

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/10/29/tight-knit-jets-out-to-prove-naysayers-wrong>

Tight-knit Jets out to prove naysayers wrong

By: Mike McIntyre

There's a few new additions to the decor inside the Winnipeg Jets dressing room this year, including a large map of North America etched on the wall with the team logo smack dab in the middle.

It's a fitting metaphor for a squad that seems to have embraced an "us against the world" mentality, both in their words and actions so far this season.

Listen closely and the messaging began early in training camp, with first-year head coach Scott Arniel and several players speaking about the perceived perils of playing in the NHL's smallest market.

"I've sat in that room. Trying to get guys to come to Winnipeg, it's a tough sell," Arniel said last month on trying to land big fish — or even medium-sized ones — in free agency.

While this may not be a huge revelation in hockey circles, it's not typically something you hear anyone in the organization saying out loud.

"Playing in Winnipeg, everyone kind of knocks playing there," captain Adam Lowry volunteered a few weeks ago in another eyebrow-raising soundbite.

You could see the second-ever draft pick of the 2.0 era bristle at the thought.

"I think that's one of the great things about playing in those smaller markets, is it's a tight-knit community," Lowry continued. "In turn, it kinda makes us a tight-knit team."

The bond was no doubt strengthened as they rattled off eight straight wins to start the season, forcing those who would otherwise overlook them to start paying attention.

They may all claim to ignore the stories and headlines, but trust us when we say Jets players, coaches and management are well aware most puck pundits had them pegged as a wild-card playoff team at best and not in the realm of a true contender.

Based on their play, it's as if they took it personally.

Yes, talent and systems and depth and special teams and goaltending and even some puck luck along the way are all valuable components. In a league where the line between success and failure is so fine, a little chip on the collective shoulder doesn't hurt.

Motivation comes in many forms, and this looks like a group with plenty to prove. And once you can build some momentum and confidence, look out.

Not that they were going to let the early success go to their heads. Consider this take from veteran defenceman Dylan DeMelo on Monday morning when asked about a sizzling 8-0-0 record that had them looking down on the other 31 NHL teams in the standings.

“It’s great that we’ve got a great start but we really haven’t done crap, to be honest with you,” he said.

Talk about a party pooper. A few hours later his club hit the ice against the Toronto Maple Leafs and stunk out the sold-out joint for the first two periods, digging a huge, self-inflicted hole that ended with a 6-4 loss. Arniel equated the performance with getting “punched in the nose.”

Which brings us back to the dressing room. On another wall is a pointed, painted reminder to players that reads as follows:

YOUR COMPETE!

-Structure

-Embrace hard areas

-Win 50-50s

-10 per cent more

OUR EDGE!

The Jets strayed from those principles against the Maple Leafs and paid a price, laying an egg in front of a huge audience (both inside the rink and watching on Amazon Prime) and no doubt giving skeptics and cynics plenty of fuel for their hot takes.

Remember last season, when Winnipeg got off to a strong start but began fading down the stretch? Former player Ryan Whitney, speaking on the Spittin’ Chiclets podcast, declared them “the biggest frauds in the NHL.”

Just imagine what they’ll start saying at the first signs of a stumble this year. Heck, even loyal fans around these parts likely have some PTSD given Winnipeg’s erratic efforts over the years, especially as the stage gets bigger.

Let’s be clear: The Jets were never going to run the table. There will be many more fists to the face. The Boston Bruins, for example, had the best regular season in NHL history in 2022-23 and still lost 17 games. They also got knocked out in the first round of the playoffs, showing absolutely nothing is guaranteed in sports.

Just as it’s risky business to get too high when things are going well, there’s no value in tripping over one’s droopy lip when things take a turn.

“Move off it,” was Arniel’s view following his first setback as Jets bench boss.

“We go to Detroit, back on the road again, and we start over. Like we’ve talked about, whether it’s a win or a loss, you’ve got to move on to the next one. You’ve still got 73 to go. There’s still a lot of hockey to go there so learn from this and move on.”

Indeed, the Jets are now back out in the hockey world they are trying to conquer, with a pair of Eastern Conference games on tap. They’ll visit the rebuilding Red Wings Wednesday night, then head to Columbus to face the rapidly improving Blue Jackets on Friday.

Arniel cancelled a planned practice Tuesday, opting to give his group some extra rest before they boarded the charter. As a result, we don't know yet whether he's planning any changes to deal with this first dose of adversity.

Does he make some lineup changes, such as inserting one or all of forward David Gustafsson, defenceman Haydn Fleury and/or defenceman Dylan Coghlan? Does he go back to the forward lines and defensive pairings he's essentially used all season prior to getting the blender out in the third period on Monday, which helped spark the comeback attempt?

Or does he maintain the status quo and allow everyone the chance to essentially clean up their own mess?

One thing is certain: The Jets, by virtue of what is now a stellar 8-1-0 start, should expect to see the best from their opponents. They're not sneaking up on anyone, nor are they catching anyone by surprise.

There's a spotlight being shone their way and a big target on their backs — and that seems to be just fine with a group that is relishing the role of an ultimate underdog, in more ways than one.

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/billeck-leafs-loss-shines-light-on-elephant-in-jets-room>

BILLECK: Leafs loss shines light on elephant in Jets' room

By Scott Billeck

Alright, let's address the elephant in the room.

The Winnipeg Jets' below-average five-on-five play this season has been masked by their stellar power play, stingy penalty kill, and sensational goalie.

That's not to diminish the team's eight-game winning streak, which the Toronto Maple Leafs ended in a 6-4 defeat on Monday night at Canada Life Centre.

The loss was merely a culmination of what was creeping up on them.

Better opponent? Sure. But that game was in jeopardy, no matter who they played.

Scott Arniel sounded a bit of a warning after Winnipeg's 4-3 win over the Seattle Kraken last Thursday.

He wasn't happy with how the team played, suggesting his disappointment took some of the shine off a seventh straight win.

At that point, the Jets were still finding ways to win, but they were outchanced handily 22-10 in that game. Connor Hellebuyck was superb. The play in front of him wasn't.

Protecting the guts of the ice, which the Jets had become very adept at, had been slipping for a couple of games already.

Their wins against Pittsburgh and St. Louis came after surrendering 33 high-danger chances across both games.

On Monday against Toronto, the slot was a free-for-all. Toronto generated 13 chances and scored four times from high-danger areas.

Fewer than half (17) of Winnipeg's 40 goals this season have come at five-on-five, and only 19 have been scored at even strength.

The Jets scored twice more on the power play on Monday, and their other two goals both came at 6-on-5. Mark Scheifele scored on a delayed penalty call, and Gabriel Vilardi's marker came with Hellebuyck pulled for the extra attacker late in the third.

A hallmark of Winnipeg's success last season was its ability to score five-on-five, finishing seventh in the league.

In that case, their issues were somewhat reversed. They had a misfiring power play and a leaky penalty kill.

Winnipeg's only real success on Monday was its special teams. They went 2-for-4 with the man advantage and kept Toronto's talented but struggling power play at bay on both occasions.

The Jets maintain the league's best power play, at 44.4 per cent, and the fourth-best penalty kills, at 88.9 per cent.

Arniel addressed another issue during Monday's loss: his top line.

Granted, none of his lines as they started the game were very good. But Arniel went to the blender in the second period and shuffled the deck again to start the third.

Better results were achieved in the final frame, but with the Leafs sitting on a 5-2 lead, they weren't exactly attacking the game as they did in the first two periods, when they generated 32 shots.

Winnipeg's lines had been mostly untouched through the first four games. That didn't come as a surprise. They were winning, and Arniel appears to be a coach who allows his lines to breathe and sort out their issues, doing so with the team's second line after a tough first few games.

Arniel didn't have much choice against Toronto.

Scheifele's line had already been on the ice for a pair of goals when the first changes were made, but this wasn't a one-off game for the trio.

They've been out-attempted (138-124), outshot (73-50), outchanced (61-51), and, crucially, outscored (9-2) this season.

It's a problem and has historically been one.

If you pay attention to the analytical discourse around these parts, you'll know that a section of the Jets community isn't thrilled with the composition of the top line.

The stats support that argument.

Arniel reached for a better club in the bag in the third, promoting Nikolaj Ehlers up with Scheifele and Vilardi.

Historically, that line's play has been befitting of a top-line designation.

In their time together last season, those three out-attempted (249-205), outshot (126-104), outchanced (123-98), and, crucially, outscored (16-6) their opposition.

For whatever reason, it's often been a safety valve rather than the status quo.

Winnipeg's offseason analytical summit surely would have shown this, just like it would have shown positive numbers when Kyle Connor plays with Cole Perfetti, which was the case on Monday.

Wednesday morning in Detroit will show whether Arniel takes the first loss of the regular season as an opportunity to run with a different set of lines or if he gives the ones he's run with a chance at redemption.

There's an argument to be made that this team's play and five-on-five scoring will be better with the former.

And married with their much-improved special teams work and strong goaltending from Hellebuyck, it's a chance to strengthen the team after being reminded of its vulnerabilities against the Leafs.

As Dylan DeMelo said Monday, the Jets "haven't done crap" and that "everything" can improve.

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/5880048/2024/10/30/winnipeg-jets-october-2024-mailbag/>

Is the Winnipeg Jets' hot start for real? Adam Lowry for Team Canada? Mailbag

By Murat Ates

The Winnipeg Jets won eight games in a row to finish off last season and won eight more games in a row to start this season.

This obviously means everything in Jets land is perfect, right? Nothing of significance happened between those two streaks or on Monday night at Canada Life Centre? The truth is that, despite an 8-1-0 start, Winnipeg remains a work in progress with some fascinating strengths and more than one area of weakness.

This gives a little extra intrigue to your mailbag questions this week. From whether or not we should believe in the Jets' hot start to Adam Lowry's chances of making Team Canada to the Jets' defensive situation, Ville Heinola's status and Dylan Samberg's next contract, here is part one of our first in-season Jets mailbag.

Note: Submitted questions may be edited for clarity and style.

The 2024-25 Jets are like a brand-new restaurant launching with a soft opening. Now I know you can only play teams in the order they appear on your schedule, but is it fair to say we might not know for sure how good these Jets really are until this run of games in November: Tampa Bay, Utah, Colorado, Dallas, New York Rangers, Tampa Bay and Florida twice? — Alexander H.

I am fully, completely, 1,000 percent treating this season as though I've been made foolish by past hot starts and won't dare let myself get drawn in again.

There are reasons to believe Winnipeg is a good team — and a bit of a paper tiger — at 8-1-0. Winnipeg is doing an enormous amount of its damage on the power play, at six-on-five and in overtime. It might be surprising to know that the Jets have been outshot (233-222) and outscored (19-17) at five-on-five, while Evolving Hockey and Natural Stat Trick each rank the Jets 29th in five-on-five expected goals percentage. This is not the dominant five-on-five team of yesteryear — at least not yet.

Winnipeg is off to an 8-1-0 start thanks to league-best goal scoring at six-on-five — and on the power play. That's not a bad thing, given the team's focus on special teams as an area of improvement. It is a troubling thing, when considering that even the best power plays run cold sometimes and that Winnipeg has a tough run of November games ahead.

To be clear, I believe the Jets have the pieces to be a good five-on-five team. I picked them to make the playoffs before the season started and nothing about their top-of-the-standings start to the season has changed my mind about that. I'm just hesitant to get carried away on these Jets' playoff potential until they show a lengthy stretch of even strength excellence — the later in the season, the better.

They've scored the most six-on-five goals (5) and the most power-play goals (12) but are tied at 19th with 17 five-on-five goals. They've given up the 15th most goals at five-on-five, too, and that just doesn't seem like the ideal formula for long-term success. Winnipeg will need to get better to consolidate its hot start. I believe it can do that. The easiest short-term fixes are improvement from the top line (outscored 9-2 at five-on-five despite brilliant special teams results) or the magical addition of a MacKenzie Weegar or Chris Tanev or Mattias Ekholm type of defenceman.

Once Ville Heinola is healthy what do you anticipate the Jets will do? Can't keep nine defencemen. — Greg B.

Greg asked a question on a lot of your minds — and one that's complicated, based on Ville Heinola's injury history and Winnipeg's history with respect to handling its defencemen. We all remember how Heinola made the team out of training camp last year but we also see the zero beside his NHL games played total in 2023-24.

I think Winnipeg's play is simpler than it looks.

The Jets have five obvious regular defencemen. Logan Stanley seems to have emerged ahead of Haydn Fleury for the sixth job, although a pair of first-period penalties and continued awkward play against Toronto opens the door for Fleury to step back in. That leaves right-handed defenceman Dylan Coghlan the odd man out and the straightforward choice to expose to waivers if everyone is healthy when Heinola returns.

As for Heinola himself, I'm not expecting this to be another case of him returning from injury only to find that the Jets have no room for him. He's lost his waivers exemption, for one, so the only AHL play for him is a conditioning assignment. Whether or not that takes place, Heinola will eventually be up to speed on a lineup with an obvious No. 6 job available. Josh Morrissey and Dylan DeMelo will be the top pair. Neal Pionk and Dylan Samberg will be the second pair, even after a difficult night against Toronto. After that, I think Winnipeg's coaches look at Heinola-Miller as a completely viable third pair who can receive sheltered minutes and play behind a secondary scoring line. Heinola's agility and passing should be a complement to Miller's veteran savvy and rocket shot. Miller's experience should offer some calm for Heinola, who will be working desperately to prove that he's a better No. 6 than Winnipeg's other options.

Even if he does that, Stanley will get into games. The organization values him.

It's early, but Dylan Samberg seems to have adjusted to the top-four role with ease. Could you please shine a light on possible term and AAV that we could possibly expect next summer? — Adrien A.

This is a great question, Adrien. Samberg will turn 26 this July and has emerged as a viable top-four defenceman. He's big, he's strong, he blocks a ton of shots on the penalty kill and he's a strong enough scanner of the ice to ensure he doesn't get lost in coverage or get beat back door. He's also prone to the occasional puck-handling wobble and, despite my belief that he's succeeding as a top-four shutdown defenceman, Samberg is still new to the job and not a brand-name superstar in that role. His minus-5 stat line from Monday night reminds us that there will occasionally be long games as he takes the next big steps in his career.

So what will he make on his next contract?

It's vital to note that Samberg will be a restricted free agent with arbitration rights in 2025. His earliest UFA eligibility is 2026, meaning that all he has to do to guarantee himself UFA status on July 1, 2026, is file for arbitration next summer. This gives him some leverage, despite his RFA status.

I've used PuckPedia's player tool to look for other defencemen like Samberg — 20 minutes per game, most of it at five-on-five and on pace for 27 points in an 82-game season — who have signed RFA contracts in recent seasons. Henri Jokiharju's one-year, \$3.1 million AAV contract would be troubling, given that Jokiharju will become an unrestricted free agent next summer. Jonas Siegenthaler's five-year, \$3.4 million AAV contract would probably give the Jets a lot more peace of mind, locking Samberg up until he's 31.

To be clear, I'm new to using that tool and it's only one lens to look through. Like you said, though, it's early: I don't mind allowing for some wide error bars as I guess at a contract in the \$3 to \$3.5 million AAV range.

Is there a chance that Adam Lowry would be considered for Canada as a checking/shutdown centre for the upcoming tournament? — Brent G.

I think there's a great chance that Adam Lowry gets considered for a shutdown job. I know it's fun — and often accurate — to assume people get overlooked because they're in Winnipeg but the truth is that Lowry gets leaguewide respect. Lowry finished seventh in Selke Trophy voting

last year, indicating a groundswell in leaguewide appreciation, and when out-of-market media discuss the Jets, Lowry's two-way quality is one of the items they consistently get right.

Of course, the problem with any player's case is that Canada is positively stacked at the center. Sidney Crosby, Nathan MacKinnon and Connor McDavid have all been the best in the world at one time or another. Brayden Point and Sam Reinhart have each scored 50 goals while providing strong two-way play. John Tavares is capable of the same and is off to a productive start, including his hat trick against the Jets.

Team Canada also has some of the world's best two-way wingers at its disposal. Mark Stone is as good as it gets on that front and seems to be off to a healthy, productive start. Mitch Marner was a Selke Trophy finalist in 2023.

Still, let's make Lowry's case. He plays an extremely defined role for Winnipeg — one virtually identical to the one that would be asked of him for Team Canada. His tough minutes line outscores almost all of its opposition and has generated plenty of offence so far. Lowry has scored two goals and five assists (and he leads Winnipeg at plus-8, which I can't help but think will catch eyes despite the flawed nature of plus/minus as a stat.) And Team Canada will need somebody to kill penalties: Lowry's big role on that front puts him among Canadian leaders along with Marner, Reinhart, and other options like Anthony Cirelli, Jordan Staal, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, Seth Jarvis and Tom Wilson.

Ultimately, I'm left with the opinion that Team Canada is too deep for Lowry to make but that I'd completely understand if it chose him anyway. They'd know what they were getting and what they were getting would be good.

Do you know if the Jets players (and/or staff) read your articles? — Kevin M.

I am aware of a number of Jets players and/or staff who read my articles. I appreciate that they do.

Hi Murat, You find so many interesting angles to write about. I often wonder, what is your writing background? I don't recall seeing your byline prior to the Athletic. Who are major influences on your career? — Bill R.

One of my earlier childhood memories is when my Grade 3 teacher, Mrs. Klassen, read an excerpt from one of my stories out loud to the class. I felt so proud to have something I wrote highlighted and appreciated that way. In Grade 8, when Mr. Velie assigned a month-long writing project on any topic of our choosing, I made mine about hockey and wrote a 20-page story about junior players trying to make the NHL.

But you're asking me about my byline prior to The Athletic. I don't think you want to know about my exploits at Pinawa Secondary School or even Upper Canada College, where an influential classmate bragged about writing for "The Blue Page" for so long I couldn't help but get involved myself.

Writing was a side project for most of my life. Childhood writing turned into teenage poetry and essays and university-aged blogging. During the 2004-05 lockout, I couldn't find an outlet for my hockey fix and started commenting on the message boards at Hockey's Future. That's where I first discovered Allan Mitchell, who I knew as Lowetide and who now writes about the Edmonton Oilers here at The Athletic. He's the gold standard by which I measure my attempts to build and

support our community of people in the comment section. Through him, I found an anonymous analytics pioneer who wrote under the pseudonym “Vic Ferrari” — Elliotte Friedman wrote about him here — and convinced him to let me contribute to his website. James Mirtle was the first journalist (that I’m aware of anyway) to take an interest in analytics and would frequently chime in on Vic’s work. I was extremely fortunate that Mirtle was aware of my work when The Athletic first came to Winnipeg; longtime readers might remember Mirtle’s open call for Jets writers in September 2017. At the time, I was recovering from a concussion experienced in another industry entirely and could not have been more fortunate that Mirtle recognized my work from Vic’s old blog.

I have been the benefactor of what I refer to as “bull— luck” more than a few times in my life. I’ve only scratched the surface of it here, and should give credit to Pat McLean of the “Black Dog Hates Skunks” blog for his part in this story, too ... But I’ve already written way too much about myself here. The answer to your question is that I have always written — I haven’t even mentioned the travel story books — and that I’m lucky Mirtle took a chance on me seven years ago.

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/detroit-red-wings-braced-for-a-good-challenge-against-winnipeg-jets>

Red Wings working on 'DNA,' braced for 'a good challenge' against NHL-best Jets Look to reduce shots against, strengthen penalty kill facing exceptional offense

By Nicholas J. Cotsonika

DETROIT -- The Detroit Red Wings have been working on their "DNA," according to coach Derek Lalonde.

Well, then consider this a DNA test: The Winnipeg Jets are coming into Little Caesars Arena on Wednesday for a game that will be nationally televised in Canada (7:30 p.m. ET; FDSNDET, SN1).

The Red Wings wanted to improve defensively after finishing 24th in goals-against per game last season (3.33) and missing the Stanley Cup Playoffs for the eighth straight season, the longest stretch in team history. They’re 13th in goals-against per game (3.11) this season and off to a 4-4-1 start.

The Jets are second in goals per game (4.44) and boast the best record in the League at 8-1-0.

"Obviously, it will be a good challenge," defenseman Moritz Seider said.

The Red Wings are allowing 34.9 shots per game, second most in the NHL. In some ways, though, it might be a byproduct of their new approach.

Focused on playing tighter, the Red Wings have been more conservative, collapsing in front and keeping shots to the outside. Lalonde said based on their internal metrics they were 16th in fewest slot shots against, 10th in fewest low net front slot shots against and first in fewest dangerous rushes against.

Detroit is tied for sixth in 5-on-5 goals against (15) and fourth in 5-on-5 save percentage (93.8 percent).

"The other teams have a lot of shots, but I think some of the shots were from the outside, and that's all right," Seider said. "Obviously, skill guys, top guys [in the NHL], they will have extended [offensive zone] time, and they will have their shifts in the [offensive] zone. But if we can keep them to the outside and have them really work to get to the inside, into the slot, I think we'll be fine, and then we can attack out of that.

"Obviously, it's very frustrating to play against a team who is just very solid, tight in their [defensive] zone, they're not giving up a lot of Grade A chances in the slot. If you keep them to the outside, our goalies will have all day to make those saves, and that's kind of what we expect."

Lalonde wants to reduce the shots against, though.

"I think volume's real," he said. "I think it's an issue."

He pointed out that in each of their past two games the Red Wings gave up a goal when a shot deflected in off one of their defensemen.

The fewer shots you give up, the fewer chances for bad breaks like that. The Jets are ninth in shots per game (31.2).

"I don't know if many NHLers go to bed dreaming of defending well the next day, especially some of our guys," Lalonde said "So I think we have worked on our DNA a little bit, and it's coming around. Obviously, [there are] the positive defensive numbers, but there's some defensive numbers we want better. It may be a byproduct. I still think we can be better in some areas and grow our game."

The Red Wings have gone 3-1-1 over their past five games. Four times, they had a third-period lead. Three times, they held it. Another time, they went to overtime.

"I think we've done a good job in third periods, especially against good teams, as far as playing conservative," forward Patrick Kane said, "but I think the next step to be a good, consistent team is to play [better in those situations]. You've got to feel so comfortable in those positions when you have the lead.

"That should be the most fun hockey. They're going to be pressing. All you've got to do is make a good play defensively, one or two plays, and you're probably going to get an odd-man rush, especially in the third period if they're trying to chase one or two, you know? We're kind of in that spot right now where we want to preserve the one-goal lead, and we're not thinking too much about adding on."

Another area of emphasis against Winnipeg is the penalty kill, where Detroit ranks 30th (66.7 percent). The Jets are first on the power play (44.4 percent). But the Red Wings went 2-for-2 on the PK in a 3-2 overtime loss to the Edmonton Oilers on Sunday, including a kill in the last 1:51 of the third period against Connor McDavid, Leon Draisaitl and Co. They feel they have been trending in the right direction on the PK and worked on it a lot in practice Tuesday.

"Sooner or later, hopefully we'll find a way to turn this ship around, and hopefully it will be this game, get a little bit of confidence back," Seider said. "Shutting down the best power play in the League, I think, would be a good start for that."

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10838218/analysis-winnipeg-jets-kyle-connor-career-milestone-points/>

ANALYSIS: Jets' Connor 1 point away from career milestone

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

Based on his low-key personality, Wednesday might just be another game for Kyle Connor. But what stands to come out of it could be considered anything but inconspicuous or insignificant.

Entering the contest in Detroit, the Winnipeg Jets' star left winger sits on 499 career points. A single point in the form of a goal or an assist Wednesday evening to begin this two-game road trip would make Connor the fastest in Jets history to reach 500 points since relocation.

Yes, quicker than Blake Wheeler and Mark Scheifele. In fact, potentially 23 games faster than his former captain and 30 sooner than his longtime linemate.

And fittingly for Connor, the milestone could come before family and friends in his hometown Wednesday, while extending a nine-game point-scoring streak in the process.

Now in his eighth full season with the Jets, Connor is just entering his prime. And unlike any other player since 2011 to call Winnipeg home, the Michigan product continues to pour in goals and accumulate points. His eight goals and 14 points in nine games to date have him leading the team and among the top scorers in the NHL.

Moreover, he's well on pace for another career year, one that might surpass his 47 goals and 93 points from just three seasons ago, and one that could deliver Winnipeg's first 50-goal NHL scorer since Keith Tkachuk in 1996.

Simply put, Connor is the best pure goal scorer to wear a Jets uniform in decades – an absolute edge-of-your-seat type of player and truthfully one of the best in the league.

And with the potential to prove that Wednesday – in his hometown, no less – by adding one more point for 500 in his career and reaching the milestone faster than any relocation Jets player before him, there won't be anything inconspicuous or insignificant about Wednesday being just another game.