

## **Winnipegjets.com**

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-jets-blank-utah-hockey-club>

### ***Three things - Jets blank Utah Hockey Club Nino Niederreiter scored twice, Connor Hellebuyck had 21 saves in 3-0 win***

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – The Winnipeg Jets looked to continue their winning ways as they faced the Utah Hockey Club for the first time. After a scoreless first period, the Jets got goals from Gabe Vilardi and Nino Niederreiter (2) on route to a 3-0 win over Utah to push their record to 12-1 and 4-0 against the Central Division. Adam Lowry had a multi-point night with a couple of assists. Connor Hellebuyck made 21 saves for his league leading eighth win of the season and recorded his 39th career shutout and second of the season. Winnipeg will host Colorado on Thursday.

#### ***DIFFERENT TYPE OF WIN***

The Jets have won four in a row after suffering their first loss of the season on October 28 to the Leafs, Winnipeg have outscored the opposition 22-8. The seemingly scored at will in wins over Detroit, Columbus and Tampa Bay but also thrived in a tight checking affair with a Central Division rival. Utah had four power plays but managed only five shots, their top line of Dylan Guenther, Logan Cooley and Clayton Keller produced two high danger scoring opportunities at five-on-five. In short, it was a complete team defensive effort from start to finish.

“I really feel confident about our group. And for us, it's what gives us success, is sticking to our structure, five on five,” said Josh Morrissey.

“Being a tough team to defend against, with our depth and now with the special teams going well right now, and our goaltending going great, it gives us different ways we can win different nights. So, a lot of hockey left, but so far so good.”

#### ***POWER PLAY AGAIN...***

In a tight checking affair with neither team giving up a lot in terms of quality scoring chances, the Jets opened the scoring with 2:03 left in the second period. With Dylan Guenther in the box for hooking, Gabe Vilardi redirected a Josh Morrissey shot for his fourth goal in the last five games. Winnipeg has a power play goal in each of its last six games and continue to lead the league in that department with 16-for-36 (44.4%).

#### ***NINO 900***

The Jets forward became the second Swiss born player to reach the 900-games played milestone, Predators defenceman Roman Josi (921) is the only other player from Switzerland to do so. It was fitting that with the Jets holding onto their one goal lead, it was Niederreiter gave the Jets some breathing room. Mason Appleton spotted the 32-year-old coming down the left side and hit him with a perfect pass, Niederreiter cut around Karel Vejmelka and scored his sixth of the season. Niederreiter would add an empty net goal to make it 3-0 and his 30th career multi-goal game of his career. Niederreiter leads Swiss players in goals (230) and sits second in points (455).

“It's definitely a great feeling,” said Niederreiter.

“It's a cool night to score a goal like that.”

## **NHL.com**

<https://www.nhl.com/news/utah-hockey-club-winnipeg-jets-game-recap-november-5>

### ***Hellebuyck makes 21 saves, Jets shut out Utah Hockey Club for 4th straight win Niederreiter scores twice in 900th NHL game, Connor's 12-game point streak ends for Winnipeg***

By Darrin Bauming

WINNIPEG -- Connor Hellebuyck made 21 saves, and Nino Niederreiter scored two goals in his 900th NHL game for the Winnipeg Jets in a 3-0 win against the Utah Hockey Club at Canada Life Centre on Tuesday.

"The game wasn't very pretty," Niederreiter said. "There wasn't a whole lot of flow out there. I think that is something that we knew and just had to stick with and do the little things right. Eventually we would create our own luck, and that's what happened there."

Gabriel Vilardi also scored for the Jets (12-1-0), who have won four straight since their loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs on Oct. 28. Adam Lowry had two assists. Kyle Connor's season-opening point streak ended at a franchise-record 12 games (19 points; nine goals, 10 assists).

"It was a grind," Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel said. "We had talked this morning about Utah, they were making it difficult on us in letting us get into the interior and letting us get second chances. But I like the way we kind of hung with it. ... Our PK was really good against a dangerous looking group that they have."

Karel Vejmelka made 25 saves for the Utah (5-5-3), which has lost six of seven (1-4-2).

"I feel bad for [Vejmelka], he was really good," Utah coach Andre Tourigny said. "We don't support him offensively. I feel really bad for him because he played really solid."

Vilardi gave the Jets a 1-0 lead at 17:57 of the second period with a power-play goal, redirecting Josh Morrissey's shot from the left point past Vejmelka.

"They capitalize on one of their power plays, and we didn't," Utah forward Lawson Crouse said. "We had a couple looks late in the game that would have been nice to go in. They're a big, strong team. A veteran team. They play sound hockey all over the ice."

Niederreiter pushed it to 2-0 at 7:30 of the third period, taking Mason Appleton's centering pass and deking Vejmelka to finish a 3-on-2 rush.

"Tonight we did a really good job of defending and coming back hard," Morrissey said. "They're a really skilled top six and they've got a lot of guys up there that can make the seam passes and lots of good plays off the rush. So I thought we did a good job defending our blue line, first off, and then not giving up too much in the middle of the ice."

Niederreiter scored an empty-net goal at 17:01 for the 3-0 final.

"The best part about it right now is that we keep finding ways to win hockey games, and in all situations" Niederreiter said. "The power play steps up when it needs to. The PK has been

great. We are finding the back of the net right now, which is great. It is something that we work very hard for it. We know we can't take anything for granted.

*NOTES:* Connor's season-opening point streak ended one game shy of the longest by a U.S.-born player in NHL history, a mark set by Kevin Stevens (14 goals, 19 assists in 13 games) with the Pittsburgh Penguins in 1992-93. ... Hellebuyck's second shutout of the season is the 39th of his career, passing Tom Barrasso for the sixth-most by a U.S.-born goaltender in NHL history. The only others with more are Jonathan Quick (60), Ryan Miller (44), Craig Anderson (43), Frank Brimsek (40), and John Vanbiesbrouck (40).

## **Canadian Press**

<https://www.chrisd.ca/2024/11/06/winnipeg-jets-utah-hockey-club-game-story/>

### ***Niederreiter Scores Twice in 900th Career Game as Jets Beat Utah 3-0***

By Judy Owen, The Canadian Press

Nino Niederreiter showed his veteran savvy in his 900th NHL career game on Tuesday.

The Winnipeg Jets forward scored twice and Connor Hellebuyck made 21 saves in a 3-0 victory over the Utah Hockey Club that kept the team's early-season success rolling with a fourth consecutive win (12-1-0).

On his first goal, the 32-year Niederreiter lifted a Utah opponent's stick in Winnipeg's end, allowing the Jets to get the puck and head toward the visitor's net.

Niederreiter then joined the rush, deked and put the puck around netminder Karel Vejmelka for a 2-0 lead at 7:30 of the third period with his sixth goal of the season.

"Obviously, the game wasn't very pretty," Niederreiter said. "There wasn't a whole lot of flow out there. I think that is something that we knew and just had to stick with and do the little things right.

"Eventually, we would create our own luck and that's what happened there."

And what about his deke in front of 12,932 fans at Canada Life Centre?

"I still got it somewhere in there," Niederreiter said with a smile. "It's a great feeling, like I said. It's a cool night to score a goal like that."

His second goal — the 230th of his career — was into an empty net with 2:59 remaining. He also has 225 assists for 455 career points.

Gabriel Vilardi scored the first goal at 17:57 of the second period on the power play and Adam Lowry picked up two assists.

Hellebuyck recorded his second shutout of the season and 39th of this career.

Niederreiter signed a three-year contract extension with the Jets last December. The \$12-million deal kicked in this season.

He's now scored against 33 NHL teams, including the Jets.

"It's a cool stat, but I think it also says that I've been traded a few times," he said. "But I guess it gives me the chance to do that."

Niederreiter was drafted in 2010 by the New York Islanders (fifth overall), becoming Switzerland's highest NHL pick.

He's also played for the Minnesota Wild, Carolina Hurricanes and Nashville Predators before being traded to the Jets in February 2023.

Jets head coach Scott Arniel was impressed by Niederreiter's quick-thinking stick lift.

"We'll throw that on the old system video," he said. "But that's just going the distance, coming all the way back and he creates that."

"We're never out of it. You never know how a puck's going to bounce. He just kept coming and obviously we turned that offence the other way."

Arniel said the team recognized Niederreiter's milestone.

"That's special. That's a lot of games," Arniel said. "We had a little tribute to him, saw all his pictures from all the jerseys he's worn and the places he's played."

"He hasn't changed a bit. He's a big power forward and that line I thought was really good. They take that (Clayton) Keller line on, those skill guys. They did a really good job."

Niederreiter is on a line with Lowry and Mason Appleton.

"Those guys on the PK were really strong," Arniel added. "When that line plays like that they're a force, they're hard to handle. They wear teams down because they spend so much time in the offensive zone."

Utah (5-5-3) ended a run of picking up points in three consecutive games (1-0-2).

Vejmelka stopped 25 shots for Utah in its second game of a four-game road trip.

"They know what to expect of each other. They play a really, really structured game, and they were patient tonight," Utah head coach Andre Tourigny said of the Jets.

"I think that was a good chess game. They got one on the power play and from there they waited for the opportunity to have a killer goal. They did a good job."

*NOTES:* Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey picked up his 14th assist of the season when his point shot with five seconds left in a power play was tipped in by Vilardi. ... Kyle Connor had his franchise-record, season-opening points streak end at 12 games. He almost picked up an assist until Vilardi tipped in Morrissey's shot.

## **TSN.ca**

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/how-will-jets-early-season-success-translate-to-postseason%7E3024398>

### ***How will Jets' early season success translate to postseason?***

With 12 wins in 13 games, everything seems to be clicking for the Jets right now, including the power play. TSN Director of Scouting Craig Button shares why Winnipeg's PP has been so dominant, and how the early season success could translate to the postseason.

## **Global Winnipeg**

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10853513/niederreiter-scores-twice-in-milestone-game-as-winnipeg-jets-win-again/>

### ***Niederreiter scores twice in milestone game as Winnipeg Jets win again***

By Christian Aumell & Russ Hobson Global News

The NHL's top team over the first month of the 2024-25 season added another two points to their ledger Tuesday night, downing the Utah Hockey Club 3-0 in their first-ever trip to Manitoba.

Nino Niederreiter scored twice in his 900th career NHL game, and Connor Hellebuyck made 21 stops for his second shutout of the season as the Jets won their fourth in a row in a game that didn't have a lot of quality scoring chances.

"Obviously the game wasn't very pretty," said Niederreiter. "There wasn't a lot of flow out there and I think that's something which we knew, and we just knew we had to stick with it. Do the little things right and eventually you create your own luck, and that's what happened there."

The Jets now have an NHL best goal differential of +32 in the first 13 games. The New York Rangers are the next best team at +20.

Kyle Connor was kept off the scoresheet for the first time of the new campaign as his season-opening point streak came to an end at 12 games.

Gabriel Vilardi notched the other Jets marker for his fourth goal in his last five games. He's now riding a five-game point streak.

The Jets are just the sixth team in NHL history to win 12 of their first 13 games of the season.

"We're finding different ways of winning," said head coach Scott Arniel. "And whether that's playing a heavy, hard, dump and chase game, if that's a skill game. If that's getting to the inside. If it's our specialty teams.

"We're finding ways to get in games, and stay in games, and get the outcome that we need."

The Jets, with the league's most potent power play, were 1-for-2 on the man advantage, and have scored a power play goal in six straight games now. They also killed off all four of their penalties successfully.

“PK (penalty kill) did great,” said Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey. “Power play did great, great goaltending, 5-on-5 play was awesome, so sorta the four categories I felt like were all there, and it’s just a solid win.

“Did I think we’d be sitting here at 12-1? Who knows, but at the same time, I really feel confident about our group.”

Story continues below advertisement

Winnipeg controlled the action for the bulk of the first period, outshooting Utah 12-6 despite Utah having the lone power play of the period but neither team could find the back of the net in the opening 20 minutes.

The stalemate continued through much of the second as each team failed to generate high-quality chances despite multiple power play opportunities.

Winnipeg killed off both Utah power plays in the second and failed on their own early in the period but in the closing minutes, they finally cashed in.

With the top unit still on the ice despite Dylan Guenther’s penalty nearly expiring, they were struggling to connect on passes but kept the puck in the Utah end before breaking through. Mark Scheifele fed Morrissey for a one-timer that was tipped by Vilardi past Karel Vejmelka to open the scoring with 2:03 left in the second.

Winnipeg carried the 1-0 lead into the second intermission as well as a 22-13 edge in shots on goal.

After a fairly dull start to the third period, Niederreiter made it 2-0 at the 7:30 mark. With Adam Lowry drawing a defender to him as he cut through the slot, Mason Appleton fed the trailing Niederreiter who made a nice move on Vejmelka before tucking it in for his sixth goal of the season.

Not long after the Niederreiter goal, Logan Stanley was called for hooking, sending Utah to their fourth power play of the night, but once again the Jets killed it off.

Utah pulled Vejmelka for an extra attacker with just over three minutes left but it didn’t take long for Winnipeg to get possession of the puck and for Niederreiter to pot his second of the night to seal the win.

Connor nearly extended his season-opening point streak in the final minute, but he hit the inside of the post from close range.

It was the 39th career shutout for Hellebuyck.

The Jets will look to keep rolling Thursday night when they host Colorado in a rematch of their first round playoff series from the spring.

## ***Offence from D corps true catalyst for Jets' quick start***

By Jacob Stoller

WINNIPEG — The blue-line was the biggest question mark before the season.

Coming off a first-round exit where their defencemen were dismantled by the Colorado Avalanche's elite offensive talent, a summer where Brenden Dillon departed in free agency and a pre-season where up-and-comer Ville Heinola got sidelined — the Winnipeg Jets' back end appeared flimsy.

But 13 games into the 2024-25 season, Winnipeg's question mark has become an exclamation mark. Although many will point to the Jets' high-flying offence and stellar goaltending, one could argue their blue-line is the x-factor behind their NHL-best 12-1-0 start.

The Jets' back end has combined for a league-high 45 points. Having Josh Morrissey (16 points) and Neal Pionk (13) in the top five among defencemen scoring is a big reason — their blue-line's collective five-on-five output goes far beyond just those two. Over the last few years, Winnipeg has prioritized having an offensively inclined back end.

"As a group, we want to get shots through when we get it at the point and be a factor in the rush," Morrissey said after Tuesday's 3-0 win over the Utah Hockey Club. "The last (three) years it's been a big change of our style of play since (Rick Bowness) and (Scott Arniel) came in."

Morrissey's offensive outburst over the last few years is a shining example of what Bowness, and now Arniel, have harped on. It's why the team brought in Colin Miller — who had the hardest recorded shot in the NHL last season — to bring a different flavor to a bottom pairing that has predominantly featured meat-and-potato defenders. And why a stay-at-home defenceman such as Dylan Samberg recorded five shots on net against Utah.

"We've always (told the defencemen) that you're going to be out there in situations, and (when) you're in the offensive zone, you're not just a pylon, you're not just a spectator, you're a part of the offence," Arniel said. "On our breakouts, if you're just going to try to rush up the ice with three forwards, the opposition's going to deny you ice and they're not going to allow you to enter. So, we have to have that second wave. Our D have to be a part of that rush."

Take Tuesday's game, as an example. Eleven of the team's 26 shots during five-on-five play came from defencemen. The game-winning goal was a result of a point shot from Morrissey on the power play, which nicked off Gabriel Vilardi and in.

Sure, point shots in of themselves aren't Grade-A opportunities. But they can lead to them.

"When you have a lane to get the puck net-front that creates the chaos, that creates the explosion of where that puck might go to, that creates second and third opportunities," added Arniel.

*No. 900 For Nino*

Nino Niederreiter had a two-goal outing in his 900th career NHL game.

His first goal — which gave the Jets a 2-0 lead — was peak Nino. He made a swift stick-lift in the defensive zone to create a turnover before darting down the ice, receiving the puck as the trailer and freezing Karel Vejmelka with a stutter-step deke.

The 32-year-old is off to a hot start, registering seven goals and 12 points in his first 13 games. It's a stark contrast from last season's start, where the Swiss forward scored just five goals in his first 24 games. Niederreiter has a reputation as a streaky scorer but, overall, he's been dependable whenever lined up alongside Adam Lowry and Mason Appleton. Niederreiter has scored 18 five-on-five goals in 93 games alongside Lowry and Appleton — trailing only Nikolaj Ehlers (26) and Kyle Connor (25) through that span.

#### *Top line in top gear*

Give credit where credit's due. Arniel's decision to keep Connor, Mark Scheifele and Vilardi intact has paid off.

The Jets' top line has turned things around after an abysmal eight-game stretch that saw them get outscored 2-9 and post a 42.5 expected goals percentage during five-on-five play. Over the last four games, they've flipped those outputs — outscoring opponents 6-1 to go along with a 66.1 expected goals for percentage.

The eye test backs up those metrics, as that trio has found a way to spend more time in the offensive zone and plays aren't dying out between the blue lines. But Arniel says the neutral zone wasn't their biggest hurdle.

"I don't really look at the neutral zone as much," Arniel said. "I look at how much time you spend at your end of the rink. I think that's an area that they've really worked at and taken pride in. Those guys buy-in just like all the other lines. I think everybody realizes now that when we defend — and I say 200-foot defending, not just our end, might be through the neutral zone, tracking back those type of things — It gets you the puck back. And it gives you the chance to go play offence. That's what everybody wants to do."

#### *Other thoughts*

- Dylan Samberg was fantastic against Utah. The 25-year-old registered five shots, two hits and logged a team-high 24:19 minutes of ice time, including 5:34 on the penalty kill.

"We've asked him to take on a big load this year. He's been pretty consistent. He's had to go out and play against some top skill," Arniel said. "I thought him and (Pionk) have done a good job; our top four have done a great job against the opposition's top six."

- Speaking of that pairing, Samberg and Pionk have posted a 55.62 scoring chance for percentage through 13 games.

- The Jets' attendance woes likely won't be going away anytime soon. Despite being the best team in the NHL, only 12,932 fans attended Tuesday's game. Three of the Jets' first seven home games drew fewer than 13,000 fans. Winnipeg is averaging 13,800 fans per game, which leaves 1,200 empty seats a night. True North Sports and Entertainment announced a few weeks ago that its season-ticket base had grown by 500 — up to 10,000 — which explains the slight increase in attendance from last season (13,447).



## **Winnipeg Free Press**

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/11/05/nino-notches-pair-on-big-night>

### ***Nino notches pair on big night Hellebuyck blanks Utah, Niederreiter puts game out of reach in 900th NHL contest***

By: Ken Wiebe

Nino Niederreiter made sure his milestone game was a memorable one.

Suiting up in his 900th NHL game, Niederreiter delivered a pair of insurance markers as the Winnipeg Jets defeated Utah HC 3-0 on Tuesday at Canada Life Centre.

With the win, the Jets extended their winning streak to four games and improve to 12-1 on the season.

"I certainly believe in our group," said Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey. "You look at the success we had last season, in the regular season, we felt like we could build off that.

"Did I think we'd be sitting here 12 -1? I mean, who knows, but at the same time, I really feel confident about our group."

Niederreiter has now scored at least one goal against 33 different NHL teams and is up to seven for the campaign.

"It's a cool stat, but I think it also says that I've been traded a few times," said Niederreiter. "But I guess it gives me the chance to do that."

With the Jets leading 1-0, Niederreiter made a subtle play at the defensive blue line that reinforces what head coach Scott Arniel has been saying about smart plays away from the puck leading to offensive opportunities.

With the puck coming around the left-wing boards, Niederreiter won a battle with Utah HC defenceman Michael Kesselring by lifting his stick.

That allowed Josh Morrissey to swoop in, grab the puck and start an odd-man rush.

Niederreiter hustled up the ice, took a pass in the high slot from Mason Appleton and faked a shot to freeze Karel Vejmelka before depositing the puck into the open net.

"Obviously the game wasn't very pretty and there wasn't a lot of flow out there," said Niederreiter. "We just knew we had to stick with it and do the little things right. Eventually, you create your own luck and that's what happened there." The Jets continue a four-game homestand on Thursday against the Colorado Avalanche in what will be the first meeting between the two teams since the opening round of the 2024 Stanley Cup playoffs.

Let's take a closer look at this one:

*POWER PLAY STRIKES AGAIN* – It seems like the storyline that simply won't go away, but the Jets' league-leading power play got them on the board at a time when it looked like goals were going to be tough to come by.

There had been several times at even strength when the Jets were guilty of passing when they probably should have been shooting, but some strong puck movement on a power play late in the second period helped tire out the Utah HC penalty killers.

With five seconds to go in the hooking minor to Dylan Guenther, Mark Scheifele found Morrissey for a one-timer from the point and Gabe Vilardi got to the front of the net and tipped it home.

"The biggest thing is that they're realizing that when there is pressure coming, we've got to get away from the pressure," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. "They're recognizing what the opposition is doing."

For Vilardi, it was his fifth goal in the past seven games — and his first of the season with the man-advantage.

The Jets have now scored at least one power-play marker in each of the past six games and they're up to 16 on the season — with nine coming from the top unit and seven scored by the second.

They also bumped their top-ranked power-play percentage to 44.4 per cent.

*PENALTY KILL ALSO COMES THROUGH* – The Jets started the season with a penalty kill that was ranked fourth in the NHL, but a recent rough patch had them in the middle of the pack.

Rough patch is a relative term — the Jets surrendered four power play goals during the previous three games.

By going four-for-four while shorthanded on Tuesday, the Jets took an important step toward stabilizing things, increasing their penalty-killing efficiency from 76.0 per cent to 79.3 per cent.

*THE GOOSE EGG* – One day after expressing his frustration with the latest goalie interference ruling, Connor Hellebuyck made 21 saves to record his second shutout of the season and 39th of his NHL career.

Hellebuyck became the sixth goalie to make 10 starts this season and continues his sensational start to the campaign.

The reigning Vezina Trophy winner is 9-1 with a 2.10 goals-against average and .923 save percentage.

#### *AFTERBURNER*

Key play — With scoring chances relatively tough to come by, the Jets power play provided them with a boost late in the second period, with Vilardi supplying a perfect redirection.

The three stars

Jets, LW Nino Niederreiter — Two goals and two points in his 900th NHL game.

Jets, G Connor Hellebuyck — 21 saves for his second shutout of the season.

Utah HC, G Karel Vejmelka — 25 saves in his 10th career start against the Jets.

*EXTRA, EXTRA* – Jets left-winger Kyle Connor saw his 12-game point streak come to an end Tuesday, but not before rattling a shot off the post with 33 seconds to go. Connor generated three shots on goal and five shot attempts against Utah and continues to lead the Jets in goals (nine) and points (19).

Jets captain Adam Lowry chipped in a pair of assists, earning helpers on each of Niederreiter's goals. Lowry also threw a big hit on Kesselring in the first period. "With that hit, he definitely set the tone early on," said Niederreiter.

The line of Lowry, Niederreiter and Appleton has outscored opponents 11-1 at five-on-five play this season.

Former Jets forward Kevin Stenlund seems to be settling in nicely with his new team after capturing a Stanley Cup in June with the Florida Panthers. After signing a two-year deal worth US\$4 million (and an AAV of US\$2 million), Stenlund is centring the fourth line and doing an outstanding job in the faceoff circle.

The Jets healthy scratches were forward David Gustafsson and defencemen Haydn Fleury and Dylan Coghlan, who has yet to see any game action this season. Gustafsson has been limited to one game and Fleury suited up in the first four but has been out for the past nine.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2024/11/05/jets-enjoying-success-as-connors-game-matures>

### ***Jets enjoying success as Connor's game matures***

By: Mike McIntyre

His eye is black and blue, and Winnipeg Jets forward Kyle Connor admits he was seeing red after taking a shot to the head from Tampa Bay's Nikita Kucherov last Sunday, which cost him the remainder of the game.

"They pulled me off right away for the concussion protocol," Connor said Tuesday morning as he spoke about the play for the first time, a big shiner presenting a visual reminder to all.

"Obviously every player doesn't want to miss any time. But I'm glad to have a protocol like that, someone up top looking out for us even when I'm pissed off."

Kucherov wasn't penalized for the hit, which caused Connor's face to strike the helmet of Lightning defenceman Erik Cernak during the third period of the 7-4 victory for the Jets.

Winnipeg's top scorer, who missed nearly two months last year after Anaheim's Ryan Strome took him out with a knee-on-knee hit, opted to bite his tongue when asked for his take.

"I don't want to get into whether it was dirty or not," said Connor. "I've watched it a couple times but you guys can have your interpretation on that."

Connor was eventually cleared by doctors, but it was too late to return to action.

The 27-year-old winger isn't just leading the way on the ice, but showing plenty of growth and maturity in various ways off of it. Take the way he responded to a Free Press question about how his team seems to have embraced the importance of playing solid defence while clearly not sacrificing anything offensively.

It's how all NHL coaches want their teams to play — but very few do it on a consistent basis.

"It's not something that happened overnight. It's something that we worked on for years now," said Connor, pulling back the curtain to reveal how core players such as himself have met with management multiple times to discuss what needs to happen to get better.

"That's been the main focus. How can we get better as a group and improve? We know we have a championship team in this group," Connor continued.

"It's not always a straight line to the top. You've got to learn, you've got to develop. You're kind of seeing that here. It's a pretty motivated group. I think Arnie (coach Scott Arniel) does a good job with not letting us get happy with where we're at."

*FIGHTING WORDS:* There used to be a time, including back when Arniel was still lacing up the skates, where seeing a fight (or two, or three, or more) in every game was expected.

Those days are long gone, as proven by the fact Logan Stanley's bout with Zemgus Girgensons on Sunday afternoon was Winnipeg's first of the season.

Arniel said Tuesday he's glad the so-called staged scraps have mostly disappeared from the game.

"I'm not big on that, obviously, unless it's there's a reason for and a big reason for it," he said.

However, a heat-of-the-moment tilt, such as the one that occurred after Stanley threw a huge, clean hit on Luke Glendenning, will likely always have a place in the sport.

"This is still is a fast game, and it's a heavy game at times, and things are going to happen," said Arniel.

"And whether you're sticking up for a teammate, which the Tampa forward tried to do and or it's Stan setting the tone by coming out early in that period and kind of playing the game that he has to play. We've talked about him before that. I want him to be a pest. I want him to be a bully."

*PUT ME IN COACH:* There also used to be a time, as recently as last season, that Cole Perfetti likely would have been stapled to the bench in the waning minutes of a close game.

Not anymore, as proven by the fact Arniel had the young forward out with his team trying to hold off the Lightning, who had pulled their goaltender for an extra attacker. Perfetti repaid that trust by icing the victory with an empty-net goal.

"That's what you strive for. You want to be a guy that can be played in all situations and I'm trying to work towards that and improve all aspects of my game to be trusted everywhere," Perfetti said Tuesday.

“Hopefully, over time, I can gain more and more. It’s been a work in progress. But slowly, hopefully gaining trust a little bit more.”

The goal was most welcome for Perfetti, who had hit three posts and crossbars in the prior two games.

“Sometimes, the hockey gods are funny, eh? They will reward you with an empty-netter,” he said.

“Obviously, you want to see the puck go in the net. Just a couple of inches off or whatever it is. The fact that you’re getting good looks and beating goalies clean is the main thing that I take away from that. You’re doing something right to get those opportunities. Eventually, the puck is going to go in for you and you just got to stick with it.”

*PP1 VS PP2:* It’s safe to say a friendly competition is developing between Winnipeg’s two power-play units.

The Jets had scored a league-leading 15 PP goals heading into action against Utah, with the top group (Connor, Mark Scheifele, Nikolaj Ehlers, Gabe Vilardi and Josh Morrissey) accounting for eight of them and the second group scoring seven.

“We are both finding success,” said Perfetti, who is on the second unit along with Nino Niederreiter, Alex Iafallo, Vlad Namestnikov and Neal Pionk.

“You’ve seen that in multiple games where if our unit doesn’t score, the first unit will come out and get a big one for us and vice versa. It’s really important to have two threats on the power play and we don’t give any team any breaks on the penalty kill.”

*MELLOW YELLOW:* Defenceman Ville Heinola (ankle surgery) and forward Jaret Anderson-Dolan (broken foot) are now skating with the main group wearing yellow non-contact jerseys, but Arniel said there’s still no timeline for a return.

“Those yellow shirts may be on for a while,” he said.

“The biggest thing is they can’t get hit with pucks. So they can do almost all the drills, but once it gets into something where there’s live fire and they can get hit, because it’s both their feet there, we’ll just stay away from anything like that. And then they’ll get their conditioning.”

## **Winnipeg Sun**

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/tried-my-best-to-help-jets-hellebuyck-ready-to-give-up-on-interference-fight>

### ***Niederreiter scores twice as Jets blank Utah 3-0***

By Scott Billeck

There may not have been an election in Manitoba on Tuesday, but the goals tallied in downtown Winnipeg confirmed that the Jets are still the kings of the NHL.

Nino Niederreiter scored twice in his 900th career game, and Gabriel Vilardi also tucked one in as the Jets won their fourth straight and 12th of the season in 13 tries, 3-0, against Utah HC at Canada Life Centre.

Connor Hellebuyck made 21 saves for his second shutout of the season and 39th of his career. He's now 8-1-0 as he launches a staunch defence of his Vezina crown.

Adam Lowry pitched in with a pair of assists as his Jets, now 12-1-0, opened up a six-point gap atop the Central Division.

Vilardi's fifth of the season opened the scoring 17:57 into the second period, tipping Josh Morrissey's point shot past Karel Vejmelka with five seconds left on the power play to make it 1-0.

Winnipeg's impressive run with the man advantage continued on Tuesday, going 1-for-2.

They've now scored a league-high 16 goals on the power play, bringing their success rate to an NHL-best 45.7 per cent.

The penalty kill, leaky recently, went a perfect 4-for-4.

Niederreiter's first of the game came courtesy of some slick stick-handling at 7:30 of the third to push Winnipeg's lead to 2-0.

His second, and seventh of the season, came just after Utah pulled Vegmelka for the extra attacker at 17:01.

Meanwhile, Kyle Connor's run of 12 straight games with a point to start the season ended.

He came within one game of Kevin Stevens' record by an American-born player.

The Jets now set their sights on the Colorado Avalanche for the third game of their four-game homestand.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/jets-kyle-connor-not-interested-in-labelling-kucherov-dirty>

### ***Jets' Kyle Connor not interested in labelling Kucherov dirty***

By Scott Billeck

Kyle Connor didn't want to get into whether the hit from Tampa Bay's Nikita Kucherov, which led to quite the shiner below one eye, was dirty.

The Winnipeg Jets' leading scorer did a bit of stick-handling on Tuesday morning, choosing the high road — and the one where no fines could be levied against him — a couple of days removed from the third-period hit in his team's 7-4 win over the Lightning.

"I've watched it a couple times but you guys can have your interpretation on that," Connor said.

The verdict is pretty easy to arrive at.

The Lightning superstar caught Connor right on the numbers, vaulting his face into Erik Cernak's helmet nearby.

Connor was pulled from the game by the league's concussion spotter and didn't return to the ice for the rest of the game.

"Just kind of an unfortunate hit," Connor said. "They pulled me off right away for the concussion protocol. Obviously, every player doesn't want to miss any time. But I'm glad to have a protocol like that, someone up top looking out for us even when I'm pissed off.

"I'm sure I'll look back on that and be thankful. There's scenarios where guys get pulled off and down the road they're thankful to do it. Everything checked out, I felt good."

It was good news for both the player and the team.

Connor is leading the way on a team full of players playing red-hot hockey. The 27-year-old is one goal off the NHL lead and two points from the current summit while riding a 12-game point streak to start the season.

He can match Kevin Stevens' 13-game streak to start a season, the longest by a U.S.-born player. Connor is also three games shy of Patrik Laine's franchise-record 15-game run in 2017-18.

Not that he's thinking about any of that.

"That's exactly what I've been doing — not focusing on it at all," he said. "Just focus on what I can control, the details, how I arrive to the rink. Just trying to be the best teammate I can be for the guys here and what I can do to help the team win. Obviously that's play to all my strengths and use my speed. All that stuff, obviously it's been a pretty good start to the year for the team and me personally, but I think it all takes care of itself if you pay attention to details and play the right way."

Connor also sidestepped questions about whether he's playing the best hockey of his career, suggesting that it was not for him to decide.

"I'm feeling good," he said. "This group wants to win and so do I. And that's just reflecting on how we approach every single game. We're not looking too far ahead, we're not looking in the past at what we did. It's on to the next one. I think I've taken that personally in my mindset and how I approach the game, it's helped me get to where I'm at."

It's hard to argue against the idea.

If Connor keeps it up, and stays healthy, a 50-goal, 100-point season is well within reach.

## **Salt Lake Tribune**

<https://www.sltrib.com/sports/utah-hockey-club/2024/11/05/karel-vejmelka-has-strong-showing/>

### ***Utah goalie Karel Vejmelka does his best, but the Hockey Club can't stop the NHL's hottest team***

By Belle Fraser

Winnipeg • It has been hard for Karel Vejmelka to feel wholly good about his game this season.

But it is not his fault.

The Utah Hockey Club goaltender has started in three games and relieved partner Connor Ingram in one. Through 11 periods of play with Vejmelka between the pipes this season, Utah has scored one goal. The team has been shut out three times with the Czech tending net.

That was the case Tuesday night at Canada Life Centre where the first-place Winnipeg Jets beat Utah Hockey Club 3-0. Vejmelka made 25 saves in the loss.

"I feel bad for him, he was really good," head coach André Tourigny said. "Now it's the third time he goes in and we don't support him offensively. I feel really bad for him because he played really solid."

The Hockey Club went into the second period tied 0-0 with Winnipeg after weathering its offensive pushes and countering with spurts of its own. It was not a bad showing for Utah, per se, but the Jets' steadfast experience and skill ultimately prevailed.

Gabriel Vilardi gave Winnipeg a 1-0 lead at the end of the middle frame as Dylan Guenther sat in the box for a hooking penalty. Josh Morrissey's blast from the point tipped in off of Vilardi at 17:57 for the Jets' league-best 16th power-play goal of the season.

Winnipeg padded its advantage in the third period off the rush. Nino Niederreiter got the puck while flashing up the left side and pulled it to his backhand before tucking it past Vejmelka to make it 2-0 at 7:30. Niederreiter's second of the night — an empty-netter at 17:01 — sealed the 3-0 victory.

Utah had four opportunities on the power play to make a dent in a tightly-contested matchup but could not produce on any. It went 0-for-4 on the night. In the Hockey Club's first power play of the game, it didn't log a shot on goal.

"I think we could be a little bit more selfish at times and shoot the puck a bit more. It ultimately came down to a special teams battle, and we lost that one tonight," said forward Lawson Crouse who had three shots, four hits and one block. "They capitalized on one of their power plays and we didn't."

While Utah's offensive woes appeared again in Winnipeg, the team played a well-rounded defensive game against a Jets group that was averaging 4.92 goals per game heading into Tuesday's matchup.

"I think defensively, we did a lot of good things today against a really good team," Tourigny said.



Vejmelka was a key part of that defensive structure. The goaltender posted 12 saves in the opening 20 minutes of play and set a balanced demeanor for Utah from the crease out.

The Hockey Club has turned to starter Ingram for 10 of its 13 games this season, so when Vejmělka gets the nod, he wants to be as sharp as possible.

“I felt myself getting better throughout the game. Couple good saves in the beginning of the first period, and then I felt better and better,” Vejmělka said. “Just wanted to get some points from the game, but hopefully next time.”

After an unconventional path to his first NHL contract with the Arizona Coyotes in May 2021, Vejmělka is not taking any time for granted in the league.

The Třebíč, Czechia native was selected in the fifth round by the Nashville Predators in the 2015 NHL Draft, but opted not to sign and became a free agent. Vejmělka then played five seasons back home for HC Kometa Brno in the Czech Extraliga league before joining the Coyotes for the 2021-22 season.

He has a 2.75 goals against average and .899 save percentage thus far this season as he continues to prove the team can rely on him against top competition.

“Playing in the NHL was a dream for me like it is for everybody else. I would like to play in the NHL for as long as possible,” Vejmělka said. “Enjoying every minute here with a great group of guys around.”

Vejmelka’s father and grandfather both played hockey; it seemed like a natural progression for him. The NHL, though, was never a guarantee. Vejmělka also played soccer and tennis, the latter of which he said was hard to give up. He said the agility skills from those sports have helped him as a goaltender.

Tourigny said he thinks Vejmělka is “capable of playing every night,” but with the nature of Utah’s start-of-season schedule, it has been able to roll with a consistent starter in Ingram. However, with a back-to-back coming at the end of the month and fewer days between games as the season wears on, Tourigny said they’ll “need both of our goaltenders every week.”

“It’s the decision for the coaches every time, so I’m just focusing on being ready every time, every game. It’s my job,” Vejmělka said.

Utah Hockey Club is not interested in moral victories, but it has been able to build its game against two top-tier opponents this week and see strong performances from individual players like Vejmělka on Tuesday.

“Learn from it, move on, get ready for the next one,” Crouse said.

Up next is another divisional matchup — Thursday against the St. Louis Blues — in which Utah will work to earn its first win of the four-game road trip.