

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/11/13/experienced-fleury-always-ready-when-called-on>

Experienced Fleury always ready when called on Depth D-man jumps right back into lineup like he never left

By: Ken Wiebe

TAMPA — There was a time not long ago when being a healthy scratch for 11 consecutive games would have been a lot for Haydn Fleury to handle.

Not that it's ever easy to be a spectator for that long, but the Winnipeg Jets defenceman has developed some significant scar tissue over the course of his professional hockey career and along with that, he's come up with some important coping mechanisms.

That combination allowed Fleury to jump right back into the lineup on Tuesday night against the New York Rangers like he never left.

"The more mature I've gotten and the more mature my game has gotten on the ice, I've found coming in and out a little easier," said Fleury, who expects to be back in the lineup on Thursday as the league-leading Jets face the Tampa Bay Lightning. "I don't think it's as big of a whirlwind. Keep it simple early, get into it early. On the first shift, get a bump in or make a strong pass. Something like that. Whatever it is, get yourself into the game and after that, the game slows down and you get going from there."

Skating on a defence pairing with a partner he had for the bulk of training camp helped smooth the process, but it's also a testament to Fleury's ability to stay ready for whenever the next tap on the shoulder from head coach Scott Arniel came.

That's also a skill that gets developed over time.

Being on the periphery of an NHL roster brings its own set of challenges and it's not for the faint of heart.

You can't reach this level without believing in yourself, but recognizing what you're good at and how to bring the best out of one's skill set is a lesson that many young players struggle with, some for a significant amount of time.

"When you're young — and for me, I was a high pick — but realistically for any young player, it's the same kind of learning curve," said Fleury. "At times, I've really shown some good spurts, but the spurts weren't as long.

"What I've learned over the years is that it takes longer for some guys. For me, I'm constantly getting better. But with getting better, you're cleaning up the game."

Fleury has transitioned from high draft pick and top prospect into a journeyman, though that classification is not meant as a derogatory term.

Since being chosen seventh overall by the Carolina Hurricanes in the 2014 NHL Draft, Fleury went from being a high-scoring blue-liner in the Western Hockey League to a mobile puck-mover who checks with his feet and can contribute on the penalty kill.

That's not an easy metamorphosis, but Fleury has embraced the role change, thanks in part to the benefit of time.

"As you grow up, you realize there's a select few really good offensive defencemen in this league," said Fleury, who has played a total of 247 NHL games with the Hurricanes, Anaheim Ducks, Seattle Kraken, the Lightning and Jets. "Everybody has to defend and be able to play in their own end. That's one of the things I had to learn coming out of junior, where I could get away with so much because of my feet. I didn't have to focus on certain things, but once you get to pro, everyone is a good skater.

"What makes me successful (now) is using my feet defensively in the D-zone, taking away time and space, being long and all of that. The rest of my game comes from there. If I'm aggressive in the neutral zone and the O-zone, I can let my passing ability and everything else take over from there."

While some players like watching from the press box when not in the lineup, Fleury prefers to be at ice level, where he has a better gauge for the speed at which the game is being played.

"I find the games are too slow from up there. You don't get a real grasp for how the game is played from way up top," said Fleury. "I like to watch it downstairs on the TV, where you're getting a smaller view and the game looks a lot faster.

"As I've gotten older, you figure out what works for you."

Fleury, 28, credits his work with Lightning assistant coach Rob Zettler, a hard-nosed defenceman who bounced around a fair amount while amassing 569 NHL games on his resume with six different teams after he was originally chosen in the third round by the Minnesota North Stars in the 1986 NHL Draft.

"We had a really good relationship and he was someone that really took the time with me," said Fleury, who suited up in 53 games with the Lightning during the previous two seasons. "I played some really good hockey last year and I got everything sorted out. Everything was just starting to click, but the injuries derailed that. It took the life out of me for a bit, but getting back to it this summer and once (training) camp got going, I was able to pick up where I left off."

Arniel has liked what he's seen from Fleury since joining the organization as an unrestricted free agent.

"He's a guy that we brought in and hoped that he could (provide) good depth for us," said Arniel. "He had a really good training camp. He's an experienced guy who has played in this league and knows what it takes."

With Logan Stanley sidelined for at least the remainder of the road trip with a mid-body injury, Fleury has an opportunity to further ingratiate himself with the coaching staff and that's become even more important with Ville Heinola taking another step closer to returning to action as he works his way back from an ankle injury.

When you've been around the block like Fleury has, you can't worry about anything other than playing as well as possible, since there's always going to be someone gunning for the job you have — or the job you ultimately want.

Sportico

<https://www.sportico.com/leagues/hockey/2024/nhl-winnipeg-jets-historic-start-relocation-worries-1234804664/>

Winnipeg Jets' Historic Start Can't Escape NHL Market Woes

By Jason Clinkscapes

The best team in the NHL resides in the league's smallest market and features the NHL's second-lowest valuation, per Sportico. And despite getting a second chance at life in the league, it's struggled at the gate.

The Winnipeg Jets come into their Tuesday night showdown in New York against the Rangers after a 14-1-0 start, the best through a team's first 15 games in NHL history. Much of the fast-opening month comes off the superb play in net from goalie Connor Hellebuyck, but the Jets also boast the league's best power play and total offense.

Just a few months ago, there was talk about a potential relocation as season ticket deposits had dropped by 27% over the previous three seasons—from just shy of 13,000 to around 9,500 last year. Despite boasting the second-best record in the Western Conference in 2023-24, the Jets drew under 88% capacity in what was already the smallest NHL-primed rink in the league, the 15,004-seat Canada Life Centre. (The defunct Arizona Coyotes—now Utah Hockey Club—played in a 4,000-seat college arena at Arizona State.)

This wasn't rampant speculation from the nether corners of social media, as team chairman Mark Chipman had openly wondered about the team's future in Winnipeg in an interview with The Athletic last spring. "I wouldn't be honest with you if I didn't say, 'We've got to get back to 13,000,'" Chipman said about the season ticket renewals. "This place we find ourselves in right now, it's not going to work over the long haul. It just isn't."

With a total value of \$1.1 billion, the Jets are 31st in Sportico's latest NHL franchise valuations, which were published in late October. That's second-to-last among all teams and just \$40 million more than the Columbus Blue Jackets. Separating the Canada Life Centre, which is worth \$80 million on its own, the team itself is valued at \$1.02 billion, which is last in the NHL. Last season, the Jets earned \$169 million in revenue, a 6.3% increase from 2022-23 and a 13.7% rise from 2021-22. Five teams pulled in less revenue.

While it may be too early to determine if the True North-owned franchise has turned a corner, the historic start has filled a few more seats at the home rink. In nine home games, the Jets have averaged 13,764 fans, which is a nominal uptick from the 13,490 average per game for all of 2023-24. Canada Life Centre is at 91.7% capacity compared to last season's 88%.

The Jets have only sold out two of their home games—their lone defeat against Toronto on Oct. 28 and the last contest against the Dallas Stars on Nov. 9—with three straight home games with around 12,900 fans in between. However, whereas the Maple Leafs are a historic draw for the other six Canadian teams, packing the house for a solid team from Texas may be a step in the right direction.

The Jets' lack of drawing power hasn't been as simple as fielding bad teams. Winnipeg is coming off a 2023-24 campaign when it tied a franchise record with 52 wins and earned 110 points. Since the franchise relocated from Atlanta (formerly the Thrashers) ahead of the 2011-12 season, the Jets have finished with a sub-.500 record just once.

However, just like the original Jets who played in the city from 1972 in the World Hockey Association until 1995 when they moved to Arizona, Stanley Cup playoff disappointment is littered through Winnipeg's history. (It won three titles in the WHA before joining the NHL in 1979.) Back-to-back first-round exits in the last two years and a single conference finals appearance (2018) hasn't exactly inspired fans to keep coming to games.

There are also the economic realities of the city itself. Winnipeg, a prairie city known mainly for agriculture and manufacturing, lags its larger-market brethren in Canada and the U.S. in having a bevy of corporations to buy ticket packages and premium seating. The Jets are more reliant on fans keeping season tickets within their families, a shaky proposition for those who have dealt with job losses and other financial hardships.

Winnipeg begins a challenging stretch of games through early December, starting with the Rangers at Madison Square Garden. Eleven of its next 13 games will be away from Canada Life Centre, including a six-game stretch in Pittsburgh, Nashville, St. Paul, Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Dallas. If the Jets keep up their torrid pace through these road-heavy weeks, chances can only improve for home sellouts during the holidays and an eight-game homestand in January.

Daily Faceoff

<https://www.dailyfaceoff.com/news/i-dont-think-theres-a-flaw-right-now-why-the-15-1-jets-believe-theyre-for-real>

'I don't think there's a flaw right now': Why the 15-1 Jets believe they're for real

By Jonny Lazarus

The Winnipeg Jets are off to a historic start to the 2024-25 season, not only for their franchise but for the entire National Hockey League. After defeating the New York Rangers Tuesday night and improving to 15-1-0, the Jets are now the fastest team to 15 wins in NHL history.

The Jets finished with the fourth-best record in the NHL last season but had an extremely disappointing first-round exit, falling to the Colorado Avalanche in five games.

What makes this year's team different, then? Mentality and a chip on their shoulder.

"The end of last year was a big wakeup call," said right winger Nikolaj Ehlers. "With the season we had — to then lose in the playoffs like we did was frustrating. I think we all knew we needed to change some things, and it wasn't our players — it was our mentality, the way we go to work every single day, that has paid off."

"If you have a great regular season and you flop like that in the playoffs — it means nothing," Mason Appleton told Daily Faceoff. "I think it put a bitterness in our mouths and in the back of our heads that we have to prove it every single day."

This team does not mess around — the mentality aforementioned by Ehlers is evident — but this team has also been building towards success for years leading up to this.

"The structure changes that we've made over the last two years, three years — you're starting to see that more and more," Ehlers said. He added that the team's 4-1 win over the Dallas Stars Nov. 9 was "one of the best and most fun games I've been apart of," simply because of how well the team played structurally.

You always hear professional athletes say that they truly believe they're going to win every game before they play it, but it's hard to find an organization in the NHL right now that portrays that emotion more than the Jets. This is not a cocky team, but it's a very confident team.

"When you get on a long streak — it just builds and builds, then it's like every game is a new game, and we've carried that feel-good feeling for a long time this year," Appleton told Daily Faceoff. "Everybody goes into every game thinking they're going to win, but at the same time with us — there's just a confidence that we've never had before, and it makes you play a little more connected, a little freer. It just elevates individuals and a team game."

The Jets have had plenty of strong regular seasons, and some may say that in previous years, they have peaked too early, but this is a process-driven team that is still aware of the fact it's a very long season. "You'd rather be winning than losing, and we're trying to build a game too. There have been wins that we've had [when] we haven't loved our game, and we haven't felt great after the game because of how we won the game," Appleton said. "It's cliché to say, but we're trying to stay more focused on the process and not 'we're peaking too early' or this or that, we're keeping that out of our heads."

Winning comes a little easier when you have a goaltender playing as well as Connor Hellebuyck has. Hellebuyck now boasts an 11-1-0 record with a .935 save percentage and a 1.83 goals-against average, along with three shutouts.

"We're obviously doing everything we can in front of him, but we know at the end of the day if you give up a little bit here, give up a little bit there, or make a wrong read — you have a good chance that the puck's not going in the net with the best goaltender in the league behind you," Appleton said.

It's tough to find anything wrong with a team that's 15-1-0, but the Jets will get judged throughout the regular season because of what their recent playoff results have been. For some reason, people seem to love finding something wrong with them, but that feeling hasn't crept into their room.

"I don't think there's a flaw right now," Appleton said. "I think at times we can play up and down to some other levels, but I don't think that's been the case at all when we found consistency this year. I don't think you can pinpoint one thing and say that this is where we need to get better."

Everything in Winnipeg right now is sky-high and the way that they have played structurally appears to be contagious throughout their locker room. They're an all-business group that feels like they have a ton to prove — the early success does not appear to be any sort of fluke. It's tough to play against a team that can score, not give up a ton, and get key saves. That won't change anytime soon.

<https://illegalcurve.com/frankly-speaking-conversation-with-winnipeg-jets-gm-kevin-cheveldayoff/>

Frankly Speaking Conversation with Winnipeg Jets GM Kevin Cheveldayoff

With the GM meetings in Toronto it was an opportunity for Daily Faceoff's Frank Seravalli to sit down with GM Kevin Cheveldayoff to talk about the historic 14-1-0 start for his hockey club to begin the 2024-25 season. (This interview was done before they beat the Rangers 6-3 last night).

Topics:

- 2:15 – Did you see this start coming?
- 3:15 – What has enabled the team to come together and be so productive?
- 4:45 – Improved power play
- 6:45 – New coaching staff, but still familiar
- 9:45 – Continuity leading to success
- 16:10 – Resisting the urge to rebuild the team after playoff loss
- 18:00 – Growth of the leadership group
- 21:55 – Kyle Connor has a little more swag this year
- 25:10 – The value of Connor Hellebuyck

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10867262/winnipeg-jets-josh-morrissey-awards/>

ANALYSIS: Will this be the season Jets' Morrissey gets recognized?

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

Will this finally be the year Josh Morrissey gets the attention he rightfully deserves?

And with all due respect to a singular all-star selection he received two seasons ago, will the rest of the league and those who cover it ultimately be obliged to acknowledge the Winnipeg Jets defenceman's elite presence in the game?

Story continues below advertisement

Specifically, we're talking about being nominated for the Norris trophy – and possibly beyond that, winning it — because at this point in the season, the 29-year-old is putting together another career year, especially as he's set to play his 600th game this Saturday in Florida.

Through 16 games, Morrissey is second in league scoring by a defenceman, slightly behind Colorado's Cale Makar. He leads his team in ice time and shot blocks and plays every night against the opposition's best. And as it was stated last evening on our 680 CJOB pregame show by a member of the New York media, Morrissey is the best defenceman in the league that nobody talks about.

Simply put, flying under the radar in this case is likely a cause of being cloaked on the Canadian Prairies and in the league's smallest market, but that obscurity is drastically changing

Sure, we're only midway through November, and there's 80 per cent of the schedule still to play out, but Morrissey's contribution to the Jets' record-setting start is undeniable, an impact that will assuredly earn him a spot on Canada's Four Nations Cup team in February.

It is there where the rest of the league and hockey world will truly have a first-hand introduction to the player he is and the sway he has in the game as one of the NHL's best rearguards – at both ends of the rink.

Of course, we might be less than 20 games in with plenty of hockey still to play – both league-wide and internationally – but might this finally be the year Josh Morrissey earns the attention and recognition of a Norris nomination, something he rightfully deserves?

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10867386/canada-life-centre-anniversary/>

Winnipeg's downtown arena still going strong at 20

By Sam Thompson Global News

Concertgoers will finally get a chance to see Bruce Springsteen live in Winnipeg on Wednesday night, but the long-awaited show is just one of thousands that have been hosted at Canada Life Centre over the past two decades.

Winnipeg's downtown arena is celebrating a notable anniversary this week — marking 20 years of sports, concerts and other entertainment since the building first opened its doors on Nov. 16, 2004.

The arena, which welcomed its 20 millionth guest last month, opened seven years before the current incarnation of the Winnipeg Jets came into existence. Originally the home of the Manitoba Moose — still one of its main tenants today — the arena was built on the site of the former Eaton's department store, and the choice of location raised some eyebrows, especially when it came to parking.

“I suppose what folks didn’t realize was every day 40,000 people come to work downtown,” True North Sports & Entertainment executive Dorian Morphy told 680 CJOB’s The Start.

“They all leave at 5:00 (p.m.) and most of our events are after that. Literally after the first two events — nothing. It wasn’t a topic anymore, but certainly leading up to that first event, (parking was) all people were talking about.”

Morphy, senior vice-president of marketing, said he’s seen the arena go from an idea, to a reality, to one of North America’s busiest venues.

“Timing is everything,” he said.

“I joined the organization out of the U of M in 1996, the first year of the Manitoba Moose. I think it’s been very rewarding, and certainly for us, having it downtown has been really important.... We welcomed our 20-millionth visitor in October — that’s a lot of people.”

The average lifespan of an NHL arena, Morphy said, is about 31 years, but Winnipeg’s facility isn’t about to get replaced any time soon. The goal, instead, is to continue working on upgrades and refreshing the existing building.

“I don’t imagine we’ll be building a new one in 11 years, so our strategy has been one of reinvestment.

“Whether it’s upgrading the washrooms, new scoreboard, sound system, we just continue to reinvest in it.”

Although the Jets are on the road on the exact anniversary date, they have a home game a few days later, and True North is using that for a celebration of the two decades of history.

“The only game within a three-week stretch was Tuesday, Nov. 19. That night, we will celebrate. We’ll do lots of going down memory lane at that game. The first 5K fans in the building will receive a commemorative coin.”

The anniversary game will also serve as the official launch of a new book about the arena’s history.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/the-talking-point-is-scheifele-playing-his-way-onto-team-canada%7E3029045>

The Talking Point: Is Scheifele playing his way onto Team Canada?

With nine goals and 12 assists through 16 games, Mark Scheifele has been lights out to start the season. TSN Director of Scouting Craig Button discusses if the Jets forward is playing his way onto Team Canada's 4 Nations Face-off team with his sensational season so far.

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/domino-s-that-s-hockey-how-are-the-jets-still-not-a-top-10-stanley-cup-favourite~3029048>

Domino's That's Hockey: How are the Jets still not a Top 10 Stanley Cup favourite?

The Jets flew past the Rangers on Tuesday to improve to 15-1, becoming the fastest team in NHL history to reach the 15-win mark. Far and away the best team so far this season, how are the Jets still not considered a Top 10 Stanley Cup favourite? Craig Button and Bryan Hayes join Domino's That's Hockey to weigh in.