

Winnipegjets.com

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-ehlers-hat-trick-helps-jets-to-10th-win>

***Three things - Ehlers hat trick helps Jets to 10th win
Nikolaj Ehlers records 5th career hat trick in 6-2 win over Columbus***

By Jamie Thomas

The Winnipeg Jets remain the only unbeaten team on the road this season (6-0) following a 6-2 win in Columbus over the Blue Jackets on Friday night. Nikolaj Ehlers had his first hat trick since 2018, Mason Appleton, Josh Morrissey and Gabe Vilardi had the other goals for the Jets. Kyle Connor's point streak is now at 11 to start the season when he got the primary assist on Vilardi's goal in the third period. Eric Comrie made 20 saves to improve to 3-0 on the season. Winnipeg will return home for a four-game homestand that starts Sunday afternoon against Tampa Bay.

EHLERS TURN

Wednesday night, it was the Scheifele line that set the tone for the Jets in Detroit. This evening in Ohio, it was the Namestnikov trio led by Nikolaj Ehlers who had a four-point night including his fifth career hat trick. Ehlers opened the scoring at 5:13 of the first blasting a slap shot past Elvis Merzlikins. After Columbus tied the game at one, Ehlers would get his second of the period snapping a shot to the far post for a 2-1 Jets lead after one. The Danish forward finished the hat trick with a 1:09 left in the second, Ehlers would follow up his rebound and backhanded the puck into the net for his sixth of the season.

"Felt pretty good in warmup and Nino said he'd be pretty disappointed if I didn't score tonight with that warm up. So it was pretty funny how that worked out. Yeah. I mean, first goal, I love coming down that side with the clapper. Luckily, it went in," said Ehlers.

"So from that on, I think as a line, played really well, and that created a lot of chances. We could have had a few more but it felt good."

JETS POWER PLAY AGAIN

Winnipeg's power play didn't get many opportunities in Columbus going 1-for-2 with the man advantage against the Blue Jackets. The Jets have gone a league-best 14-for-31 (44.8%). The Jets have scored a power play goal in each of the past four games, the last time Winnipeg scored a power play goal in four consecutive games was Nov. 2-9/23. With the Jets leading 4-2 in the third, Ehlers slid a pass over to Scheifele and he spotted a wide-open Josh Morrissey who hammered a one timer past Merzlikins to give the Jets a three-goal lead.

DOMINANCE

The Blue Jackets were off to a great start offensively this season with Dean Evason behind the bench scoring 35 goals in their first nine games. After the Jackets tied the game at one at 11:02 of the opening frame, Winnipeg took over at Nationwide Arena. The Jets outshot the Jackets 43-22 and had 72 shot attempts compared to Columbus' 45. The Jets have allowed three goals or less in 10 of their 11 games this season.

"We're trying to keep people out of our end of the rink, so that means you are playing, probably, down in the other end," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel.

"You try, when you get teams caught on the ropes there a little bit and getting tired and start zone-timing them, that's when we try to keep our foot on the gas and keep the pressure on them. It's not always going to end up that way, but you gotta take what's being handed to you right now."

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/winnipeg-jets-columbus-blue-jackets-game-recap-november-1>

Ehlers gets hat trick, Jets ease past Blue Jackets Connor extends season-opening point streak to 11 for Winnipeg, which gets 10th win

By Craig Merz

COLUMBUS -- Nikolaj Ehlers scored a hat trick and had an assist for the Winnipeg Jets in a 6-2 win against the Columbus Blue Jackets at Nationwide Arena on Friday.

"I felt pretty good in warmups," Ehlers said. "I'd be pretty disappointed if I didn't score tonight with that warmup. It was pretty funny how that worked out."

Kyle Connor had an assist to extend his season-opening point streak (nine goals, nine assists) to 11 games for the Jets (10-1-0), who became the 12th team in NHL history to have 10 wins through their first 11 games.

They have outscored opponents 52-26.

"Our offense is generated by our defense," Winnipeg goalie Eric Comrie said. "If you look at the games, we come back so hard, backcheck so hard, we play great in our D-zone. We really take pride in what we do. It forces teams to do extra stuff, and we capitalize on their turnovers and their mistakes."

Mason Appleton, Josh Morrissey and Gabriel Vilardi scored for Winnipeg, and Comrie made 20 saves.

Sean Kuraly and Sean Monahan scored, and Elvis Merzlikins made 37 saves for the Blue Jackets (5-4-1), whose four-game point streak (3-0-1) ended.

"It was back and forth there for a little bit, who's putting each team under more pressure," Kuraly said. "Eventually they tilted it in their favor. I think maybe in some of those instances, we got a little impatient and didn't just punch back like we wanted to."

Ehlers made it 1-0 at 5:13 of the first period with a slap shot off the rush from the top of the left circle.

"When he puts his speed on display like that, he's a hard player to defend," Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel said.

Kuraly tied it 1-1 at 11:02 before Ehlers gave the Jets a 2-1 lead at 15:14 with a wrist shot from the right face-off dot.

Appleton extended the lead to 3-1 at 2:20 of the second period, one-timing a shot through traffic from the right circle off a feed by Neal Pionk.

“They’ve got a lot of speed up front, and I think we got surprised by it a little bit,” Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason said. “But we fed into it, or compounded the issues by making soft plays out of our zone that they got sticks on pucks, turned it over and then away they went.”

Monahan made it 3-2 on the power play at 16:29. He tipped in Zach Werenski’s shot from the point for his sixth goal, which leads the Blue Jackets.

“I don’t think we had a great game,” Monahan said. “We gave them a lot, but we can learn from that game.”

Ehlers scored at 18:51 for the hat trick and a 4-2 lead. His three-goal game marked the fifth of his NHL career and his first since Dec. 20, 2018.

Morrissey made it 5-2 at 11:39 of the third period with a power-play goal from the top of the left circle, and Vilardi pushed it to 6-2 at 14:54 after Connor dangled past two defensemen and fed him at the top of the crease.

The Jets are 6-0-0 on the road with a 30-12 goal differential.

“When you’ve got goalies like we do, and with the defensive structure we have going for us right now, giving limited scoring chances, that helps us a lot,” Ehlers said. “Columbus, they were really good tonight. They made us work but we found a way.”

NOTES: Ehlers (fifth hat trick) is tied with Connor for the fourth most in franchise history. ... Vilardi (three goals, two assists) and Mark Scheifele (one goal, three assists) have three-game point streaks. ... Blue Jackets forward Dmitri Voronkov made his season debut after being on the injured list with an upper-body injury since Oct. 4. He had one shot in 13:24 of ice time. ... Monahan scored his 250th NHL goal. ... The Blue Jackets set a team record for the most goals through their first 10 games (37), breaking the mark of 36 set in 2018-19.

Associated Press

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/ehlers-scores-hat-trick-to-lead-jets-to-win-over-blue-jackets/>

Ehlers scores hat trick to lead Jets to win over Blue Jackets

By Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Nikolaj Ehlers scored three goals for his fifth career hat trick and the Winnipeg Jets beat the Columbus Blue Jackets 6-2 Friday night to stay perfect on the road.

Mason Appleton and Gabriel Vilardi also scored, Josh Morrissey had a power-play goal and an assist, and Ehlers added an assist for Winnipeg, which has won 10 of its first 11 games. Eric Comrie had 20 saves as the Jets improved to 6-0-0 on the road for the best such start in franchise history.

Sean Kuraly scored and Sean Monahan had a power-play goal for the Blue Jackets. Elvis Merzlikins made 37 saves.

Takeaways

Jets: Scott Arniel returned to Nationwide Arena for the first time as a head coach since being fired by the Blue Jackets in January 2012. His Jets showed Columbus how it's done, dominating from the opening puck drop and demonstrating why they are atop the NHL standings.

Blue Jackets: Columbus could not answer the faster, nimbler Jets and spent most of the game protecting their zone with limited success, getting outshot in every period and ending up with a 21-shot deficit.

Key moment

Columbus found momentum when Monahan scored with 3:30 left in the second period, seven seconds into a power-play, cutting the Jets' lead to 3-2. Ehlers then scored his third goal of the night 2:20 later, and Winnipeg never looked back.

Key stat

Winnipeg kept its power-play streak alive, scoring with a man advantage in each of its past four games. The Jets have gone a league-best 14 for 31 this season.

Up Next

The Jets host Tampa Bay Sunday, and the Blue Jackets visit Washington on Saturday.

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/five-thoughts-on-the-winnipeg-jets-through-10-games/>

Five thoughts on the Winnipeg Jets through 10 games

By Jacob Stoller

WINNIPEG — Dylan DeMelo said the quiet part out loud.

"It's great that we've got a great start but we really haven't done crap, to be honest with you," the Winnipeg Jets defenceman told reporters before Monday's game against the Toronto Maple Leafs, the Jets' first loss of the season.

Before addressing the meat of that quote, let's not downplay the part DeMelo glossed over. Winnipeg's 9-1-0 start truly is remarkable, and while only two of those opponents were playoff teams last season, it shouldn't discount the value in Winnipeg's hoarding lots of points early on.

But DeMelo is right about the second part.

Winnipeg is no stranger to elite regular season play over the last few years — the Jets are tied with the Dallas Stars and Colorado Avalanche for the most regular-season wins (106) since the start of the 2022-23 season. But, in that same span, they've won just two playoff games.

Regular-season accolades mean bupkis to this team.

Now, that's not to say the regular season doesn't matter. It does. It's an 82-game marathon — not a sprint — with ebbs and flows. As the saying goes, you can never get too high or too low.

But with the Jets steadfast on making a legitimate Cup run this spring, every bit of dissection of the season should be evaluated through the lens of, Is this good enough for a contending team?

And with that in mind, let's evaluate the Jets' first 10 games of the season.

Special-teams sessions are paying off

Jets coach Scott Arniel made special teams a point of emphasis right from the get-go in training camp, allocating several practices solely to the power play and penalty kill.

They had to. Winnipeg's penalty kill was its kryptonite during last season's playoffs, and while the Jets' power play clicked decently in a small sample size against Colorado, it was in the bottom 10 throughout the 2023-24 regular season.

This season, the Jets boast the league's best power play (44.8 per cent) — where they've generated nearly 30 per cent of their goals — and their penalty kill has gone from being below average (21st) to slightly above average (15th).

Defence is looking good

The Jets pride themselves on their identity.

"We're kind of a defence-first-mindset type of team," Jets forward Mason Appleton said after the Jets beat the Pittsburgh Penguins 6-3 on Oct. 20. "We would rather win a game 2-1 or 3-2."

And aside from that beatdown from Toronto, the Jets have been pretty sound defensively during five-on-five play, ranking 11th in high-danger shot attempts against per 60 (10.39). The caveat, though, trickles back to the quality of competition. You can chalk up that Leafs loss as just a bad game, and those are going to happen, but the bigger talking point is, how will the Jets defend heavy-forechecking playoff-calibre teams?

So far, we really don't know. But we'll get a much better idea this month, as seven of their next 12 opponents made the playoffs last season.

There's a top-six, bottom-six drop-off

Winnipeg's top six has had a rough go this season.

And while recency bias may make you think it's not a pressing issue — considering the team's top line generated three five-on-five goals against Detroit — the last 10 games, as a whole, can't be ignored.

The Jets have the ingredients to ice a productive top six but if things don't drastically improve, the configuration needs to be adjusted.

The Kyle Connor—Mark Scheifele—Gabriel Vilardi line showed a glimpse as to why Arniel has kept it together, despite its defensive deficiencies, Wednesday against the Detroit Red Wings. But, overall, that line has really struggled to get from point A to point B in transition, resulting in it getting hemmed into its own zone for prolonged periods of time.

The Cole Perfetti—Vladislav Namestnikov—Nikolaj Ehlers line has gotten over the hump after a dreadful first few games but there's still lots left to be desired. Those three aren't stuck in their own end like the aforementioned top line, but segments of sustained offensive-zone pressure have been few and far between.

The blue-line is scoring

The Jets defencemen have combined for 34 points — the most of any team in the league.

“We've got guys that are good at getting in front of the net. So, if we can create some chances from up top, it only helps us open up stuff down low,” Jets defenceman Neal Pionk said Wednesday night. “It's been a point of emphasis since I got here.”

Pionk leads the charge with 12 points, which ties him with Alex Pietrangelo for second among NHL defencemen. Pionk has had a huge bounce-back year and his aggressive and calculated gambles — at both ends of the ice — have paid off.

Josh Morrissey's 11 points tie him fourth league-wide. We've come to expect this type of production from him — Erik Karlsson is the only defender with more even-strength points than Morrissey since the 2022-23 season (104) — and one could even argue Morrissey has another gear to get to. We haven't seen him take over a game yet. But that'll come.

And we can't forget about Colin Miller. He's scored five points — all of which have come at even-strength — and his bomb of a shot has created several quality looks on the second power-play unit.

Michigan magicians are at it again

Kyle Connor and Connor Hellebuyck are in mid-season form.

Connor is tied for third in goals (nine) and fifth in points (17th) in the league and, honestly, that's not even the most impressive part of his start. He's proven to be an asset in all three zones, with his puck pursuit and second effort being top notch. And he's been an asset on the penalty kill, too. He's a driver, and that's also part of the reason many have been critical of the Jets stapling him and Scheifele together, through thick and thin, despite the underwhelming defensive results. If you look around the league — at Colorado, Edmonton, etc. — teams often have their two best offensive players on separate lines at even-strength play.

Hellebuyck is doing Hellebuyck things. His numbers — .923 save percentage, 2.12 goals-against average — are aligned with what we've come to expect from arguably the world's best goaltender. The biggest x-factor with Hellebuyck down the stretch will be his workload. We've seen his production dip over the last two playoffs — where he combined for an .878 save percentage through 10 games — and although his team's defensive play contributed to that, one ought to wonder if fatigue played a part, too.

Do they need a top-six centre or a top-four defenseman?

This will be a hot topic until the trade deadline.

Conceivably, one could argue the team needs both. That's no disrespect to Dylan Samberg or Vladislav Namestnikov — but if you're sizing the Jets up against the crème de la crème of the NHL, they probably need an upgrade at their second-line centre and fourth defenceman spot.

In an ideal world, Namestnikov is best suited as a fourth-line centre on a Cup-contending team. He's been producing — seven points in 10 games — but he doesn't classify as the type of pillar you want down the middle come playoff time. And that's why GM Kevin Cheveldayoff acquired Sean Monahan at last year's deadline. If the Jets want to get the most out of that second line, they need a player who can elevate Perfetti and Ehlers. Namestnikov doesn't fit the bill.

Samberg, on the other hand, is a high-end defender who, despite having decent chemistry with Pionk, isn't the most fluid puck-handler. Arniel has discussed in the past how important it is for someone like Samberg, who has graduated into a top-four role in the wake of Brenden Dillon's departure, to make tape-to-tape passes to the team's top-six players. He's not the most poised puck carrier — leading to lots of scenarios where he bobbles a pass and needs an extra half second to recover — and he especially struggles against hard-forechecking teams.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/ehlers-sets-tone-in-dominant-jets-performance-over-blue-jackets%7E3021544>

Ehlers sets tone in dominant Jets performance over Blue Jackets (VIDEO)

Nikolaj Ehlers flashed his creativity all night long for the Winnipeg Jets, scoring a hat trick and setting up another goal, while Eric Comrie looked solid in the net in place of Connor Hellebuyck. TSN's Dan Robertson and Kevin Sawyer break down the game, and more.

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/5892244/2024/11/01/blue-jackets-winnipeg-jets-loss/>

Blue Jackets crumble under Winnipeg Jets' withering pressure

By Aaron Portzline

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Since Columbus Blue Jackets general manager Don Waddell was hired last spring, he has dropped the following line repeatedly: “There will be games where we get out-skilled, but we shouldn't ever be outworked.”

Friday, the Blue Jackets' effort against the NHL-best Winnipeg Jets wasn't the issue. But the Jets ran roughshod past the Blue Jackets, taking them completely out of the structured, smart game they've flashed this season and rolling to a 6-2 win before a crowd of 15,823 in Nationwide Arena.

Don't expect the Blue Jackets to ever agree they've been out-skilled, but that might have been the case Monday. The Jets are 10-1-0 for a reason.

Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason was steamed his club made so many soft passes, high-risk passes and slow-developing decisions in their own zone, but he acknowledged Winnipeg's relentless pressure played the biggest part in that.

“That team put heat on us to make the mistakes,” Evason said. “If we were playing the way we're capable of playing, getting pucks behind them and getting our forecheck going ...

“We never had a forecheck all night. Not all night. There was no pressure, so sustained heat for us in any of the three zones, but especially in the offensive zone.”

Essentially, Winnipeg, fueled by Nikolaj Ehlers' 4-point night (3-1-4), did to the Blue Jackets what the Blue Jackets have done to a handful of opponents already this season during a surprising 5-4-1 start.

Winnipeg held a 44-22 advantage in shots on goal and a 72-45 edge in shot attempts, which includes attempts that were blocked or missed the net. Put another way: The Jets were in Columbus' zone all night, and the Blue Jackets couldn't reciprocate.

Sean Kuraly and Sean Monahan scored goals for the Blue Jackets, and Elvis Merzlikins — on the heels of two strong outings, including a shutout — had 38 saves. Monahan's goal, on the power play, was the 250th goal of his career and his team-leading sixth of the season.

The Blue Jackets hung in there for a while.

Kuraly scored his first of the season midway through the first period after a strong forecheck by the fourth line. James van Riemsdyk, who won a battle behind the net, found Kuraly coming through the slot for a one-timer to make it 1-1 at 11:02 of the first.

The Jackets fell behind 3-1 early in the second period but later scored a power-play goal — Monahan tipped a point shot from defenseman Zach Werenski at 16:30 — to make it 3-2.

Ehler's third goal — his fifth career hat trick — made it 4-2, however, later in the second period, before Winnipeg pulled away in the third.

"We were going backward and holding on to the puck too long," Kuraly said. "We want to (pass), we want to chip, we want to keep moving forward. When we're not moving forward, when we're not doing those things, it's when we get in trouble.

"It's pretty evident, usually, when we were getting scored on tonight, that it started somewhere with that."

This is what the Jets have done all season. They came into the game with the highest-scoring offensive in the NHL, the fourth-stingiest defense and the best goal differential in the league. After Friday's game, they've outscored opponents by 26 goals in 11 games.

"They're playing well," said Monahan, who finished last season with Winnipeg after he was traded there by the Montreal Canadiens. "I don't think we had a great game. We gave them a lot. We can learn from that game."

A lot of lessons have been taught recently between these clubs. In the last three meetings with Winnipeg, the Jackets have been outscored 17-3. They lost 6-1 in Nationwide last March 17.

"It's a skilled team; they don't give you much," Werenski said. "I definitely think we could have been a little bit better, just in terms of making it harder on them. We just seemed a little bit sloppy tonight."

The Blue Jackets, who play in Washington on Saturday, did get positive news on the injury front Friday.

Forward Dmitri Voronkov, who suffered a shoulder injury in training camp, made his season debut, playing on the fourth line with Kuraly and van Riemsdyk. He was minus-3 with no shots on goal in 13 minutes, 24 seconds of playing time.

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/5891648/2024/11/02/nhl-2024-25-regular-season-concerns/>

Each NHL team's biggest concern a month into the 2024-25 regular season

By The Athletic NHL Staff

We're just over a month into the NHL regular season, and for some teams, the high hopes and optimism of the preseason have faded away for one reason or another.

The Athletic asked its NHL staff this week for each team's biggest concern at this point. The responses covered the full spectrum, from goaltending and lack of offense to bad defense, injuries and more. Here's what they said.

Winnipeg Jets

The Jets are special teams merchants: Last year's Jets would have loved a power play this good: an NHL-best 45.2 percent behemoth that has looked dangerous from every position on the ice. Kyle Connor is on fire, tied for the power-play goals lead with four, and Cole Perfetti has three from the second unit. The problem is that this year's Jets are not as good at even strength as last year's team. The 10-1-0 record deserves plaudits, but Winnipeg has outscored its opponents only 27-20 at five-on-five. Those numbers are top-10 as opposed to best in the league like the Jets were last season. Keep working on that through a grueling November schedule and this team will be a contender. — Murat Ates

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/11/01/jets-overwhelm-blue-jackets>

Jets overwhelm Blue Jackets

Ehlers leads the way with four-point night, Comrie gets the win between pipes

By: Mike McIntyre

COLUMBUS — They fire off a cannon at Nationwide Arena every time the Columbus Blue Jackets score a goal, something visiting players and media often say results in a jump scare. It's really that loud.

However, it was the high-flying Winnipeg Jets who made the most noise on Friday, blasting the home team by a 6-2 score to improve to a seismic 10-1-0 on the season.

Hockey's hottest, highest-scoring team is showing no signs of slowing down.

"Up and down the lineup we have so much talent and so much skill," said goaltender Eric Comrie.

Indeed, Winnipeg once again brought out the big guns in this one, with Nikolaj Ehlers leading the way with his fifth career hat trick along with an assist. All-star defenceman Josh Morrissey had a goal and a helper while Gabe Vilardi and Mason Appleton rounded out the scoring.

Winnipeg has lit the lamp 52 times in 11 games, which is tops in the league. Putting up at least a half-dozen, as they've now done on five occasions including both games on this road trip, seems like a natural occurrence.

"It's the pressure we're putting on teams," explained coach Scott Arniel.

"When you get teams caught on the ropes there a little bit and getting tired and start zone-timing them, that's when we try to keep our foot on the gas and keep the pressure on them. It's not always going to end up that way, but you gotta take what's being handed to you right now."

Columbus came into the game on a 3-0-1 run and were the top offensive team in the league at five-on-five early this season. So they were no easy targets, even if the Jets ultimately made short work of them. To be honest, the final score flattered the Blue Jackets.

Goaltender Elvis Merzlikins was the only thing that kept Winnipeg from hitting double-digits. He faced a whopping 44 shots and 72 shot attempts on the night as his club now falls to 5-4-1 overall.

Let's break this one down further:

1) *Warming up*: Turns out Ehlers had a hunch he was in for a good game.

"Felt pretty good in warmup and Nino (Niederreiter) said he'd be pretty disappointed if I didn't score tonight with that warm-up," he told the Free Press.

Ehlers first goal was a thing of beauty as he streaked down the left wing and wound up with a blistering slap shot that went through Merzlikins' five-hole and in and out of the net in the blink of an eye.

After Sean Kuraly tied it later in the first period, Ehlers gave his team the lead for good as he ripped a wicked wrist shot past the Blue Jackets netminder at 15:14. He'd complete the hatty late in the second period when Merzlikins tried to sweep a puck out of his crease, putting it right on Ehlers stick. When you're hot, you're hot, and the puck starts following you around.

"When you play the right way, you get those bounces. So that's nice," said Ehlers, who is up to seven goals through the first 11 games.

He'd later add an assist when, along with Mark Scheifele, he set up Morrissey for a blue-line blast on the power play midway through the third period.

"I don't watch warmup but whatever fired up his engine, it was running," said Arniel. "When he puts his speed on display like that, he's hard player to defend."

2) *Good memories*: Columbus holds a special place in Comrie's heart. It's where he made his NHL debut in 2017, picking up his first win as a late-season callup that year for the Jets.

"Seven years? Oh my goodness, gracious me. Seven years. I'm getting old, aren't I?" he said with a laugh. "I was a little more jittery as a kid back then. I'm a little more older and wiser now. A little more calm now and just let things happen."

It helps, of course, when you have the type of firepower Winnipeg does that can give you plenty of offensive support. Comrie is more than holding his own in spelling off Vezina winner Connor Hellebuyck. The 29-year-old is now 3-0-0 with a 2.67 goals-against-average and .914 save percentage on the year.

"I think our offence is generated by good defence. If you look at the games, we come back so hard and backcheck so hard, we play great in our D-zone and take pride in what we do," said Comrie.

Indeed, Winnipeg has surrendered 26 goals through 11 games, making them one of the stingiest squads as well.

"It forces teams to try other stuff and allows us to capitalize on their turnovers and mistakes," he said. "I think we have a very skilled group with a lot of talent, and a commitment to defence, you can really see it every single night, goaltenders, our team, we just capitalized on the chances we get."

One of Comrie's best saves came early in the game as he calmly gloved down a Sean Monahan breakaway bid. Monahan would later beat him with a power play deflection in the second period.

Comrie finished with 20 stops in the night.

3) Connor the playmaker: Everyone talks about Kyle Connor's goal-scoring abilities, which are among the best in the NHL. But don't overlook his playmaking. He fed linemate Vilardi for the final goal of the game with a spinning, behind-the-back feed that should get plenty of play on highlight reels.

Connor — named the NHL's second star for October earlier in the day — has 252 goals so far in his career, but he also has 251 assists. This was one of his finest and had Jets players still buzzing in the dressing room following the victory.

"He came down and made a great play. I'm sure everyone thought he was going to shoot the puck because he's been red hot and then he made the play to Gabe. A very unselfish play," said Arniel.

Vilardi is now up to four goals, all of which have come in the past five games.

4) Afterburner:

Key play: Appleton's goal just 2:20 into the second period came after some solid work from his line and gave the Jets a two-goal cushion, which was plenty on this night. His fourth of the year ultimately proved to be the game-winner.

Three stars:

1. Winnipeg RW Ehlers: 3 goals, 1 assist
2. Winnipeg D Morrissey: 1 goal, 1 assist
3. Columbus G Merzlikins: 38 saves

5) Extra, extra:

-Team Canada management was in the building once again. On Wednesday in Detroit, where the Jets won 6-2. Boston general manager Don Sweeney and Tampa Bay GM Julien Brisebois watched from the press box. On Friday, it was Sweeney and Pittsburgh GM Kyle Dubas.

Neither the Red Wings or the Blue Jackets have any real high-end Canadian talent, so there's a good chance they are scouting the likes of Morrissey, Scheifele and even Adam Lowry for possible spots at both the 4 Nations Face Off next February and even the national Olympic team for 2026.

-The same three Winnipeg skaters were scratches in forward David Gustafsson and defencemen Haydn Fleury and Dylan Coghlan, but Arniel said prior to the game he has "a plan" to ensure they don't sit and wait too long.

-The Jets now head home to play four straight games at Canada Life Centre beginning Sunday afternoon against the Lightning.

"We'll just make sure we're mindful of that, that we go home and we don't take our foot off the gas," Arniel said, noting Winnipeg's last showing at the downtown rink resulted in its only loss of the season (6-4 against Toronto last Monday).

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/11/01/monahan-playing-with-heavy-heart>

Monahan playing with heavy heart Former Jets centre having a positive impact with Blue Jackets

By: Mike McIntyre and Ken Wiebe

COLUMBUS — Sean Monahan would have loved to return to Winnipeg. He thoroughly enjoyed his brief stint with the Jets organization following a trade last February, just as the team welcomed the production he brought as its second-line centre.

"A great time there," Monahan told the Free Press on Friday as he prepared to face his former team at Nationwide Arena. "A great group. Looking back it was a time I will always remember."

However, the Columbus Blue Jackets came calling on Canada Day and made him a free-agent offer he couldn't refuse, one that presented an opportunity nobody else could offer — a reunion with former Calgary Flames teammate and longtime friend, Johnny Gaudreau.

Tragically, the pair never got to hit the ice together with the Blue Jackets. Gaudreau, along with his brother, Matthew, were killed by an alleged drunk driver as they biked home from their sister's wedding rehearsal in New Jersey this past August.

The hockey world was in shock. Monahan was hit especially hard, forced to soldier on without Gaudreau at his side. He's playing with a heavy heart, but channeling those emotions into a stellar start for himself and the rebuilding Blue Jackets.

"Everything," Columbus head coach Dean Evason said Friday when asked what Monahan has brought to the organization after signing a five-year deal that pays him US\$5.5 million per season.

“Right from the Johnny Gaudreau situation, his best buddy, and how he handled it. His maturity. Then leading that into the hockey end of it. He’s just a calm presence, a veteran guy who goes about his business. Good in all areas. Great in the room. Team first. He’s been a perfect fit.”

Monahan, 30, had nine points (5G, 4A) in his first nine games with Columbus centring the top line between young Russian wingers Yegor Chinakov and Kirill Marchenko. That’s earned him the nickname “Monahanov” around these parts.

“Both pretty funny guys. It’s been going well. We have lots to build off. I gotta start to learn a little bit more Russian for sure,” Monahan joked.

Monahan scored in the home-opener in Columbus and pointed at a Gaudreau banner that had been raised in an emotional pre-game ceremony. Following the game, he fittingly received the first donkey hat players are now giving out after victories as a tribute to Gaudreau, who loved to call people “donkeys.”

“I think we’ve been playing together as a team. There are ups and downs we’ve obviously gone through since the beginning of the season,” said Monahan.

Although they were tasked to trying to keep him in check on Friday night, his former Jets teammates were happy to see him thriving in his new hockey home.

“Not surprised he’s off to a great start. He’s a fantastic player and he finally has a clean bill of health,” said defenceman Dylan DeMelo.

“He’s really cerebral. When he came in here, there was instant chemistry on that second line and he was a huge piece of the power play. A guy that does everything. He’s a great pro, a great person. We loved having him here and I’m happy to see that he’s off to a great start.”

Monahan had 24 points (13G, 11A) in 34 regular season games after being acquired from the Montreal Canadiens in exchange for a 2024 first-round pick, then had one assist in five playoff contests.

“Obviously we didn’t go as far as we wanted, but that’s hockey,” he said, adding he’s not surprised the Jets are off to a flying start this year.

Monahan, the sixth-overall pick of the Flames in 2013, has been a great mentor to many of the young players on Columbus, such as sophomore forward Adam Fantilli.

“He’s the man,” Fantilli said Friday. “I love being around him. Right from when he came in the locker room he’s been loved. He likes to have fun, he’s played some pranks on me. I think he’s a great teammate, one of the best I’ve had.”

Fantilli and Monahan have much in common, including being first-round picks (Fantilli went third-overall in 2023 and they share the same birthday, Oct. 12) and have had to battle through injuries.

“I’m not going to change who I am wherever I go. There’s guys you can learn from, there’s guys you can help teach,” said Monahan.

“There’s different roles you can play on a team like this, and it’s exciting for me. I’m really proud to be here.”

AROUND THE GLASS

EVASON EVOLVES

Evason admits getting fired by the Minnesota Wild early last season was a humbling experience, one that led him to do a bit of soul-searching.

The 60-year-old from Flin Flon took some time to reflect on both the past and the present on Friday, saying he’s come a long way in the past 25 years — from a rookie bench boss in the Western Hockey League “who didn’t know what I was doing” to the man now guiding the Blue Jackets.

“Just as in life, you go through different situations. You make mistakes and you learn from them and when they come up again hopefully you don’t make the same mistake,” said Evason, who was hired this summer to replace Pascal Vincent, the former Jets assistant and Manitoba Moose head coach.

Evason can be as intense as they come — remember him challenging Jets head coach Rick Bowness to a fight two years ago during a particularly nasty Winnipeg/Minnesota clash? — but he seems to have mellowed a bit, cracking numerous jokes during his latest media sessions.

“I think you’re constantly learning, you’re constantly getting better, hopefully,” said Evason. “The longer you do this, the more experiences you have. The best thing you do is you hire properly. You get really smart people. Not that our coaches are real smart.”

Zing!

“We’ve got a good group. Everyone has input. That’s the one thing I’ve learned over the years, your coaching staff has to be the same as your team. It has to be team-first, it has to be well-rounded, it has to have voices in there and it has to have accountability,” he said.

“I love our coaching staff because we make each other accountable every day. We challenge each other in different situations, and we’re a good team in there.”

STONE SHINING

Winnipegger Mark Stone is off to the most productive start of his NHL career.

The captain of the Vegas Golden Knights went into Friday’s action leading the NHL in points with 19 through 11 games.

Back to full health, Stone has recorded at least a point in 10 of 11 games and already has three separate three-point outings for the Golden Knights, who sit atop the Pacific Division with a record of 7-3-1.

The 32-year-old right-winger was the NHL’s first star of the week and is up to 94 goals (including 20 game-winners) and 275 points in 285 games since he was acquired by the Golden Knights from the Ottawa Senators.

HAPPY HOMECOMINGS

One popular first-overall pick went back to face his original team for the last time, while another was in the building he starred in for the first time as a visitor.

Emotions ran high for both Marc-Andre Fleury and Steven Stamkos this week.

Fleury, who has announced that this season will be his last, was feted by the Pittsburgh Penguins faithful even as he made 26 saves to help the Minnesota Wild win on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Stamkos began to tear up after Lightning fans gave him a lengthy standing ovation after a thank you message was played on the scoreboard during a broadcast timeout. He chipped in a pair of assists as the Predators dropped a 3-2 overtime decision and is up to a goal and three points in 10 games with his new team.

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/billeck-jets-days-of-playing-to-opponents-level-seem-gone>

BILLECK: Jets' days of playing to opponent's level seem gone

By Scott Billeck

It wasn't always like this.

There once was a time when the Winnipeg Jets faced struggling teams and seemingly empathized with them, sharing in their burden.

They'd play to that level, whatever it was. Sometimes, they'd squeak out a win. Sometimes, they'd get goalie'd. Sometimes, they tossed up a stinker.

Those days no longer exist.

Look at these scores against the NHL's have-nots: 8-3 over San Jose, 6-3 against Pittsburgh and now back-to-back 6-2 triumphs, including Friday's hammering of the injury-plagued Columbus Blue Jackets.

Nothing is being half-assed. Goalies are barely standing, never mind standing on their heads.

It's a hell of a shift, and it's part of the picture the Jets are painting for themselves this year. No free spaces on the bingo card.

"If you look at the games, we come back so hard and backcheck so hard, we play great in our D-zone and take pride in what we do," Eric Comrie, who summed it up so well, told reporters after Friday's win. "It forces teams to try other stuff and allows us to capitalize on their turnovers and mistakes. We have a very skilled group with a lot of talent, and a commitment to defence, you can really see it every single night, goaltenders, our team, we just capitalized on the chances we get."

Ain't that the truth at 10-1-0, with a league-high 52 goals scored, a league-best plus-26 goal differential, and a top-of-the-charts power play.

If you're a fan, you hope this isn't a team peaking far too early.

But it's hard to believe they'd allow that to happen when they've hit the ground running so well this season, refining what they learned from their disappointment last season into fuel for the current campaign.

Winnipeg's success this season will always be measured in late April and beyond, not during the doldrums of another long winter.

Still, they have to get there.

More importantly, they need to get there with better consistency so that they dig deeper when the game gets harder.

That's not lost on head coach Scott Arniel, who wasn't savouring anything post-game.

"We went out on the road and won three and then came home and kind of laid an egg against Toronto," he said. "We'll just make sure we're mindful of that, that we go home and we don't take our foot off the gas.

"We've just got to go home and make sure... We've got four of them at home. Three of them are huge, in our division, so we just want to make sure that we take this good hockey that we're playing and take it home with us."

The Jets have an immediate challenge ahead of them starting Sunday.

Between then and the third week of November, they'll face an uptick in competition.

Tampa Bay comes to Canada Life Centre for Sunday's matinee, and they'll see them in Florida in the middle of the month. They face the defending Stanley Cup champs twice, along with the Dallas Stars and the New York Rangers, all favourites to take this year's title.

It won't always be as easy as the Jets make it look.

Better teams. Better goalies. The inevitability of injuries. Cold streaks. Plain bad games.

But there's a standard in place. The Jets knew they fell short of it against Toronto.

Instead of being happy that they were 9-1 through 10 games, there was an air of disappointment about not being 10-0.

That's the change in this team and something they must protect to be successful when spring comes.

For now, it's a solid foundation.

And it makes you wonder: should this team already be surveying to strengthen what they have?

It's barely November.

Yet the Jets can essentially play a hair over .500 hockey the rest of the way and secure a playoff spot.

If you look around the league over the past several years, Stanley Cup winners have been bigger and meaner than the Jets currently are.

Knowing the identity of this team so early gives management a leg up when looking to add to it.

And that comes at a time when some teams, struggling through the season's early days and falling short of their respective expectations, might be looking to shake up their rosters to spark a change.

If the Jets know an area or two they'd like to address, it could be quite the hunting ground.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/nikolaj-ehlers-notches-hat-trick-as-jets-hammer-blue-jackets-6-2>

Nikolaj Ehlers notches hat trick as Jets hammer Blue Jackets 6-2

By Scott Billeck

Kevin Cheveldayoff may want to start checking underneath his couch cushions.

The Winnipeg Jets' general manager will need all the change he can find to keep Nikolaj Ehlers in navy blue.

And after the 27-year-old's fifth career hat trick in a 6-2 win over the Columbus Blue Jackets in Ohio on Friday night, Cheveldayoff may want to check his truck's cup holders as well.

Ehlers scored twice in the first period and completed the hat trick to tie Kyle Connor for most in franchise history in the third as the Jets won their 10th game of the season in just their 11th try.

"Felt pretty good in warmup, and Nino (Niederreiter) said he'd be pretty disappointed if I didn't score tonight with that warm-up," Ehlers told reporters in Columbus. "It was pretty funny how that worked out."

Ehlers, who has never touched 30 goals in a season, is on pace to crack 50 if he keeps this pace up. He has seven goals on the season, is up to 14 points, and is on a path to 100.

So much for that early-season chatter about Winnipeg's second line not getting it done.

The line, which employs Vladislav Namestnikov, Cole Perfetti, and Ehlers, has outscored their opposition 6-1 now.

Mason Appleton, Josh Morrissey and Gabriel Vilardi also scored for Winnipeg. Kyle Connor, who set up the Vilardi goal, pushed his point streak to 11 games, establishing a career-high.

Meanwhile, Columbus holds a special place for Winnipeg backup Eric Comrie, who got his third start of the season on Friday, stopping 20 for his third win.

Comrie made his NHL debut at Nationwide Arena in 2017, bagging his first career win that night.

“Oh my goodness, gracious me, seven years?” Comrie said. “I’m getting old, aren’t I? I wasn’t thinking about that much today. Just going out and playing the game and having some fun with it. Just going through my process is what I was trying to do.”

Ehlers uncorked his first of the night past Elvis Merzlikins 5:13 into the game.

“When he puts his speed on display like that, he’s hard player to defend,” Arniel said.

Added Ehlers: “I love coming down that side with the clapper. Luckily, it went in. So from that point on, I think as a line, played really well, and that created a lot of chances. We could have had a few more, but it felt good.”

After Sean Kuraly tied the game 1-1 on missed coverage later in the period, Ehlers curled down the right side before slotting his second of the game at 15:14.

Dylan Samberg made a good play at the offensive blue line to keep the puck in the zone, and Columbus failed to clear the puck after that before Ehlers latched onto it.

Former Jets forward Sean Monahan pulled the Blue Jackets to 3-2, scoring his 250th career goal after Appleton notched his fourth of the season in the second period.

Ehlers completed the hat trick at 18:51 to give Winnipeg a 4-2 lead heading into the third, with his line showing that hard work pays off.

“Fetts going to get the puck and hitting me in the slot,” Ehlers said. “I was trying to go back door to Vladdy because I didn’t think I could get that shot off, and then when you play the right way, you get those bounces. So that’s nice.”

Morrissey scored Winnipeg’s 14th power-play goal of the season in the final frame, bringing the team’s success rate with the man advantage to 45.2 percent, which leads the NHL.

Ehlers had an assist on the goal to give himself a four-point night, equalling his career-high.

Vilardi’s goal at 14:54 made it five times in 11 games where Winnipeg has scored at least six goals, the most in the league.

“We trying to keep people out of our end of the rink, so that means you are playing, probably, down in the other end,” Arniel said, trying to explain all of the scoring. You try, when you get teams caught on the ropes there a little bit and getting tired and start zone-timing them, that’s when we try to keep our foot on the gas and keep the pressure on them. It’s not always going to end up that way, but you gotta take what’s being handed to you right now.”

The Jets return home from the quick two-game road trip — they won 6-2 in Detroit on Wednesday — to start a four-game homestand, which begins Sunday afternoon against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

Arniel said they won’t be spending much time savouring Friday’s win.

“We went out on the road and won three (earlier this season) and then came home and kind of laid an egg against Toronto,” he said. “We’ll just make sure we’re mindful of that, that we go home and we don’t take our foot off the gas.”

“We’ve got four of them at home. Three of them are huge, in our division, so we just want to make sure that we take this good hockey that we’re playing and take it home with us.”

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10847652/ehlers-pots-hat-trick-as-winnipeg-jets-keep-rolling-with-6-2-win-in-columbus/>

Ehlers pots hat trick as Winnipeg Jets keep rolling with 6-2 win in Columbus

By Christian Aumell & Russ Hobson Global News

The NHL’s best team in the month of October got November started on the right foot Friday night in Columbus.

Fresh off an impressive win in Detroit, the Winnipeg Jets knocked off the Blue Jackets 6-2 to improve to 10-1 on the season.

Nikolaj Ehlers recorded a hat trick and Kyle Connor extended his season-opening point streak to 11 games as the Jets remained undefeated on the road, now a perfect 6-0.

“They made us work,” said Ehlers. “But we found a way. So, we got to continue trying to find ways to win games. And I think if we keep playing with the defensive structure that we do have, that gives us a really good chance.”

Eric Comrie made 20 stops to improve to 3-0 on the season.

The Jets had twice as many shots as the Blue Jackets, outshooting them 44-22.

“Our offence is generated by good defence,” Comrie said. “I think we come back so hard, we back check so hard. We play great in our D-zone and we really take pride in what we do, and it forces teams to try and push stuff, and it allows us to capitalize on the turnovers and mistakes.”

The Jets scored at least four goals for the fifth straight game and are now the highest scoring team in the NHL with 52 markers in their first 11 contests.

“We’re trying to keep people out of our end of the rink so that means you are playing probably down in the other end,” said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. “And when we get teams caught on the ropes there a little bit, get them tired, and sorta zone timing them. That’s when we try to kinda keep our foot to the gas and keep the pressure on them. And it’s not always going to end up that way, but you gotta take what is being handed to you right now.”

Ehlers also had an assist for a four-point night. It was his fifth career hat trick to tie Connor for the fourth most in franchise history. He also now has the most career hat tricks for a Danish born player in NHL history. It was his first hatty since December of 2018.

“When he puts his speed on display like he does like that, he’s a hard player to defend,” Arniel said. “We had KC (Kyle Connor) going at a 100 miles an hour the other night and him going tonight, that’s nice depth, great to see.”

Ehlers got the scoring started at the 5:28 mark of the first when he wheeled into the Columbus end and beat Elvis Merzlikins with a long-range slap shot.

Sean Kuraly answered for the Jackets just over 11 minutes into the period. James van Riemsdyk won a puck battle behind the Jets' net and fed Kuraly in front, who potted it past Comrie to level the score.

But just over four minutes later, Ehlers restored the Jets' lead. Columbus had chances to clear the puck but failed to do so thanks in part to some good stick work by Dylan Samberg at the blue line. After a scramble near the blue line, the puck eventually found its way to Ehlers in some open ice and he buried a hard wrister to make it 2-1.

It stayed that way until the 2:20 mark of the second period when the Jets make it 3-1 thanks to some nice puck movement in the offensive end. Adam Lowry dropped it off to Neal Pionk as he drove down the wall before Pionk fed Mason Appleton in the slot. He one-timed it home for his fourth of the year.

Winnipeg kept the pressure on as they searched for more goals and Connor came very close when he rang one off the crossbar but Merzlikins kept his team in the game.

Columbus found some life late in the period after Mark Scheifele was called for tripping and just eight seconds later, Sean Monahan tipped a point shot past Comrie to make it 3-2.

Before the period ran out, though, Winnipeg regained its two-goal cushion. After a scramble in front of Merzlikins, the puck escaped and landed on the stick of Ehlers who had a wide-open net to score into for his fifth career hat trick and first since Dec. 2018.

The Jets took the 4-2 lead into the third period after outshooting Columbus 19-8 in the second and 31-16 over the first two periods.

It stayed a two-goal game until the 11:39 mark of the third when Josh Morrissey blasted one home from the point on the power play to make it 5-2.

Gabriel Vilardi made it 6-2 with just over five minutes left, finishing off a brilliant play from Connor who made a nice toe drag around a defender before sending it to Vilardi in front of the crease.

Merzlikins turned aside 38 shots in defeat.

The Jets will return home to face the Tampa Bay Lightning Sunday afternoon. Puck drop is just after 2 p.m. with pregame coverage on 680 CJOB beginning at noon.