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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-hellebuyck-shines-in-calgary>

Three things - Hellebuyck shines in Calgary Kyle Connor scores game winner with 3:09 remaining in the third

By Jamie Thomas

The Winnipeg Jets closed out their 2024 preseason with a 3-2 win over the Calgary Flames at the Scotiabank Saddledome. The Jets finish the preseason 3-2-1 and will have Saturday off before beginning their final preparations for the regular season opener which will be October 9th. Nino Niederreiter, Colin Miller and Kyle Connor scored for the Jets and Connor Hellebuyck came up huge in the third period and finished with 31 saves.

1. FAMILIAR LINEUP

The Jets lineup at the Saddledome was close to what you will see when they open the season in Edmonton next Wednesday. Familiar lines like Connor-Scheifele-Vilardi and Niederreiter-Lowry-Appleton and D pairings Morrissey-DeMelo and Samberg-Pionk plus Hellebuyck starting in goal. It was the Lowry line that opened the scoring for the Jets in the first, Haydn Fleury dumped the puck into the offensive zone and Mason Appleton found a wide-open Nino Niederreiter and he scored for the third time in two games, all those goals coming against the Flames.

2. MILLER TIME

31-year-old Colin Miller signed a two-year deal with the Jets with an average annual value of \$1,500,000 back in July. After being used sparingly last spring when he was acquired from the New Jersey Devils at the trade deadline, Miller will be a regular on the blueline this season. Miller had three goals and five points in the preseason, with his third goal coming tonight. Miller did a great job getting the puck past the Flames Jonathan Huberdeau and the shot ended up going off Dan Vladar's blocker and in for a 2-0 Jets lead after two.

3. HELLEBUYCK WAS HELLEBUYCK

The Flames woke up in the final frame outshooting Winnipeg 20-4 and scoring tying the game with a couple of goals 3:23 apart. Both Calgary goals came on deflections on shots from the point. After the Flames tied it, Connor Hellebuyck held the fort with numerous big stops and then with 3:09 left in the period, Kyle Connor was in the right place at the right time to deposit the go-ahead goal behind Vladar. The Flames had a chance to tie the contest while on a late power play, but Hellebuyck robbed Nazem Kadri.

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/10/04/jets-hang-on-to-end-preseason-with-win>

Jets hang on to end preseason with win Hellebuyck goes distance in victory over Flames

By: Mike McIntyre

The final dress rehearsal for the Winnipeg Jets won't have fans clamouring for a curtain call — it's preseason hockey, after all — but there was enough about their performance to at least earn polite praise.

A 3-2 victory over the Calgary Flames on Friday night at the Scotiabank Saddledome featured the closest thing we've seen to regular NHL lineups since training camps opened in mid-September. As such, the takeaways from this type of tilt can carry at least a bit more weight.

Here are a few noteworthy ones as the Jets wrapped up the exhibition slate with a 3-2-1 record.

Connor's crease

Safe to say Connor Hellebuyck's preseason finished better than it started.

After getting shelled for eight goals in 40 minutes during his debut in Minnesota, the reigning Vezina Trophy winner looked more like his usual stellar self in his next two outings.

Hellebuyck stopped 17 of 19 shots last Wednesday in a 5-2 home victory over the Flames, then followed that up by turning aside 32 of 34 against a beefed-up version of the same team, just 48 hours later.

You've got to be good to be lucky, and Hellebuyck had a bit of early help in this one as Calgary rang iron twice in the opening period. (Although goaltenders will always say a post is just the product of not giving the opponent anywhere else to shoot).

Winnipeg got a bit of a scare in the first period when Hellebuyck came out to play a puck and was tripped up by Calgary's Adam Klapka in some skate-on-skate contact, but he quickly popped up without issue.

The only two pucks to beat him came courtesy of nifty net-front tips by the Flames, both in the third period. He stood tall in the final frame when the Jets (who entered up 2-0) were outshot 21-4.

Depth scoring

One of Winnipeg's strengths last season was depth scoring, with 11 forwards hitting double-digits. Defenceman Josh Morrissey also joined the club, and Brenden Dillon came two goals short.

In other words, they had a lot of offensive weapons.

Coach Scott Arniel will love the fact Friday's first two goals came from third-liner winger Nino Niederreiter (linemate Mason Appleton won a race to a loose puck and found him wide-open in the slot) and third-pairing defenceman Colin Miller, who was set up by fourth-line centre Rasmus Kupari.

The 12 skaters who notched at least 10 last year are all back for Winnipeg, and it says here Miller has a legitimate shot of being in that mix as well. He's got a rocket of a shot and ended up lighting the lamp three times in the preseason.

Clutch scoring

It's nice to have a few game-breakers on the roster, and top-line winger Kyle Connor is certainly in that category. He scored with 3:09 left in the third period to snap a tie, beating Flames

goaltender Dan Vladar after Gabe Vilardi fed him the puck off a scrambled draw in the offensive zone.

Connor ended up with three goals in three preseason games, which was tied for the team lead with Niederreiter and Miller.

After 34 goals in just 65 games last year — he missed 17 with a knee injury — Connor might just threaten his career-high of 47 if he can stay healthy. Dare we say 50?

Special teams

The power play had some great chances despite going 0-for-2, but the penalty killing was the real story. Winnipeg killed off five minors, including a 6-on-4 in the final minute of play which included huge shot blocks from defencemen Dylan DeMelo (off his visor/face) and Dylan Samberg (off his shin pads).

Waivers worries

The Jets breathed a sigh of relief on Friday as four players sent packing from training camp all cleared waivers.

Defenceman Simon Lundmark and forwards Axel Jonsson-Fjalby, Dominic Toninato and Mason Shaw were all bypassed by the other 31 clubs, paving the way for them to remain in the organization and join the Manitoba Moose. They'll give the AHL team a major boost while also serving as insurance for the Jets.

Extra, extra

The following skaters were scratched from the lineup: Forwards Brad Lambert, Nikita Chibrikov, David Gustafsson and Jaret Anderson-Dolan. Defencemen Elias Salomonsson, Dylan Coghlan, Ville Heinola and Logan Stanley, and goaltender Kaapo Kahkonen.

The Jets flew back to Winnipeg following the game and will take Saturday off. Sunday will be spent away from the rink doing some team bonding while coaches and management work to get down to a maximum of 23 healthy players by Monday's deadline.

The team will skate on Monday and Tuesday before heading to Edmonton for the season-opener against the Oilers on Wednesday.

Captain Yager

Brayden Yager had an eye-opening first training camp with the Jets, which included scoring a goal on future Hall of Famer Marc-Andre Fleury in preseason action. The 19-year-old was sent back to junior earlier this week but had a nice consolation prize waiting for him.

Yager was named the new captain of the Moose Jaw Warriors, the defending Western Hockey League champions who should be a force again this year. There's a good chance the Saskatoon product could also be part of the leadership group for the Canadian World Juniors club this coming holiday season.

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/after-showing-struggles-has-time-run-out-for-lambert-to-make-jets-roster/sn-amp/>

Few surprises expected in Jets' season opening roster

By: Ken Wiebe

Some might call it the path of least resistance.

Winnipeg Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff probably considers it the pragmatic one.

When the Jets submit their opening-day roster on Monday afternoon before the 4 p.m. deadline, it's unlikely to include many surprises.

The only transaction made by the Jets on Sunday involved forward Jaret Anderson-Dolan being placed on waivers, with the intention of sending him to the Manitoba Moose of the American Hockey League.

Anderson-Dolan had a strong training camp and the coaching staff clearly considers him to be a good candidate for recall for a checking role if an injury opens up an opportunity — provided he clears waivers.

The projected assignment of Anderson-Dolan leaves the Jets with three goalies, 10 defencemen (though two of them are injured and heading to injured reserve) and 15 forwards remaining as training camp gives way to preparations for Wednesday's regular season opener against the Edmonton Oilers at Rogers Place.

So what else is to come on the roster front?

Barring a waiver claim to potentially bolster the defence corps, the Jets are going to cut at least one forward (a maximum of two) and possibly one D-man and/or one goalie.

Despite turning heads and significant progression during training camp, one of the players destined for the Moose is winger Nikita Chibrikov.

The biggest thing Chibrikov needs to do during his second season playing on North American ice is to improve his pace, as he's already got poise with the puck, an ability to score and a willingness to get to the hard areas and get under the skin of opponents.

Chibrikov should get NHL work this season and he won't likely need to wait until Game 82, which is when he scored and didn't look out of place in his NHL debut against the Vancouver Canucks.

Top defence prospect Elias Salomonsson has shown extremely well in camp and some observers are making the case that he might even be ready for the NHL right now.

Salomonsson has the tools and tool kit to slide in on a third pairing role and at least tread water, but this is a guy the organization believes is going to be an impact player.

And while the "give him a chance now to see how he handles it" chorus is getting louder, the benefits of Salomonsson playing 20-plus minutes a game at the AHL level and getting more puck touches than he would get while playing 10-to-12 in the NHL should win out.

At least for the time being.

Whether it's 20, 40 or 70-plus games in the minors will be determined mostly by how Salomonsson handles the transition to the North American game — and the early returns suggest he'll handle it just fine.

Salomonsson has done the opposite of what many inexperienced pros do, improving as training camp moved along, rather than see his game drop off.

This is someone with the combination of size, skating, puck-moving ability and edge — something the Jets are going to be looking to add before this season is complete.

If Salomonsson can be that guy instead of needing assets to be shipped out in order to acquire a D-man in a deadline deal, that's a big win for the Jets.

That brings us to Brad Lambert, who also had a steady training camp.

Lambert showcased his shot and playmaking ability while spending time with experienced linemates and demonstrated he's taken strides when it comes to his ability to defend.

Did he do enough to supplant incumbent Vladislav Namestnikov?

Not really, though it would have been beneficial to see him get some reps on a line with Nikolaj Ehlers and Cole Perfetti.

Lambert would give the Jets the ability to go with three scoring lines instead of the traditional top-six and bottom-six composition.

However, there could be some benefits to Lambert going down to the AHL and dominating the way Logan Stankoven did with the Texas Stars before he was summoned to Dallas late in the season.

That doesn't mean Lambert won't get a chance before February or March either.

It could be a brief stay, even if it's not as short as Kyle Connor's was back in the fall of October of 2017 when he suited up in his final four games in the AHL before graduating to full-time duty with the Jets.

Carrying three goalies would seem strange when you consider the workload starter Connor Hellebuyck is expected to carry, though it's a possibility Jets head coach Scott Arniel has mentioned.

If the Jets choose to expose goalie Eric Comrie to waivers on Monday, it's possible Lambert could open the campaign in the NHL, even if it seems unlikely he will be in the lineup on Wednesday.

There are obvious benefits to being around an NHL club on a daily basis, but when it comes to Lambert's quest to show he can be the No. 2 C for the Jets, playing time is essential — even if that means getting it with the Moose on a temporary basis.

Taking fourth line minutes and getting a shot on the second power play unit — like former Jets head coach Paul Maurice tried with Nic Petan back in the fall of 2015 — isn't going to be enough to enhance Lambert's development at this stage of his career.

As for Comrie, he's kept himself in the battle for the backup job.

He would also be an outstanding mentor for Thomas Milic with the Moose should he eventually end up there.

One of the themes surrounding the Jets training camp was Cheveldayoff's proclamation back on July 1 (and reiterated during training camp) that there were opportunities for young players on the horizon.

While some observers assumed that meant there could be a number of newcomers on the Jets' roster in October, Cheveldayoff expanded his statement when he met with reporters last month.

"It's an exciting time for a veteran on this team, too, because there are opportunities to take on different roles," said Cheveldayoff. "Whether it's an expanded leadership role, whether it's an expanded game role... Everybody in this game wants more and it's up to them to earn that opportunity for more."

Aniel has said on multiple occasions that the players battling for jobs on the edges of the roster have made the decisions difficult — and that's what an organization wants.

Internal competition is something that teams trying to win need and while it's easy to get overwhelmed with the importance of making the opening-day roster, the truth is that the jockeying for position on the depth chart is merely just beginning.

That's what all of Salomonsson, Lambert and Chibrikov need to keep in mind this week, no matter what decisions are made by Jets' management.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/featured/2024/10/04/the-plot-thickens-4>

The plot thickens Impending NHL season offers plethora of plotlines

By: Mike McIntyre and Ken Wiebe

The NHL is back and so too is our regular Dump & Chase column featuring Free Press hockey writers Mike McIntyre and Ken Wiebe. In this first edition for the new season, the duo offer observations on what's to come and take a glimpse into the crystal ball.

Ten storylines

1) What will the Panthers do for an encore?

Wiebe: Now that former Winnipeg Jets head coach Paul Maurice has his name engraved on the Stanley Cup, the question shifts to what the Florida Panthers are going to do next. Although they lost D Brandon Montour to the Seattle Kraken in free agency, general manager Bill Zito was able to convince F Sam Reinhart to stay after his most productive season as a pro (8 years, US\$69 million) and extended top D Gustav Forsling (8 years, US\$46 million).

The Panthers can also lean on Conn Smythe runner-up Sergei Bobrovsky between the pipes, D-man Aaron Ekblad, reigning Selke Trophy winner Aleksander Barkov, Matthew Tkachuk and

Carter Verhaeghe as they try to follow the path the Tampa Bay Lightning forged when they captured consecutive championships in 2020 and 2021.

2) 4 Nations Face-Off

McIntyre: It's not the Olympics — that will come in early 2026 — but some best-on-best hockey is just around the corner as the top players from Canada, the United States, Finland and Sweden battle for bragging rights during the Feb. 12-20 event being held in Boston and Montreal. Several Jets players could be in the mix, including Connor Hellebuyck, Kyle Connor, Josh Morrissey and Mark Scheifele, and this event should serve as a fun distraction during the dog days of the lengthy NHL season.

3) Chasing history

Wiebe: When Washington Capitals captain Alex Ovechkin got off to a slow start last season, whispers about whether he could actually catch Wayne Gretzky for the all-time goals record grew louder. Ovechkin found his game under first-year head coach Spencer Carberry and finished with 31 goals, moving to 853 markers for his career.

This is a record many believed was untouchable, but now it seems almost inevitable. Gretzky had 894 regular season NHL goals during his Hall of Fame career, so it's probably going to take more than one campaign for Ovechkin to eclipse the mark, but how close he can come is going to capture the attention of many who follow the league. Ovechkin is just one season removed from finding the net 42 times in 73 games, so there's an outside chance the record could be in jeopardy in the spring of 2025.

4) Motivated McDavid

McIntyre: The Edmonton Oilers came painfully close to ending Canada's lengthy Stanley Cup drought. Can Connor McDavid and company now channel that bitter disappointment, the way the Panthers did after losing to the Vegas Golden Knights in the spring of 2023?

If you've seen clips from the new Faceoff: Inside The NHL series, you know how angry McDavid was at coming up just short. A motivated McDavid is a very dangerous McDavid, and the Oilers have bulked up with the additions of Jeff Skinner and Viktor Arvidsson up front. Bet against them at your own peril.

5) How high will Utah HC soar?

Wiebe: For the first time since 2011 when the Atlanta Thrashers moved to Winnipeg, an NHL franchise relocated.

After countless attempts to make things work in the desert, the Arizona Coyotes are now Utah's team and Ryan and Ashley Smith are set to provide stable ownership after years of upheaval. They've got enormous pride for the community and the team made a splash by trading for Lightning defenceman Mikhail Sergachev.

The Coyotes have shown flashes since Andre Tourigny took over as head coach, but they've lacked attention to detail in their play without the puck. This is a team with ample firepower, led by the likes of Clayton Keller, Nick Schmaltz, Dylan Guenther and Logan Cooley.

If the goaltending tandem of Connor Ingram and Karel Vejmelka holds up and the commitment to defending as a five-man unit is there, GM Bill Armstrong could be a buyer at the trade deadline (given all of the draft picks and prospects the organization has accumulated) and Utah HC could be playoff-bound during their inaugural season.

6) Watching Winnipeg

McIntyre: Jets co-owner and chairman Mark Chipman, flanked by NHL commissioner Gary Bettman, sounded the alarm last season about dwindling season ticket sales and what it means in the big picture for the organization. Specifically, they called upon corporate entities to dig deep.

Time will tell if that leads to a much-needed uptick in attendance in what is the league's smallest market. A hot start on the ice for the Jets would certainly help the cause.

7) What will Trotz's moves mean for Music City?

Wiebe: Dauphin product Barry Trotz resisted the urge to panic when the Nashville Predators got off to a slow start under new head coach Andrew Brunette last year and added a couple of pending unrestricted free agents when some wondered if he might be a seller at the deadline.

Trotz doubled down this summer and added a pair of snipers and Stanley Cup winners in former Lightning captain Steven Stamkos and Golden Knights winger Jonathan Marchessault in free agency. When you couple those moves with the additions of Ryan O'Reilly and Luke Schenn the previous summer, you get the sense the Predators will be a force to be reckoned with in the Central Division this season.

The departure of Ryan McDonagh to the Lightning will sting, but the addition of Brady Skjei and the ability to retain Alexandre Carrier means the blue line should remain a strength — led by captain Roman Josi. By extending goalie Juuse Saros, Trotz showed his commitment to the group and set the table for taking some big swings in free agency.

8) Laine's fresh start

McIntyre: Patrik Laine can't seem to catch a break. However, the revelation that the new Montreal Canadiens winger might only miss the first two months of the season after suffering an ugly knee injury in a preseason game last week can be marked down as a best-case scenario.

The second-overall pick from 2016 has plenty of people in the hockey world rooting for him — especially here in Winnipeg — and you hope the 26-year-old can move on from last year's miserable campaign in Columbus, which began with injury and ended with a lengthy stint in the NHL player assistance program dealing with mental health issues.

9) Who will capture the Calder?

Wiebe: After last year's race between Connor Bedard (Chicago Blackhawks) and Brock Faber (Minnesota Wild) went down to the wire, there's a bumper crop of players across the league ready to jockey for position in the chase to be named top rookie.

Macklin Celebrini (San Jose Sharks) was the first overall pick in 2024 and he's got a contender for the award in teammate Will Smith, who left Boston College after just one season.

Matvei Michkov (Philadelphia Flyers) is one of the favourites after getting out of his KHL deal and he'll bring a game-breaking dynamic much like Kirill Kaprizov did when he joined the Minnesota Wild.

Logan Stankoven (Dallas Stars) left a massive impression after his dominant season in the American Hockey League and he's ready to take the next step as an NHL regular. He'll be joined in the Stars roster by Mavrik Bourque, who was the most valuable player in the AHL last season.

Blue-liner Lane Hutson (Montreal) is someone who could also work his way into the conversation given his offensive instincts and skating ability.

10) Flower's farewell

McIntyre:: Marc-Andre Fleury is truly one-of-a-kind. This year marks a final chance to see the sure-fire hall of famer tend goal. The first-overall pick from 2003, who will turn 40 next month, is retiring after this season with Minnesota.

The Jets will face the Wild three times — Oct. 13 and Dec. 21 in Winnipeg, Nov. 25 in St. Paul — so perhaps they'll face the guy who almost single-handedly ended their Stanley Cup hopes in 2018 at least once more.

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/jets-survive-third-period-onslaught-to-take-final-preseason-win>

Jets survive third-period onslaught to take final preseason win

By Scott Billeck

If not for Kyle Connor's opportunistic game-winner late in the third period on Friday, the Winnipeg Jets may still be in survival mode in Calgary.

A Mark Scheifele faceoff loss got steered into the slot, with Connor outlasting Dan Vladar's desperation sprawl to give the Jet a 3-2 win.

It was hardly earned by Winnipeg, who were outshot 21-4 in the final frame and watched their 2-0 lead dissolve in the first 4:27 of the period.

Nino Niederreiter's third goal in two games in the first, and Colin Miller's third of the preseason, had the Jets up by a pair after 40 minutes.

Calgary stepped on the throttle in the third, and Winnipeg never adjusted.

A bad breakout led to Jonathan Huberdeau getting a tip on a Danill Miromanov shot from the point to claw one back just 64 seconds in.

And Flames captain Mikael Backlund tied the game just over three minutes later, tipping another shot past Connor Hellebuyck.

The reigning Vezina winner was rock-solid otherwise, stopping 31 shots in his final tuneup before he tries to retain the hardware.

Winnipeg's penalty kill went 5-for-5 in the game, including killing off the remaining 1:28 of regulation at 6-on-4 after Connor took a holding penalty.

Mercifully, the preseason is over.

Some thoughts on Friday's game:

- It's preseason, granted, but that third period was ugly from a team that iced what's likely to be its opening night roster come Wednesday in Edmonton. Winnipeg was much better at holding onto leads last season, and there weren't any points on the line on Friday. You'd expect them to clean that up when they get back on the ice on Monday.
- Don't tell Dylan Samberg there wasn't anything to play for on Friday. He got down to block a late shot with Calgary pushing for an equalizer playing 6-on-4. The shotblock effectively ended the threat with seconds left. Samberg is a shot-blocking beast on the penalty kill. You like the effort, even if it's not entirely necessary in preseason.
- Winnipeg's breakouts were poor, especially in the third. They just weren't moving through the neutral zone well, and often got caught up at the opposing blue-line, if not their own. Their inability to get the puck out led directly to Calgary's first goal in the third.
- The second goal from Backlund came courtesy of another sore spot for the Jets on the night: faceoffs. Scheifele lost the draw to Backlund, allowing Kevin Bahl to get the shot off while Backlund moved in front for the redirection. Backlund was 10-for-11 in the dot. The Jets had just one player over 50 per cent. Morgan Barron went 2-for-2, and both draws came after his centre was given the boot.
- The Jets still have roster decisions ahead of Monday's 4 p.m. deadline. We can only assume that Ville Heinola (ankle) and Logan Stanley (knee) will begin the season on injured reserve. Jaret Anderson-Dolan and David Gustafsson skated on Friday morning as they work their way back from injuries sustained in Wednesday's win over the Flames. With those parameters, the Jets will need to cut four by Monday. Three likely candidates — Brad Lambert, Nikita Chibrikov and Elias Salomonsson — don't require waivers. Winnipeg's fourth cut will be one of Eric Comrie or Kaapo Kahkonen, who will have to survive waivers for the Jets to re-assign one of them to the Moose.

Canadian Press

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/connor-scores-winner-as-jets-beat-flames-in-final-pre-season-game-for-each-team/>

Connor scores winner as Jets beat Flames in final pre-season game for each team

By Canadian Press

CALGARY — The Winnipeg Jets prevailed 3-2 over the Calgary Flames in Friday's final dress rehearsal for the NHL regular season for both clubs.

Kyle Connor scored the late game-winner after a hard push by the Flames to tie the game early in the third.

Both clubs expressed satisfaction with her performances in their pre-season finales, although the Jets could feel more content having beaten the Flames in two straight games to go home with a 3-2-1 pre-season record.

"We definitely accomplished what we set out in pre-season here to feel ready and touch on all aspects of the game," Connor said.

"There's a lot of new system stuff as well, power play, PK, and we're going to continue to build on that."

Nino Niederreiter scored his third goal in two games and Colin Miller also scored for the Jets.

Winnipeg goaltender Connor Hellebuyck stopped 32 shots in his third game of the pre-season.

His Flames counterpart Dan Vladar made 14 saves in his fourth appearance.

Jonathan Huberdeau and Mikael Backlund scored their first goals of the pre-season for Calgary, which went 5-2-1 in tune-ups.

Both rosters resembled opening-day lineups, although the Flames rested winger Blake Coleman and newly-signed defenceman Tyson Barrie.

Niederreiter also scored twice in a 5-2 win over the visiting Flames on Wednesday.

"It's great to get on the board in pre-season," said Niederreiter. "Hopefully that carries over to the regular season, but I mean I'm trying to go to the net and get a greasy goal and glad it went in again."

Miller scored three goals in three pre-season games.

Calgary trailed 2-0 after two sluggish periods, but brought more spark to start the third when Huberdeau and Backlund struck in a span of three minutes 23 seconds.

The Flames outshot Winnipeg 13-2 in the first 10 minutes of the third period, but Connor gathered a loose puck off an offensive-zone draw and beat Vladar from a sharp angle at 16:51.

Connor then took a holding penalty with 92 seconds left in the game, but the Flames couldn't generate an equalizer.

"I thought we were really good at controlling the middle of the ice and not giving a good rush team a lot of room, so that's something that makes me feel pretty good about," Flames head coach Ryan Huska said.

"We didn't get the result we wanted tonight. We probably deserved better. I know that doesn't mean anything at the end of the day, but I feel like our checking details were really good tonight."

Winnipeg held Calgary's power play to 0-for-5 while going scoreless on a pair of chances with a man advantage. The Jets blocked 14 shots while Calgary blocked six.

"It's great to see in pre-season. It really carries over to regular," Niederreiter said.

Backlund and Huberdeau scored goals on redirections at 4:27 and 1:04 respectively in the third period.

The visitors led 2-0 at 15:59 of the second when Miller threaded a shot through traffic from the blue line to beat Vladar.

Niederreiter took advantage of a complete Calgary defensive-zone breakdown with ample time to go forehand-backhand upstairs on Vladar at 14:48 of the first period.

UP NEXT:

Both clubs start their regular seasons on the road Wednesday. The Flames are in Vancouver to face the Canucks. The Jets meet the Oilers in Edmonton.

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/what-we-learned-from-the-winnipeg-jets-pre-season/>

What we learned from the Winnipeg Jets' pre-season

By Jacob Stoller

WINNIPEG — Now the fun starts.

After wrapping up exhibition play with a dress rehearsal against the Calgary Flames — which they won 3-2 — the Winnipeg Jets' pre-season has finally concluded.

With just a few cuts left to be made, the team's roster is practically set four days out from Wednesday's season opener against the Edmonton Oilers. While the pre-season is often viewed as a snoozefest to many, we sure learned a lot about these Jets over the last two weeks.

So, before we bid adieu to the pre-season, let's unpack some takeaways.

No youth movement....For now

After failing to re-sign Brenden Dillon and Sean Monahan on July 1, Jets GM Kevin Cheveldayoff hinted at possibly filling those voids internally with young talent.

"If I'm a young player in the Jets organization today, I'm pretty excited about the opportunities in front of me. I'm working hard in the off-season to make sure I can take full advantage," Cheveldayoff told reporters after the first day of free agency. "If you want to try and move forward in this league, you have to take different opportunities that are in front of you - whether you're a team or whether you're a player. It's about seizing that moment. Everybody talks about wanting more. This is the opportunity for some of them to get that."

Naturally, those comments had fans thinking — or rather, expecting — that the likes of Brad Lambert, Nikita Chibrikov and Elias Salomonsson were due for big-league promotions.

But despite showing promise during training camp, those three — who were healthy scratches on Friday — will likely be among the Jets' final cuts ahead of Monday's roster deadline.

Lambert, 20, was the main draw at training camp. The lightning-fast skater has displayed tremendous growth since being drafted 30th overall in 2022 but as of right now, he's better off going back down to the AHL's Manitoba Moose and being the team's number-one centre. While he held his own during practices, Lambert struggled to make an impact during five-on-five play — particularly on Wednesday night against Calgary — against NHL competition.

Chibrikov, 21, is arguably NHL-ready. However, given that Nino Niederreiter, Mason Appleton, Morgan Barron and Alex Iaffalo have a firm grasp on Winnipeg's bottom-six wing spots, there's simply no room for the 5-foot-9 Russian winger. Chibrikov — who plays with 'bite' and has a howitzer of a shot — is first in line to be recalled, should the Jets have an injury on the wing.

Salomonsson, 20, ignited a 'hype train' on the prairies but the smooth-skating Swedish defender never was going to leapfrog Dylan DeMelo, Neal Pionk or Colin Miller on the right side. While he got plenty of reps on the left side, the Jets want him to develop at his natural position — thus making it a no-brainer to assign him to the Moose, where he'll log big minutes.

New-look special teams

It's hardly surprising that special teams was a top priority for Jets coach Scott Arniel during training camp.

Since relocating from Atlanta, the Jets have only finished in the top 10 in power play percentage three times over the last 13 seasons. And they've only had a top-10 penalty kill twice.

Winnipeg boasts a new look on their first power play unit, which includes Nikolaj Ehlers — who former coach Rick Bowness rarely had on the first unit— in the bumper role. Alongside Ehlers in the 1-3-1 formation is Gabriel Vilardi, who posts up net front, Josh Morrissey on the point and Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor on opposite flanks.

The penalty kill, on the other hand, has also added a new wrinkle. The first unit will be comprised of Dylan DeMelo, Dylan Samberg, Adam Lowry and Mason Appleton, while Scheifele and Connor will make a cameo on the team's second unit. That may sound crazy, but there's no need to worry — the Jets aren't asking two offensive studs to go out there and block shots.

"With how smart those guys are and their reads, oftentimes they can get in the lines, or they can intercept passes," Lowry explained on Monday.

Assistant coach Dean Chynoweth has experience with weaponizing skilled players on the penalty kill, having overseen the Carolina Hurricanes' penalty kill from 2018-19 to 2020-21 — a span in which they ranked second in PK% (83.4) — where Sebastian Aho was a key cog.

"You can be a little more opportunistic," Lowry said. "A little more quick in the transition [and] you can catch guys flat-footed at the blue line and go the other way."

Winnipeg still needs a second line centre

Here we go again.

In what has become a recurring theme, the Jets still have a glaring hole between Scheifele and Lowry on the depth chart. It's no slight on Vladislav Namestnikov — a valuable swiss-army knife in his own right — but he's better suited in a bottom-six role and that's why Cheveldayoff went out and got Monahan last winter.

Will the Jets go out and trade a first-round pick for a stop-gap centre solution, as they did with Paul Statsny, Kevin Hayes and Monahan? They don't have many options internally. Arniel has confirmed that they'll be deploying Perfetti as a winger, and there's no sign that Vilardi, a natural centre, will be shifting to the middle anytime soon.

With Lambert and Brayden Yager in the pipeline, the Jets likely won't be seeking a centre with term. But if Winnipeg plans on advancing past the first round — let alone make it to the playoffs in the first place — they'll have to make an upgrade, somehow.

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/5818674/2024/10/06/winnipeg-jets-depth-chart-2024/>

Winnipeg Jets depth chart: Analyzing the team's strengths and weaknesses

By Murat Ates

This story was updated to reflect Sunday afternoon's NHL waiver activity.

On paper, the Winnipeg Jets are a probable playoff team without an inside track to Stanley Cup contention.

Could we be underestimating them again?

Now that the Jets are inches away from naming their final roster, it's time to zoom into Winnipeg's depth chart, starting with our projected opening-night lineup.

Projected Winnipeg Jets roster

Kyle Connor

Mark Scheifele

Gabriel Vilardi

Cole Perfetti

Vladislav Namestnikov

Nikolaj Ehlers

Nino Niederreiter

Adam Lowry

Mason Appleton

Morgan Barron

Rasmus Kupari

Alex Lafallo

David Gustafsson

LD

RD

Josh Morrissey
Dylan DeMelo
Dylan Samberg
Neal Pionk
Haydn Fleury
Colin Miller
Dylan Coghlan
G
Connor Hellebuyck
Kaapo Kahkonen
Eric Comrie
IR
Waivers
AHL assignments
Ville Heinola
Jaret Anderson-Dolan (Sunday)
Brad Lambert
Logan Stanley
Nikita Chibrikov
Elias Salomonsson

You've seen this before. This roster is almost identical to what we've been projecting throughout training camp.

The only adjustments are for injury, with Haydn Fleury and Dylan Coghlan winning jobs in lieu of Ville Heinola and Logan Stanley. Winnipeg placed Jaret-Anderson Dolan on waivers on Sunday but kept all three of its goalies; we've thus projected a 23-player roster with 13 forwards, seven defencemen and three goaltenders — at least to start — instead of the 22-player roster Scott Arniel told us he'd hoped to land on when camp began.

Rosters are due on Monday. It's possible Arniel surprises by keeping Elias Salomonsson over Coghlan or one of Brad Lambert or Nikita Chibrikov over Anderson-Dolan. That's not the call we're making here, as we move into position by position analysis of this year's Jets.

Centre

Mark Scheifele
Vladislav Namestnikov
Adam Lowry
Rasmus Kupari
David Gustafsson

Winnipeg's centres have diverse strengths and weaknesses and likely rank mid-pack in terms of the NHL at large.

Mark Scheifele is many things. A big, powerful protector of the puck. A strong shooter. A smart, consistent playmaker. He has body positioning tricks designed to earn him an extra inch in the offensive zone, opening up passing seams that he exploits. Scheifele scored at a point-per-game rate like clockwork through the heart of his 20s and is a threat to do it again this season — particularly given his role on the Jets' suddenly potent-looking power play.

He's not among the best in the world at his No. 1 position. If the NHL started from scratch today, with GMs on all 32 teams given the option to draft teams from scratch, Scheifele would not be one of the top 10 centres drafted.

This isn't a slight — it's just that, in a league with Connor McDavid, Nathan MacKinnon, Sidney Crosby, Auston Matthews, Aleksander Barkov, Leon Draisaitl, Jack Hughes, Elias Pettersson, Jack Eichel, Sebastian Aho and Brayden Point in it, Scheifele is a solid first-line centre without being a spectacular one. Judging Winnipeg by its top centre and its top centre alone, then, would make the Jets an average club — not a Cup contender, not a lottery team.

I'm not as down on Scheifele's defence as Dom, Shayna and Sean were in the analytics-heavy Jets season preview. I think his commitment to the Jets' improved team defence over the past few seasons has been solid, although failed zone exits — particularly when he, Kyle Connor and Gabriel Vilardi play together — hurt his defensive numbers. I think the Jets could maximize Scheifele's (and Connor's) offence if they could find a way to make sure that duo gets the puck out of their own zone with possession more often than it does. I don't know if that means a split, or playing Josh Morrissey behind them at all times, or adding Nikolaj Ehlers to their right wing. Still, I think of Scheifele as a great point producer whose defence is fine — and if I wanted him to displace one of the top-10 centres from the list above, I'd need him to score even more (which seems like a tough ask) or to spend less time in his zone (which seems to be about zone exits).

Adam Lowry gives the Jets' shutdown line a lynchpin further down the lineup. Lowry is a two-way force with just enough offence to justify heavy usage, earning a seventh-place finish in Selke Trophy voting last season. If the Jets had two centres of Scheifele's calibre — as many Cup contenders do — Scheifele "B" would take up the slack and Lowry would be one of the best third-line centres in the world.

Of course, that's not how Rick Bowness' Jets ran their lines. Lowry was Winnipeg's second-line centre under Bowness — not its third — and there's no guarantee Arniel diverts from last year's deployment. Whereas Lowry tends to drive play and goals well enough to be an elite third-line centre, his results are below average for a second-line centre on a Cup contender. That gap is primarily about offence; he's more than effective enough in his own zone but scored 36 and 35 points in two seasons as Winnipeg's de facto 2C.

Among Jets centres, Vladislav Namestnikov is the big question mark. He's tenacious, pesky and positionally sound. He reads off linemates Cole Perfetti and Nikolaj Ehlers well enough to produce some offence — and that line outscored its opponents 11-6 last season to prove it. Namestnikov would not grade out as an above average second-line centre throughout the league but the Jets' deployment, leaning heavily on Scheifele and Lowry as they did, opened up opportunity for him to be effective — particularly when he played with high-end wingers.

Meanwhile, Rasmus Kupari's right-handedness appears to give him the edge over Gustafsson for the fourth-line job. I expect both to play, with Kupari taking right-side faceoffs on the PK and getting a bigger push if his high-speed hustle leads to legitimate production. Gustafsson is the better-rounded of the two, in my opinion, but is not a tremendous threat to generate offence despite a heavy shot. Winnipeg has historically used its fourth line as a secondary shutdown line and, handedness aside, I think Gustafsson is the superior player for that role. Both players are 24; both have (some) room left to develop.

Left wing

Kyle Connor
Cole Perfetti
Nino Niederreiter

Morgan Barron

Jaret Anderson-Dolan (waived Sunday)

Winnipeg is loaded at left wing, although Connor's particular set of skills creates a sense of all gas, no brakes. The anonymous executives' criticism of his defence in our season preview was harsh but borne out by years' worth of defensive results. Connor doesn't get pucks out, is an inconsistent backchecker, and gives back almost exactly as much offence as he creates. Over the past five years, the Jets have given up five more goals with Connor on the ice than they've scored at five-on-five.

That's a tough outcome, given that Connor can do things with the puck that few players in the NHL can match. He's the most dangerous finisher on the Jets and has the fast hands and feet to consistently get himself into positions to score. He's creative, he's quick, he's almost always one step ahead of the opposing goaltender and his release tends to fool goalies even when they see the shot coming.

Connor is a point-per-game player who has scored the eighth most goals in the NHL over the past four seasons and whose defence lets the air out of that offence to the point of being an average first-line player. Sometimes it feels like his critics and his fans only see half of the previous sentence. I'd also point out that mitigating the defensive issues of a player who like Connor does strikes me as a much better problem to have than not having those goals at all.

In a way, that makes Perfetti a nice point of comparison. He has great vision and great hands without the footspeed to get into as many dangerous situations as Connor does. I think this might make Perfetti a bit more dependent on linemates for his offence; he makes passes that lead directly to scoring chances at a high rate but is at the mercy of the quality of finish at the other end of the play. In preseason, we've seen Namestnikov get a large volume of chances through his chemistry with Perfetti without scoring at the end.

Nino Niederreiter is a player whose backcheck I don't question. No Jets forward tracks back to cut off weakside chances at the far post more effectively than Niederreiter does. At his best, Niederreiter bulldogs his way to the front of the net offensively, too, and seems to score close to 20 goals like clockwork as a result. This ability to contribute at both ends of the ice makes Niederreiter a strong candidate to move onto a scoring line if the Jets ever change their approach to deployment. Even if he's "only" a shutdown forward, his presence helps shift the Jets from average at first- and second-line left wing to above average on the whole. With Morgan Barron a luxury on the fourth line, the Jets have a decided strength at left wing.

Right wing

Gabriel Vilardi

Nikolaj Ehlers

Mason Appleton

Alex Lafallo

Winnipeg is similarly well positioned at right wing, albeit with some concerns.

Vilardi is big, he's strong, he has great vision and he can make small area passes through just about any amount of traffic. His work beside the net on the power play was the difference between an awful unit and a good one last season and it seems reasonable to think this year's version could lead to a points explosion. Vilardi is a healthy season away from a breakout year of stunning proportions ... just like he was one year ago. Arniel will play him with Connor and Scheifele to start the year, looking for improvement in all three zones in what ideally becomes Vilardi's first full season with Winnipeg.

Ehlers is even faster than Connor if you go by NHL Edge data and uses his speed to get the puck through the neutral zone far more often than not. It helps the Jets play in the offensive zone and leads to elite five-on-five offence, alongside solid defensive numbers even though Ehlers' in-zone defence is not a strength. There is also a bit of chaos to Ehlers' game in the offensive zone that can lead to confusion, despite several seasons' worth of elite point-per-minute rates. Ehlers' usage has been discussed at length and it continues to be a source of inefficiency. That said, Davis Payne has found a big role for Ehlers on the power play — part of the turnaround on special teams.

Mason Appleton makes defensive plays that Ehlers, Connor and other top wingers don't make. He eats checks to get pucks out of his own zone and scored a career high 36 points last season. He was also given the fifth-most minutes per game among Jets forwards last season — a testament to Bowness' faith in Appleton and his linemates. Suboptimal usage aside, Appleton is a quality bottom-six right winger which helps the Jets claim a strength here.

Alex Iafallo rounds out the group. Iafallo has been everything from a solid middle-six contributor to a fourth-line player in recent seasons. Winnipeg probably hoped for more than 27 points from him last season, particularly at a \$4 million AAV, but he's a luxury at 4RW and a decent bet for a bounceback season.

All in all, an average to below average group of centres is supplemented by a large number of quality wingers to make for an above average forward corps. You might like more size or more sandpaper but it's a capable group with clearly defined roles.

Defence

Defence

Josh Morrissey

Dylan DeMelo

Neal Pionk

Dylan Samberg

Colin Miller

Haydn Fleury

Dylan Coghlan

On paper, this is where the Jets have the most question marks.

Josh Morrissey is an All-Star defenceman who has finished inside the top 10 in Norris Trophy voting for two consecutive seasons. Dylan DeMelo is a strong complement; Morrissey credits DeMelo's dependable play in part for his own growth. They're an effective top pair that can be counted on to generate positive goal differential against top competition, even as critics point to a lack of size. They win pucks through speed and smart coverage and then excel at moving those pucks up the ice and onto teammates' sticks. DeMelo picked up 31 points last season, although that's thoroughly outshone by Morrissey's 145 points over his past 159 games. It's been a particular treat to watch Morrissey develop confidence attacking along the offensive blue line, frequently toe-dragging his forward coverage and then stepping into the spaces left behind.

Dylan Samberg and Neal Pionk are the all-Hermantown second pair on whose shoulders Winnipeg's season might rest. This is going to be Samberg's first crack at consistent top-four minutes, which I expect to lead to occasional chaos. He's a quality positional defender. He scans the ice well. He doesn't get beat back door or lose track of coverage over his shoulder. But Samberg is still working on chaining reads together — ending the other team's offence, then

making his first pass, then joining the play. His breakout passing will get tested under pressure this year but I ultimately expect Samberg to be a quality top-four defenceman in the long run. Pionk's performance in his second-pair role has varied from excellent to porous; depending on the level Pionk is able to reach in this contract season, he might end up adding to the chaos.

Colin Miller looks like an above average player as the Jets' third-pairing right-handed defenceman, providing plenty of preseason offence with his shot. He might get some of the "tough guy" duties by default, given Brenden Dillon's departure and the Jets' relative lack of size elsewhere on the blue line. He could also see himself become a mentor, whether because Haydn Fleury takes the third-pair left side job and runs with it or one of Heinola or Stanley does the same upon returning to health.

In a perfect world, Winnipeg would find a way to use some of its ample (but injury-impacted) cap space to add a top-four defenceman. We're going to hear about defence being a five-player job a lot of times. I also think we're going to see growing pains, whether it's about losing boxout battles in the slot or about exit passes getting sent back into Winnipeg's zone.

Goalie

Goalies

Connor Hellebuyck

Kaapo Kahkonen

Goalies get paid to play hockey, too, and Winnipeg enters the season with great strength here.

Connor Hellebuyck is a two-time Vezina Trophy winner, a four-time finalist and as good bet as any goaltender to be the best in the world at his position this season. His playoff numbers were miserable, though, souring some on a goalie who stole the last playoff series that Winnipeg won.

The Jets do lose ground on their No. 1 position in leaguewide rankings by moving from Laurent Brossoit to Kaapo Kahkonen (or even Eric Comrie, who was not placed on waivers on Sunday) but there's no way to call Winnipeg's goaltending anything but a strength. It could be the best in the league again and is a good bet to be close to the top.