

## **Winnipeg Free Press**

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/11/26/chevys-hollywood-heist-pays-off-big-time>

### ***Chevy's Hollywood heist pays off big time Three ex-Kings playing major role in Jets' success***

By: Mike McIntyre

LOS ANGELES — There's been no shortage of great heist movies produced in Hollywood over the years, including the likes of *The Italian Job*, *Ocean's Eleven*, *Gone In 60 Seconds*, *Reservoir Dogs* and *The Usual Suspects*.

Perhaps we could interest an aspiring filmmaker to tackle a real-life "ripped from the headlines" project which focuses on a hockey team from the Great White North that commits grand larceny right in the heart of La La Land.

Winnipeg Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff would be the protagonist, having made off like a bandit 17 months ago with forwards Gabriel Vilardi, Alex Iafallo and Rasmus Kupari and a draft pick that turned into an intriguing young defence prospect in Alfons Freij.

Going the other way was the disgruntled and seemingly disinterested Pierre-Luc Dubois, who is both gone and forgotten here in Los Angeles after one ugly season. Safe to say that script was quickly torn up.

The only thing Kings GM Rob Blake has left to show for that June 2023 blockbuster is 34-year-old goaltender Darcy Kuemper, who was obtained from the Washington Capitals last summer in exchange for dumping Dubois, who will earn US\$8.5-million annually over the next seven years. He has two goals through 21 games this year. One was into an empty-net.

Kuemper, meanwhile, is currently on injured reserve for the second time this season.

In that sense, Blake could be cast as the unwitting victim of this particular story. He'd likely be out for revenge, considering Vilardi, Iafallo and Kupari represent 25 per cent of arguably the deepest forward group in the NHL and have all played big roles in elevating the Jets to the top of the league standings with a 18-4-0 record.

Cheveldayoff's club will look to keep the momentum going as they return to the scene of the hockey crime on Wednesday to face an inconsistent Kings team that is coming off an embarrassing 7-2 loss to the lowly San Jose Sharks on Monday night.

The Jets, meanwhile, improved to 2-1-0 on their season-long six-game road trip with a 4-1 victory over the Minnesota Wild. Like so many games this year, *All The King's Men* played a big role.

Iafallo scored two goals to hit 100 for his career, Kupari set up his first tally with a terrific forecheck, was a key part of the penalty kill and led the team in faceoff percentage (67 per cent). Vilardi was his usual effective self on the top line, led the Jets with four shots on goal and was 57 per cent on faceoffs.

Vilardi, Iafallo and Kupari are also making a combined US\$8.437 million this year, or exactly US\$63,000 less than Dubois alone. Not only have the Jets gotten much deeper and significantly better with this trade, they actually shed a bit of salary overall in turning one underperforming player into three key producers.

That is some serious wheeling and dealing by Cheveldayoff, who should be the prime contender for the Jim Gregory Award for GM of the Year when the hardware is handed out next spring.

In addition to drafting and developing foundational pieces such as Connor Hellebuyck, Mark Scheifele, Josh Morrissey, Kyle Connor, Nikolaj Ehlers, Adam Lowry, Mason Appleton, Cole Perfetti and Dylan Samberg, Cheveldayoff's work in the trade department should not be overlooked.

Nino Niederreiter. Vlad Namestnikov. Dylan DeMelo. Neal Pionk. Morgan Barron, and — of course — Vilardi, Iafallo and Kupari, which is really looking like a seismic, franchise-defining fleece job. Just imagine if the 18-year-old Freij, who is currently playing in the top Swedish men's league, ultimately pans out.

The Dubois deal completely changed the makeup and the dynamics of the Jets, who can now roll four balanced lines and come at opponents in waves with no shortage of size and speed, skill and savvy.

There are already 10 forwards who have at least four goals this year, which is quite something through 22 games. The other two regulars — Kupari and Barron — each have two. It's possible all 12 hit double-digits by the end of the season.

Vilardi is a huge part of the NHL's top power play and with 16 points (8G, 8A) skating with Scheifele and Connor, he's on pace to obliterate his career highs of 23 goals and 18 assists set in 2022-23 with Los Angeles. (He easily would have exceeded that last year, but injuries cost him 35 games).

As long as he remains healthy, the 25-year-old is a legitimate power forward in this league.

Iafallo, 30, is part of what might be the NHL's best fourth line. He is a calming presence and a quiet leader who can move up and down the lineup, help the power play and the penalty kill and does a lot of little things really well, including chip in with some offence (4G, 4A so far).

Kupari, 24, might be one of the real surprises of the Jets season so far. Limited to just 28 games last year (with only one assist), he's made it impossible for new head coach Scott Arniel to take him out of the lineup. The three points are nice (2G, 1A), but it's his blazing speed, his strong forechecking and his PK and faceoff abilities that stand out.

Kupari is starting to show why he was more than just a throw-in to this trade, why the Jets specifically asked for him and why he was a 20th-overall pick in 2018.

Vilardi and Kupari will be restricted free agents next summer in need of new contracts, while Iafallo is an unrestricted free agent who may ultimately be a cap casualty as the Jets try to work some young forward prospects into the mix.

Those are worries for another day. All three of them are here, right now, thanks to what looks like the biggest robbery in Jets history — one it would appear those poor, unsuspecting Kings never saw coming.

### **Sportsnet.ca**

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/video/how-the-jets-are-building-a-team-made-for-deep-playoff-success/>

#### ***How the Jets are building a team made for deep playoff success (VIDEO)***

David Amber joins the FAN Hockey Show to discuss the success the Winnipeg Jets have had early in the season and how they're shaping up to be a team that will be very difficult to play in the playoffs.

### **Global Winnipeg**

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10890573/winnipeg-jets-hellebuyck-stanley-cup/>

#### ***ANALYSIS: A decade into his career, Jets' Hellebuyck has eyes on the prize***

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

By his own admission, the only trophy that Connor Hellebuyck truly cares about winning now — 10 years into his NHL career with the Winnipeg Jets — is the Stanley Cup.

With respect to the two Vezina trophies he's earned as the league's top goaltender, including last year's where he took 31 of the 32 first-place votes, it's all about capturing the league's top prize from here on out.

But based on his performance thus far this season, it might be difficult for the 31-year-old to avoid any additional individual accolades while at the same time potentially leading his team to the Holy Grail.

After making a season-high 43 saves Monday in a win over rival Minnesota, Hellebuyck now leads the league in wins, goals-against average, save percentage and shutouts. In three of those four categories, he's the runaway leader.

And while those numbers — should they remain consistent — would undoubtedly earn him a third Vezina, only this time unanimously, they are also exemplary enough to make him an early favourite for both the Hart Trophy and Lindsay Award.

You see, for as good as the Jets have been this season, none of it would be possible without Hellebuyck's direct contribution. His efforts, more than anyone else's, on the Jets this season have paced Winnipeg to the NHL's penthouse.

Furthermore, with the USA's roster for their 4 Nations Face-Off team set to be announced a week from Wednesday, expect Hellebuyck to not only be named to it, but also to find the inside track to the starting job in goal.

And sure, an international title would be a nice aside to what's shaping up to be an incredible season for the Michigan product, there is really only one award, championship or trophy he cares to win, now 10 years into his NHL career – and that's a cup named Stanley.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10890644/manitoba-moose-captain-toninato/>

### ***Manitoba Moose name Dominic Toninato as new captain***

By Sam Thompson Global News

The Manitoba Moose have named their 12th captain in franchise history.

Dominic Toninato will wear the 'C' going forward, with Ashton Sautner and Mason Shaw serving as alternates.

Toninato, 30, was drafted by the Toronto Maple Leafs in 2012 and spent time in the NHL with the Colorado Avalanche and Florida Panthers before signing with the Winnipeg Jets organization as a free agent in 2020.

The Minnesota native — the third American-born player to lead the Moose — split his time between the NHL and AHL last season, recording 20 points with the Moose and five with the Jets. To date, he's played 107 career games with Manitoba and 99 with the parent club.

Flin Flon, Man.'s Sautner first suited up for the Moose for two games in 2020 — while a member of the Vancouver Canucks organization — in an unusual situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 30-year-old was signed by the Jets in 2022 and has been a stalwart on the Moose blue line ever since.

His fellow alternate captain, Shaw, is in his first season with Manitoba. The 26-year-old was acquired as a free agent this summer following a lengthy career with the Minnesota Wild and their AHL affiliate in Iowa.

The Moose (6-9-0) next see action Friday against the Calgary Wranglers.

### **TSN.ca**

<https://illegalcurve.com/tsn-what-is-working-so-well-for-winnipeg-jets-josh-morrissey-who-should-he-play-with-on-team-canada/>

### ***What is working so well for Winnipeg Jets Josh Morrissey; who should he play with on Team Canada? (VIDEO)***

Cheryl Pounder shares her insight on what is working so well for 44.