

## **Winnipegjets.com**

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-jets-ot-magic-in-seattle>

### ***Three things - Jets OT magic in Seattle Jets franchise best start to a season at 7-0 after win in Seattle***

By Jamie Thomas

The Winnipeg Jets continued their three-game road trip in Seattle beating the Kraken 4-3 in overtime. Winnipeg got two goals from Nino Niederreiter and Gabe Vilardi and Nikolaj Ehlers added singles. Kyle Connor extended his season-opening point streak to seven games (5G, 2A) which is the longest in his career to start a season. Thursday's win over Seattle gave the Jets their first 7-0-0 start in franchise history. The Jets have now won 15 consecutive regular season games, dating back to last season which sits as the franchise record.

#### ***EHLERS OT WINNER***

After the Jets gave up a 3-1 lead in the third period, Seattle fought back to tie it at 3-3 and sent the game to overtime. In OT, on a delayed penalty, Nikolaj Ehlers shot squeaked through Joey Daccord's pads and into the net for the game winning goal. Winnipeg is 3-0 in overtime, winning their first two OT games at Canada Life Centre.

"I think both coaches might be tossing that one away. It was sloppy both ways. I don't mean to be disrespectful to Dan (Bylsma) and his team, we weren't very good in the first," said Scott Arniel.

"We were a lot better in the second, third, we did everything we needed to do but made a couple of mistakes that ended up in the back of our net. But at the end of the day, like I said before, it's two points, it's on the road, move on."

#### ***EL NINO***

After a solid first period for the Kraken that saw them lead 1-0, the Jets line of Adam Lowry, Mason Appleton and Nino Niederreiter tied things up at 3:56 of the middle frame. Appleton took a shot that was stopped by Joey Daccord; however, the rebound went off of Niederreiter and into the net to push the Swiss forwards goal streak to three games.

Niederreiter would get his second of the night taking a pass from Cole Perfetti, faking his shot and getting Daccord to commit before his fourth of the year into the back of the net to make it 3-1.

"He's someone I watch a lot in practice. The things he does around the net. The things he works on, I try and work on those things too. He's been around for so long," said Gabe Vilardi on Niederreiter.

"He's been a goal scorer around the net, and I kind of see myself as similar to that, a guy that's going to score his goals around the net. He's got incredible hands and he uses his body well."

#### ***KEY PLAY***

The Kraken looked like they had taken a 2-1 lead in the second period as Oliver Bjorkstrand finished off a pretty passing play. The Jets challenged that Yanni Gourde made contact with Connor Hellebuyck and thus goaltender interference. The challenge was successful, and the

game remained 1-1. Neal Pionk also made a goal saving play in the second, after Jordan Eberle redirected a shot during a Kraken power play, the puck went through Hellebuyck and Pionk swatted it out of the crease.

## **NHL.com**

<https://www.nhl.com/news/winnipeg-jets-seattle-kraken-game-recap-october-24>

### ***Jets recover for OT victory against Kraken, remain undefeated Ehlers wins it at 1:26 for Winnipeg; Beniers has 2 goals, assist for Seattle***

By Darren Brown

SEATTLE -- Nikolaj Ehlers scored 1:26 into overtime, and the Winnipeg Jets extended their season-opening winning streak to seven games with a 4-3 victory against the Seattle Kraken at Climate Pledge Arena on Thursday.

During a delayed penalty, Ehlers got the puck in the high slot and scored with a wrist shot that trickled under Joey Daccord's arm.

"Obviously, it's a great shot, and we knew once he got the shot it was [going] in," Jets forward Nino Niederreiter said. "We didn't do a lot of great things tonight, but we still found a way."

Niederreiter scored twice, and Gabriel Vilardi also had a goal for the Jets (7-0-0), who became the fifth team in the past 10 years to start a season with a seven-game winning streak. Connor Hellebuyck made 29 saves.

"As much as I'm disappointed on how we played, you still have to look at the fact that we're doing a lot of good things to find ways to win," Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel said. "And we've got to bank points. If you look at the scoreboard tonight, Dallas won, [Minnesota] won ... everybody in our division keeps winning, so you've just got to keep piling up points."

Matty Beniers had two goals and an assist, Jordan Eberle scored and Jared McCann had two assists for the Kraken (4-3-1), who have lost two straight. Daccord made 32 saves.

"They're a good team," Beniers said. "I thought we played well throughout the night, and that was some good character coming back there in the end, tying it up, taking it to overtime. Obviously, you want a different outcome, but there's a lot of positives to build off."

Beniers scored his first goal of the season at 11:27 of the first period to give the Kraken a 1-0 lead. He took a pass from McCann at the top of the left circle and scored blocker side with a wrist shot.

"I think the defensive side of the game has been there all year for him," Seattle coach Dan Bylsma said of Beniers. "I think the chances to score have also been there for him in pretty good amounts the last three or four games, but I thought he was at another level tonight."

Niederreiter tied it 1-1 at 3:56 of the second period. Mason Appleton's shot from the top of the right circle hit Daccord's blocker and bounced in off Niederreiter's chest as he drove to the net.

“Sometimes you’ve just got to go to the paint,” Niederreiter said. “That’s what I did, and it went right off my chest. I just tried to protect the puck with my skate, make sure I didn’t kick it, and after that, I thought it was a good goal.”

Vilardi gave Winnipeg a 2-1 lead at 15:05 of the second. Kyle Connor won a race for the puck at the blue line and passed to Mark Scheifele, who found Vilardi at the side of the net. Vilardi then drove across the crease and tucked it around Daccord’s outstretched left pad.

“Good track by ‘K.C.,’ and then obviously with that, all their guys on their team are flying out of the zone,” Vilardi said. “And that gives me more space down low, and so I just take it to the net and was able to score.”

Niederreiter pushed it to 3-1 with his second goal of the game at 4:21 of the third period. He faked a shot in the right circle, cut to the middle and lifted the puck into the open net with Daccord out of position.

The goal came three seconds after Winnipeg’s only power play of the game expired.

“When things are not going well, [my line] has to make sure we go back to what we do great,” Niederreiter said. “Wearing teams down, getting it down low, creating chances, create momentum, and I think that’s what we did tonight.”

Eberle cut it to 3-2 at 11:01 of the third, receiving a pass from Jared McCann at the top of the crease and lifting a backhand in off Hellebuyck’s blocker.

Beniers tied it 3-3 with his second goal of the game at 16:38, tipping Brandon Montour’s slap shot past Hellebuyck.

“They obviously score that third goal in the third, and I thought we did a great job of not letting that get to us, continuing to play our game,” Beniers said. “[We knew] that it was going to come, and it did.”

NOTES: Hellebuyck became the sixth U.S.-born goaltender in NHL history to record a season-opening winning streak of at least six games. The others: Jack Campbell (11 games in 2020-21), Ryan Miller (eight in 2006-07), Tim Thomas (seven in 2010-11), Brent Johnson (seven in 2000-01) and Jeremy Swayman (six in 2023-24). ... The Jets became the sixth Canadian team in NHL history to record a season-opening winning streak of at least seven games, joining the 1993-94 Maple Leafs (10 games), 2015-16 Canadiens (nine), 1934-35 Maple Leafs (eight), 1983-84 Oilers (seven) and 1985-86 Nordiques (seven).

### **Associated Press**

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/jets-improve-to-7-0-with-overtime-win-over-kraken/>

### ***Jets improve to 7-0 with overtime win over Kraken***

By Associated Press

SEATTLE — Nikolaj Ehlers scored the winning goal 1:26 into overtime, and the Winnipeg Jets remained unbeaten this season with a 4-3 win over the Seattle Kraken on Thursday night.

Nino Niederreiter had two goals for Winnipeg, Gabriel Vilardi scored one and Connor Hellebuyck had 29 saves as the Jets improved to 7-0.

Matty Beniers had two goals and an assist for Seattle.

Beniers scored first at 11:27 of the first period to put the Kraken ahead 1-0. Seattle's lead disappeared in the second period, when Niederreiter tied it with a goal at 3:56.

"I think both coaches might be tossing that one away ... It was sloppy both ways," Jets coach Scott Arniel told reporters. "I don't mean to be disrespectful to Dan (Bylsma) and his team. We weren't very good in the first. We were a lot better in the second. Third, we did everything we needed to do and then made a couple mistakes and they're in the back of our net.

"But at the end of the day, it's two points, it's on the road, move on and (go) to the next one."

Vilardi snuck one past Kraken goaltender Joey Daccord at 15:05 of the second to give the Jets a 2-1 lead.

Niederreiter scored again just over four minutes into the third period to put the Jets ahead by two.

Jordan Eberle made it a one-score game with 9:58 left with his sixth goal in Seattle's first eight games, and Beniers tapped in his second with 3:22 remaining to tie it at 3-3.

Daccord finished with 32 saves.

#### *Takeaways*

Kraken: Beniers' goals were his first two of the season. He didn't score his second goal last season until Seattle's 18th game.

Jets: Winnipeg, which ranks second in the league in scoring, has now scored three or more goals in four consecutive games, and has reached the mark in five of its seven contests this season.

#### *Key moment*

The Kraken appeared to take a 2-1 lead on Oliver Bjorkstrand's goal midway through the second period, but the goal was disallowed after review due to goaltender interference. Vilardi put Winnipeg ahead just a few minutes later, making that overturned call sting even more.

#### *Key stat*

Winnipeg outshot the Kraken after the first period, 29-20, with four of those shots finding the back of the net.

#### *Up next*

The Jets will play at Calgary on Saturday night, while the Kraken will play host to Carolina.

**Sportsnet.ca**

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/friday-four-bruins-brad-marchand-facing-uncertain-future-with-only-team-hes-ever-known/>

***Takeaways: Third line powers Jets to another win***

By Jacob Stoller

Whenever the Winnipeg Jets' backs are against the wall, the team's third line is always there to spark a turnaround.

It was hardly pretty — at times, it was almost ugly — but the Jets wouldn't have defeated the Seattle Kraken 4-3 (OT) on Thursday night and upheld their NHL-best record (7-0-0) if it weren't for the team's identity line of Adam Lowry, Mason Appleton and Nino Niederreiter.

After a first period where Winnipeg trailed 1-0 and had no answer for Seattle's run-and-gun style — which led to being outchanced 6-1 during five-on-five play — the team's trusted trio went to work.

"When things are not going well we have to go back to what we do great, wearing teams down, get it down low, create chances, create momentum and I think that's what we did tonight," Niederreiter told reporters post-game. "I think that was a big reason why we won tonight."

Just over four minutes into the second period, Niederreiter tied the game after crashing the blue paint and using his body to deflect Appleton's shot into the net. That goal was the catalyst for Winnipeg regaining its composure and spearheaded what turned out to be a dominant performance from that line. In nine minutes of five-on-five ice time, the Jets' third line outshot their opponents 10-4 and posted a 78.95 Corsi-for percentage while also controlling 60.93 per cent of the expected goal share when they were on the ice, according to NaturalStatTrick.com. And during the small amount of time when they didn't possess the puck during five-on-five play, the third line did everything they could to get it back — combining for seven hits. And Niederreiter would add a second goal, too, at the 15:39 mark of the third period.

"Those guys are straight-line players," Jets coach Scott Arniel told reporters postgame. "They push the puck forward in their straight line, they get after it. They score a lot of goals in that blue paint area."

As much as Connor Hellebuyck is the team's safety net, Winnipeg's third line is their motor. And it never runs out of gas. Through seven games, they've outscored opponents 6-0 during five-on-five play, while also posting a 58.6 high-danger shot attempt percentage and a 56.3 scoring chance-for percentage.

***El Nino***

You could argue that Niederreiter is Jets GM Kevin Cheveldayoff's most underappreciated acquisition.

The 32-year-old Swiss forward, who's currently riding a three-game goal streak, has been one of the league's best at generating quality shots since Winnipeg acquired him midway through the 2022-23 season.

Since Feb. 23, 2023 — the day of that trade with the Nashville Predators — Niederreiter ranks in the 97th percentile in five-on-five individual expected goals per 60 minutes (1.06) among skaters that have played at least 500 minutes, according to NaturalStatTrick.com.

“He’s got incredible hands and he uses his body well,” teammate Gabriel Vilardi told reporters postgame.

#### *Tough times for top line*

Not only were they outchanced 12-2 and outscored 2-1 during five-on-five play but the Kraken’s second goal was a direct result of poor defensive coverage from those three. They were benched for a few shifts shortly after.

Thursday night felt very reminiscent of last year’s first-round series against the Colorado Avalanche, where that trio — whose defensive shortcomings have been well-documented — were frequently hemmed in their own zone for prolonged periods of time.

#### *Other takeaways*

- While Arniel wasn’t the most pleased with his team’s performance, the coach pointed out how crucial it is that they’re picking up points early on into the year given how competitive the Central Division is this year.

“If you look at the scoreboard tonight, Dallas won, (Minnesota) won, (Colorado won),” Arniel told reporters. “Everybody in our division keeps winning.”

- We all know how good of a passer Cole Perfetti — who registered another gorgeous assist against Seattle — is but he’s also appeared to develop more of a ‘shooter’s mentality’ this year. Perfetti is currently averaging 2.57 shots per game, which is a sizable increase from his career average (1.80).

- Alex Iafallo, Morgan Barron and Rasmus Kupari are shaping up to be a heck of a fourth line. Iafallo and Barron — two hard-forechecking players who thrive at sustaining offensive zone pressure on the walls — have always been known to be rock solid but Kupari’s emergence has really added a nice wrinkle to that unit. The 24-year-old has always had world-class speed but he’s really moulded well into a responsible fourth-line centre who can cycle the puck well in the offensive zone and kill penalties. Oh, and he’s won 54.9 per cent of his faceoffs.

- After registering an assist against Seattle, Neal Pionk now has eight points in seven games — tying him with Victor Hedman and Adam Fox for third league-wide in defenceman scoring.

#### **TSN.ca**

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/how-have-the-jets-continued-to-cook~3017544>

#### ***How have the Jets continued to cook? (VIDEO)***

The Jets overcame the Kraken’s comeback to remain the only undefeated team in the NHL. Winnipeg has trailed in five of their seven wins, so how do they keep pulling out the victories? TSN Hockey analyst Martin Biron shares his thoughts.

## **Global Winnipeg**

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10829939/ehlers-scores-ot-winner-as-winnipeg-jets-edge-kraken-to-improve-to-7-0/>

### ***Ehlers scores OT winner as Winnipeg Jets edge Kraken to improve to 7-0***

By Christian Aumell & Russ Hobson Global News

The Winnipeg Jets keep finding ways to win.

After blowing a two-goal lead in the third period, Nikolaj Ehlers scored in overtime to lift the Jets to a 4-3 win in Seattle Thursday night, their seventh straight win to start the season.

The Jets took a two-goal lead in the final frame, but the Kraken stormed back with a pair of markers in the final nine minutes to send the game to OT where Ehlers notched the game winner for their third overtime victory of the season.

“We found a way to win and that’s the most important thing, But it wasn’t our best.” said Jets forward Nino Niederreiter. “We didn’t do a lot of great things tonight, but we still found a way, and that makes things special.”

Niederreiter scored twice for Winnipeg to give him a three-game goal streak. Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor each had two assists as Connor extended his point streak to seven games. The franchise record point streak to start a season is eight games held by Blake Wheeler from 2015.

The Jets were outplayed in the first period, getting outshot 12-7 but found another gear in the second period.

“I think just the way they started in the first period kinda caught us off, honestly,” said Gabriel Vilardi who notched his first goal of the season in the win. “They’re really fast and just kinda pushing the puck up in the neutral zone and going from there. And we weren’t really playing well against that. And kinda made some adjustments in that first intermission. I thought we played much better against their style of play.”

The Jets have given up the first goal of the game in five of their last six contests but continue to find a way to come out on top.

“I think both coaches might be tossing that one away,” said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. “It was sloppy both ways.

“We weren’t very good in the first. We were a lot better in the second. Third, we did everything we need to do kinda and then made a couple mistakes and it was in the back of our net. But at the end of the day, like I’ve said before, it’s two points, it’s on the road, move on, we’ll move to the next one.”

With the win, the Jets become the 17th team in NHL history to start a season with seven consecutive wins. It’s also their 15th straight regular season victory dating back to last season, two shy of the league record.

After a stretch of almost six minutes without a whistle, Matty Beniers opened the scoring with his first of the season, ripping a shot up high past Connor Hellebuyck in transition at the 11:27 mark.

Seattle pushed to get another goal on the board, earning the game's first power play, but the Jets killed it off and kept it a one-goal game after 20 minutes.

Winnipeg got on the board just 3:56 into the second period when a Mason Appleton shot was stopped by Joey Daccord but the rebound ricocheted off the chest of Niederreiter and trickled over the goal line.

Seattle thought they had regained the lead just over seven minutes into the period but a Jets challenge overturned the goal because of goalie interference.

With just under five minutes to go in the second, the Jets took their first lead of the night. Connor made a great play to keep the puck in at the Seattle blue line and Scheifele came and collected it before firing it down low to Vilardi. He drove the puck in front of the net and tucked it past Daccord.

Winnipeg took that 2-1 lead into the third period and extended it to 3-1 at the 4:21 mark when Niederreiter potted his second of the night moments after the Kraken killed off a Winnipeg power play.

The Jets seemed set to cruise to the win but the Kraken had other ideas. With just under nine minutes left, a broken play in the Winnipeg end led to three Jets flocking to Jared McCann, but that left Jordan Eberle alone in front of the net. McCann fed the Kraken captain who then buried it through Hellebuyck to make it 3-2.

Beniers tied it with 3:22 to go when he tipped a Brandon Montour point shot past Hellebuyck, sending the game to overtime.

With a delayed penalty pending in OT, Ehlers came off the bench, skated into the Seattle end and got a pass from Scheifele that he fired on goal. Daccord got most of it but the puck squeaked through his body and trickled just over the goal line to give the Jets the win.

The Jets will look to make it eight wins in a row Saturday night when they visit the Calgary Flames to close out the road trip.

### **Winnipeg Free Press**

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/10/25/jets-sink-kraken-in-overtime-to-push-winning-streak-to-seven-games>

### ***Jets sink Kraken in overtime to push winning streak to seven games***

By: Ken Wiebe

SEATTLE – It wasn't quite sleepless in Seattle, but a sluggish opening period didn't end up sinking the Winnipeg Jets.

Neither did allowing a pair of third period goals that sent this game to overtime.



With the Jets enjoying a 4-on-3 advantage in extra time thanks to a delayed penalty, Nikolaj Ehlers squeezed a shot through the five-hole of Kraken goalie Joey Daccord to earn a 4-3 overtime victory at Climate Pledge Arena on Thursday night.

“Once you get to overtime now, it’s a skills contest,” said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. “Puck possession is a big part of it and I thought we had the puck for a lot of that, which helps. I just like the way we went out and attacked.”

The Jets, who improved to 7-0-0 on the season, close out their three-game road trip on Saturday in Calgary against the Flames.

“Overall we found a way to win and that’s the most important thing,” said Jets winger Nino Niederreiter. “But it wasn’t our best.”

No argument here, but let’s take a closer look at what transpired:

*TURNING THE TIDE* – It was a tough first period for the Jets, with puck management an area of concern, especially in the defensive zone, as the Kraken scored the lone goal of the opening 20 minutes of play.

But early in the second period, the line of Adam Lowry, Mason Appleton and Nino Niederreiter made a simple, but effective play to provide a momentum shift.

Lowry provided the zone entry and got the puck over to Appleton, who quickly got a shot off from the right wing that was tough to handle.

Niederreiter was driving for the far post and the puck ended up going in off his body.

“Those guys are straight line players. They push the puck forward in their straight line they get after it,” said Arniel. “They score a lot of goals in that blue paint area.”

Niederreiter appeared to make a kicking motion at the loose puck after it dropped to the ice, but he explained there was a method to his madness.

“Just to protect it. Just to protect it so nobody was going to go for the puck and let it slide in, which it did,” said Niederreiter, who was asked which part of his body the puck touched last before it went in. “It was definitely chest. I think it went straight up the chest and then it went down and I was like just go over the line and it should be good. And it did, thank God.”

Kraken head coach Dan Bylsma strongly considered challenging the play, but ultimately decided against it and the goal helped the Jets even the score.

It was another game where the Lowry line helped the Jets get back to their identity.

“When things are not going well we have to go back to what we do great, wearing teams down, get it down low, create chances, create momentum,” said Niederreiter. “That’s what we did and that was a big reason why we won.”

Niederreiter added his second goal of the night as an insurance marker that was set up by the vision of Cole Perfetti just after a power play had expired.

*THE REVIEW* – The Kraken made a pretty passing play for what they thought was the go-ahead goal for Oliver Bjorkstrand at 7:17 of the second period, but as soon as the puck went into the net, Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck was pointing at Yannick Gourde.

The reason Hellebuyck was pointing at Gourde was because the Kraken centre had made contact with him while driving the net just before the puck went in.

That prompted the Jets to challenge the play for goalie interference and ultimately, the goal was overturned.

There's no disputing that Gourde's skates made contact with his pad on the play inside the blue paint.

"Yeah. Obviously, we have the cameras at our feet. We all kind of thought until we were pretty sure we were going to challenge," said Arniel. "For sure, we thought it would go the right way for us."

Instead of being down 2-1, the game remained tied and that opened the door for the Jets to turn the tables.

*THE KEEP* – An incredible defensive play by Jets left-winger Kyle Connor helped lead to the Jets second goal of the contest.

Connor lifted the stick of Bjorkstrand just inside the offensive blue line, keeping the puck in the zone and then passing it over to Mark Scheifele, who found Gabe Vilardi alone in front of the Kraken net.

Kraken defenceman Adam Larsson raised his right arm because he thought the puck had exited the zone and it was offside, but the play continued.

With Larsson flat-footed, Vilardi drove the net and put the puck beyond the outstretched left pad of Daccord.

"I'm just trying to wait him out, kind of thing. I was able to do that. He almost saved it, he almost got his blade on it at the end," said Vilardi, who scored his first of the season. "Just a good track by KC. All the guys on their team are flying out of the zone and it gives me more space down low. I just take it to the net and was able to score."

Vilardi has had several quality opportunities in recent games and finding the back of the net is something that will provide a confidence boost.

"We need his goals to be successful and I'm very happy it goes in," said Niederreiter. "I know exactly the feelings you go through when things aren't going your way and you work hard. And then you start going away from what you do great. I think once he's in front of the net and starts getting those greasy goals, I think that's what gets him going."

Vilardi says he's been watching Niederreiter a lot in practice and working on some of the things his fellow winger works on.

“He’s been around for so long and he’s been a goal scorer around the net and I kind of see myself similar to that, a guy that’s going to score his goals around the net,” said Vilardi. “He’s got incredible hands and he uses his body well.”

*THE THREE STARS* – It was another tight game, with plenty of strong individual showings:

3) Connor Hellebuyck, Jets – The exceptional play continued with a 27-save effort and featured another highlight-reel special as he kicked out the left pad to rob Jamie Oleksiak on a rebound chance in the second period.

2) Nino Niederreiter – Two more goals and a distinct presence in his office, around the net.

1) Matty Beniers, Kraken – The centre was struggling offensively with just one helper in his first seven games but scored a pair, including the one that sent the game to overtime, while adding an assist.

*EXTRA, EXTRA* – After the morning skate, Arniel provided a quick update on Jets D-man Ville Heinola, who remains sidelined after ankle surgery. Heinola still isn’t back on the ice and there is no timetable for his return – other than it’s not imminent. Given the amount of time he missed in training camp and with his recovery, a conditioning stint with the Manitoba Moose of the American Hockey League is probably going to be the best opportunity to help him get back up to speed. Heinola, who is not exempt from waivers this season, could spend up to 14 days in the minors if that’s the path the Jets take after he is cleared to return to game action.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/10/24/namestnikov-a-valuable-and-versatile-chameleon-for-jets>

### ***Namestnikov a valuable and versatile ‘chameleon’ for Jets***

By: Ken Wiebe

SEATTLE — By definition, some might say Vladislav Namestnikov falls into the category of journeyman.

The versatile forward has suited up for seven different NHL organizations — including one he played for twice — and was involved in a deal to an eighth team, though he didn’t have time to suit up with them before he was traded again just prior to the deadline in 2022.

That trade with the San Jose Sharks that brought Namestnikov to the Winnipeg Jets for a 2025 fourth-round draft pick has turned out to be an incredible value for general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff, especially after he signed a two-year contract with the Jets on July 1 of 2023.

Namestnikov, who turns 32 next month, isn’t just a capable player, he’s proven to be an important cog in the machine.

Namestnikov’s ability to move up and down the lineup has been well-documented, but it’s his demeanour and attitude that have allowed him to grow into such an important complementary piece of the puzzle.

“That goes back to his hockey sense and versatility. He’s kind of a chameleon in that he can fit that style of whoever he’s playing with,” Jets captain Adam Lowry said on Thursday before the

game against the Seattle Kraken that was ongoing at press time. “He’s so good at reading off of his teammates and understanding how they want to accomplish their offence.

“If you look at the big picture of playing in Winnipeg, whatever line he’s been on, they’ve had solid success and that just speaks volumes to how adaptable he is. He’s a quality player and he’s really easy to play with.”

Namestnikov was under the microscope coming into the season after the departure of Sean Monahan in free agency to the Columbus Blue Jackets.

There was a young prospect in Brad Lambert trying to win the job as the second scoring-line centre, but Namestnikov just showed up for work at training camp and cemented his spot.

Trying to win his job back wasn’t a motivating factor for him.

When you’ve been around the block the way Namestnikov has, spending time looking over your shoulder about who might be coming isn’t a way to get the best out of yourself.

Ultimately, your standing on the depth chart will be what it will be.

“I wasn’t really thinking about much about what was going to happen. I was just trying to get ready for the season,” said Namestnikov, noting he stays away from social media. “I was going in with an open mindset.”

Namestnikov had a quiet opening three games with linemates Nikolaj Ehlers and Cole Perfetti at even strength, but an offensive outburst against the San Jose Sharks included a four-point outing for both Namestnikov and Perfetti and a three-point showing for Ehlers.

Namestnikov followed that up with an assist on the tying goal from Kyle Connor on Tuesday, so he’s up to two goals and five points in six games.

That helped quiet some of the critics who were wondering about whether or not Namestnikov can supply enough offence on that second scoring line — a job he held for a good chunk of last season before Monahan’s arrival.

“It’s a privilege and an honour to be put in that position. I’ve got to work hard every day to prove that I can play in that position,” said Namestnikov, who played his 715th NHL game on Thursday night. “What I pride my game on is that I can do many different things. Last year, we made some good moves and things got shuffled around. You have to accept it and accept the role you’re given at the time. That’s what successful teams are built on.”

Given who he’s playing with, Namestnikov is going to be counted on offensively, though he does a lot of the difficult things that don’t always get noted on the score sheet.

Lowry said Namestnikov reminds him a lot of former linemate Andrew Copp, who played the role of the Swiss Army knife frequently with the Jets before he was traded to the New York Rangers in 2022.

“He plays centre, he can play the wing and you can put him anywhere in the lineup and he complements them really well and the line does really well,” said Lowry. “He’s one of those guys that may be underappreciated around the league, just because he’s such a quiet guy. He’s one

of those guys that has really good puck skills, he's so patient with it and he's unbelievable at transporting the puck through the neutral zone. He can knife through traffic and he's comfortable with guys on him when making those plays."

Originally chosen by the Tampa Bay Lightning in the first round, 27th overall, in the 2011 NHL Draft, Namestnikov is a ferocious forechecker and can also play a puck possession game.

There's also a physical element that Namestnikov brings to the game and that willingness to get involved and mix it up in scrums is another quality that endears him to the coaching staff and his teammates.

"He's a do-it-all type of player, we use him in different situations," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. "He's responsible in our end of the rink without the puck. He's a smart guy that's been around the league and he knows what it takes to play in different roles.

"He's one of those sneaky dirty guys. He's not afraid to whack guys (with this stick) and take shots at guys. He's not afraid of that part of it and he's hard to play against."

### **Winnipeg Sun**

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/ehlers-rips-ot-winner-as-jets-preserve-perfect-start>

### ***Ehlers rips OT winner as Jets preserve perfect start***

By Scott Billeck

After a brief scare, the Winnipeg Jets' unbeaten run will live to see another day.

Nikolaj Ehlers ripped his third of the season to push his point streak to four games 1:24 into overtime to dispatch the Seattle Kraken 4-3 at Climate Pledge Arena on Thursday.

Ehlers stepped onto the ice as the extra attacker on a delayed tripping call on Neal Pionk, burying feed from Kyle Connor as the Jets moved to 7-0-0 to start the season.

"It was a great shot," Nino Niederreiter told reporters in Seattle. "We knew once he got the shot it went in. That was great. But... didn't do a lot of great things tonight, but we still found a way and that makes things special."

Niederreiter extended his goal-scoring streak to three games, scoring twice, and Gabriel Vilardi notched his first of the campaign for Winnipeg.

"It definitely felt good," Vilardi said. "Felt better that we got the win in the end."

Mark Scheifele had a pair of assists, and Kyle Connor and Neal Pionk extended their respective point streaks to seven and four games, respectively.

Connor Hellebuyck's unbeaten run moved to six games (6-0-0) after making 29 stops as his bid to defend his Vezina Trophy continues to strengthen early.

It may not have been perfect, but head coach Scott Arniel wasn't gloating about his team's latest performance.

"I think both coaches might be tossing that one away," Arniel said. "It was sloppy both ways. I don't mean to be disrespectful to (Kraken head coach Dan Bylsma) and his team. I just thought the whole game was just ... we weren't very good in the first. A lot better in the second. The third, we did everything we needed to do and then made a couple of mistakes and it's in the back of our net.

"It's two points, it's on the road. We'll move to the next one."

Niederreiter erased Matty Beniers's first-period goal to tie the game in the second period and then ripped his fourth of the year in the third in Winnipeg's latest win.

Beniers wired one short side on Hellebuyck to open the scoring at 11:27 of quite a sluggish opening frame from the visiting Jets, who were outshot 12-7 through 20 minutes.

Vilardi scored his first goal of the season, while Kyle Connor extended his point streak to seven games, and Pionk pushed his own to four.

Niederreiter's first of the game came off his chest after crashing the crease hard 3:56 in.

"We finally put the puck behind their D and made them turn and created some luck and got some good bounces," Niederreiter said.

Vilardi tore the monkey off his back when he walked out in front of Joey Daccord to slip it past his left pad to score the go-ahead goal at 15:05.

Connor's work just before the goal helped keep the puck in the zone and directly led to the goal.

"Just a good track by KC," Vilardi said. "With that, all the guys on their team are flying out of the zone and it gives me more space down low. I just take it to the net and was able to score."

Niederreiter's second came just seconds after Winnipeg's only power play of the game ended, with Cole Perfetti notching a terrific assist as he showcased his vision to pick out the Swiss-born player.

"It was a nice look," Niederreiter said. "As soon as I saw him kind of beat his guy off the wall there I found the open space, he found me and I was lucky it went in."

Jordan Eberle's goal with nine minutes remaining sparked a comeback attempt completed with Beniers's second of the night at 16:38 to send the game to overtime.

Winnipeg wraps up their three-game road trip with a Saturday evening date at the Calgary Flames.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/how-jets-second-line-got-its-mojo-back>

## ***How Jets' second line got its mojo back***

By Scott Billeck

The fix for the Winnipeg Jets' second line's sluggish start to the season was a simple one in the end.

They got back to the fundamentals of hockey. And it was there that they began to thrive.

"We had a meeting with (head coach Scott Arniel) and (assistant coach Davis Payne), just trying to figure out what were the extremely simple things that we could do out there to get something going," Nikolaj Ehlers said.

His line, with Vladislav Namestnikov and Cole Perfetti, hadn't generated much during the first three games.

As Ehlers explained during a revealing one-on-one on Monday, no one was doing anything wrong, per se.

The problem was that they weren't doing anything in sync.

"We'd go on the forecheck, but it'd be only one guy going, and then the second guy would be too early or too late, and the third guy would be in an off position and (the opposition) would make one pass and they were out," Ehlers said.

What made matters worse was that they'd get the puck back only to repeat the same process.

One guy in, another too early or too late, and the other left in no man's land.

The fix, as mentioned, was pretty simple.

"We just started to move our feet," Ehlers said. "We tried timing it all together.

"We helped each other, supported each other a lot more, and it created a lot of offensive zone time. It really was a lot of the simple things we need to talk about, to time a little better so we weren't as disconnected as we were."

It sure worked.

The Jets laid an 8-3 whuppin' on the San Jose Sharks, and Ehlers' line was as dialled in as it gets.

Just marinate on these stats for a few seconds: 11 shot attempts, seven shots on goal, five scoring chances created and three goals.

And the kicker? Not one attempt, shot, scoring chance or goal was allowed against them.

As far as analytics go, it was a perfect game.

“All three of those guys have real good skill,” Arniel said. “They complement each other when they’re all on their game.”

Arniel wasn’t interested in blowing up the line.

Through the first three games, he had liked what he had seen from the other three.

Reading between the lines (no pun intended), Arniel essentially told them to figure it out.

“That’s probably one of those things that I’ve learned over the years,” Arniel said. “Let guys grow their chemistry. If you keep changing it too much, it gets hard.”

“Sometimes you have to after a certain time period, you just have to, but at the end of the day, most of the guys that are in this league, and they’re in this league for a reason, they’ll find a way to work things out... and they’ll find a way to get their game going first and then get their partner or their linemates up and running with them.”

For Ehlers, the way to get his game going was to get moving.

“When my legs are going, everything else is going,” he said. “When my legs aren’t going, that’s when I start looking for things I shouldn’t be looking for.”

Ehlers took ownership of it and went about changing that.

“After the (Minnesota game), I told (Namesnitkov and Perfetti), ‘Next practice, I’m going to go out there. I’m not going to worry about making some pretty plays. I’m going to skate my ass off down the wing and you don’t have to look for me. I’m not too focused on the puck today. I’m just going to go out and skate my ass off to get my legs going,’” Ehlers said.

His two linemates agreed to do the same thing, not worrying about scoring to making highlight-reel plays in practice.

“Just get the puck, and start skating,” Ehlers said. “You could say, so far, it’s worked.”

Indeed, Ehlers has six points in the three games since. Perfetti has seven, and Namestnikov has chipped in with five to help the Jets remain undefeated (6-0-0) heading into Thursday’s game against the Seattle Kraken.

“We knew that was eventually going to come,” Perfetti said. “It didn’t come the first three games and we were struggling a little bit with that stuff. We talked about it as a line. We were pretty positive that we found a lot of success last year and we knew it was going to come.”

Meanwhile, Ehlers seems happy with his current situation with the Jets.

It has been a long time coming, but he’s been bumped up to the top unit on the power play.

Not that he pushed for it.

“It’s not that I was fighting to get on there,” Ehlers said. “There were years here where we had the better power play on PP2.”



“The thing is, when the first power play always starts, sometimes they’re out there for a minute, sometimes they’re out there for 90 seconds. Then you’re going out there for a breakout, and that’s what, at times, was frustrating. That said, when the first power play was in the o-zone the whole time, you didn’t want them to change.”

And his minutes?

As Ehlers has said in the past, he’s not looking to play 20-22 a night.

That 16-18 range that some onlookers argue should be more is actually just right for him.

“I’ve never, ever said I wanted to play 20 minutes,” Ehlers said. “I’m fine with 16. It’s when it gets down to 11 and 12, that pisses me off. And I said that many times. It’s not a secret. When it gets lower, that’s when it’s frustrating because I can’t get into the games. I’ve played in this league long enough and played well enough to deserve more.

“The 16 minutes are great for me. I’m not a guy that needs to play 20-22 minutes. When lines do that, you don’t get the whole team involved and you need the whole team to win games in the long run.”