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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-milestone-night-for-connor>

***Three things - Milestone night for Connor
Kyle Connor reached 500 point milestone in 6-2 win at Detroit***

By Jamie Thomas

The Winnipeg Jets looked to get back into the win column after their loss to Toronto on Monday and they took care of business in Detroit beating the Red Wings 6-2 to improve to 9-1. Kyle Connor had a three-point night (1G, 2A), Neal Pionk scored twice, and Gabe Vilardi (1G, 1A) had a multi-point night as well. Connor Hellebuyck made 19 saves to push his record to 7-1. Winnipeg scored a power play for the third straight game and have five power play goals over that stretch. Scott Arniel became the sixth head coach in the past 50 years to record nine wins through his first 10 contests with a franchise. He joined Jim Montgomery with the 2022-23 Bruins, Patrick Roy with the 2013-14 Avalanche, John Paddock with the 2007-08 Senators, Mike Babcock with the 2005-06 Red Wings and Marc Crawford with the 1994-95 Nordiques. The Jets will head to Columbus to play the Blue Jackets on Friday.

500 PLUS POINTS FOR CONNOR

After a four-point performance Monday night against Toronto, Kyle Connor sat one point away from 500 in his career. The fact that the Michigan product had a chance to do so in his home state was a great storyline heading into tonight. The 27-year-old didn't wait long as 2:48 into the first period, Connor slid a perfect pass onto the stick of Gabe Vilardi, who scored his third of the season giving Connor the milestone moment. He would get point 501, 1:16 later as Neal Pionk scored to make it 2-0 Winnipeg. Connor would finish off an impressive opening frame at 15:44, converting a Vilardi pass to make it 3-0 Jets and giving him career point 502. Connor became the fourth U.S.-born player in NHL history with a 10-game season-opening scoring streak, following Kevin Stevens (13 GP in 1992-93), Pat LaFontaine (11 GP in 1992-93) and Darren Turcotte (11 GP in 1990-91).

"He's a fantastic player. I'm very, very lucky to play with him. He's unbelievable. He brings it night in and night out," said Mark Scheifele.

"And tonight he was absolutely phenomenal. And could have had a lot more. So, like I said, it was fun to play with those guys tonight. And just gotta keep going."

WINGS IMPRESSIVE IN SECOND

The Jets looked to be on their way to an easy win, but Detroit woke up in the second period thanks to their power play. Dylan Larkin (8:13) and Alex DeBrincat (17:40) would score on the man advantage to bring the Red Wings within one goal at 3-2. The Jets were a perfect 10-for-10 on the penalty kill in four games previous to tonight and Wednesday marked the first time this season Winnipeg allowed two power play goals in a game.

JETS SCORE EARLY AND OFTEN IN THIRD

Winnipeg took back the momentum just ten seconds into the third period when Nino Niederreiter lit the lamp for the fifth time in the last six games. Niederreiter went to the Wings net and hit the puck with one hand on his stick and it banked off former Jets defenceman Ben Chiarot and behind Alex Lyon to make it 4-2. Neal Pionk (PPG) and Colin Miller scored almost three minutes

apart to blow the game open. Jets defencemen combined for four points tonight (2G, 2A) and Winnipeg leads the league with the most points from their d-men.

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/topic/nhl-insider/kyle-connor-continues-point-streak-gets-500th-of-career-in-winnipeg-jets-win>

Connor reaches 500 NHL points, continues hot streak to start season with Jets Winnipeg forward has goal, 2 assists in win against Detroit

By Nicholas J. Cotsonika

DETROIT -- Kyle Connor said he doesn't set statistical goals, because he doesn't want to put limits on himself.

"I try not to think about it at all," he said.

Who knows what he could accomplish?

The forward had a goal and two assists in the Winnipeg Jets' 6-2 victory against the Detroit Red Wings at Little Caesars Arena on Wednesday, reaching 500 NHL points and tacking on two more.

On a 10-game point streak -- the Jets/Atlanta Thrashers record to open a season, and tied for his personal best at any point -- he's tied for second in the NHL in goals with nine and for fifth in points with 17.

"Sometimes you're rolling," he said. "You can kind of get into a groove, especially when we've got these games every other day, it seems like."

Could Connor reach 50 goals in a season for the first time? How about 100 points?

The 27-year-old has scored more than 30 goals six times and produced more than 60 points five times, setting NHL career highs in goals (47) and points (93) in 2021-22. Since 2017-18, his first full NHL season, he's eighth in the League in goals (250) and tied for 25th in points (497).

"I like watching him play," Red Wings center J.T. Compher said. "I always know when he's on the ice when I'm playing against him, and I know that he doesn't need a lot of space to find the back of the net. He's definitely a great hockey player, and he seems to continue to get better."

It was fitting Connor put on a show in front of friends and family here. He grew up in the Detroit suburbs shooting at least 100 pucks per day in the garage, leaving marks on the concrete and cinderblocks.

He spent one season at the University of Michigan, leading NCAA Division I in goals (35) and points (71) in 2015-16.

"You could kind of see it in practice at Michigan right away," said Compher, one of his linemates then. "He kind of could score from any spot. He could score from wherever the puck got to him. He found a way to get the puck in the right spot."

“Like, his shot placement’s elite. His release, I would call it sneaky. It’s not super fancy -- like, toe drag, shot. It’s sneaky. It’s really quick, and it’s heavy enough, and it’s always in the right spot.”

Connor spends the offseason in the Detroit area skating with fellow NHL players, including Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck, New Jersey Devils center Jack Hughes and Red Wings forwards Andrew Copp, Alex DeBrincat and Dylan Larkin.

“I love watching him in the summer, and I love keeping tabs on him throughout the year,” Hughes said. “I think he’s got a really tricky release. Like, he can overpower a goalie and beat him just by blowing one right by him, but also he can score five-hole, score on the breakaways. I think he’s a guy that just scores a lot of different ways, and that’s probably why he scores so many goals.”

Copp said Connor “can put the puck in the net almost unlike anything you’ve ever seen, just with his very unique release.” Larkin said Connor’s release is so quick he beats goalies when they’re not expecting it -- off the hip, off the shoulder, through the arm -- doing things “once a skate where you’re just like, ‘Wow.’”

“It’s definitely impressive to see him consistently put the puck in the net and just how much he scores,” DeBrincat said. “Even in the summer, we’re shooting on Hellebuyck, who’s obviously one of the best goalies in the League and not easy to score on, but some days, he makes it look pretty easy.”

Trying to describe Connor’s release, DeBrincat said: “I think a lot of guys pull in and snap the puck, and he can obviously do that too. But his natural shot is more of a wrist shot, I would say, and he just scores all the time. I think it’s just a little bit different than what I normally see, and he’s so good at it. It’s definitely different to watch but a lot of fun.”

Connor said there is no secret. His stick shaft has an 80 flex, on the whippy end of the spectrum, and his blade has a fairly standard curve. Whenever he tries to tweak things, he goes back to the same specs he’s essentially always had.

“I think it’s just a function of growing up, how I learned to shoot the puck,” he said. “It’s a lot of reps shooting the puck in the garage over and over. Everybody’s got their own unique style of how they do it, and I think just kind of that quick-twitch shot release is my kind of thing.”

Connor has 502 points (252 goals, 250 assists) in 541 games. The sky’s the limit.

“His whole game is really impressive,” Jets defenseman Neal Pionk said. “His shot, obviously. I think everyone sees that. But also his hockey sense too. He’s a pretty good passer. Really impressive.”

Pionk smiled.

“Like we say, he’s only halfway to 1,000,” Pionk said, “so maybe not that impressive.”

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/video/jets-connor-continues-remarkable-start-to-season-in-win-over-red-wings/>

Jets' Connor continues remarkable start to season in win over Red Wings (VIDEO)

David Amber and the Wednesday Night Hockey panel break down the Winnipeg Jets' win over the Detroit Red Wings and how forward Kyle Connor has continued his remarkable start to the season.

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/scouts-analysis-what-leafs-get-in-benning-sharks-in-liljegren/>

Jets' Kyle Connor takes game to new level in win against Red Wings

By Jacob Stoller

If you've been in the camp that believes the Winnipeg Jets lack a true game-breaker at forward, Kyle Connor would like a word.

Wednesday night — where Winnipeg defeated the Detroit Red Wings 6-2 — was yet another example of Connor's brilliance. His three-point performance not only helped him eclipse 500 career points, but more importantly, reaffirmed what many on the prairies had noticed since the regular season began.

Connor has hit another gear this season.

His saucer pass assist to Gabriel Vilardi for the game's first goal was executed with perfect precision. His second point of the night — a secondary assist — came via a well-placed low-shot to create a rebound, which Neal Pionk capitalized on. And his third point of the night? Well, it was just vintage 'KC' — a give-and-go with Vilardi that saw him receive a pass above the blue-paint, at full speed, and swiftly deke to his backhand to score on Alex Lyon.

"He's got that scoring touch that not many guys in this league have," Jets forward Mason Appleton told reporters Wednesday morning. "It seems like almost every other night he scores a goal where you're like 'wow....' You almost get used to it but it's like 'wow...that's an unbelievable goal.'"

The six-time 30-plus goal scorer is currently tied for the second-most goals (nine) and tied for the most game-winning goals (three) in the NHL. For those that have kept tabs on Connor, that shouldn't be all-that-surprising. Since the 2019-20 season, only Auston Matthews, David Pastrnak and Connor McDavid have scored more even strength goals than Connor (137) — which, to the typical hockey fan, may come as a surprise.

"He's an elite player in this league," Jets coach Scott Arniel told reporters post-game. "We like to keep him as our little hidden secret but I don't think that's going to happen anymore."

Especially given how dangerous Connor has been in areas other than goal scoring this season.

This season, the 27-year-old has found a way to leverage his natural gifts in the 'unsexy' areas of the game. He's weaponizing his quick stick work to not only quickly release wrist shots or deke opponents, but to also intercept pucks and defend players along the wall. He's using his legs to not only push the play up the ice but also retreat and play a full 200-foot game. It's something he's always had within him. And that's why Arniel has had Connor killing penalties for the Jets since day one of training camp.

"The thing I like most about KC — we know the goal scoring, the shot, all the stuff — but it's his ability to get the puck back," Arniel told reporters Wednesday morning. "The way he tracks. The way he takes a lot of pride playing without [the puck]. That leads to offence. It allows them to play with [the puck] a little bit more. He's a guy that, when he doesn't have it, he goes and gets it."

As much as Connor's first period point totals on Wednesday were eye-catching, his play away from the puck all night long was something Arniel didn't want to gloss over.

"I just love the fact there were a couple of times in the third period where we were up three goals or whatever it was and he was still pouring back on the back-check and he was still trying to pop sticks," Arniel said.

While Connor was always a near-lock to represent Team USA at the 2025 4 Nations Face-Off, the all-around game he's displayed will undoubtedly bode well for him becoming a driver — not just a passenger — in that tournament.

Other Takeaways:

- The first line rebounded big time. After a dreadful showing against the Toronto Maple Leafs — which came on the heels of a season-long trend of being outscored and out-chanced during five-on-five play — the trio of Connor, Vilardi and Mark Scheifele was downright dominant against the Red Wings. Not only did they combine for three goals in the first period but they also out-chanced the opposition 10-3 at five-on-five. For the first time all year, it felt like things were clicking for them throughout an entire game. They were sustaining prolonged periods of offensive zone pressure, generating Grade-A chances and, most importantly, not getting suffocated in the neutral zone.

"That line looks fast, they're cohesive and they're doing things together," Arniel said. "When you have chemistry like that, they're going to create the offence."

- Speaking of that first line, it's safe to say we can put Vilardi's six-game goal drought to start the year in the rear-view mirror. With a goal tonight, Vilardi has three goals (and five points) in his last four games.

- You can add Dylan Samberg and Pionk to the list of players that bounced back in a big way from Monday's 6-4 loss to the Maple Leafs, where that pairing was on the ice for five goals against during five-on-five play.

"I'll quote [Rick Bowness] — [expletive] happens," Pionk told reporters post-game. "It was a combination of [Toronto] playing really well and us playing very poorly. That just happens. Over the course of 82 games, that's going to happen. Like I said, you've got to respond.

And that duo sure did, with Winnipeg out-chancing Detroit 11-2 during five-on-five play when those two were out there. Pionk scored two goals — the first being an aggressive pinch to the

slot and the second coming on the power play — which gave him 12 points on the year (tying him with Alex Pietrangelo for the second-most points among defenceman). Samberg had a few hallmark defensive stoppages, including some textbook defending on a two-on-one in the second period where he sprawled out and nullified a cross-ice chance.

Associated Press

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/jets-kyle-connor-tops-500-career-points-in-victory-over-red-wings/>

Jets' Kyle Connor tops 500 career points in victory over Red Wings

By Associated Press

DETROIT — Kyle Conner had a goal and two assists to top 500 points for his career, and the Winnipeg Jets beat the Detroit Red Wings 6-2 on Wednesday night.

Neal Pionk scored two goals for the Jets while Gabriel Vilardi had a goal and an assist, and Nino Niederreiter and Colin Miller also scored. Connor Hellebuyck made 19 saves to help Winnipeg bounce back from its first loss of the season against Toronto on Monday.

Connor, who entered the game with 499 career points, extended his season-opening point streak to 10 games. He has 17 points (nine goals, eight assists) this season.

Dylan Larkin and Alex DeBrincat scored power-play goals for Detroit, which has lost three straight. Lucas Raymond and Moritz Seider each had two assists, and Alex Lyon had 23 saves.

Takeaways

Jets: Their top-ranked power play didn't get an opportunity until the third period. Pionk scored his second goal of the game on a shot from the point. They went 1 for 2 with the advantage and are now 13 for 29.

Red Wings: The offence just hasn't put enough pressure on opposing goalies. They've been outshot 211-127 over the last six games.

Key moment

The Jets were clinging to a one-goal lead entering the third. They got some breathing room 10 seconds into the period after Detroit defenceman Jeff Petry failed to control the puck in his own zone. Niederreiter swatted it toward the Red Wings crease and it deflected off the skate on Detroit defenceman Ben Chiarot and into the net.

Key stat

The Jets had given up two power-play goals in their first nine games and none on the road. The Red Wings converted on two opportunities in the second period.

Up Next

The Jets visit Columbus on Friday, while the Red Wings host Buffalo on Saturday.

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/10/30/jets-score-early-and-often>

Jets score early and often Club rebounds from first loss of season to pummel Red Wings

By: Mike McIntyre

DETROIT — Two nights after getting “punched in the nose” and suffering their first loss of the season, the Winnipeg Jets picked themselves up off the ice and came out swinging.

A 6-2 pummelling of the Detroit Red Wings inside Little Caesars Arena on Wednesday has the hockey club once again looking like an NHL heavyweight.

“I think that was a great response game,” centre Mark Scheifele told the Free Press. “I thought we all stepped up. We obviously didn’t like our last one and that’s what good teams do.”

Winnipeg reeled off eight straight victories — one of the best starts in league history — before a 6-4 setback on Monday night that had coach Scott Arniel offering up the colourful quote above. That game was marked by an ugly first 40 minutes in which the Jets had absolutely nothing going.

That wasn’t the case against Detroit. Winnipeg (9-1-0) grabbed command early, scoring three times in the opening frame and never looking back against a rebuilding Red Wings team that falls to 4-5-1.

Here’s a breakdown from Motown on how it all went down:

1) Top line steps up: Much has been made about the top trio of Scheifele, Kyle Connor and Gabe Vilardi, who had been significantly outscored at five-on-five this season. Arniel even broke them up in the latter half of Monday’s game but put them back together for this one.

It’s safe to say they rewarded their bench boss for his belief.

Connor fed Vilardi for the opening goal 2:48 into the game, and the assist marked the Michigan product’s 500th career point. Connor and Scheifele then set up defenceman Neal Pionk for a goal at 4:02 to make it 2-0, and then Vilardi returned the favour by helping Connor get his team-leading ninth later in the opening frame.

Three tallies by the No. 1 line, all at even strength, was quite the statement.

“We’re a good line. There’s games that go our way that don’t go our way, but we were 8-0 before last game. So that’s something,” said Scheifele.

“And obviously we all played a great game. KC and Gabe were absolutely fantastic tonight. And it showed and it was fun to play with those guys tonight.”

It was also a refreshing change to see the Jets not chasing a game early. Despite their strong record, they haven’t exactly come flying out of the starting gate in games this season. Winnipeg had only scored the opening goal in two of its first nine games.

In the three contests where they've now lit the lamp first, the Jets have gone on to score 20 goals. Captain Obvious here, but they might want to try to do that more often.

"Our start in the first obviously set the tone," said Arniel.

"We had to be back to (having) everybody playing their A-game and I thought we did. Good contributions from everybody. We went after them and made them play in their end of the rink to kind of take the crowd out of it a little bit and we did that."

2) *Pulling away*: The Jets were still in firm control of the game through the second period, even if the scoreboard didn't reflect it.

Winnipeg took three consecutive minor penalties — two of them were what you might dub "game management" type calls given the lopsided score through 20 minutes — and Detroit converted on two of them with deflections by Dylan Larkin and Alex DeBrincat that eluded Connor Hellebuyck.

Any thoughts of a Red Wings comeback were put to rest when Nino Niederreiter scored a bizarre goal just 10 seconds into the third, throwing a puck towards the Detroit net which was knocked in by former Jets defenceman Ben Chiarot.

They don't ask how, just how many, and Niederreiter is now up to five.

"I think it should be play of the day," joked Scheifele. "We were playing an unbelievable game, five-on-five, and obviously they got some power-play goals, but our PK has been fantastic. And I think that's the hockey gods looking down on us."

Pionk then added his second of the night when Winnipeg got its first power play later in the period, and fellow blue-liner Colin Miller finished it off with a wrist shot that eluded Red Wings goaltender Alex Lyon.

You know it felt good for Pionk, who along with partner Dylan Samberg had a nightmarish game against the Maple Leafs as they were on the ice for five even-strength goals against.

"The sun came up, thankfully," Pionk said of quickly putting that in the rear-view mirror.

"It was just a team thing. Obviously, we didn't play very well, (me) personally either. It's all part of being a pro. I talked to (Samberg) and we both agreed we just got to turn the page and get on to the next game."

3) *Oh, Canada?*: There were a couple of interesting observers in the press box a on Wednesday night. Boston Bruins general manager Don Sweeney and Tampa Bay Lightning GM Julien BriseBois took in the game, which is notable because they are involved in Team Canada's management for the upcoming 4 Nations Face-Off.

Given that the Red Wings don't have any prominent Canadian skaters on the roster, it's a safe bet they wanted to get an up-close look at the likes of Scheifele and Josh Morrissey. Maybe even shutdown centre Adam Lowry, too.

BriseBois, whose Lightning were playing in Colorado at the same time, was also in Winnipeg last week for a Jets home game.

Scheifele, Morrissey and Lowry all had strong outings, but you wonder if they are also thinking how their lives would be an easier if Connor and Hellebuyck, who will be key parts of the American team, could get their Canadian citizenship between now and February.

4) *Afterburner:*

Key play: Connor's sweet dish to Vilardi for his milestone point really set the tempo.

Three stars:

- 1) Winnipeg LW Kyle Connor: 1 goal, 2 assists
- 2) Winnipeg D Neal Pionk: 2 goals
- 3) Winnipeg RW Gabe Vilardi: 1 goal, 1 assist

5) *Extra, Extra:* Hellebuyck finished the night with 19 saves on 21 shots, while Lyon stopped 23 of the 29 pucks he faced.

Prior to the game, Arniel revealed that injured defenceman Ville Heinola (ankle surgery) and forward Jaret Anderson-Dolan (broken foot) have both started skating this week. They are not on the trip but are working out back home in Winnipeg. Although there's no specific timeline for returns, this is obviously a welcome development. There's a good chance Heinola will be sent to the Manitoba Moose on a conditioning assignment once he's ready, while Anderson-Dolan is likely headed to the Manitoba Moose for additional depth.

The Jets chartered following the game to Columbus and will enjoy an off day Thursday. They'll be back on the ice Friday morning to prepare for that evening's date with the Blue Jackets.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/10/30/connors-milestone-night-in-michigan>

Connor's milestone night in Michigan Jets high-scoring winger eclipses 500-career points in homecoming

By: Mike McIntyre

DETROIT — Kyle Connor is no longer the little kid from Shelby Township working on his shot by blasting hundreds of pucks a day in his garage.

He's now the big kid from Shelby Township having highlight-reel moments on the largest hockey stage in his backyard.

Connor, 27, wasted no time on Wednesday recording his 500th career NHL point, dishing out a beautiful assist to linemate Gabe Vilardi 2:48 into the his team's annual visit to Michigan. He then added points No. 501 (an assist on Neal Pionk's first goal of the night) and 502 (his own snipe, a team-leading ninth of the season) before the opening frame was finished.

Happy homecoming, kid.

Connor spoke with the Free Press a few hours before puck drop, saying how much it would mean to hit a milestone in a place that means so much to him.

“You never take anything for granted in this league. It’s tough every single day, it’s the best league in the world,” said Connor.

“To get that accomplishment is pretty cool. Obviously there’s bigger goals in mind, but it’s still nice.”

It sure didn’t look very tough against the Detroit Red Wings for Connor, who was coming off a four-point outing on Monday against the Toronto Maple Leafs.

With 17 points (9G, 8A) in 10 games, he’s off to the best start of his career and is among the league leaders in all offensive categories. His previous single-season highs of goals (47), assists (49) and points (93) could all be in jeopardy if he can stay healthy. Not that he has a potential ceiling in mind.

“You know, I don’t really set numbers going into a season, per se,” said Connor.

“It’s good to get into a groove, especially when you’ve got these games every other day. You kind of find your groove there. But as far as a specific goal, you don’t like to put limits on yourself, if you set yourself a goal. That’s kind of how I look at it. So I try not to think about it at all.”

Jets coach Scott Arniel, an associate for the past two years, is seeing a more dangerous and determined Connor than ever.

“The thing I like the most about KC, we know the goal scoring, the shot and stuff, but his ability to work to get the puck back, the way he tracks, the way he takes a lot of pride in playing without it,” Arniel said following the morning skate.

“That leads to offence, allows him to play with it a little bit more. He’s a guy when he doesn’t have it, he goes and gets it.”

That has led to Arniel even deploying him on the penalty kill, knowing he can be trusted with those additional responsibilities.

“He’s taken a lot of pride in the last few years being more responsible when he doesn’t have the puck,” said Arniel. “We talk about buy-in, especially from your top guys, and he does that on a nightly basis. It gets noticed by his teammates and they see the effort he puts in. He gets rewarded for it.”

Connor, as always, had quite the cheering gallery on hand for his latest visit, with dozens of family members, friends, former teammates and coaches inside Little Caesars Arena.

“I love coming to Detroit and obviously playing here. It’s just such a different vibe than anywhere else,” he said.

“Obviously spend a lot of time here, spend my summers here. Tons of family and friends. It’s just a different atmosphere here towards the game. Just kind of relish it and embrace it.”

There were other reminders about Connor's past in the building Wednesday, including former college teammates JT Compher and Tyler Motte who are now members of the Red Wings.

Dubbed the CCM line, they were one of the more lethal trios at the time while playing for the University of Michigan in 2015-16. Connor had 71 points that year in 38 games, while Compher (63) and Motte (56) had big years as well.

"I feel like you never really know when guys are in junior or college how it will translate. But he always had that scoring ability," Compher said following the morning skate.

"It didn't matter where he got the puck, how much time he would have or how much room he would have, he was always able to get it off. He's got a super fun release to watch. It's sneaky and quick. He's also just a crafty player, a good playmaker and a great skater. I'm not surprised to see him having a great career."

Compher (247 points in 509 games) and Motte (90 points in 404 games) haven't enjoyed the same level of success but continue to cheer him on from a distance.

"It's one of the things you talk about as a kid. You want to make the next level and take advantage of the opportunity. It's fun to see your classmates and teammates doing it as well," said Compher.

Jets forward Mason Appleton was part of the same draft class as Connor, who went 17th-overall in 2015 (Appleton went 168th). He thinks the best is yet to come.

"Just the way he can impact the game and score at any at any second is unbelievable. He's got that scoring touch that not many guys in this league have," said Appleton.

"So it seems almost like every other night he scores a goal. You almost get used to it, but it's like, well, that's an unbelievable goal. So he's a heck of a player, and he's got a lot more time in his career."

It's too bad the Jets don't play in Detroit more often. Connor now has eight goals and eight assists in 13 career NHL games here.

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/billeck-jets-leadership-answers-the-challenge>

BILLECK: Jets leadership answers the challenge

By Scott Billeck

Winnipeg's leaders made a statement on Wednesday night in Detroit.

They weren't about to allow a repeat performance.

From the opening shift, where Adam Lowry's relentless line went out and set the tone, to when the top trio opened the scoring 2:48 into the game, to the continued defensive presence on the scoresheet.

The Jets answered the bell, silencing the criticism after a tough loss with a masterclass on responding to a bad night at the office.

A 6-2 win over the Red Wings put the Jets back in the win column, the ninth tick through 10 games.

It wasn't just the score that stood out. It was how the team arrived there.

Kyle Connor's quick cross-ice feed to Gabriel Vilardi put Winnipeg in front before three minutes were gone, putting the pre-game chatter about the line's five-on-five woes to bed.

"We're a good line," Mark Scheifele told reporters. "There's games that go our way that don't go our way, but we were 8-0 before last game. So that's something. And obviously, we all played a great game. KC and Gabe were absolutely fantastic tonight. And it showed and it was fun to play with those guys tonight."

About 90 seconds later, Neal Pionk awoke from his nightmare against Toronto, scoring his first of two in the game to ease the memory of being on the ice for five on Monday.

"The sun came up, thankfully," Pionk said. "It was just a team thing. Obviously, we didn't play very well, me personally either. It's all part of being a pro. I talked to (defensive partner Dylan Samerg) and we both agreed we just got to turn the page and get on to the next game."

Vilardi would help return the favour for Connor's league-leading ninth goal of the season, capping off his multi-point night as the line finished plus-three on the scoresheet while controlling possession and outshooting and out-chancing their opponents.

Lowry's line ground out another goal, with Nino Niederreiter scoring 10 seconds into the third. Head coach Scott Arniel welcomed the quick response after Detroit scored twice in the second period to pull the game to 3-2.

"Everybody was put in a little bit of a, 'Let's see how we respond after the last game,' and it was a great response," Arniel said.

And he couldn't have asked for a better one.

"Our start in the first obviously set the tone," Arniel said. "I thought it was everybody again. We had to be back to (having) everybody playing their A-game, and I thought we did tonight. Good contributions from everybody. We went after them and made them play in their end of the rink to kind of take the crowd out of it a little bit and we did that."

Pionk ensured Winnipeg's power play continued to churn along, scoring the team's eighth goal of the season with the man advantage.

The 29-year-old rearguard, in a contract year, is now second in the league in defensive scoring, and Winnipeg's defensive corps took over the top scoring ranking by blue-liners with 34 points.

Detroit's only hope came on the power play, as the Jets penalty kill had an off night in what's otherwise been a steady, solid start to the season.

Connor Hellebuyck won his seventh game of the season and responded well after allowing five against the Leafs. The two-time and reigning Vezina winner has a 2.12 goals-against average and a .923 save percentage.

Here are a few other thoughts after Wednesday's win:

- If you haven't heard, Connor reached the 500-point milestone on Wednesday. He's the sixth player from the vaunted 2015 draft class to reach that mark, joining Connor McDavid, Mitch Marner, Mikko Rantanen, Sebastian Aho and Jack Eichel. "Five hundred points, that's unbelievable, in the sense that it shows the type of player he is, how hard he works," Arniel said. "He's a professional through and through. He's an elite player in this league. We like to keep him as our little hidden secret but I don't think that's going to happen anymore. People know he's got 500, that he can score and that he's off to a great start to start this year."
- Pionk invoked the words of former head coach Rick Bowness describing his night against Toronto. "S— happens." Scheifele, meanwhile, was as blunt as it gets: "We sucked."
- Speaking of Pionk, he's been very good this season. It's what made Monday as noticeable as it was. Really solid on both sides of the puck. He will never admit it, but injuries slowed him over the past couple of years.
- I've said it here before: there's a tangible change in Winnipeg's approach to this season. The disappointment of losing like they did to Colorado in the playoffs is being channelled correctly. This team's upset they're not still undefeated and not just happy to be 9-1.
- Connor's defensive work keeps getting better. It was something he's been criticized about, but it's improved a lot over the past couple of seasons. "I just love the fact there were a couple of times in the third period where we were up three goals or whatever it was, and he was still pouring back on the back-check, and he was still trying to pop sticks," Arniel said.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/jets-find-redemption-in-motown-clip-red-wings-6-2>

Jets find redemption in Motown, clip Red Wings 6-2

By Scott Billeck

Scott Arniel offered his team a chance at redemption, and they wasted little time rewarding his faith.

Kyle Connor hit the 500-point milestone, moved into a share of the NHL's goal-scoring lead, and his top line ran rampant in a 6-2 Winnipeg Jets win over the Detroit Red Wings on Wednesday at Little Caesars Arena.

Connor, the sixth player from the vaunted 2015 NHL draft class to reach 500 points, had a goal and two assists in the first period as the top line contributed all three goals in the opening frame.

It was a dominant display from a line that had come under fire recently.

Through the first nine games, the line had been outscored handily at five-on-five, and Monday's 6-4 loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs led Arniel to split up the trio for the back half of the game.

Reunited on Wednesday, Connor fed Gabriel Vilardi 2:48 into the first period for point No. 500 and a 1-0 Winnipeg lead. The goal was just the third time in 10 games the Jets have scored first this season.

The point pushed Connor's streak to a career-high-matching 10 games, a feat he's achieved three times now.

He added his second helper at 4:02 when Neal Pionk, on the ice for five of Toronto's six goals, scored his second of the year and first of two in the game to double the lead.

Connor then fired home his ninth of the year to tie the NHL goal-scoring lead at 15:44 to make it 3-0.

Detroit fought back in the second, scoring twice on the power play.

Dylan Larkin converted on Dylan Samberg's interference call — one Arniel was furious about — then Alex DeBrincat redirected one past Connor Hellebuyck to make it 3-2 with Neal Pionk sitting for hooking.

Hellebuyck won for a seventh time in eight starts (7-1-0) this season, making 19 saves.

A two-goal cushion was restored 10 seconds into the third when Nino Niederreiter banked a puck off the skate of former Jets defenceman Ben Chiarot behind Alex Lyon to make it 4-2.

Pionk kept Winnipeg's white-hot power play churning, ripping a shot at 7:19 to make it 5-2, and Miller pushed the lead to 6-2, scoring just after Winnipeg's second power play of the period expired.

Pionk is now tied for second in defenceman scoring with 12 points.

Winnipeg's power play, meanwhile, is 8-for-19 (42.1 per cent), good for second in the NHL.

ARNIEL KEEPS FAITH

The head coach shuffled the deck twice during Monday's loss to the Leafs, which was the worst performance of this young season and resulted in Winnipeg's first loss.

Lines were back to normal during the morning skate, with Arniel signalling that the slip-up was an anomaly for the Central Division leaders.

"I've liked what our lines have done," Arniel said. "We talked prior to that Toronto game. Our depth has given us, and every line has given us opportunities to win games for us and created momentum in games themselves. They've all done what they need to do. Just gotta get back to it."

Arniel also admitted to being a little curious.

There's been a bit of in-game adversity for the Jets to overcome this season, but Monday was the first loss after eight consecutive wins and Winnipeg's game looked nothing like it had.

"It's a new year ... we've got good leaders," Arniel said. "They know they weren't very good. We just have to make sure we get back to playing how we have to play. That's our mindset when we

don't have the puck. That's our compete. That's us getting in and getting our nose in there, winning more one-on-one battles."

HEINOLA SKATING

Ville Heinola is back on the ice.

Arniel said Heinola (ankle) and Jaret Anderson-Dolan (foot) have been skating in Winnipeg.

"Ville has been on the ice for a couple of days," Arniel said. "Still non-contact. Same with Anderson-Dolan. They're both out on the ice. Both are just getting their conditioning right now. No contact."

Heinola had surgery in late September to fix an infection at the site of a screw that was used to repair his ankle a year earlier.

Anderson-Dolan, meanwhile, broke his foot blocking a shot late in Winnipeg's pre-season schedule.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/betting/video/strength-in-numbers-is-this-the-year-connor-hits-50%7E3021163>

Strength in Numbers: Is this the year Connor hits 50? (VIDEO)

Jets sniper Kyle Connor has eight goals through nine games so far this season, with his career high sitting at 47 goals in the 2021-22 season. Is this the year he hits the 50 mark? Meghan Chayka takes a closer look in the latest Strength in Numbers.

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10839865/connor-pionk-shine-as-winnipeg-jets-roll-past-detroit-6-2/>

Connor, Pionk shine as Winnipeg Jets roll past Detroit 6-2

By Christian Aumell & Russ Hobson Global News

After suffering their first loss of the season Monday, the Winnipeg Jets responded in a big way by taking care of the Red Wings 6-2 in Detroit Wednesday night.

The Jets scored three times in each of the first and third periods, and Kyle Connor recorded three points, including the 500th of his career, as the Jets bounced back for their ninth win in their first ten games.

Winnipeg finally had a strong start after giving up the first goal of the game in seven of their first nine contests, scoring the first three goals of the game to jump out to the early lead.

"Our start in the first obviously set the tone," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. "I just thought it was everybody.

“Big contributions from everybody. Went after them and made them play in their end of the rink to hopefully take the crowd out of it a little bit and we did that.”

The Jets rode a hot power play in the first nine games, but scored five goals at 5-on-5 in the win over Detroit.

Neal Pionk scored twice for just his second career multi-goal game. The Jets never trailed as they avoided their first losing streak of the season.

“We sucked against the Leafs and still had a chance of tying it,” said Jets forward Mark Scheifele. “There’s just a resiliency in this group.”

“I think that was a great response game. I thought we all stepped up and obviously didn’t like our last one and that’s what good teams do.”

Connor has a point in every game this season. He scored his ninth goal of the season, one back of the league lead and his 17 points is just two points back of the NHL lead. He notched his milestone 500th point in his old backyard in his home state of Michigan.

“500 points, that’s unbelievable,” Arniel said. “It just shows what type of player he is, how hard he works. Again, I just love the fact there was a couple times in the third period, we were up three goals or whatever it was and he’s still pouring back on the backcheck. He’s still trying to pop sticks and he’s a professional through and through.”

“He’s an elite player in this league and we like to keep him our little hidden secret, but I don’t think that’s going to happen anymore.”

The Jets wasted little time getting on the board, opening the scoring just 2:48 into the game. Connor fed a hard-charging Gabriel Vilardi in transition and he roofed it past Alex Lyon to make it 1-0.

Just 1:14 after Vilardi’s goal, the Jets made it 2-0. Scheifele won an offensive zone faceoff back to the point to Pionk, who sent it near-side to Connor. His shot toward the net was tipped by Scheifele and trickled to the back post where Pionk charged to the back door and knocked it home for his second of the season.

After picking up a pair of helpers, Connor got in on the scoring late in the first. He picked up a loose puck in his own end and started up the ice, firing a cross-ice pass to Vilardi in the neutral zone. After taking it into the Detroit end, Vilardi sent a perfect pass to the back door where Connor was ready to receive it and deke out Lyon to make it 3-0 after 20 minutes.

Winnipeg nearly made it 4-0 around eight minutes into the second when Cole Perfetti hit the post from point-blank range, and moments later Dylan Samberg was called for interference near the Wings’ blue line, giving Detroit a power play chance that they would make quick work of.

Six seconds after the puck was dropped in the Jets’ zone, Dylan Larkin scored on a one-timer to make it 3-1.

Detroit rode the momentum of that goal and put lots of pressure on Winnipeg as the period rolled along, earning another power play that they would again take advantage of.

With Pionk in the box for hooking, Alex DeBrincat tipped a Lucas Raymond shot high over the shoulder of Connor Hellebuyck to make it 3-2 heading to the third.

But just eight seconds into the final frame, a weird one helped the Jets restore their two-goal lead. After Jeff Petry mishandled the puck in the corner, Nino Niederreiter steered it softly on goal but Lyon's attempt to send the puck away from the net bounced off Ben Chiarot and into the net.

Winnipeg ran away with the game from there, scoring a power play goal at the 7:19 mark of the third when a long wrist shot from Pionk beat Lyon clean for his second of the night.

Colin Miller got in on the fun just past the midway point when he beat Lyon from distance as the Wings' netminder tried to catch the high shot but whiffed on it.

Ten different Jets recorded at least a point in the win, while Hellebuyck only had to make 19 saves to earn the victory.

Winnipeg will look to pick up another two points Friday in Columbus against the Blue Jackets. Pregame show starts at 4 p.m. on 680 CJOB, with puck drop just after 6 p.m.