cup winners in the top six of our poll. The Tampa Bay Lightning, in particular, may have slipped a bit from the lofty perch they inhabited from 2020 to '22 but are still a well-run organization that empties the tank every season to stay competitive.

Teams that are active in trades and free agency seemed to poll best among our 40 respondents. But this ended up being a runaway win for a team that hasn't made many go-for-broke moves and still hasn't won a Cup this century.

18. Winnipeg Jets (6 points)

GM Kevin Cheveldayoff's 13-year tenure has produced a pretty decent team, given the factors — including requested changes of scenery — that have gone against the Jets since they moved from Atlanta. "They draft well, develop their players," an assistant GM said. "They've taken strides in being more proactive in trades because that had been a roadblock. They probably don't want to admit it, but it's a tough place to attract players, and they've continued to win."

Global Winnipeg

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

ANALYSIS: The Winnipeg Jets are undefeated. Should we be surprised?

By Kelly Moore Global News

A dozen days and five games into their season, the Winnipeg Jets are the only team in the NHL without a loss of any kind.

And while that's certainly impressive, the best start in 2.0 franchise history should not be totally unexpected.

Oh sure, that 6-0 beatdown of the Oilers in Edmonton to kick things off was beyond the category of a pleasant surprise. But a clean sweep of the just-completed four-game homestand?

I think most would agree that a defeat at the hands of any of the four opponents involved would have been classified as a significant disappointment — opportunity lost.

And without a doubt, the Jets had to dig deep on multiple occasions to avoid that scenario.

The late tying goal against Chicago, that perfectly-executed end of first period marker versus Minnesota, and then the rally from a two-goal deficit yesterday against Pittsburgh.

Those back-to-back OT victories over the Hawks and Wild also lend credence to the idea that nothing is going to come easy in the Central this season. But they're also teams Winnipeg needs to beat if they are to scrap and claw their way into the top three of the division.

Just as not looking past the Sharks and the Penguins was also part of that equation.

With this being October, I think we have a little licence to adopt some baseball terminology.

The Jets have handled the bottom of the order. But starting Tuesday — with five of the next six on the road over the next dozen days, and the only home game during that stretch against a legit contender in Toronto — well, let's just say Winnipeg will be facing a lineup of next-level hitters.

But at 5-0, they have certainly established themselves as one of the NHL's toughest outs — at least in the early innings.

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/video/how-the-jets-have-made-a-smooth-transition-from-bowness-to-arniel/>

How the Jets have made a smooth transition from Bowness to Arniel (VIDEO)

Winnipeg Jets General Manager Kevin Cheveldayoff joins the FAN Hockey Show to discuss how the Jets have seamlessly transitioned from former head coach Rick Bowness to starting the season strong under Scott Arniel.

NHL Network

<https://www.nhl.com/nhl-network/topic/nhl-latest-video/nhl-now-discusses-the-jets-hot-start-and-more-6363569289112>

NHL Now discusses the Jets' hot start and more (VIDEO)

The NHL Now hosts talk about how the Jets are finding ways to win, the Stars notching an impressive win over the Oilers, the Capitals' winning streak, and more

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/jets-early-season-success-no-fluke>

Jets' early-season success no fluke

By Scott Billeck

Sometimes, you just have to sit back and tip your cap.

It's the sort of thing that rarely happens in a Canadian hockey market. A team gets off to a 5-0-0 start to the year, and the temptation to nitpick that success is never too far from the mind.

This line hasn't performed at its best, or that player on the periphery could be swapped for another player on the fringe.

It's easy to do.

The Winnipeg Jets are undefeated to start the 2024-25 NHL campaign, but no one would suggest it has been perfect.

Even teams that have reached the pinnacle of this sport haven't achieved perfection. The Florida Panthers won the Stanley Cup last season but didn't sweep the playoffs in 16 games with 16 consecutive shutouts.

It can always be better. And it can always be worse.

What is often lost is the ability to enjoy the moment. The season is long, and it's almost always a rollercoaster.

The time to critique will come. It's inevitable.

But right now, this Jets team has done good things.

In no particular order, that list includes an improved power play and an improved penalty kill.

They've hit the ground running with their structure, a foundation built over the past couple of years that can support further growth.

Their two-time and reigning Vezina-winning goalie hasn't skipped a beat.

They've received scoring from up and down the lineup. Their fourth line is a strength, and their third pairing has played well. Dylan Samberg has stepped up into the vacancy left by the departed Brenden Dillon and thrived.

Head coach Scott Arniel has allowed his lines to breathe, not believing in constant tinkering that goes against the tenets of building chemistry.

The team is more aggressive. They can escape their game for a period but recapture it before it sinks them.

They've won big, come from behind and protected leads.

They're playing well, and few would have seen this coming, even with the backdrop of a 52-win season in the rearview mirror.

This team's most recent memory before the season started was another quick first-round exit, where they played nothing like the team that won 67% of its games to get there.

They also didn't really improve, at least on paper, over the summer.

For instance, if you take a team like Nashville and compare the two respective off-seasons, the winner is clear.

Barry Trotz waved his general manager wand, and Steven Stamkos, Brady Skjei and Jonathan Marchessault were pulled out of the hat.

The Jets signed a couple of backup goalies and shored up depth at the bottom of their lineup but whiffed on their big free-agent targets.

The Predators are 0-5-0, have scored just 10 goals and own a minus-13 goal differential so far.

For comparison's sake, Winnipeg has notched 24, tied for second most in the league, and allowed a league-low eight against.

The Jets aren't going to give up the Jennings quietly.

Crucially, they've built a 10-point gap on a team many figured could finish second in the division.

These are early days — no one's planning parades or scouting out real estate in the rafters in October.

But Winnipeg's hot start can be attributed to a group that's matured together. It's not a coincidence.

You can walk around that dressing room now, and almost every player will tell you the same thing: That they've learned there's a way to play where being good at one end of the rink doesn't mean you won't be at the other.

Their plus-16 goal differential is proof of that.

The buy-in is there, and their playoff disappointment didn't alter their belief in it.

They took ownership of their failures in the post-season. They didn't point the finger elsewhere.

And that's evident early on here, both in word and deed.

The Jets have built a different culture in their dressing room, and with time, that may prove to be the improvement no free-agent signing would have brought.

The Hockey News

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

Winnipeg Jets' Attendance Improving, But There's A Long Way To Go

By Ken Campbell

On Sunday afternoon, Sidney Crosby and the Pittsburgh Penguins made their only visit of the season to the Canada Life Centre, home of the Winnipeg Jets.

The game also served as a tribute to longtime Jets fan favorite Bryan Little, who retired from the NHL. And they didn't sell out the building. Didn't come close, really.

That's been a problem for the Jets since the pandemic. Their attendance has cratered for a number of reasons, and while things are starting to look up, there's still a lot of work for them to do to capture the hearts and minds of sports fans in Winnipeg.

Winning, of course, is a great cure-all, and the Jets have been doing a lot of that to start the season. If they can keep the good times rolling, perhaps the good people of Winnipeg will put their bums back in the seats.