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A Special Trip

"It's awesome to be able to do this with her." -Perfetti

By Mitchell Clinton

SAN JOSE – There may be some rain in San Jose on Monday in San Jose, but it's certainly not dampening any spirits for the moms and sisters joining the Winnipeg Jets on the road this week.

"To share the experience with them and get to have them see how we travel, them to see how we're treated, the day-to-day of being on the road, it's super special," said captain Adam Lowry. "They've played such important roles in our careers and our upbringing, it's just a small way that we get to share what we've been so privileged to experience playing in the NHL."

After a four-hour flight on Sunday and a team dinner shortly after arrival, it's evident that the friendships have already been built. It was also the players' first chance to make sure their moms got to dinner on time.

"Growing up it was the other way around, they were making sure we were on the bus or at places on time, now it's roles reversed," laughed Lowry. "It's been a lot of fun getting to see where everyone is from, where they get their personality, or things like that."

Are any of those personality traits obvious? Head coach Scott Arniel isn't saying.

"There actually are a few, I won't name anybody but you can see it," Arniel grinned. "These guys, they had the dads out last year and now they have the sisters and moms. It's a special time for them, not only for the players but also the mothers."

For Cole Perfetti, he's excited his mom – Sandra – gets to have the same experience his dad, Angelo, had last season.

In fact, she knew about the trip before her son did.

As they always say, 'a mother always knows.'

"I had mentioned to her 'I think we're going to do a mom's trip, it's not 100 percent, but I kind of heard we might be,'" Perfetti said. "Then all of a sudden, she heard we were doing it. So she was super excited. Right away she was really amped to do this. It's awesome to be able to do this with her."

The special guests watched the 30-minute skate at SAP Center on Monday. David Gustafsson was part of the session in a non-contact jersey, his first time on the ice since leaving the 8-1 win over the Boston Bruins a little under a week ago.

"He's still in the concussion protocol but he's further along," said Arniel. "He got on the bike yesterday, now he gets to get on the ice. We'll just move him along here. No rush, obviously with concussions it's a tricky area, so we'll go day-to-day."

Nikolaj Ehlers graduated from a non-contact to a regular jersey, but wasn't part of line rushes and Arniel said it's still a day-to-day process with Ehlers at this point.

The full line rushes looked like this:

Connor-Scheifele-Vilardi
Perfetti-Namestnikov-Chibrikov
Niederreiter-Lowry-Appleton
Barron-Kupari-Iafallo

Morrissey-DeMelo
Fleury-Pionk
Stanley-Miller
Heinola-Coghlan

Dating back to November 22, the Jets have played at least every other day (including two back-to-back sets), so to wake up on Monday and not have a game that night was a welcome change for the group that had played 13 games in 23 days.

"It's a bit of a mental reset," said Lowry. "Sometimes the limited practice time, those days in between games, you're just trying to rest as much as possible and you miss out on the important things with hockey - mental sharpness, and structure-wise - and being able to work on that in practice today, hopefully it helps for this road trip coming up."

The trip will be short, just two games on back-to-back nights against San Jose and Anaheim, but the Jets won't be taking either opponent lightly – even though they're seventh and eighth in the Pacific Division, respectively.

Winnipeg beat San Jose 8-3 on October 18 with Perfetti, Vladislav Namestnikov, and Neal Pionk registering four-point nights.

"They're young, they have a lot of firepower, guys that are shifty and can make plays," said Perfetti. "It's always tough against these guys, we always have a tough time in this building. I think with that two-day break, we needed that, and we're feeling good going into it coming off a nice win."

The goal, of course, is to keep those good vibes going with their moms in the building.

"It's the little things like seeing how we travel and seeing our hotel, going behind-the-scenes on the day-to-day stuff they don't typically see," said Perfetti. "We're pretty spoiled, so it's nice to spoil her too and have her on this trip. It's great to have all the moms, the sisters, and meet some new people. It's been fantastic so far."

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/12/16/moms-the-word-6>

Mom's the word Mothers join Jets for California road swing

By: Mike McIntyre

They are the unsung heroes who helped keep everything at home running smoothly long before their hockey-obsessed boys grew up to become household names around here.

Now the mothers of the Winnipeg Jets are getting their well-deserved moment in the sun, joining the team on its quick California road trip this week for an up-close, VIP look at life in the big leagues.

"They've played such important roles in our careers and our upbringing, it's just a small way that we get to share what we've been so privileged to experience playing in the NHL," Jets captain Adam Lowry told team media following Monday's practice in San Jose.

Lowry recalls how it was his mother, Elaine, who always ensured he got to the rink in time or had enough food in his belly as he was growing up.

"Now it's roles reversed," he said of being able to pamper them. "To share the experience with them and get to have them see how we travel, them to see how we're treated, the day-to-day of being on the road, it's super special."

This is the second Mom's trip in Jets history, with the previous one taking place in 2020. You don't need to remind the players who are still around from that team that they went 0-3-0 through Carolina, Columbus and Chicago.

Winnipeg will be hoping for a better showing this time around as they face the San Jose Sharks on Tuesday, then wrap it up on Wednesday night against the Anaheim Ducks.

"It's been awesome. My mom put a lot into this. So now being able to celebrate, it comes full circle," Jets forward Cole Perfetti told team media.

"I'm really grateful that my mom is here and able to get this experience, and I'm able to experience it with her. We had a great dinner (Sunday) night, and it's the little things like seeing how we travel and seeing our hotel, going behind-the-scenes on the day-to-day stuff they don't typically see. We're pretty spoiled, so it's nice to spoil her too and have her on this trip."

Indeed, the Jets have planned a series of events for the mothers (and some sisters, too) including visiting a winery. Patty Samberg even joined her son, Dylan, on the stationary bike Monday as he works his way back from a broken foot.

Jets coach Scott Arniel joked that he's come to realize the apple doesn't fall from the tree in many cases as he's gotten to know some of the mothers.

"I won't name anybody but you can see it. There are some similarities there," he told team media. "It's a special time for them, not only for the players but also the mothers."

The 22-9-1 Jets are looking to keep the momentum going following a 2-1-1 homestand which ended Saturday with a 4-2 victory over the Montreal Canadiens. This has been their first two-day break in a month

"It's nice to get a full day off (Sunday) and then get a nice practice in (Monday) and get our feet going again. It was well needed," said Perfetti.

Although the 11-17-5 Sharks have lost four of their past five games, they've been playing some better hockey overall in the past month and have plenty of exciting young talent including rookie Macklin Celebrini, who was injured back on Oct. 18 when San Jose came to Winnipeg and lost 8-3. The teen has 20 points (10G, 10A) through his first 21 games.

"I think as a team, when you're young and there isn't a lot of expectations, there is a lot of room for growth. They've taken a step forward, they play hard," said Lowry.

"You look at their record since we played them, it's certainly improved. They're a team a lot like Montreal. They're good off the rush, they can create there, they have a lot of smaller skilled forwards that like to make plays. It's going to be important we play a similar style to Montreal in terms of what we gave up."

Connor Hellebuyck is expected to make his 26th start of the year, with backup Eric Comrie likely getting the assignment 24 hours later in Anaheim.

As for other potential lineup news, injured forward Nikolaj Ehlers shed his non-contact jersey Monday and was a full participant in practice. He's been out with a lower-body injury suffered Nov. 29 in Vegas.

Could he return against the Sharks?

"That was the first full practice with us. We'll move forward here. We'll talk about it and see where he's at with (trainer Rob Milette) and we'll see where it goes," said Arniel.

Forward David Gustafsson also resumed skating Monday after suffering a concussion last Tuesday against the Boston Bruins.

"He's still in the concussion protocol but he's further along," said Arniel.

"He got on the bike (Sunday), now he gets to get on the ice. We'll just move him along here. No rush, obviously with concussions it's a tricky area, so we'll go day-to-day."

Following this trip, the Jets will get another two-day break before facing the Minnesota Wild on Saturday at Canada Life Centre. They'll then head to Toronto for a Monday matinee before a four-day break for the holidays.

"It's always tough against these guys, we always have a tough time in this building," Perfetti said of the Sharks. "I think with that two-day break, we needed that, and we're feeling good going into it coming off a nice win. We're feeling good."

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/a-lot-of-strange-things-jets-in-foreign-territory-in-san-jose-pressures-on-to-win-a-couple-for-mom-gustafsson-and-ehlers-a-step-closer>

'A lot of strange things': Jets in foreign territory in San Jose ... Pressure's on to win a couple for mom ... Gustafsson and Ehlers a step closer

By Paul Friesen

The pace they set through their first 16 games was historic, their 15-1 mark best the NHL has ever seen.

Their record over the next 16 was as mediocre as it gets.

Starting in San Jose on Tuesday, the Winnipeg Jets will try to look more like their early-season selves as they move on to the next phase of their season.

They have at least one thing going for them: Rest.

Two days without a game felt like a reset for a team that played 13 in the previous 23 days.

"Kind of foreign," head coach Scott Arniel called it after a practice in San Jose on Monday. "Hopefully it makes us, because of the back-to-back, fresh for both games."

After the Sharks on Tuesday, the Jets will head south to face Anaheim on Wednesday, a set not nearly as daunting as the back-to-backs that involve more travel and less rest leading into them.

"There have been a lot of strange things," captain Adam Lowry said. "It's like being at home for a week was weird, having that home stand. Getting these two days, it's nice waking up this morning and realizing you don't have to get ready for a game. It's a bit of a mental reset.

"November and the start of December was obviously a grind."

The Jets went 2-1-1 in their week at home, capping a middling, 7-8-1 run since that jailbreak of a start.

This team didn't handle its first set of back-to-backs very well, dropping the second game, 4-1, to Nashville last month, after grabbing a 4-1 win in Pittsburgh.

The Sharks and Ducks aren't quite in the same lowly area code as the Predators, but they do occupy the bottom two rungs in the basement of the Pacific Division, with just 11 wins each.

The only teams with a lower points percentage than San Jose's .409 are Nashville and Chicago.

Playing down to the level of their opponent has been a Jets tendency at times.

It wasn't when they faced the Sharks in Winnipeg in the fourth game of the season, though: they skewered them, 8-3.

Nik Ehlers and Cole Perfetti each scored twice in that one, and while Ehlers took part in his first full practice on Monday he's not a slam-dunk to be in the lineup on Tuesday.

Perfetti, on the other hand, is.

"They're young, they have a lot of firepower, guys that are shifty and can make plays," Perfetti said of the 11-17-5 Sharks. "We always have a tough time in this building. With that two-day break, we needed that, and we're feeling good going into it coming off a nice win."

When we last saw the Jets, they were leaving the ice with a 4-2 win over Montreal, continuing a five-game stretch of win-one, lose-one.

Lowry says the Sharks are a bit like the Habs: younger, smaller, skilled — and not burdened by a ton of expectations.

"They've taken a step forward, they play hard," he said. "You look at their record since we played them, it's certainly improved. It's going to be important we play a similar style to Montreal in terms of what we gave up."

Look no further than rookie Macklin Celebrini for an example of the Sharks' current makeup.

The first-overall draft pick has 10 goals, 10 assists in his first 21 NHL games, including three game-winners.

Former Jet Tyler Toffoli leads San Jose with a dozen goals.

Mom's the word

Many players have their mothers or sisters in tow on this California trip, as the Jets continue the NHL practice of taking family members or mentors on the road.

It's a chance for a parent who put so much work into their son's career choice to get a behind-the-scenes look at how it's paid off.

"It's been awesome," Perfetti said. "My mom put a lot into this. So now being able to celebrate, it comes full circle. We did the dads trip last year, so that was the first time doing that and that was pretty special too. It's the little things like seeing how we travel and seeing our hotel, going behind-the-scenes on the day-to-day stuff they don't typically see.

"We're pretty spoiled, so it's nice to spoil her, too."

"Wrangling the moms together, they're having a great time," Lowry said. "Growing up it was the other way around. They were making sure we were on the bus or at places on time. Now it's roles reversed."

They'd like to reverse the results this year, too, as the moms went 0-3 the last time (January of 2020).

"I already got a call and I've seen a couple of dads, they were talking about their winning record the last couple of years," Arniel said going into the trip. "So the moms better be ready. We'll have to make sure that they fire up their sons for this road trip."

Heads-up for Gustafsson

Ehlers wasn't the only back for practice on Monday.

Forward David Gustafsson also suited up, although he wasn't taking any contact as he continues to recover from a concussion suffered in a fight against Boston last week.

"He's further along," Arniel said. "He got on the bike (Sunday), now he gets on the ice. No rush. Obviously with concussions it's a tricky area, so we'll go day-to-day."

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/5996419/2024/12/16/winnipeg-jets-josh-morrissey-connor-hellebuyck/>

With Jets mom's trip underway, Josh Morrissey reflects on mom's hockey-first support

By Murat Ates

Josh Morrissey is well aware that his dad, Tom, gets a lot of credit for his hockey career.

Before Tom died, Morrissey called his dad after every game to talk shop. Josh attended (and volunteered at) his dad's "D-Rules" hockey camp for defencemen. Their close relationship was well documented, particularly after Tom's brain cancer.

Morrissey's mom, Bev Jarvis, hasn't always gotten the acclaim she deserves.

"I think there's the misconception that the dad is the hockey driver, the coach, etc.," Morrissey told The Athletic before the Winnipeg Jets' mom's trip, which began on Sunday. "In my experience, they each had their own attributes to bring and both were important in my development as a young man and as an athlete."

Josh and his little brother, Jake, both played hockey throughout their youth. There were times when Tom was with Jake in Vancouver and Bev was on the road with Josh in Saskatoon. Minor hockey championships were often won or lost with Bev at Josh's side. Long prairie highways could mean long, impactful conversations. WHL championships, NHL success, and a hockey career under the microscope made Morrissey's mom a vital sounding board.

"As my career evolved, whenever I'd pick up the phone and talk to her, it was never about hockey first. It was just about how I was doing first," Morrissey said. "She's very aware of every game, every minute. I don't think she misses a shift. ... But her tone or her entry into the conversation is never different, whether I caused the game-winning goal or scored the game-winning goal. She's just speaking to me with the same enthusiasm and compassion. That sense of even keel and unwavering support is something I've always felt."

Winnipeg plays San Jose on Tuesday and Anaheim on Wednesday, giving the Jets' moms an itinerary that involves Napa Valley wine tastings and two beatable opponents. The former should be a treat; Morrissey and his mom still reminisce about the last mom's trip back in 2020. It means a lot to Morrissey to share the perks of NHL life with his mom.

“It’s cool to be able to show people in your life what it’s like to play in the NHL and go on the road — from how we travel, how we’re treated. ... You know, we call it the ‘Never Hungry League, the NHL.’ There’s food everywhere. We’re pretty spoiled and it’s just cool to be able to share that experience with them, because otherwise, they wouldn’t know. And I don’t think the stories or descriptions do it justice.”

The ‘beatable opponents bit’ is worth mentioning because the Jets didn’t win a single game on their last mom’s trip.

“We’re coming on the plane afterwards and it was ... very supportive, let’s say,” Morrissey said, laughing. “Whereas the dads were very hockey results-based. They’re still supportive but in a different way.”

Tom and Bev separated almost 15 years before Tom died. That didn’t stop Jarvis from emerging as an enormous source of support when Tom had cancer. Morrissey is grateful to his mom for so many things — from the phone calls to the long drives to her emotional intelligence — but one thing comes most dearly to mind.

“There was no greater period of time than when my dad got sick,” Morrissey said. “Her support for my brother and I during that time — and for my dad. They were married for a long time but had been divorced and not together for over 10 years, almost 15 years at that point in time. Even through that period, her support for him in ways she could help was instrumental ... I wouldn’t have been able to get through it without her.”

Morrissey recognizes that no divorce is easy and every situation is different. He is grateful to both of his parents for how they showed up for their two boys.

“Whatever may have been going on between them — I mean, you get divorced, it’s not an easy time — they always maintained support for us. They always acted the way that they need to, I suppose, for my brother and I. Then throughout the years, time goes on. I wouldn’t say they were close by any means but there was probably a mutual respect and even, at times, both of them acknowledged and recognized that ‘it didn’t work out for us but we’ll always share the bond of you kids.’”

The irony of Hellebuyck’s big save on Laine

Connor Hellebuyck’s dad Chuck vividly remembers the day Connor told him not to sign him up for goalie camp.

“I want to say maybe he was 8 or 10 years old. There were goalie camps going on,” Chuck said. “We didn’t have a ton of money but I asked Connor if he wanted us to sign him up for this goalie camp. He says, ‘Dad, no. That’s a waste of money. All they’re going to do is try to change my game. They don’t understand the way I play. Don’t do it.’”

Hockey fans familiar with the adult Hellebuyck, a two-time Vezina Trophy winner who doubled down on his own process in the face of playoff adversity, might not be surprised. Hellebuyck may be one of one as an NHL goaltender, but he had to come from somewhere.

So father and son save their money and skip camp. Months go by. Later that season, a different goaltending camp was using the ice before one of Hellebuyck’s practices. Chuck watched one day as the instructor — a goaltender who’d achieved a level of success, as he recalls — answered a slew of parents’ questions about how their kids were playing.

“I’m just standing there, waiting to watch Connor practice, just listening,” Chuck said. “The coach finally ended up getting frustrated. He looks at all the parents and he goes, ‘Do you want to see how your kid should be playing goalie? Watch that kid out there. Pretty much everything that kid is doing is what your kid should be doing if they want to be successful.’ And he walked away.”

It was an early version of an experience Chuck has seen with his son several times — first in Michigan; then in Odessa, Texas; at UMass-Lowell in the NCAA; and now in the NHL. Connor makes bold claims and then proves those claims true.

“It was shocking to me. He was a kid. What could he know?” Chuck said. “But then there was this adult who had played some goalie and ran this camp. It completely changed how I looked at Connor’s approach to his game.”

This brings us to Patrik Laine and the circus save Hellebuyck made on Saturday night in Winnipeg. Remember that the outcome of Hellebuyck’s self-assured childhood approach to his game is a style he proudly calls “big and boring.” Hellebuyck’s focus is on reading the play, taking the most efficient body position and using his biomechanical expertise to stop pucks without highlight-reel acrobatics.

It’s a style so effective that Hellebuyck has followed up his second Vezina Trophy with an even better save percentage and goals-saved-above-expected rate than last year.

But this ... this is anything but boring:

“It’s one of those things where I’ll say, ‘if I screw up, I can make a good save,’” Hellebuyck said on Saturday. “When they pass it down (to Laine), I had lost it for a second ... By the time I picked it up, it was on its way to the net, so the only thing I could do was just flail and try and make something cool — and thank God I did.”

It’s amazing in one way and ironic in another. Hellebuyck made a ridiculous save and ended up on a highlight reel as the result of a mistake. One of the reasons he doesn’t end up on highlight reels more often is his commitment to making saves through angles and hockey IQ instead of depending on athleticism. It’s not like the style is costing Hellebuyck saves, wins or Vezina Trophies, but it did keep him off of Martin Brodeur, Mike Vernon and Henrik Lundqvist’s “best active goalies” lists last season.

It’s having an amusing effect at the minor-league level, too. I recently spoke with an agent — not Hellebuyck’s — who works with youth goaltenders. Whenever he’s talking to kids and teenagers, the agent likes to ask which goalie the kids try to emulate. A startling minority of young goalies choose Hellebuyck — even in the United States. It’s as if they don’t understand Hellebuyck’s advantages, gained through positioning and obsessive understanding of each play, or as if they do understand but don’t think they can replicate it.

Sometimes I facetiously wonder if Hellebuyck’s reputation would be better served if he lost track of the play more often. Meanwhile, Hellebuyck’s dad still gets a kick out of his son’s unique approach to the game.

“I watched so many of those types of saves when he was growing up,” Chuck shared in response to a clip I posted of Connor’s save. “It led to him developing ‘big and boring.’ Less exciting but far more efficient.”

Whatever keeps the Jets in the win column, I guess.

By the way: If Hellebuyck wins his second straight Vezina, he’ll be the first repeat winner since Brodeur did it in 2007 and 2008.

The Hockey News

<https://ca.sports.yahoo.com/news/jets-prospect-finally-finding-game-022354101.html>

Jets Prospect Finally Finding His Game With His New Team

By Julian Gaudio

It took him a while, but Winnipeg Jets prospect Colby Barlow has finally found his game with his new OHL team.

Barlow was a goal-scoring machine with the Owen Sound Attack during his first three OHL seasons, scoring 116 goals in 168 games. He was named captain in his final two seasons with the Attack and scored 40 goals and 58 points in 50 games during the 2023-24 campaign.

In the offseason, he was moved from the Attack to the Oshawa Generals, the runner-ups last year and one of the favourites to win the OHL championship. The Generals are filled with NHL prospects such as Callum Ritchie, Beckett Sennecke, Ben Danford and Luca Marrelli.

Although it can be considered a bit unfair, the expectation was that Barlow would join the Generals and seamlessly fit in, but that wasn't the case. In his first 10 games, the 19-year-old recorded just one goal and two assists. In his next 20 contests, he registered 14 goals and seven assists, giving him 15 goals and 24 points in 30 games.

Barlow was left off of Team Canada's World Junior team for the second consecutive year and wasn't invited to their selection camp. The snub has ignited his already motivated game and with Ritchie off at the World Juniors, more pressure will be put on Barlow to continue to step up.

If Barlow raises his game to another level, the OHL finals could be a rematch of last year's with the Generals seeking revenge over fellow Jets prospect Jacob Julien and the London Knights.