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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-scheifele-hat-trick-leads-jets-past-panthers>

***Three things - Scheifele hat trick leads Jets past Panthers
Scheifele records ninth career hat trick in 6-3 victory***

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – The Winnipeg Jets set another franchise record by winning for the ninth time in their first 10 games on home ice beating the Florida Panthers 5-3 at Canada Life Centre. Mark Scheifele had the hat trick, Morgan Barron scored his first two goals of the season and Kyle Connor scored his 12th of the season. Nikolaj Ehlers (2A), Connor (1G, 1A) and Josh Morrissey (2A) had multi-point efforts, Connor Hellebuyck made 20 saves and improved to 13-2 on the season. Winnipeg will head back on the road starting a six-game road trip in Pittsburgh on Friday.

TOP LINE GETS IT STARTED

The Jets had a couple of great scoring chances in the first period, Neal Pionk hitting the post and Adam Lowry also hitting iron and not beating Sergei Bobrovsky. At 14:13, Winnipeg finally got the puck past the Panther netminder when Kyle Connor jumped on a loose puck and backhanded his 12th of the season to make it 1-0. The top line went to work again at 17:40, Mark Scheifele took a pass from Gabe Vilardi and ripped a low shot glove side past Bobrovsky. After failing to score on 27 shots on Saturday, Winnipeg scored twice on their first five shots of the night. Scheifele extended his point streak on home ice to 10 games, which is one game behind the franchise record set by Connor in 2022-23.

"As a team we didn't like how we played in Florida, so it's a good sign of a lot of good character in this room," said Scheifele.

"We wanted to bounce back, we wanted to have a good game in front of our home crowd before we go on the road."

POWER PLAY IS BACK

The NHL's top power play went oh-for-Florida (0-for-7) in the previous two games. Tonight, in the second period, the Jets had a two minute five-on-three but could not score generating four shots. With just over five minutes to go in the period, the power play got another chance with Dmitry Kulikov in the box for tripping Vlad Namestnikov. 1:11 into it, Nikolaj Ehlers sent a seam pass to Scheifele, and his one timer gave the Jets a 3-0 lead at 15:41.

SCHEIFELE COMPLETES THE HAT TRICK

The defending champions didn't go away getting goals from A.J. Greer at 17:24 of the second and Sam Reinhart on the power play at 7:10 of the third to make it 3-2. But Scheifele would complete his ninth career hat trick after their fourth power play expired finishing a nice passing play from Connor. Scheifele passed Patrik Laine for the second most hat tricks in franchise history behind Ilya Kovalchuk (11).

After the Panthers made it 4-3 on a power play goal from Matthew Tkachuk, Morgan Barron scored back-to-back empty net goals. Barron became the second player in Jets/Thrashers history to score multiple shorthanded goals in a game, joining Marian Hossa who did back on Dec. 19, 2006.

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/vilardi-enjoying-second-season-in-winnipeg>

Vilardi enjoying second season in Winnipeg
The 25-year-old is on pace for career bests in goals, assists and points

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – The hockey world continues to be stunned by the start to the NHL season by the Winnipeg Jets. As for those in the dressing room, including Gabriel Vilardi, there is a high level of confidence.

“Going to every game, especially with our team, we expect to win every game right now. Obviously, there’s some reality to that, injuries and different things come into play,” said Vilardi on the Ground Control podcast.

“You’re tired, back-to-back, stuff like that, and it’s not realistic to win every game. But, I mean, we have a really good team, and like I said, we’re going into every game, and we have the expectation that we’re going to come out with a win.”

This is Vilardi’s second season in Winnipeg, last year he posted 36 points (22 goals, 14 assists) in 47 games. He currently is on pace to smash his career bests in goals, assists and points.

“I got injured after three games last year, so I was just kind of waiting. This year I’m with the team and I’m playing so I think that’s the biggest difference. Just being around the guys, I feel like I’m more comfortable in my own shoes kind of thing,” said Vilardi.

“The injury kind of just messed kind of getting in with the guys because I mean you get more comfortable going into battles and playing with the guys and being in the room. So, it was tough, definitely, to get injured so soon and be watching the guys for a month and a half there. I feel very comfortable and just feel like myself right now with the team.”

The production the Jets are getting from the 25-year-old this season is what they were hoping for when they sent Pierre Luc-Dubois to the Kings in the summer of 2023 for Vilardi, Rasmus Kupari, Alex Iafallo and a draft pick. The chemistry with Vilardi, Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor seems to be growing shift-by-shift.

“I think just their hockey smarts, how they read and see the game, and how they draw guys into them, and that allows me to have more space with the puck. They hold on to the puck for that extra second. That just gives me the extra time to either get open or if they do give me the puck, I know I have that extra split second,” said Vilardi.

“And then I think underrated aspect of their game is they’re both very, very big competitors, and they’re very good defenders. And I think we’re starting to kind of find our game.”

As of this morning, the Jets continue to have the best power play in the league (35.7%). After finishing 22nd (18.4%) last season, they added Davis Payne to the coaching staff and there has been a noticeable difference.

"I think just the different options. I think it's less stagnant than last year. I think guys are moving around more. It feels more, I don't know what the word is, I call it, flowy, guys are going in and out of spots. So, I'd say that compared to last year," said Vilardi.

"And then, obviously we're having success, which always makes things better. But I still think we have more levels to keep going, and we want to keep this, we want to be one of the best power plays. A lot of games come down to special teams, so you have to take advantage of those opportunities."

Athletes are always looking for ways to get better and diet plays a big part of that. Over the summer Vilardi changed his and one of the new additions is dark chocolate which he eats before games, an idea from Dr. Chad Prusmack, a doctor from Denver.

"If you want the science behind it, it's pure fat. It's 90% dark chocolate. So, it's good fats for you. That's good energy you want to run off fat and proteins and then another thing is, it's good for the brain, opens a lot of the neurotransmitters," explained Vilardi.

"I think so much of the game is mental, actually. So, if I can get the edge mentally, I'll try it out. So, I tried it out during the preseason, the first few games in camp, and I liked it, and I've been kind of sticking with it."

Jets fans should be grateful that Vilardi's parents chose to put their sons in hockey after moving to Canada from Italy in the late 90's. On top of that, his older brother Francesco played a large part in his push for excellence on and off the ice while growing up.

"Just kind of the back story parents moved to Canada in 98 My brother was born 96 and then I was born 99 so just being in Canada, it was the thing to do. Everyone was doing it. So, my brother got into it first, and then obviously me being the younger brother and looking up to him so much I saw him doing it, so I got into it. And he was a big part of me making it to the NHL. Because whatever my brother did, if he did an hour of training practice. I had to do two hours, so it was always something like that," said Vilardi.

"I don't think my parents ever envisioned this. Obviously, coming to Canada, neither of them knew what hockey was, but it's just kind of cool how sports take you down different pathways of life, and you meet so many different people."

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/winnipeg-jets-florida-panthers-game-recap-november-16>

Scheifele scores hat trick, Jets bounce back with win against Panthers Barron gets 2 short-handed goals; Reinhart extends point streak to 11 for Florida

By Darrin Bauming

WINNIPEG -- Mark Scheifele scored a hat trick for the Winnipeg Jets in a 6-3 win against the Florida Panthers at Canada Life Centre on Tuesday.

The hat trick was Scheifele's first of the season and ninth in the NHL.

"Honestly, I'm so lucky to play with the guys that I play with," Scheifele said. "[Kyle Connor] made an amazing pass on the hat trick goal. [Nikolaj Ehlers], an amazing pass. [Gabriel Vilardi], a great drive through. I'm blessed to play with the guys that I play with. They were fantastic tonight."

Morgan Barron scored two short-handed goals, and Connor had a goal and an assist for the Jets (16-3-0), who had lost two in a row. Connor Hellebuyck made 20 saves, and Josh Morrissey and Ehlers each had two assists.

"That's huge for us, to be able to close out those games," Barron said of his two empty-net goals coming 21 seconds apart in the final two minutes. "It's something that we're going to continue to learn how to do and hopefully get to that point. A lot of guys stepped up, so that's good to see."

Matthew Tkachuk had a goal and an assist, and Sam Reinhart scored to extend his point streak to 11 games for the Panthers (12-6-1), who defeated the Jets 5-0 at home on Saturday but have lost three of four (1-3-0). Sergei Bobrovsky made 21 saves.

"It's tough to lose that one when you fight back to get close," Tkachuk said. "Then you have a power play, and then feel like we have all the momentum there... It's a hard fought two games by two good teams, in my opinion. It just would have been nice to get this one."

Said Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel of the previous loss against Florida: "Our whole group was (frustrated). [Scheifele] came out and was a leader. He led. When your best players can be your best players in games like that, it certainly helps you have success."

Connor gave Winnipeg a 1-0 lead at 14:13 of the first period, cutting to the slot and scoring on the backhand.

"They got off to a lead in the first. It's always important to get that first goal, it's kind of that playoff mindset," Tkachuk said. "They're a good team. They're good at home, they play hard and they're a deep team like us. So, I just think it continues to show that if we play our game we can compete with the best and be one of them."

Scheifele made it 2-0 at 17:40 when Vilardi dropped it to him for a wrist shot from the top of the circle. He then scored a power-play goal to push it to 3-0 at 15:41 of the second period with a one-timer from below the left face-off dot.

"[Vilardi's] stick is just fantastic," Scheifele said. "He has a knack for holding onto the puck, being strong along the wall, having a very crafty stick. He's a fantastic player. Like I've said before, I'm lucky to play with a guy like him. And he was fantastic tonight."

A.J. Greer cut it to 3-1 at 17:24 when his point shot deflected in off the leg of Jets forward Adam Lowry.

"We're definitely not happy with the result," Greer said. "You like to see the fight again and the resiliency in the third period. It's just not good enough, though."

Reinhart cut it to 3-2 with a power-play goal at 7:10 of the third period. He has 17 points (nine goals, eight assists) during his point streak.

Scheifele scored again on the power play to make it 4-2 at 9:46 of the third when Connor's cross-slot feed found him for another one-timer.

Tkachuk then scored on the power play to make it 4-3 at 16:38.

"They have a fantastic team over there," Arniel said of the Panthers. "[Aleksander] Barkov, Reinhart, those guys play a solid game and they don't give you a lot. We, as a team, we wanted to be better than we were the other night and we showed that."

With Florida pulling its goalie for a 6-on-4 advantage on the power play, Barron scored short-handed into an empty net to extend it to 5-3 at 18:23, banking a shot off the boards near the Winnipeg blue line.

"If I'm going to shoot it down anyways, I figured I might as well put it in a place that has a chance," Barron said. "My thought was to just kind of get it down to the other end of the ice."

Barron scored short-handed again into an empty net at 18:44 for the 6-3 final.

"We didn't like the way that we played in Florida, so it's just a sign of a lot of good character in this room," Scheifele said. "That we wanted to bounce back and we wanted to have a good game in front of our home crowd before we go on the road for what feels like forever (season-long six game road trip). It was a great all-around effort by everyone."

NOTES: Scheifele passed former teammate Patrik Laine (eight) for the second-most hat tricks in Jets/Atlanta Thrashers franchise history behind Ilya Kovalchuk (11). ... Barron became the second player in Jets/Thrashers history to score multiple short-handed goals in a game, joining Marian Hossa (Dec. 19, 2006). ... Reinhart's point streak is his second of at least 11 games with Florida (13 games in 2023-24). He became the second player in Panthers history to record multiple point streaks of 11 or more games, joining Pavel Bure (three times: 13 games in 1999-00, 11 games in 2000-01, and 11 games in 1999-00).

Canadian Press

<https://www.chrisd.ca/2024/11/19/winnipeg-jets-florida-panthers-game-win/>

Mark Scheifele's Hat Trick Powers Jets Past Panthers 6-3

By Judy Owen, The Canadian Press

Mark Scheifele wasn't happy with the way he played in the Winnipeg Jets' 5-0 loss to the Florida Panthers last weekend.

He responded in a big way in Tuesday's rematch, recording his ninth career hat trick in a 6-3 victory over the Panthers.

"I just didn't like the way that we were playing or the way I was playing, so I felt like I had to do something," Scheifele said.

The victory ended Winnipeg's two-game losing skid and the club remains first in the NHL with 32 points (16-3-0).

“It’s just a sign of a lot of good character in this room that we wanted to bounce back and we wanted to have a good game in front of our home crowd before we go on the road for what feels like forever,” Scheifele said. “It was a great all-around effort by everyone.”

The Jets won in front of the third sellout of the season at Canada Life Centre. The team begins a six-game road trip Friday against the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Scheifele’s ninth hat trick set a record for the Jets 2.0 version. Patrik Laine had recorded eight.

“He came out and was a leader,” Jets head coach Scott Arniel said of Scheifele. “He led. When your best players can be your best players in games like that, it certainly helps you have success.”

Kyle Connor had a goal and an assist and Morgan Barron scored twice, shorthanded into an empty net, for his first goals of the season. Josh Morrissey and Nikolaj Ehlers each added a pair of helpers.

Connor Hellebuyck made 20 saves for Winnipeg.

Matthew Tkachuk had a goal and assist. A.J. Greer and Sam Reinhart also scored for the reigning Stanley Cup-champion Panthers (12-6-1). Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 21 of 25 shots.

Scheifele and Connor are tied for the team lead in goals with 12 apiece, and points with 24 each.

Winnipeg led 2-0 after the first period on Connor and Scheifele’s goals.

“I just thought our battle level went way up tonight, throughout,” Arniel said. “Even at the start of the game, our battle level was really good. We knew it was going to have to be that way.

“They’re a heavy team and they play hard. They come at you. We did a fantastic job of turning the tide and going and playing our game and getting after them.”

Scheifele made it 3-0 late in the second period on the power play, but Greer notched a goal less than two minutes later when the puck went in off captain Adam Lowry’s skate at 17:24.

Reinhart closed the gap with a power-play goal at 7:10 of the third, but Scheifele scored his third goal two and half minutes later, and six seconds after Winnipeg’s man advantage ended.

“(Connor) made an amazing pass on the hat-trick goal, (Ehlers) an amazing pass. Gabe (Vilardi) a great drive through,” Scheifele said. “I’m blessed to play with the guys that I play with. They were fantastic tonight.”

Arniel has seen growth in Scheifele.

“His maturing, for me, in the last year or two and a half years, he takes a lot of pride,” Arniel said. “Like I said, he takes a lot of pride now... I shouldn’t say now. I mean he probably always has, but just in the fact of being responsible without the puck.”

Tkachuk viewed Scheifele’s third goal as a turning point.

“It’s tough to lose that one when you fight back to get close and then you have a power play, and then feel like we have all the momentum there,” he said. “And then just a couple plays that probably want to change and then it’s game’s over.”

Tkachuk made it 4-3 on the power play at 16:38 of the third, but Barron pointed his pair 21 seconds apart in the final two minutes.

Barron was the last regular Winnipeg forward to have a goal this season.

Notes: Winnipeg is 12-0-0 when leading after the second period. ... The Jets also improved to 9-1-0 at Canada Life Centre, which set the franchise mark for most wins through the first 10 home games of a season. ... Reinhart’s goal on the power play at 7:10 of the third period extended his point streak to 11 games with nine goals and eight assists. Aleksander Barkov picked up an assist to move his point streak to nine games with three goals and 14 assists.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/resilient-jets-push-back-and-get-revenge-on-panthers%7E3032707>

'Resilient' Jets push back and get revenge on Panthers (VIDEO)

After two losses in the state of Florida, including a 5-0 loss on Saturday to the Panthers, the Jets answered Tuesday. TSN Hockey analyst Frankie Corrado explains what went well for the Jets, including what makes Winnipeg's power play so successful.

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/scheifele-shines-on-both-sides-of-the-puck-in-bounce-back-win%7E3032921>

Scheifele shines on both sides of the puck in bounce back win (VIDEO)

After being dominated in Florida, the Jets bounced back Tuesday against the Panthers, led by the stron play of Mark Scheifele. TSN Hockey's Dan Robertson and Kevin Sawyer explain why it just wasn't his three goals that made a difference in the game.

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/how-important-was-winnipeg-s-win-over-florida%7E3032699>

How important was Winnipeg's win over Florida? (VIDEO)

The Jets where blown out 5-0 Saturday against the Panthers, but bounced back to beat Florida in Winnipeg. TSN Hockey analyst Frankie Corrado has more on how important the victory was for the Jets, who are trying to show their resiliency early this season.

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/jets-mark-scheifele-belongs-on-team-canada-at-4-nations-face-off/>

Jets' Mark Scheifele belongs on Team Canada at 4 Nations Face-Off

By Jacob Stoller

WINNIPEG — A hat trick from Mark Scheifele couldn't have been more fitting.

On the heels of a dreadful two-game road trip in Florida — where they were outscored a combined 10-1 by the Tampa Bay Lightning and Florida Panthers — the Winnipeg Jets needed their best from their best in Tuesday's rematch with the Panthers. After being shut out 5-0 by the defending Cup champions on Saturday, naysayers had six periods worth of evidence to explain away how title contenders are Winnipeg's kryptonite. That pessimism would've only amplified with another loss to the Panthers.

They needed their stars to be drivers.

Scheifele was just that. And then some.

In front of a sellout crowd on a night where the 20th anniversary of Canada Life Centre was celebrated, the face of the franchise scored three goals and put together his most impactful performance of the season en route to the Jets' 6-3 win over Florida. Scheifele recorded five scoring chances, made a handful of stealth defensive plays and was the driving force behind Winnipeg's top line outchancing the opposition 12-4 during five-on-five play.

"He wants to push that envelope every night offensively against the other team's best players," coach Scott Arniel said after the game.

That's always been obvious to those that have followed Scheifele closely. And for those unaware, that'll likely change after the 4 Nations Face-Off rosters are announced. At this rate, it'd be downright shocking if Scheifele wasn't part of Team Canada in February.

Scheifele, who has 12 goals and 24 points in 19 games, ranks fourth in goals per game (0.63) and is tied for sixth in points per game (1.26) among Canadian forwards.

The native of Kitchener, Ont. has an elite offensive tool-kit and it's underappreciated league-wide. While Scheifele has long been lauded for his scoring — deservedly so, considering he scored 42 goals in 2021-22 and twice has scored 30-plus goals — he's also a world-class passer. Dating back to the 2019-20 season, Scheifele ranks in the 94th percentile league wide in five-on-five primary assists per game (0.19), according to NaturalStatTrick.com.

He excels at finding seams and threading the needle.

"Scheif has a way of being deceptive and maybe holding on for an extra second that maybe others don't," Arniel said after Winnipeg's 3-0 win over the Utah Hockey Club on Nov. 5th. "He has a way of finding people."

The 31-year-old centre does some of his best facilitating along the wall and that'll help his odds of cracking a Canadian squad that's stacked down the middle (with Connor McDavid, Nathan MacKinnon, Sidney Crosby, Brayden Point). His natural position isn't going to be the only thing that changes if he makes the team. So, too, will be what's expected of him. He won't be the top power play performer, nor will he be counted on as the guy when his team needs a goal. But he's proven this year he can provide value as a support player in a best-on-best tournament.

"I would say the best two-way play of his career is going on right now. And there's no doubt about that," Tampa Bay Lightning coach Jon Cooper, Team Canada's bench boss, told reporters before his team faced Winnipeg on Thursday.

Cooper, who has coached Scheifele at the world championships and when he played for Team North America at the World Cup of Hockey, thinks highly of the Jets star.

"If you're going to talk about a student of the game and somebody that follows everything and knows everything that goes on in this league, it's Mark Scheifele," Cooper said "I really appreciate that about him, especially when I'm lacking some stat detail. You can always go to him."

And, like we saw Tuesday night, Scheifele possesses the clutch gene. Among Canadians that have played in at least 30 playoff games since the 2017-18 season, only Logan Couture and Nathan MacKinnon have scored more goals per game than Scheifele (0.55) in the playoffs.

At this point, it's safe to say you won't regret ordering a Scheifele 4 Nations Face-Off jersey.

Monkey off Barron's back

Speaking of clutch, how about Morgan Barron's two short-handed, empty-net goals against Florida?

The first was an incredibly placed bank shot from his own end.

"Barron went to Cornell, so he knows his angles," Scheifele told Jets TV reporter Sara Orlesky in his post-game interview at ice-level.

The second one came as a result of a key defensive zone retrieval before a perfect shot right into the middle of an empty net. Before his two goals, Barron was the lone regular Jets forward without a goal. But score totals aren't fair measuring sticks for the 25-year-old, who is one of Arniel's most trusted defensive forwards.

"He's the first guy over the boards on the penalty kill with (Adam Lowry)," Arniel explained.

"That's a big responsibility. You're obviously facing the No. 1 power play on the opposition all of the time. He's taken on that role. And tonight, there was lots of situations where I threw them against the Tkachuk line and they got the zone time."

According to NaturalStatTrick.com, Barron ranks second in five-on-five takeaways per 60 minutes (3.12) among forwards that have played at least 100 minutes this year.

Other thoughts

- Arniel peeled back the curtain a bit on the Jets' mindset ahead of their revenge game. He pinpointed a video session — particularly, the vibe within it — that gave him a good indicator of how much his team embraced the challenge.

“We had a video session yesterday. The whole team. There was lots they got to see. And it wasn’t loud and screaming. It was just obvious. It was just obvious stuff that Florida did that we didn’t do. Everybody was involved in the video. Every guy got to be a star and I thought everybody wanted to make amends. And you could really feel it,” Arniel said. “This morning, our meetings getting ready — power play and penalty kill, our five-on-five — you could tell the guys really wanted another piece of the Florida Panthers. And I’m glad they’re in the Eastern Conference.”

- Tuesday was one of those nights where you saw why Arniel has been committed to running Scheifele alongside Gabriel Vilardi and Kyle Connor. They were firing on all cylinders, pinning the Panthers in their own zone for extended periods and creating a flurry of chances – off the cycle and rush.

- Vilardi’s skillset along the wall is a big driver in that line’s ability to extend plays. He had a couple sequences where he won one-on-one battles, kept the puck down low — even using his feet at one point — before dishing it off to one of his linemates.

“His stick is just fantastic,” Scheifele said of Vilardi. “He has a knack for holding onto the puck, being strong along the wall, having a very craft stick.”

- Winnipeg has scored at least five goals in 10 of its 19 games. Absurd.

The Athletic

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/bobrovsky-gets-shutout-panthers-roll-past-nhl-leading-jets-to-snap-2-game-slide/>

Why the Winnipeg Jets’ rematch with the Florida Panthers matters so much

By Murat Ates

From a storytelling perspective, of course, the Florida Panthers should be the team that holds the Winnipeg Jets to 15 wins.

The Panthers play a style of hockey the Jets aren’t supposed to be able to match.

That’s how the story goes, anyway.

Put plainly, the Panthers play playoff hockey. They’ve proven it, doubling down on bone-crushing physicality and crease-clearing defence in back-to-back trips to the Stanley Cup Final. The Jets have the NHL’s best record, top power play and most goals, all backed up by the defending Vezina Trophy winner in Connor Hellebuyck, but they still have critics the Panthers don’t have to contend with.

The Panthers are the defending champions in a league that defines legacies not by making it to 15 wins before anybody else but by being the only team to earn 16 wins at playoff time. The Panthers and Jets finished last season with identical 110-point, 52-24-6 records, but Florida pushed all the way to a Stanley Cup championship while Winnipeg lost in Round 1.

So it’s fitting that Florida gave Winnipeg its most lopsided loss of the season on Saturday.

The Panthers are one of the most aggressive forechecking teams in the NHL. They're better than anybody at getting pucks behind defenders, laying the body and recovering their dump-ins. They demonstrated it on Saturday, recovering pucks at will, getting them back to the point and crashing the net on the inevitable shot while protecting their slot with a ferocity the Jets haven't seen yet this season.

They won board battles by hook or by crook, and by glass-rattling hits, fighting for every inch of ice with 200-foot stars like Aleksander Barkov and Sam Reinhart and world-class pains like Matthew Tkachuk and Sam Bennett. Florida's Cup-winning formula was on full display so the critics had their day.

No amount of early-season success means anything, the story goes because the Jets can't play playoff hockey. There is a vocal minority of Jets fans who can't shake the wounds of Winnipeg's back-to-back first-round exits or the pain of second-half collapses in seasons gone by. Regardless of whether you agree with this perspective, it's easy to understand its roots. The Jets have started almost as well as this before but haven't ended the way fans wanted them to. Former coach Rick Bowness criticized the team's lack of pushback against Vegas, later saying Winnipeg's resilience had already shown cracks by the middle of the 2022-23 season.

The Jets have shown tremendous growth since that time. Their highs have gotten higher while their lows haven't been so low. Excellence has often been habitual as opposed to the product of desperate play. Bowness' work has been continued by Scott Arniel, with leadership and team culture still contributing directly to team success. But still, there is that background noise: The Jets' 15-3-0 start won't mean anything until they beat an elite team. When they beat that elite team, the start won't mean anything until the Jets replicate it in January and February. If the Jets put together a scorching second half of the season, it won't mean anything until they win a playoff round.

For anyone who is sick of that criticism, I point you to The Athletic subscriber Charles M.

"Anyone who looks past the great start the Jets have put together in order to fret about an early bounce from this year's playoffs are turning down a damn good meal served hot today for a feast they hope to have in June," Charles wrote in a comment last week. "I have no idea what's going to happen this April so I'm keeping my focus on what's happening now."

Whether or not they can solve Florida on Tuesday (remember, the Jets went 2-0 against the Panthers last season and dominated Colorado too) there is wisdom in Charles' approach. The Jets can't rewrite their painful playoff history any more than they can erase their regular-season success.

When we zoom out and evaluate the Jets' 2024-25 season, we will evaluate their ability to survive (or avoid) a second-half slump. We will find out if they can overcome past playoff demons. Those answers are on their way, whether the Jets are ready for them or not.

But we are what we repeatedly do, as Aristotle is often miscredited with saying and Arniel likes to say now. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.

Habits are the only thing Winnipeg can control now.

They can only play the schedule that's in front of them, starting with Tuesday's rematch against Florida which should be appointment viewing for fans across the NHL.

Winnipeg has some tidying up to do at five-on-five, where its defencemen need to get the puck moving up ice faster than they did last week. Those defencemen will need outlets, so Winnipeg's forwards will need to get down low and help faster than they did last week. When the Jets get into the offensive zone cleanly, they tend to be able to find ways to get the puck to the net. When they struggle, as they did against the Cup-calibre pace and pressure of the Panthers on Saturday, they get stuck in their own zone for long stretches where elite teams like Florida can make them pay.

The Jets can't win a playoff game on Tuesday. They can't atone for playoff performances against Colorado in 2024 or Vegas in 2023 during the six-game road trip that starts on Friday. But step by step, shift by shift, Winnipeg can show itself and its critics that it can take a punch from a proven playoff performer and come back swinging, playing the best version of its own game.

Global Winnipeg

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/5923368/2024/11/16/winnipeg-jets-free-agents/>

ANALYSIS: Monumental performance by Jets' Scheifele

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

Former Jets coach Paul Maurice once declared that there would be a statue erected of Mark Scheifele outside Canada Life Centre one day – likely not long after his career with Winnipeg concluded.

Well, Tuesday night in a game where the Jets undoubtedly needed their star players to stand out, the 31-year-old Scheifele delivered a monumental performance – one that came at the expense of Maurice's current team, the Florida Panthers, who just happen to be the defending Stanley Cup champions.

For the second time in three games against the Panthers, Scheifele recorded a hat trick, Tuesday's being the ninth of his career and a significant one in a bounceback effort for the Jets that may well have local sculptors now planning casts and moulds of his likeness.

Faced with the challenge of rebounding following a humbling loss to the Panthers last Saturday, the Jets barrelled down the runway Tuesday night and not only won in the finale of a home-and-home set, 6-3, but they also did so with a message – one that was loud and clear that they, too, are quite capable of playing 'big boy' hockey.

You see, without the Jets' emphatic response Tuesday, there would have been myriad questions to follow about the team's inability to raise its game to compete when it really counts with the likes of Colorado, Vegas and Florida – the last three Cup champs.

For the record, and after Tuesday night's win, Winnipeg has now beaten two of those three this season with the Golden Knights on the horizon next week, something Scheifele and the Jets are keenly aware of, no doubt.

And while there were other stellar performances on Tuesday for Winnipeg, it was Scheifele's three goals that made the boldest statement – kind of like his former coach not that many years ago declaring a statue of Scheifele would one day be erected outside Canada Life Centre.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10878261/scheifeles-hat-trick-propels-winnipeg-jets-to-6-3-win-over-panthers/>

Scheifele's hat trick propels Winnipeg Jets to 6-3 win over Panthers

By Christian Aumell & Russ Hobson Global News

Coming off back-to-back losses for the first time all season, the Winnipeg Jets improved to 16-3 Tuesday night thanks to a 6-3 victory over the Florida Panthers.

Mark Scheifele recorded a hat trick and the Jets fended off a late comeback attempt to beat the Stanley Cup champions in the rematch after getting schooled by the Panthers just a few days earlier.

"We didn't like the way we played in Florida," said Scheifele. "It's just a sign of a lot of good character in this room is that we wanted to bounce back. We wanted to have a good game in front of our home crowd before we go on the road, for feels like forever. So, it was just a great all-around effort by everyone."

Scheifele is now enjoying a 10-game home point streak which is just one game shy of Kyle Connor's franchise record.

The Jets took a three-goal lead in the second period before the Panthers scored back-to-back goals to pull within one. The Jets re-took the two-goal advantage only for the Panthers to answer back with three minutes left in the final frame and the goalie pulled. But Morgan Barron scored two different empty netters shorthanded to end their short two-game losing skid.

The Jets are now 12-0 on the season when leading after two periods.

"It's huge for us to kinda be able to close out those games," said Barron. "And it's something we're still going to continue to learn to do and hopefully it doesn't get to that point, but a lot of guys stepped up."

The Panthers hit the post/crossbar three times in the final period.

Five Jets players had multi-point nights in the win. It was Barron's first career multi-goal game, while Scheifele netted his ninth career hat trick. And it was a night and day difference from their performance in Florida on the weekend.

"I just thought our battle level went way up tonight throughout," Jets head coach Scott Arniel said. "We knew it was going to have to be that way. They're a heavy team and they play hard and they come at you. I thought we did a fantastic job of turning the tide and going and playing our game and getting out and after them."

The Jets improved to 9-1 on home ice this season in front of their third sellout crowd of the campaign.

Neither team could find the back of the net as the first period rolled before Winnipeg got on the board thanks to their leading scorer.

A loose puck in the Florida end was corralled by Conner in the slot before the sniper outwaited Sergei Bobrovsky and roofed a backhand shot for his 12th of the season at the 14:13 mark.

A few minutes later, Winnipeg's top line put in a dominant shift in the Panthers' end and the crowd roared with delight before the Panthers briefly cleared it but the Jets weren't done. Josh Morrissey got the puck up the ice to Gabriel Vilardi who dropped it to Scheifele, and he wired a wrist shot under the glove of Bobrovsky to make it 2-0.

Winnipeg carried that lead into the second period despite getting outshot 8-5 in the first.

The Jets got a golden opportunity to expand their lead on a rare two-minute 5-on-3 just over four minutes into the second. Uvis Balinskis tripped Scheifele and before the Panthers touched the puck, Evan Rodrigues roughed Dylan DeMelo, but Winnipeg couldn't cash in, unable to get anything dangerous on goal.

The Jets killed off a penalty of their own before earning another power play chance and this time, they made no mistake.

The top unit looked more crisp on this opportunity, culminating in a great play by Nikolaj Ehlers as he patiently held the puck and skated up the zone before zipping a perfect cross-ice pass that Scheifele blasted home to make it 3-0 at the 15:41 mark.

Before the period expired, Florida got on the board thanks to a lucky break. A point shot from A.J. Greer was going wide but it deflected off a stick in the slot before ricocheting off the skate of Adam Lowry and into an open net.

Winnipeg outshot Florida 11-7 in the second and carried a 16-15 edge into the third.

After each team hit a post in the opening six minutes of the third, Florida got their second power play of the night and they made good on it. The Panthers held the puck in the Winnipeg end for almost 90 seconds after Cole Perfetti went off for hooking, earning a few good looks before Matthew Tkachuk fed Sam Reinhart in front of the net and he buried it to make it 3-2.

Just 30 seconds later, Winnipeg got a power play look of their own and while the top unit couldn't score despite having the puck in Florida's end for the full two minutes, they did cash in just six seconds after the penalty expired.

Other than Eetu Luostarinen coming out of the box, everyone on the ice was exhausted but Connor found enough in the tank to take a pass in the corner and drive it towards the net before seaming a pass to Scheifele back-door that he knocked home to make it 4-2, securing the hat trick.

Florida went back on the man advantage with 4:04 to go and Paul Maurice decided to pull Bobrovsky to make it a 6-on-4. The move paid off as a shot from Tkachuk on the half-wall beat Connor Hellebuyck through a maze of bodies with 3:22 remaining.

Winnipeg took another penalty with 2:15 left and again the Panthers pulled the goalie to make it a 6-on-4 but this time the Jets got the puck and Barron banked a shot off the boards from his own end, scoring into the empty net to make it 5-3 with 1:37 to go.

The Panthers kept Bobrovsky on the bench and Barron added another empty netter just 21 seconds after his first.

Hellebuyck picked up the win in goal, turning aside 20 of 23 shots.

The Jets now embark on a lengthy six-game road trip starting Friday in Pittsburgh.

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/11/19/jets-get-revenge-with-6-3-win-over-panthers>

Jets get revenge with 6-3 win over Panthers Scheifele nets hat trick, Barron scores twice to power Winnipeg back to winning ways

By: Ken Wiebe

It's safe to say the Winnipeg Jets found another gear in this one.

Urged by head coach Scott Arniel to get back to playing faster all over the ice, the Jets responded to Saturday's lopsided loss to the Florida Panthers by turning the tables in a 6-3 victory before a sellout crowd of 15,225 at Canada Life Centre on Tuesday night in Winnipeg.

Mark Scheifele recorded the ninth hat trick of his career to pace the offensive attack, moving him to 12 goals for the season for the Jets, who improved to 16-3.

"We made adjustments. We didn't like the way we played," said Scheifele. "They played us hard and did certain things. And when you get the opportunity to play a team back-to-back like that, you've got to make some adjustments, especially losing 5-rip. And we did that, and it paid off."

This was a determined effort in all facets of the game and one that was required after the Jets didn't come close to their standard in Saturday's 5-0 loss to the defending Stanley Cup champions.

Let's just say the video session was not kind to any Jets players on Monday.

"There was lots they got to see. And it wasn't loud and screaming. It was just obvious," said Arniel. "It was just obvious stuff that Florida did that we didn't do. Everybody was involved in the video. Every guy got to be a star and I thought everybody wanted to make amends.

"You could tell the guys really wanted another piece of the Florida Panthers. And I'm glad they're in the Eastern Conference."

Although there were several anxious moments before Morgan Barron iced the game with a pair of late empty-net goals (one of which was banked off the boards in the neutral zone), the Jets looked more like themselves.

“No, terrible, so I don’t know how I made that happen but it worked,” said Barron, who was asked if he’s a good pool player. “Some of the guys were making fun of me for school and Cornell. But that’s not it at all, I promise.

“It just kind of opened up and I didn’t have a lane at it. So my thought was to just kind of get it down to the other end of the ice. I figured if I’m going to shoot it down anyways, I figured I might as well put it in a place that has a chance. I think the puck actually went on its edge, so I thought it was going to roll wide, but it didn’t.”

The Jets head out on a season-long six-game road trip that begins on Friday in Pittsburgh against Sidney Crosby and the Penguins.

Let’s take a closer look at what transpired:

THE ANSWER – After being held off the board in the previous two games to close out the road trip, Scheifele, Kyle Connor and Gabe Vilardi combined for three goals at five-on-five to get back onto the positive side of the ledger in goals for/goals against.

The line also generated 12 scoring chances for the Jets at five-on-five compared to allowing four scoring chances against, according to Natural Stat Trick.

To complete his hat trick, the Jets’ top power play unit had the puck in the offensive zone and generated plenty of momentum during a third period power play, Connor found Scheifele on the doorstep moments after the minor penalty expired.

The shift lasted two minutes and six seconds.

“I think you’re always more tired defending than you are with the puck,” said Scheifele. “When you have the chance to score, you find a little extra energy.”

That moves the top line to 15 goals for, while allowing 11 for a plus-4 ratio at five-on-five.

THE MISSED OPPORTUNITY – The Jets had a glorious opportunity to extend the lead at 4:21 of the second period when they had a two-man advantage for a full two minutes.

Uvis Balinskis was given the original minor for tripping Scheifele and Evan Rodrigues was called for roughing (on Dylan DeMelo) in the corner.

Although the Jets generated four shots on goal during the power play, they got a bit stationary and didn’t move the puck quickly enough and came up empty, despite considerable time set up in the offensive zone.

However, the Jets did strike on the power play for the first time in 10 opportunities late in the second period when Nikolaj Ehlers found Scheifele for a blistering one-timer.

AFTERBURNER

The key play: Barron’s first of two empty-net goals restored a two-goal cushion after the Panthers had cut the deficit to 4-3 on a power-play marker from Matthew Tkachuk.

Three stars

Jets C Mark Scheifele, 3 G, 3 P
Jets D Josh Morrissey, 0 G, 2 P
Jets LW Morgan Barron, 2 G, 2 P

THE ASSIGNMENT – The Jets assigned defenceman Ville Heinola to the Manitoba Moose of the American Hockey League on a conditioning stint that could last up to two weeks. However, Arniel let it be known that Heinola will suit up in two games (on Thursday and Saturday) before he will be recalled and join the Jets in Minnesota, where they will be preparing for Monday's game against the Wild.

“Obviously it's been a tough two years for him. I'm probably his biggest fan here. I want to see him,” said Arniel, joking that he told Moose head coach Mark Morrison to play him around 30 minutes per game. “He's going to get in all situations. We need to get him playing games and then we need to get him in our lineup.”

Heinola suffered a fractured ankle in the final preseason game in October of 2023 and on the second day of training camp in 2024, there were some complications that popped up in his ankle that were related to the original injury.

That required another surgery and now Heinola is going to do his best to get up to speed so he can jump into the Jets' lineup as early as Game 3 of the season-long six-game road trip.

EXTRA, EXTRA – Morrissey chipped in a pair of assists and is back up to producing at a point per game rate. He's up to 19 points in 19 games.

Connor Hellebuyck made 20 saves as he improved to 13-2 for the season.

The Jets scratches were forward David Gustafsson and defenceman Dylan Coghlan. Gustafsson has suited up in only one game this season, while Coghlan is up to 19 consecutive healthy scratches.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2024/11/19/former-jets-coach-maurice-back-for-first-time-as-champion>

***Former Jets coach Maurice back for first time as champion
Would love for Winnipeg to win Stanley Cup***

By: Mike McIntyre

Classy? No question. Clairvoyant? Time will tell.

Florida Panthers head coach Paul Maurice raised plenty of eyebrows last spring when, mere moments after conquering hockey's highest summit, he gave a shout-out to his former employers and said he hopes the Winnipeg Jets are next in line to win the Stanley Cup.

“I hope he has a crystal ball somewhere and that he's right,” Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey told the Free Press on Tuesday as his club prepared to host its former bench boss at Canada Life Centre. “He invested a lot of time and energy and emotion into his time here in Winnipeg so I thought that was pretty cool and hopefully he's right.”

It's safe to say Maurice's comments were well received around these parts given the impact he had over parts of nine seasons.

"Paul was an amazing coach, an amazing person here for a long time," said defenceman Dylan DeMelo, noting Maurice set the table for the type of hockey that his successors Dave Lowry (on an interim basis), Rick Bowness and now Scott Arniel have pushed them to play.

"He was a huge part of changing this organization and making them into a top team in this league."

Yes, Maurice's December 2021 departure was messy with a shock resignation in the middle of the year. At the time, he stated he felt his message had grown stale with a group that appeared to be trending in the wrong direction after reaching the Western Conference Final in 2018.

But the roots — and the relationships — still run deep.

"My daughter lives here. My kids went to high school here. So much of this is just home and Winnipeg is a special team," Maurice said as he returned to the city for the first time as a champion.

"It's not like anyplace else. It's in a different market. It's not the biggest market. They've lost their team, it's come back. There's a connection there."

As for what prompted the unsolicited remarks to Sportsnet during the on-ice celebration, Maurice chalked it up to raw emotion.

"It's like most things in my life. It's out of my mouth before my brain decides whether I should say it or not," he said with a laugh.

"There's this incredible sense of peace. I love those guys in that (Florida) room. And it's so hard to win. But I feel the same way about everybody here (Winnipeg). I still love this place. I would love for all of the people that I love here in Winnipeg to feel what I was feeling on the ice. Euphoria, certainly relief on my part, but it's a feeling of all of the people that you love are happy at the same time and I would love for Winnipeg to feel that because it would make the Jets even more special. "

The Jets seem to have taken Maurice's words to heart, getting off to the NHL's best start in history by winning 15 of their first 16 games. Of course, no trophies are being handed out in November.

"It's great. It's flattering. Somehow we gotta get through 82 games before we worry about that," Arniel said Tuesday.

"I've got a ton of respect for Paul. How he goes about his business over these years is pretty amazing. At the end of the day, to hear that, that was obviously a nice moment."

Maurice has repeatedly told his Panthers to enjoy the journey, even if it wasn't a straight one to the top. He took over a team that won the Presidents Trophy in 2021-22 (under Andrew Brunette) but was upset in the opening round of the playoffs straight to the Stanley Cup Final in 2022-23, only to lose to the Vegas Golden Knights.

They followed that up a year later by beating the Edmonton Oilers in a classic, seven-game series filled with emotional swings.

“We had to find a way to work harder than the other team, but also have more fun,” Maurice said of finally getting his team over the top.

“And I’m talking about having fun while you’re working that hard. On the bench, when it’s s——y. When it’s the tie game with eight minutes left, you’ve got to find a way to enjoy that. We talked about that all the time and we talk about it when we get to those situations in games now, that we have to figure out a way — even when the coach is growly — to enjoy it.”

You get the sense a similar mindset might serve his old club well, especially after some recent stumbles served up a stark reminder that it’s never easy.

“They’ve come of age. Their best players, I think they might even be a little bit older than we are. I mean these guys are now in their prime, they’ve played together, they’ve got a really, really strong structure, not just to the game but to their lineup,” Maurice said of the differences he now sees in the Jets from his tenure.

“They’ve got a dominant checking line, which means they’re going to be very strong at home. And tremendous speed, like right straight through those 12 and the back end can move the puck to them. And Connor Hellebuyck’s in behind them. So we don’t feel, and we didn’t, that there are any holes to their game. They don’t have any.”

One thing is clear: Maurice will continue to root for them. Unless, of course, next year’s Final happens to be Panthers versus Jets, which isn’t out of the realm of possibility at this stage of the game.

“We’d like to hang onto it if we can for a while. Maybe after we’re done,” he said.

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/jets-bank-another-win-proving-maurice-right>

Jets bank another win, prove Paul Maurice right

By Paul Friesen

Going into his return to Winnipeg as a Stanley Cup champion, Paul Maurice was overflowing with compliments for his former team.

“They’ve come of age,” the Florida Panthers boss said. “Their best players... these guys are now in their prime. We don’t feel there are any holes to their game.”

Despite coming off a 5-0 romp over the Jets, Maurice lauded their speed, their checking line, their structure, their defence and of course goalie Connor Hellebuyck.

He didn’t mention the bank shot of fourth-liner Morgan Barron.

His team clinging to a 4-3 edge with less than two minutes to go and Florida on a power play with their net empty for an extra attacker, Barron took the puck in his own zone, took aim at the side boards, right around the Winnipeg blue line, and banked a long shot the length of the ice into the open cage.

Someone take the man to the nearest pool hall.

“He went to Cornell, so he knows his angles,” Mark Scheifele said, post-game. “To put that one in and seal the game, that was amazing.”

It was Barron’s first goal of the season and he enjoyed the feeling so much he added another shorthanded empty-netter 21 seconds later to cap a 6-3 Jets win, nipping their two-game slide before it became a skid.

“I figured if I’m going to shoot it down anyways, I figured I might as well put it in a place that has a chance,” Barron said, claiming to be lousy at billiards. “It was good to see one go in. I don’t know (how) I made that happen, but it worked.”

Nobody asks which goalie you beat, they just ask how many.

Barron’s back-to-back goals tied an NHL record for the third-fastest pair of shorties in NHL history.

Scheifele scored three himself, one on the power play, leaving the Jets with more wins than anybody in the NHL: 16 against three losses. You don’t have to be a math major to know that’s pretty good.

“He led,” Jets coach Scott Arniel said. “When your best players can be your best players in games like that, it certainly helps you have success.”

Maurice’s Panthers fell to 12-6-1.

Up next, a season-long, six-game, 11-day trip beginning in Pittsburgh on Friday.

“We didn’t like the way we played in Florida,” Scheifele said. “So it’s just a sign of a lot of good character in this room, that we wanted to bounce back and have a good game in front of our home crowd before we go on the road for what feels like forever.”

His coach seconded those thoughts.

“The best part was that we got to play them again right away,” Arniel said. “That was the biggest thing. We knew how much better we had to be. We didn’t want to go out on the road for 11 days and have to be going through a three-game losing streak, so there was a lot of things piled into this game. But the biggest thing was just our players weren’t real happy with what happened.”

Arniel says he could tell his team was going to be on after a team video session on Monday, in which they dissected Saturday’s mess in Florida.

“Everybody was involved in the video. Every guy got to be a star,” he joked. “You could tell the guys really wanted another piece of the Florida Panthers.”

Two pieces per season is enough, though.

"I'm glad they're in the Eastern Conference," Arniel said.

After surviving a couple of early Florida chances, the most dangerous from star pest Matthew Tkachuk, the Jets began to take over the first period.

A Scheifele/Kyle Connor rush got broken up in the Panthers' zone, but Connor managed to corral the loose puck, dance in on Sergei Bobrovsky and top-shelf a backhand for his 12th of the season.

A few minutes later it was Scheifele's turn, a drop-pass from Connor producing a wrister under Bobrovsky's catching mitt, Scheifele's 10th.

Five Jets shots, two goals, and a penalty-free 20 minutes were in the books.

Things were a little more rough-and-tumble in the next 20, the stripes handing out a dozen minutes in penalties.

The Jets had a glorious chance to lengthen their lead with a full five-on-three early in the second, but the NHL's league-leading power play spent more time passing the rubber around than firing it at Bobrovsky.

By the time they got their next man advantage, they'd figured that out.

And when Nik Ehlers fired a long, cross-ice pass to Scheifele, No. 55 had his second of the night.

Any thoughts of a rout to avenge the loss in Florida three days earlier were put on hold when Panthers D-man A.J. Greer's shot ricocheted off Adam Lowry's foot and past Hellebuyck late in the second.

The Jets took that 3-1 lead into the third, only to see the Panthers bite into it with a power-play goal of their own, Sam Reinhart finishing off a tic-tac-toe beauty.

No problem, just get it to Scheifele again.

Connor did, right after another power play expired, and it was raining inside just like it was outside – only hats.

It was Scheifele's first hat-trick of the season, the ninth of his career.

When Hellebuyck robbed Carter Verhaeghe on a two-on-one with Tkachuk, the home side had it all but sealed.

Tkachuk, though, made it interesting with Josh Morrissey in the box and Bobrovsky out of the net to create another two-man edge.

"They weren't going away," Arniel said. "Maybe some other opponents might back off and call it a night. They didn't. You can tell they're the champs for a reason. They kept coming. Kept coming."

“It’s tough to lose that one when you fight back to get close,” Tkachuk said. “And then you have a power play, and feel like we have all the momentum.”

Tkachuk’s fifth of the year made it a one-goal game.

The rest is bank-shot history.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/football/cfl/winnipeg-bluebombers/pride-after-pain-former-jets-coach-maurice-feels-for-bombers-oshea>

Pride after pain: former Jets coach Maurice feels for Bombers' O'Shea

By Paul Friesen

Paul Maurice knows what it’s like to lose a championship final. He also bounced back the next year to win it.

So the Florida Panthers head coach, in town to face the Jets on Tuesday, couldn’t imagine what his old friend, Blue Bombers coach Mike O’Shea, is going through after losing a third straight Grey Cup game.

Asked what he’d say if he ran into O’Shea, Maurice was briefly at a loss for words.

“I get it,” he said. “The agony of the two previous...”

A deep exhale followed.

You wouldn’t call them best buddies, but Maurice and O’Shea got to know each other a little bit over their eight years as two of the most recognizable men in Winnipeg.

Their sons were in the same class at St. Paul’s High School, both athletes there, so the two had a few sit-downs over coffee.

“When we had coffee early on... things weren’t great with the Blue Bombers,” Maurice recalled. “I don’t know enough about football, but it seems to me like he built that. So god, I can’t...”

Another exhale, as Maurice tried to comprehend having three straight championship-game heartbreaks.

“I’ve been on both sides of it now, not as often on the good side as he has,” he said. “But I hope that once the pain goes away, there’s a tremendous amount of pride in the program that he’s built in this community for how special it is, how hard it is to do what he’s done.”

Hired six weeks apart in late 2013, early ’14, O’Shea and Maurice became the two longest-tenured coaches in their respective leagues, save for Jon Cooper of the Tampa Bay Lightning.

O’Shea was the first to lead his team to the mountaintop, in 2019. On his way to a second straight Grey Cup in ’21 – the 2020 CFL season was lost to the pandemic – he kind of predicted Maurice’s Jets would do it, too.

“When they win the Stanley Cup this year, I’ll be at Portage and Main,” O’Shea said then.

Three months later, Maurice shocked him and the entire hockey world by resigning, saying he’d taken the team as far as he could.

A year later, Maurice guided the Panthers to the Stanley Cup Final, but lost to Vegas.

Last spring, he lifted the Cup for the first time in his long career.

He immediately made waves back in Manitoba with a televised shout-out to his old hockey home.

“I still love this place,” Maurice said, Tuesday. “My daughter lives here. My kids went to high school here. So much of this is just home and Winnipeg is a special team. It’s not like anyplace else. It’s not the biggest market. They’ve lost their team, it’s come back. There’s a connection there.

“I would love for all of the people that I love here in Winnipeg to feel what I was feeling on the ice. That was the whole thing.”

Maurice’s post-Stanley Cup shout-out included this: “If I could have one thing more, it would be for the Winnipeg Jets to win the next Stanley Cup.”

The 57-year-old had a clarification before Tuesday’s game.

“I think I used the word ‘next’ but I didn’t mean next year,” he said. “We’d like to hang onto it if we can for a while. Maybe after we’re done.”