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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-vegas-steals-a-win-in-ot>

***Three things - Vegas steals a win in OT
Jets lose for the first time in overtime this season***

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG - The Winnipeg Jets lost for the first time in overtime this season in a 3-2 loss to the Vegas Golden Knights at Canada Life Centre. It marked the eighth straight time that Vegas has beaten the Jets in the regular season (0-6-2). Nikita Chibrikov and Josh Morrissey scored for Winnipeg (21-9-1), Mark Scheifele saw his franchise record 13-game point streak on home ice come to an end. Connor Hellebuyck made 33 saves and saw his record fall to 18-5-1. The Jets will close out their four-game homestand Saturday against the Montreal Canadiens.

CAN'T STOP SCORING

After the Jets 8-1 win over the Boston Bruins, captain Adam Lowry complimented Nikita Chibrikov who had registered his first assist and multi-point game in the NHL about the spark the young Russian provided in the game after being recalled from the Manitoba Moose at the beginning of the week. Tonight, Chibrikov continued his goal scoring streak and is now a perfect three-for-three in his NHL career after slamming a rebound past Adin Hill to give the Jets a 1-0 lead that they carried into the first intermission. The 21-year-old became the first player in Jets/Thrashers history to score in each of his first three career games (spanning seasons or otherwise).

MORRISSEY GOOD TIMING

With the game tied at one in the third period, the Jets top defenceman picked a great time to score his third goal of the season. Dylan DeMelo hit Morrissey with a perfect pass, and he had plenty of time to walk in and fire a seeing eye slap shot past Adin Hill to give the Jets their one goal lead back at 10:55. It was the first goal for Morrissey since November 1, a span of 20 games but he leads the team with 25 assists.

VEGAS STEALS ONE

The Jets held their 2-1 lead until late in the third when Gabe Vilardi and Dylan DeMelo were penalized at 17:20 and 17:33 respectively. Vegas would pull Hill in favour of the extra attacker and scored while on a 6-on-3 at 18:11 to tie it. In overtime, the Jets would have a couple good chances, but the Golden Knights would end the game at 3:47.

"Yeah, definitely unfortunate. Yeah, I think guys do a lot worse than not get a call," said DeMelo of his tripping penalty.

"So that's a tough pill to swallow. We all know at the end of games or overtime has got to be pretty egregious to be a penalty. He deemed it so."

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/vegas-golden-knights-winnipeg-jets-game-recap-december-12>

***Barbashev scores in OT, Golden Knights rally late to defeat Jets
Forward gets winner after Olofsson ties it with 1:49 left in 3rd for Vegas, which has won 4 straight***

By Darrin Bauming

WINNIPEG -- Ivan Barbashev scored 3:47 into overtime to help the Vegas Golden Knights rally for a 3-2 win against the Winnipeg Jets at Canada Life Centre on Thursday.

"It's probably going to be, numbers-wise, one of our best (defensive games) of the year," Vegas coach Bruce Cassidy said. "Analytics can be funny sometimes because the eye test isn't always right, but I have a feeling this one will be. And we have been better. We have been better for probably the better part of a month now, and we should be. We have good defensive players, we played that way before."

Barbashev finished off a 2-on-1 with Shea Theodore to win it. The goal came after Victor Olofsson tied the game 2-2 at 18:11 of the third period with Vegas on a 5-on-3 power play, taking Mark Stone's cross-crease pass and scoring with a one-timer from a tight angle below the right circle.

"(Stone's pass was), I would say, unbelievable," Olofsson said. "It was a great pass from, first Jack [Eichel] to [Stone], and then 'Stoney' to me. Wide-open net, and I just had to hit it. It was a good play."

Keegan Kolesar also scored, and Theodore had two assists for the Golden Knights (19-7-3), who have won four straight. Adin Hill made 18 saves.

"(We were) able to tie it up, then go down again, we stayed with it right to the very end," Kolesar said. "We didn't let it waver in any way in our play, played right to the whistle and we were able to come up two points."

Josh Morrissey and Nikita Chibrikov scored for the Jets (21-9-1), who are 3-1-1 in their past five. Connor Hellebuyck made 34 saves.

"We didn't like our first two periods," Morrissey said. "They're obviously a very good team, but we're still up 1-0 going into the third. ... (We) did a decent job through the third period, I thought, of trying to play our game when we didn't really have our best stuff in the first two. Obviously, a tough ending with the penalties there at the end of the game. It was a tough situation, and we couldn't get it done in OT."

Chibrikov gave the Jets a 1-0 lead at 9:27 of the first period. Vladislav Namestnikov's shot on the rush was kicked aside by Hill, finding Chibrikov at the left side of the net for a tap in. He has a goal in each of his first three NHL games.

"I think that [Chibrikov] is growing, he's learning every game, every shift," Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel said. "He's competitive, he goes to those areas, he drove to that net on that goal tonight. He does a lot of good things. Lots of times, you're concerned that maybe without the puck, he might be a liability, but that line had lots of good looks. They had some zone time and that's what you hope for when a guy like that goes in there."

Kolesar tied it 1-1 at 4:34 of the third. Theodore forced a turnover in the Jets zone before Kolesar beat a screened Hellebuyck with a low shot from the right circle.

"It's fun. It's very fun," Kolesar said of scoring in his hometown of Winnipeg. "I've got a lot of special people in the building here tonight. It'll be exciting to see them after... I didn't even know it went in until my teammates told me."

Morrissey scored with a slap shot from the left circle to give the Jets a 2-1 lead at 10:55.

"We were down 2-1 in the third, and I thought we were playing really well, to be honest with you, especially defensively," Cassidy said. "You know, they looked tired. They're at the end of, I think, four in six, they've had a tough stretch. We've been off for a while, so I thought we might be rusty early. But I thought after the first period that we executed better and had our legs and hands more than I would have suspected. We didn't give up much for two periods, but hung in there, got some calls late. We needed them, obviously, and our power play was able to connect there."

NOTES: Vegas has won eight straight regular-season games against Winnipeg dating back to Oct. 20, 2022, outscoring them 34-19. ... The Golden Knights improved to 8-1-2 in their past 11 road games. ... Chibrikov is the first player in franchise history to score a goal in each of his first three NHL games. He scored his first in Winnipeg's final regular season game of 2023-24. He then had a goal and an assist in the Jets' 8-1 win against the Boston Bruins on Tuesday.

Canadian Press

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/jets-fall-to-golden-knights-after-barbashev-scores-in-overtime/>

Jets fall to Golden Knights after Barbashev scores in overtime

By Canadian Press

Josh Morrissey figured the hockey gods weren't on the Winnipeg Jets' side Thursday night.

The veteran defenceman gave the Jets a 2-1 lead midway through the third period against the Golden Knights, but a late five-on-three power-play goal by Vegas forward Victor Olofsson sent the game into overtime.

After a Winnipeg turnover, Ivan Barbashev scored at 3:47 of overtime when his 14th goal of the season beat Connor Hellebuyck to give the visitors a 3-2 victory.

"It certainly was not even close to our best game in the first two periods, but we were still up 1-0," Morrissey said. "You go up 2-1 in the third period, and again I did think we got to our game a little better in the third.

"But they probably through the course of their first two periods, the hockey gods probably earned them those power plays when we didn't have our best in the first two. You'd like to find a way to close it out even when you don't have your best stuff."

Keegan Kolesar also scored for the Golden Knights (19-7-3). Shea Theodore had a pair of assists and Adin Hill made 18 saves to extend their win streak to four games.

Nikita Chibrikov had the other goal for the Jets (21-9-1) and Hellebuyck made 33 saves.

Winnipeg was outshot 12-4 in the first period and 10-6 in the second.

After Morrissey scored at 10:55 of the third period, forward Gabriel Vilardi and defenceman Dylan DeMelo took costly tripping penalties late in regulation.

Vilardi was called at 17:20 and DeMelo was sent off 13 seconds later. It took Olofsson 38 seconds to tie it up.

"I've seen guys do a lot worse and not get a call, so that's a tough pill to swallow," DeMelo said. "We all know that at the end of games or overtime, it's got to be pretty egregious to be a penalty and (the referee) deemed it so."

Jets head coach Scott Arniel avoided commenting on the DeMelo call.

"I mean, Gabe's was a penalty. Two hundred feet from our net, that was a penalty," Arniel said. "Not talking about the other one."

The Jets were able to kill the second penalty to send it to overtime, but the extra session produced more errors. Defenceman Haydn Fleury created a turnover when he sent the puck toward a player who was leaving for a line change.

"I think that predominantly the whole overtime, we had the puck, which you like to do and you like to have," Arniel said. "I mean, it would be nice if we got a couple more attempts at the goaltender, but we made probably a bad decision with the puck.

"We were kind of on a line change and we got caught."

The Jets have dropped their last eight regular-season games (0-6-2) to Vegas.

The Golden Knights were coming off a five-day break and head coach Bruce Cassidy was glad any rust wore off fast.

"I thought after the first period that we executed better and had our legs and hands (more) than I would have suspected," he said. "We didn't give up much for two periods, but hung in there, got some calls late.

"We needed them, obviously, and our power play was able to connect there."

Winnipeg, which was coming off an 8-1 victory over the Boston Bruins on Tuesday, struggled to put shots at Hill.

They went a span of 18:24 without a shot on goal, from late in the first period until 13:01 of the second, but picked up their play after that.

Arniel has been preaching about the importance of taking more shots for a while.

"When we talked about the success we had against Boston, we got into the attack mode," he said.

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10915866/winnipeg-jets-blow-late-lead-lose-3-2-in-ot-to-vegas/>

Winnipeg Jets blow late lead, lose 3-2 in OT to Vegas

By Christian Aumell & Russ Hobson Global News

The Winnipeg Jets just can't seem to beat the Vegas Golden Knights.

The Jets surrendered a late goal before losing in overtime as the Golden Knights pulled out a 3-2 victory at the Canada Life Centre on Thursday.

The Jets jumped into the lead with nine minutes left, but took back-to-back penalties in the final three minutes. Vegas scored on the 5-on-3 before winning it in the extra frame for the Jets first overtime loss of the season.

Dylan DeMelo was assessed a questionable tripping penalty to put the Jets two men down.

"I've seen guys do a lot worse and not get a call," DeMelo said. "So that's a tough pill to swallow. We all know at the end of games or overtime it's got to be pretty egregious to be a penalty. He deemed it so."

The Jets have now lost eight straight regular season meetings against Vegas.

Winnipeg had a one-goal lead going to the third but still didn't like their first two periods. It took the Jets more than 13 minutes to record their first shot on goal in the second and they registered only 10 shots in the first 40 minutes.

"It certainly was not even close to our best game in the first two periods," said defenceman Josh Morrissey. "I did think we got to our game a little bit better in the third, but they probably, through the course of their first two periods, the hockey gods probably earned them those power plays at the end of the game when we didn't have our best in the first two."

Morrissey and Nikita Chibrikov scored the goals for Winnipeg.

It was the first time all season the Jets lost a game when leading after the first or second period. They entered the night 10-0 when leading after 20 minutes and 15-0 when up after two periods.

"I just thought when we did have opportunities when it went the other way, I didn't think we attacked like they attack," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. "The shot attempts I think were almost double in this game."

The game winning goal in overtime came after the Jets got their signals crossed near their bench and made a bad line change.

"Really the whole overtime we had the puck, which we like to do, and you like to have," Arniel said. "It'd be nice if we got a couple more attempts at the goaltender, but we made probably a bad decision with the puck, and we were kinda on a line change and we got caught."

It was the Knights fourth straight victory as Vegas was playing for the first time in six days.

Mark Scheifele's franchise record home point streak ended at 13 games.

Chibrikov kept up the torrid pace to start his NHL career, potting his third goal in as many career games at the 9:27 mark of the first.

Cole Perfetti carried the puck into the Vegas end off the rush, sending it to Vladislav Namestnikov on the right wing. He fired a low shot on goal that was kicked away by the pad of Adin Hill right to the stick of Chibrikov, who blasted it home to open the scoring.

It was one of just four shots the Jets got on goal in the opening 20 minutes as Winnipeg was under duress for much of the period. Connor Hellebuyck made sure the Jets held onto the 1-0 lead as he turned aside 12 shots in the frame.

Just over two minutes into the second, Neal Pionk was called for hooking Pavel Dorofeyev but he may have saved a goal in the process as it prevented the Vegas winger from getting a stick on a rebound that could have been knocked into an open net. Winnipeg killed off the power play.

The game stayed 1-0 as the period rolled along with neither team getting much on goal through the first half of the frame: shots were 3-0 Vegas at the second media timeout while Winnipeg didn't register a shot on goal until a Pionk wrist shot from the point with 6:59 left in the frame. The Jets finished the period with six shots to Vegas' ten but the score remained 1-0.

Right at the end of the period, the Jets were called for sending the puck out of play from their own end, giving Vegas 1:52 of power play time to start the third but just 20 seconds into the period, Jack Eichel was called for hooking, nullifying the man advantage.

Hellebuyck could only hold down the fort for so long before Vegas finally got on the board. After the Jets whiffed on multiple chances to clear the puck, Brandon's Keegan Kolesar fired a shot from the slot that beat Hellebuyck through a screen to make it 1-1 at the 4:34 mark of the third.

But Winnipeg wrestled the lead back with 9:05 to go. Mark Scheifele carried the puck into the Vegas end at the end of a shift and offered a fairly ineffective drop pass that Alex Lafallo had to work hard to get to before Vegas did. He knocked it back to the point where DeMelo sent a cross-ice pass to Morrissey, who stepped in and blasted a shot that took the slightest of deflections off the stick of Zach Whitecloud and over the shoulder of Hill.

With 2:40 to go, Gabriel Vilardi was called for tripping and just 13 seconds later, DeMelo was sent off for tripping as well, giving Vegas a fantastic opportunity to level the score and with 1:49 remaining, Victor Olofsson finished off a great passing play to tie the game.

Olofsson had a glorious look to add another with 30 seconds left but Haydn Fleury deflected his point-blank shot over the glass, sending the game to overtime.

Winnipeg had possession of the puck for the bulk of OT, though they managed just one shot on net before a poorly executed line change doomed them.

With the puck near the Winnipeg bench, Nino Niederreiter sent it back to Fleury in his own end to allow Niederreiter and Namestnikov to change. Ivan Barbashev put some pressure on Fleury, who sent it softly back toward the Winnipeg bench but Shea Theodore jumped up to snatch it away, creating a 2-on-1 with Barbashev who finished off a pass from Theodore to end the game.

Hellebuyck stopped 33 shots in the loss, Winnipeg's first in five games this season that required extra time to resolve. Hill had to make just 18 saves for the win, Vegas' 12th in their last 13 meetings with Winnipeg if you include their playoff battle in 2023.

The Jets will wrap up a four-game homestand Saturday evening against Montreal. The puck drops just after 6 p.m. with pregame coverage on 680 CJOB starting at 4 p.m.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/are-the-jets-still-the-team-to-beat-in-the-west%7E3046201>

Are the Jets still the team to beat in the West? (VIDEO)

After a tough loss to the Vegas Golden Knights where they squandered the lead late in the third, TSN Hockey analyst Martin Biron joins SportsCentre to discuss if the Jets are still the team to beat in the West.

Nikita Chibrikov proving he deserves to stay with Jets

By Jacob Stoller

WINNIPEG — Three games into his NHL career, Nikita Chibrikov is a goal-per-game player.

“We should probably lock him up now before he does that for the rest of the year,” Josh Morrissey quipped after the Winnipeg Jets’ 3-2 overtime loss to the Vegas Golden Knights on Thursday, where Chibrikov opened the scoring.

While talk of an extension was said tongue in cheek, the 21-year-old Russian winger's body of work has been impressive. As the stakes have risen, so too has his game. His first kick at the can came last spring, where he scored during the Jets' final regular-season game in which several key players sat out to rest.

He parlayed last season's trial-run into a strong training-camp showing this fall, where he was one of the team's final cuts. And then, after recording a team-high 13 points in 19 AHL games with the Manitoba Moose, Chibrikov was recalled on Monday to help fill the void left by Nikolaj Ehlers' injury. Unlike Brad Lambert — the first player to get an audition in Ehlers' absence — Chibrikov hasn't just been treading water in the big leagues. He's been thriving.

Before Thursday, it seemed like a foregone conclusion that the 2021 second-round pick would be reassigned to the Moose once Ehlers returned. But after how he played against Vegas, GM Kevin Cheveldayoff may be inclined to keep him indefinitely.

In addition to his goal, Chibrikov recorded three high-danger shot attempts, one blocked shot (which was perfectly choreographed), one takeaway and one hit. He was engaged physically, digging his way through puck battles and making plays along the wall. He made sound decisions, helping the Jets' second line — alongside Vladislav Namestnikov and Cole Perfetti — execute zone exits against a hard forechecking Golden Knights team. He played with pace, executing high-percentage plays at top speed. And above all, he played a straight-lined, assertive game, unlike some of his teammates.

“He's taking advantage of the opportunity that's put in front of him and you know what? That's all you ask of your players,” coach Scott Arniel said. “We'll give you the chance and it's yours to go out and take and he's done a pretty good job of it.”

Now, if Chibrikov was just another undersized scoring forward — his days would likely be numbered with the Jets. We see it time and again in the NHL: a young player turns heads while filling in for an injured player only to be reassigned because they lose their top-six spot and aren't of much use in the bottom six.

"Lots of times, you're concerned that maybe without the puck, (young players) might be a liability," Arniel said.

But that's not the case with Chibrikov. The five-foot-11 forward isn't your stereotypical 'undersized' scorer, either.

"He's obviously a smaller guy but he's stocky. He's strong on his skates," Dylan DeMelo said. "He's willing to go in those dirty areas, he took a few (hits) tonight but he's a guy that gets first on the puck and (can) get it out to make a play. He's fearless out there, he's got a good knack for the net and he's been rewarded for going to the net."

Chibrikov's best attributes are things the Jets desperately need more of. And it stretches beyond just the short-term, with Ehlers on the shelf. Winnipeg's 23.85 five-on-five scoring chances per 60 minutes ranks 29th in the league and according to SportLogiq data displayed during a local broadcast, they rank 30th in rebound chances, 31st in rush chances and 22nd in forecheck chances per game. Whether it's overpassing on odd-man rushes, or kiboshing their transition chances by zig-zagging in the neutral zone, the Jets have overcomplicated their game, especially lately. They've also veered away from the 'attack mentality' we saw during their historic start to the year.

Chibrikov plays a very direct, north-south game. Arniel isolated one of his net-front chances as a shining example of what he wants more of.

"It's as simple as Vladdy coming off the wing, shooting that puck off the pad and Chibby throwing in the rebound," Arniel said. "Some of those. That's kind of more of the mindset that we have to have."

Keeping Chibrikov around would make for some uncomfortable roster decisions. Winnipeg would have to scratch an NHL regular, like Morgan Barron or Rasmus Kupari — two players that have given the Jets solid mileage in fourth-line role. That's not an easy decision for any team, let alone one that has seldom tinkered with its forward lines all year.

But when you've got a player making a profound impact like Chibrikov, you can't just send him down because he's waivers-exempt.

Even if his goal-per-game pace drops off.

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/12/12/a-tough-pill-to-swallow>

'A tough pill to swallow'

Late penalties, bad line change cost Jets in OT loss to Golden Knights

By: Ken Wiebe

Dylan DeMelo spoke calmly, but it's fair to say that he doesn't agree with referee Justin Kea.

With the Winnipeg Jets already down a man in the latter stages of the third period while holding a one-goal lead, Kea sent defenceman DeMelo to the box to serve a tripping minor.

That put the Jets down two men for one minute and 47 seconds and after some superb puck movement, Victor Olofsson tied the game with 1:49 to go in the third period.

"I've seen guys do a lot worse and not get a call," said DeMelo. "So that's a tough pill to swallow. We all know that at the end of games or overtime, it's got to be pretty egregious to be a penalty and he deemed it so."

The Jets ultimately fell 3-2 after Ivan Barbashev converted a pass from Shea Theodore on a two-on-one rush to secure the extra point at 3:47 of overtime, leaving Winnipeg to settle for a single point as they lost an eighth consecutive regular-season game to the Golden Knights.

Jets head coach Scott Arniel was asked about the penalties called late in the contest and chose his words carefully.

"I'm not talking about the other one. They have their power play with two minutes to go," said Arniel. "Anyways. The first one was a penalty."

In overtime, Jets defenceman Haydn Fleury was looking to move the puck up ice, but the Jets were in the midst of a line change and the Golden Knights came into the offensive zone with speed and closed out the contest.

"We didn't like our first two periods, but we were still up 1-0 going into the third," said Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey, who put his team up 2-1 at 10:55 of the third period. "Obviously it was a tough ending with the penalties there at the end of the game. It was a tough situation and we couldn't get it done in OT."

The Jets, who slipped to 21-9-1 and lost in extra time for the first time this season, close out a four-game homestand on Saturday against Patrik Laine and the Montreal Canadiens.

Let's take a closer look at this one:

STILL STREAKING

Jets winger Nikita Chibrikov extended his NHL goal-scoring streak to three games on Thursday, driving the net and banging home a rebound after a smart low shot from Vladislav Namestnikov.

Chibrikov continues to make an impression on the Jets coaching staff during his first recall of the season and the second of his career.

He's up to two goals and three points in two games this season to go along with his goal in Game 82 of last season. He's also handling his defensive responsibilities and doing the little things that earn the trust of the coaching staff.

Although Brad Lambert showed fairly well in his four games with the Jets, it's easy to see why the Jets wanted to get a look at Chibrikov as well — and he's been making the most of that opportunity.

Chibrikov is doing what he can to make it a tough decision for the Jets to send him back to the Manitoba Moose of the American Hockey League once the team is back to full health and that's all that a prospect can do in this situation.

“He's strong on his skates. He's willing to go in those dirty areas. He took a few licks but he's a guy that gets first on the puck and (can) get it out to make a play,” said DeMelo. “He's fearless out there, he's got a good knack for the net and he's been rewarded for going to the net and getting a couple goals.”

THE SAVE

Just past the midway point of the first period, Jets winger Nino Niederreiter made a desperation play that saved a goal.

As a shot caromed off the end boards, it landed directly on the stick of Golden Knights winger Pavel Dorofeyev and with plenty of net to shoot at, it looked like he was going to fire the puck in to tie the game.

Niederreiter fully stretched out and tipped the puck enough so that Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck could get into position to make the save.

MANITOBA CONTENT

The Golden Knights' roster features four Manitobans and they played a prominent role in the outcome of this one.

Keegan Kolesar took advantage of a defensive zone turnover and ripped a quick shot past Hellebuyck for his seventh goal of the season at 4:34 of the third period.

Then with the Golden Knights enjoying a lengthy two-man advantage late in regulation time, Winnipegger Mark Stone made a perfect cross-seam pass to Olofsson, who tied the game 2-2 with 1:49 to go in the third period.

Stone is also the player who was tripped by DeMelo to ensure there would be the lengthy two-man advantage for the Golden Knights.

Oakbank product Brett Howden was held off the scoresheet, but finished with two shots on goal and four hits in 14:03 of ice time.

Defenceman Zach Whitecloud returned to the Golden Knights lineup for the first time in nearly three weeks and finished with just under 16 minutes of ice time.

AFTERBURNER

Key play

Barbashev converts a pass from Theodore on a two-on-one rush at 3:47 of overtime to secure the bonus point.

The three stars

Shea Theodore: Golden Knights, Set up the 2-2 goal and the overtime winner.

Connor Hellebuyck: Jets, Finished with 33 saves.

Ivan Barbashev: Golden Knights, Scored the overtime clincher.

EXTRA, EXTRA

Jets forward Nikolaj Ehlers skated on his own for a third consecutive day, but Arniel wasn't sure when he would be ready to rejoin the main group in a non-contact jersey. He's missed the past seven games with a lower-body issue he sustained in the first meeting of the season against the Golden Knights.

Arniel said Jets defenceman Dylan Samberg wouldn't be back in action until the calendar turns to 2025. He's been out with a broken foot since Nov. 23. Jets forward David Gustafsson remains in concussion protocol.

The Jets placed forward Henri Nikkanen on unconditional waivers on Thursday, with the purpose of terminating his contract. Nikkanen, who was chosen by the Jets in the fourth round (113th overall) in the 2019 NHL Draft, is heading back to play overseas after spending the past two seasons and change with the Manitoba Moose. The Finnish centre had essentially stalled in his development with one goal and four points in 13 games with the Moose this season. The chances are high Nikkanen wouldn't have been given a qualifying offer in June and would have become an unrestricted free agent anyway, so this move simply speeds up the process.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/business/2024/12/12/we-need-to-fill-the-building>

'We need to fill the building'

Jets get creative in effort to attract corporate support

By: Mike McIntyre

The Winnipeg Jets are taking an aggressive new approach to boost attendance — a nagging issue that's put the team on the NHL radar for the wrong reasons.

The club has been doing its part on the ice; a stellar start has has them near the top of the standings and looking like a serious Stanley Cup contender.

But that success hasn't been duplicated at the box office. The organization has reported only modest attendance gains and is still well below its targeted season-ticket goal.

There's an increased sense of urgency to get that number up as reflected by a beefed-up sales and marketing team and the implementation of a new game plan aimed at Winnipeg's corporate community.

“We feel good about the momentum that’s been created, but there’s still more to do,” Rob Mullenwey, the new senior VP of ticket sales and service, told the Free Press Thursday.

“Our goal is to be sold out every night. We’re not there.”

The average crowd count for the first 13 games this year (not including Thursday against the Vegas Golden Knights) was 13,770, which represents 90.4 per cent capacity inside Canada Life Centre. That is 30th overall in the NHL in terms of raw numbers — only San Jose and Utah draw fewer customers — and 25th overall in terms of capacity.

It marks an increase from the 12,170 the Jets averaged in the first 13 games last year, which is largely a product of stronger walk-up sales for a high-flying team that set a new NHL record by winning 15 of its first 16 games.

But what might that look like if the Jets were 9-21 through their first 30 contests, rather than 21-9?

“We need to fill the building,” said Bram Strain, the president and CEO of the Business Council of Manitoba and a Jets season-ticket holder who has been working closely with the organization.

The bad news is the season-ticket base is currently at 10,000, which is up about 500 from last year’s all-time low but still 3,000 short of what True North Sports and Entertainment co-owner Mark Chipman and league commissioner Gary Bettman have said is needed to ensure the Jets remain viable and competitive in the league’s smallest market.

Winnipeg had 13,000 season-ticket holders from 2011 through 2018 — with non-stop sellouts at the downtown rink — before the numbers began to nose-dive starting in 2018 and only got worse during and following the global pandemic.

“If you want quality on the ice, you have to pay to the (salary) cap,” said Strain.

Jets attendance by the numbers

HOME GAMES THIS SEASON:

Oct. 11 vs. Chicago: 14,564

Oct. 13 vs. Minnesota: 12,916

Oct. 18 vs. San Jose: 13,422

In publicly sounding the alarm last season, Chipman revealed that only about 15 per cent of the team’s season-ticket holders were from businesses, with private citizens accounting for the other 85 per cent. That is, by far, the lowest corporate support in the league. Some Canadian markets sell more than 50 per cent of their season tickets to businesses.

“As a big-league, big-city team — and the Jets do define us somewhat worldwide as a brand — if you want them to win, you have to spend to the cap (\$88 million this season, projected to rise to more than \$92 million next year),” said Strain.

“It’s incumbent on big and small and medium-sized enterprises to play their part. It’s not like they’re asking for donations. This is for a high-value product.”

According to MULLOWNEY, the club is “north of 20 per cent” when it comes to businesses this year.

The Jets got 95 per cent renewals of their existing 9,500 season-ticket holders and added more than 1,000 new customers during the summer with a heavy emphasis on businesses.

“We like the direction we’re going, but we’re not all the way there,” said MULLOWNEY, who started his role in March after previous stints with the Ottawa Senators and Vancouver Canucks.

“We’ve reinvested a lot of resources into sales and service over the last 12 months. We have the largest sales and services team we’ve ever had. I think that’s an example of the organization understanding where we’ve been and understanding what’s required to get us back to where we want to be.”

Beginning Friday, the Jets are introducing a new “Biz Pass” they hope will lead to a much-needed spike in sales within the corporate community and shore up the foundation so that they are not so reliant on Joe and Jane Fan to carry such a heavy load.

“Businesses can set a budget and choose the games that work for them, for various means,” said MULLOWNEY.

“Whether it’s engaging employees, celebrating a milestone, hosting customers, it’s a flexible ticket offering that we feel positions us better within the business market. It’s a new opportunity for us, and we’ll see how it goes and what the reaction is in the market.”

The Biz Pass is the result of feedback the Jets have received in ongoing meetings and discussions over recent months. There are three different price levels of investment for the second-half of the current season — \$2,000, \$5,000 or \$10,000 — followed by discussions with a ticket agent to pick the numbers of games and tickets the price point will cover.

“They could use it all for one game, they could go to two or three games. It’s up to them. There’s different prices based on the day of the week and the opponent,” said MULLOWNEY.

“When you look across the NHL, flexible ticket offerings are becoming more and more current. I don’t think we’re reinventing the wheel here, but we’re looking at how we can better penetrate a particular segment. That segment is asking us and looking for more flexibility.”

Winning combination

A win for the Winnipeg Jets is a win for downtown restaurants and bars, the people who work there say.

Local Public Eatery on Garry Street is one of several to track a year-over-year increase in foot traffic related to Jets games.

“There are more people coming in (who are) excited about the team,” said general manager Riley Edwards. “Obviously, a historic start to the year.”

The Jets are also hoping they are now giving people more bang for their buck, with improved game-day amenities such as contactless entry to the rink, better concessions and entertainment.

“The quality of the experience has elevated the last couple of years,” said Strain, noting millions of dollars have been poured into arena upgrades, in addition to all of the other projects being tackled by True North in downtown Winnipeg.

“We are in this together. And you’d be hard-pressed to find an owner more invested in the community.”

There has also been a noticeable effort to re-engage with a fan base the club has admitted it may have taken for granted in the past, including enhanced perks for season-ticket holders, such as players making personal visits to deliver prizes and merchandise.

“Each of those are individual things, but they all add up to creating that momentum that positions us in a way to keep building,” said Mallowney.

A good part of his job has been to reconnect with former corporate ticket holders, including some who were disgruntled and walked away. Chipman has admitted the Jets didn’t do a great job of customer service in the past, as tickets essentially sold themselves in the first decade after the NHL returned to Winnipeg.

“There’s certainly been some of those conversations,” said Mallowney.

“But they’ve been positive conversations, with customers bringing forward their concerns and their rationale. One thing that has been consistent is their commitment and their fandom of our team. And we’ve been successful in winning some of those customers back. Some will take a little more time.”

According to TSN, the Jets’ regional TV broadcaster, the average game audience this year is 268,000, which makes it the most-watched season not including the COVID campaign in 2021, That’s a big jump from 210,000 last year, showing Winnipeg’s hot start has got the public’s attention.

The mission for True North now is getting more of those people off the couch and into the building.

The Jets have registered three sellouts so far this year, and upcoming home games Saturday (Montreal) and next Saturday (Minnesota) are trending in that direction. They hope to keep that going for the remaining 25 home dates that will come after Christmas, including eight straight to kick off January.

Winnipeg didn't record its first sellout last year until Dec. 30, eventually finishing with 10 as sales surged in the second half — Bettman's in-person visit to figuratively pound the table likely played a role — which pushed average attendance up to 13,490.

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/jets-bitten-by-vegas-again-this-time-in-ot>

Jets blow late lead, bitten by Vegas again, this time in OT

By Paul Friesen

Make it eight straight regular-season losses for the Winnipeg Jets against Vegas.

Ivan Barbashev scored with 1:13 left in overtime to give the Golden Knights a 3-2 win on Thursday, capping a wild final 20-plus minutes that produced an all-too-familiar result.

The loss drops the Jets to 21-9-1, while Vegas won its fourth straight to improve to 19-7-3.

After a relatively dull 40 minutes in which the Jets didn't muster much of anything — but still held a 1-0 lead — the game came to life in the third.

Manitoban Keegan Kolesar got the action started with his seventh of the season less than five minutes in to tie it for Vegas.

The home side appeared no match for the pressure that followed, and it seemed just a matter of time before the Golden Knights got another.

That's when defenceman Josh Morrissey loaded his rifle and fired a blast into the top, short-side corner over the shoulder of goalie Adin Hill.

Winnipeg appeared ready to ride that 2-1 lead across the finish line.

But with less than three minutes to go, Gabe Vilardi took a tripping penalty, and if that wasn't bad enough Dylan DeMelo took one 13 seconds later.

Jets fans had barely gotten into their "Ref you suck" chant — power plays favoured Vegas 5-1 by then — when Vegas's Victor Olofsson finished a tic-tac-toe play to even it up on the five-on-three.

The loss ruined what could have been a special night for a Jets rookie.

A goal in your first NHL game is cool enough. Another in your second, even if it's the following season, is quite something.

But to make it three in three?

Take a bow, Nikita Chibrikov.

Called up from the farm this week, Chibrikov's snipe allowed the Jets to escape the first period with the lead.

Shots favoured the Golden Knights, 12-4, in the first 20 minutes.

The Jets remained stuck at four shots until there were less than seven minutes to go in the second, going a stretch of nearly 19 minutes without putting the puck on the Vegas net.

Shots through two: 22-10, Vegas.

The final count: 36-20.

Winnipeg closes out this four-game home stand against Patrik Laine and the Montreal Canadiens on Saturday.

The Habs will be in an ornery mood, as they lost, 9-2, at home to Pittsburgh on Thursday.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/bad-call-sure-but-jets-got-what-they-deserved-against-vegas>

Bad call, sure, but Jets got what they deserved against Vegas

By Paul Friesen

The Winnipeg Jets had yet to lose a game this season when leading after the first period.

Bad call, sure, but Jets got what they deserved against Vegas

Going into Thursday night, they had yet to lose a game when leading after the second period.

Those 10- and 15-game streaks, respectively, came crashing down against a familiar foe, keeping another, more humbling streak alive.

A 3-2 overtime loss to the Vegas Golden Knights made it eight straight regular-season losses to Winnipeg's Western Conference rival.

Some might colour this one striped. As in, tainted by the officiating.

The Jets appeared ready to ride a 2-1 lead across the finish line, but with less than three minutes to go, Gabe Vilardi took a tripping penalty. It was legit.

Dylan DeMelo's, 13 seconds later, less so.

Jets fans had barely gotten into their "Ref you suck" chant – power plays favoured Vegas 5-1 by then – when Vegas's Victor Olofsson finished a tic-tac-toe play to even it up on the five-on-three.

In overtime, the Jets got caught on a bad line change and Ivan Barbashev made them pay.

"I've seen guys do a lot worse and not get a call," DeMelo said of his costly infraction. "So that's a tough pill to swallow. We all know at the end of games or overtime it has got to be pretty egregious to be a penalty, and he deemed it so."

DeMelo's head coach seemed equally puzzled.

"Yeah, pretty much," Scott Arniel said. "Gabe's was a penalty, 200 feet from our net. That was a penalty. Not talking about the other one."

There was plenty of other stuff to talk about, though, stuff Arniel's team didn't do well, in the end getting what it deserved.

"The hockey gods probably earned them those power plays," is how defenceman Josh Morrissey put it. "When we didn't have our best in the first two."

"I didn't think we attacked like they attacked it," Arniel said. "The shot attempts were almost double in this game."

Favouring the visitors.

Through 40 minutes, the Jets were badly out-shot (22-10) and out-chanced.

"They made it really hard to get through," DeMelo said. "They played really good and we didn't really match that. And then the third period was better."

In the two-plus years since he arrived in Winnipeg as Rick Bowness's assistant, head coach Scott Arniel has yet to enjoy a regular-season win against Vegas.

This latest loss leaves his team at 21-9-1, while Vegas won its fourth straight to improve to 19-7-3.

The Jets held an unlikely 1-0 lead through two periods thanks to goalie Connor Hellebuyck.

"Made a ton of big saves through the first two periods where probably an average goalie or even a really good goalie in the league would probably give a few up," Morrissey said. "He was unreal."

Hellebuyck couldn't stop Manitoban Keegan Kolesar from scoring less than five minutes into the third to tie it.

For the next several minutes Vegas poured it on and another goal seemed imminent.

That's when Morrissey's blast beat goalie Adin Hill, giving his team some life.

"The conversation in the locker room going into the third is you've got to find different ways to win," Morrissey said.

This time they found a new way to lose: it was their first loss in five overtimes this season,

"Three on three is a coin flip," DeMelo said. "Like, it's essentially glorified pond hockey, with some pretty good players on both teams... it's fun to watch, and it's great. But it's not hockey."

He's right.

But it counts.

The next chance for the Jets to make it count comes at home against Montreal on Saturday.

"Our team's pretty good at recognizing when we don't play the way we need to," Arniel said. "Hopefully for the next game we'll be a heck of a lot better."

'Lock him up'

The loss put a damper on what could have been a special night for a Jets rookie.

Nikita Chibrikov's first-period goal continued his run of a goal in every NHL game he's played, a streak now at three.

Sign him long-term, says Morrissey.

"We should probably lock him up now before he does that for the rest of the year," the defenceman said. "He's just a really smart player. He's not the tallest guy but he's strong on his skates. Strong on pucks and on his stick. It's not an easy transition, either, coming up from the minors and not playing from the start of the season with our team."

Called up from the farm this week, Chibrikov scored against Boston on Tuesday, his second career game.

His first goal came as he made his NHL debut in the last regular-season game last year.

"He does a lot of good things," Arniel said. "Lots of times, you're concerned that maybe without the puck he might be a liability, but that line had lots of good looks. They had some zone time and that's what you hope for when a guy like that goes in there.

"He's taking advantage of the opportunity that's put in front of him."

Chibrikov is in the second-line spot while Nik Ehlers remains sidelined with a foot injury.

Ehlers has resumed skating but hasn't taken part in a full practice, yet.

Las Vegas Review Journal

<https://www.reviewjournal.com/sports/goldenknights/knights-rally-past-jets-in-ot-to-win-4th-straight-3227634/>

3 takeaways from Knights' win: Domination of Jets continues

By Danny Webster Las Vegas Review-Journal

Right wing Keegan Kolesar put it best. Games are 60 minutes for a reason.

There are times when it takes mere seconds for everything to flip in another direction. The Golden Knights found themselves in one such spot Thursday against the Winnipeg Jets at Canada Life Centre.

The Knights were trailing late in the third period despite being in control most of the game. Two tripping penalties by the Jets then opened the door to a comeback.

Right wing Victor Olofsson tied the game with a power-play goal with 1:49 remaining in regulation, then left wing Ivan Barbashev scored with 1:15 left in overtime to hand the Knights their fourth consecutive victory.

“We didn’t let it waver in any way in our play,” Kolesar said. “Played right up to the whistle, and we got the two points.”

The Knights (19-7-3) trailed 2-1 in the third after defenseman Josh Morrissey scored for Winnipeg with 9:05 remaining.

But the Jets gave their opponent life. Winnipeg center Gabriel Vilardi tripped defenseman Shea Theodore in the defensive zone with 2:40 left in the third to give the Knights their third power play of the game.

Jets defenseman Dylan DeMelo tripped captain Mark Stone 13 seconds later. The Knights had 1:47 to score on a two-man advantage, and capitalized when Stone set up Olofsson.

Barbashev proceeded to finish a two-on-one in overtime to end things after Theodore forced a turnover in the neutral zone. It was the first overtime goal of Barbashev’s 544-game NHL career.

“If something doesn’t go your way in the first minute or whatever it may be, you have another 59 minutes to play,” Kolesar said.

Goaltender Adin Hill made 18 saves for the Knights to improve to 7-1-1 in his last nine starts. It was the team’s eighth straight win over the Jets. The Knights have won 12 of their last 13 meetings with Winnipeg, including their five-game playoff series victory in the first round in 2023.

“We were down 2-1 in the third, and I thought we played really well,” coach Bruce Cassidy said. “We didn’t give up much for two periods, but hung in there.”

Here are three takeaways from the win:

1. Stone on the power play

The Knights’ power play suffered when Stone was out 14 games with a lower-body injury.

It’s looked much better since his return. The Knights scored two power-play goals in Stone’s first game back against the Dallas Stars on Dec. 6, then converted again Thursday.

Stone’s passing played a key role in Olofsson’s goal. His skates were on the goal line and he slid the puck across the offensive zone to Olofsson for a one-timer.

It was Stone’s second power-play assist since coming back, with both coming from the goal line. It’s an extra dimension he adds to the Knights’ attack.

2. Deserved to win

The Knights, in their first game following a five-day break, played like a well-rested team. They had a 12-4 edge in shots in the first period.

The Knights still trailed 1-0 thanks to a rebound goal from Winnipeg right wing Nikita Chibrikov, but they were proud of their start.

They carried that effort over to the rest of the game. The Knights had a 84-43 edge in shot attempts, a 37-13 edge in scoring chances and a 17-5 edge in high-danger scoring chances Thursday.

They weren’t rewarded until Kolesar’s goal 4:34 into the third period, but they stuck with it and came out with a win.

3. Whitecloud returns

Defenseman Zach Whitecloud returned to the Knights’ lineup Thursday after missing seven games with an upper-body injury.

The Brandon, Manitoba, native was a minus-2 in 15:55, but his return marked the first time the team had its entire lineup healthy and available.