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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-ducks-stun-jets>

***Three things - Ducks stun Jets
Ehlers returns but Jets lose on late goal from Anaheim***

By Jamie Thomas

The Winnipeg Jets looked like they were going to sweep their two-game California road trip but ended up losing 3-2 to the Anaheim Ducks at Honda Center. Gabe Vilardi and Mark Scheifele scored for the Jets who saw their record fall to 23-10-1. Eric Comrie made 28 saves for Winnipeg who will return home to host the Minnesota Wild on Saturday.

RUN SUPPORT

Anaheim was well rested and the Jets were playing on back-to-back nights so it was a good thing Eric Comrie was on his game looking to end his personal four game losing streak. During the four game slide for Comrie, the Jets scored a total of six goals. The top line made sure that they did their part with the game tied in the third, Kyle Connor started in his own end and carried the puck all the way into the Ducks zone before finding Mark Scheifele who hammered in his 18th of the season to give the Jets their first lead.

However, the Ducks would tie it up with the second goal of the night off the stick of Frank Vatrano. And then with 25 seconds left, Anaheim forced a late turnover and Troy Terry would slide the game winner past Comrie to steal the win for Anaheim.

GUESS WHAT? THE POWER PLAY COMES THROUGH

With Anaheim leading 1-0 in the second period, the Jets power play came through with Ross Johnston in the box for roughing. It took Winnipeg all of nine seconds to cash in when Gabe Vilardi tapped in his 14th goal of the season.

Winnipeg did have a chance to close out the Ducks in the third period when Leo Carlsson was in the box for holding but the Ducks held them to just one shot and went on to complete the comeback. The Jets finished the night 1-for-4 on the power play.

EHLERS RETURN

With the Jets not having a morning skate on Wednesday, it was unknown about the status of Nikolaj Ehlers. Just before the game the Jets announced that they activated Ehlers off of injured reserve and he would return after a nine game absence. Ehlers returned to the right side with Cole Perfetti and Vlad Namestnikov and on the top power play unit. The Danish forward would record an assist in 16:51 of ice time and also added two shots on goal.

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/winnipeg-jets-anaheim-ducks-game-recap-december-18>

***Terry's late goal lifts Ducks to comeback win against Jets
Scores winner with 26 seconds left, Vatrano has 3 points for Anaheim***

By Dan Arritt

ANAHEIM -- Troy Terry scored off a turnover with 26 seconds left to lift the Anaheim Ducks to a 3-2 win against the Winnipeg Jets at Honda Center on Wednesday.

Winnipeg had possession in the corner of its zone, but Frank Vatrano poked the puck off the stick of Neal Pionk, and it went to Terry alone in front of the net. He waited out goalie Eric Comrie before scoring the game-winner.

"[Vatrano] is such a good forechecker and he was just able to get a stick on it," Terry said. "When the puck came to me, I knew where everyone was. They were in the corner that I was just coming from, so my first instinct was just to try to hold on to it and take it to the far side."

Anaheim trailed by one with less than five minutes remaining before Vatrano scored his second goal of the game with a slap shot through traffic to tie it 2-2 with 4:46 left in the third period.

Radko Gudas had two assists, and Lukas Dostal made 21 saves for the Ducks (12-14-4).

"This is a win that should give us a lot of confidence," Anaheim coach Greg Cronin said. "It's a team win and we can build off of it."

Gabriel Vilardi and Mark Scheifele scored, Kyle Connor had two assists, and Comrie made 28 saves for the Jets (23-10-1), who were coming off a 4-3 win at the San Jose Sharks on Tuesday.

"We've got to hold each other accountable for what we're doing out there, and we're not doing that," said Winnipeg forward Nikolaj Ehlers, who had missed the previous nine games with a lower-body injury. "We've got some work to do."

The Ducks took a 1-0 lead at 4:45 of the second period when Vatrano scored on a tip-in off a slap shot from the point by Gudas.

"We knew that they were a tired team, they got in late last night. We know what that travel's like," Vatrano said. "For us, we just wanted to play a simple game early and kind of put it down their throat, and I think we did that for most of the game."

The Jets didn't get their first shot on goal until 11:28 of the first period.

"We didn't do anything in the first period," Vilardi said. "It was just Eric, he was the only one playing in the first period."

The Jets started slow in the second period as well and didn't get their first shot until 9:49, but Winnipeg went on its second power play 26 seconds later when Ross Johnston was penalized for roughing against Nino Niederreiter.

The Jets scored nine seconds into the power play when Ehlers made a one-touch centering pass to Vilardi at the top of the crease. The puck hit Vilardi's skate before he swiped it into the net to tie it 1-1 at 10:24.

"We had complete control of the game and then they scored that goal and it happened so quick," Cronin said. "I think it stunned us for a little bit."

The Jets took their first lead of the game, 2-1, at 4:13 of the third period.

Connor carried the puck through all three zones before pulling up above the right circle and sliding a pass to Scheifele, who scored on a one-timer from the left circle.

NOTES: The Jets had won eight straight against the Ducks, holding them to two goals or fewer in the previous six games. ... Winnipeg had four shots on goal in each of the first two periods. ... Comrie has lost five straight starts, and the Jets have been outscored 19-8 in those games. ... Vilardi has six points (two goals, four assists) in the past three games. Connor has 13 points (six goals, seven assists) in the past eight games. ... Anaheim defenseman Jackson LaCombe had an assist on Vatrano's tying goal, giving him five points (two goals, three assists) in the past three games. ... Terry has six points (three goals, three assists) in the past five games. ... Vatrano and Terry are tied for the Anaheim lead with nine goals. ... Defenseman Jacob Trouba had three hits while playing a Ducks-leading 22:12 in his Anaheim home debut ... Ryan Strome had an assist on Vatrano's first goal, giving him four assists in the past three games.

Associated Press

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/ducks-late-rally-stuns-nhl-best-jets/>

Ducks' late rally stuns NHL-best Jets

By Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Troy Terry scored with 24 seconds left and the Anaheim Ducks rallied late for a 3-2 victory over the NHL-leading Winnipeg Jets on Wednesday night.

Frank Vatrano scored his second goal with 4:46 left for the Ducks, who have won back-to-back games for the first time since Nov. 19. Anaheim won in regulation for the first time in three weeks.

Lukas Dostal stopped 21 shots for the Ducks.

Gabriel Vilardi and Mark Scheifele scored for the Jets, who had won five of seven. Eric Comrie made 28 saves, but the seldom-used backup goalie remained winless in six starts since Nov. 1.

Vatrano tied it when his long shot banked off the skate of Vladislav Namestnikov and beat Comrie.

Defenceman Jacob Trouba made his home debut for the Ducks, who acquired the former Rangers captain 12 days ago. The game also was Anaheim's first at home since trading 15-year veteran defenseman Cam Fowler to St. Louis.

Takeaways

Jets: The NHL's best team again had plenty of time to recover from another sluggish start in California, but it followed up Tuesday's comeback in San Jose by blowing a late lead.

Ducks: They did little with a major shot advantage in the first two periods, but the team ranked 31st in the NHL in goals per game delighted its fans with that late offensive burst.

Key moment

Vatrano got an assist on the winning goal when he broke up a pass between Jets defensemen Haydn Fleury and Neil Pionk deep in Winnipeg's end. Terry pounced on the puck and scored his ninth goal in front.

Key stat

Winnipeg didn't record a shot on goal until nearly 11 1/2 minutes into the first period, and it didn't manage its first shot in the second period until nearly 10 minutes had elapsed.

Up next

Winnipeg hosts Minnesota on Saturday night, and Anaheim hosts Colorado on Friday night.

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10925231/terrys-late-tally-sends-ducks-past-winnipeg-jets-3-2/>

Terry's late tally sends Ducks past Winnipeg Jets 3-2

By Christian Aumell & Russ Hobson Global News

Back-to-backs are not going well for the Winnipeg Jets so far this season.

After going 6-2 last year in the second leg of back-to-backs, the Jets fell to 0-3 in such situations for the 2024-25 campaign with a 3-2 loss to the Ducks in Anaheim Wednesday night.

The Jets wasted a third period lead as the Ducks tied the game with under five minutes left before Troy Terry scored the game winner off a turnover with just 26 seconds remaining.

It's the first time the Ducks have beaten the Jets in more than three years with the Jets winning their previous eight straight meetings.

"We didn't play very well for two periods," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. "Found a way to get out and get a lead and we're usually pretty good when we get up, especially in the third period, and made some mistakes. Obviously critical mistakes – one off faceoff play and then just a turnover near the end of the game and Anaheim gets the win."

Mark Scheifele and Gabriel Vilardi scored for Winnipeg, while Frank Vatrano notched a pair of goals and added an assist for Anaheim.

The Jets were a no-show for the first two periods. It took them 11 minutes to register their first shot on goal in the opening period, and over nine minutes for their first shot of the second as they recorded only eight shots in the first two periods.

"We didn't do anything in the first period," said Vilardi. "It was just Eric (Comrie). He was the only one that was playing in the first period."

The Jets have been outshot in 10 of their last 13 road games.

“We were a little better in the third, but not good enough,” said Jets forward Nikolaj Ehlers. “We didn’t deserve that win.”

Ehlers returned to the lineup for Winnipeg after missing their last nine games. He replaced Nikita Chibrikov on the second line and had one assist with two shots on goal.

“Felt nice to be back out there,” he said. “Playing a game is what you want. You don’t want to practice. You don’t want to sit out and watch your teammates go to work. My game wasn’t very good. Had some good shifts but also some really bad stuff.”

It was another hard-luck loss for Comrie who has now lost his last five straight starts.

“He didn’t deserve that today,” said Ehlers. “Our goalies give us a chance to win every single night and he did that again tonight. We weren’t good enough in front of him.”

The first period was one to forget for the Jets. They didn’t register a shot on goal until there was 8:30 remaining, by which time the Ducks had 10 shots on goal and had out-attempted the Jets 22-1.

By the time 20 minutes had been played, the Ducks had outshot Winnipeg 12-4 and had 28 shot attempts to the Jets’ 10. Having said all that, the score remained 0-0 heading to the second period.

The second period started much as the first did with Anaheim asserting control of the game, leading to the opening goal of the contest.

After a net-mouth scramble, Comrie lost his goal stick and he played without it for a few seconds. As he reached to grab it, Vatrano deflected a Radko Gudas point shot past Comrie to make it 1-0 at the 4:45 mark.

Winnipeg didn’t register a shot on goal until there was 9:36 left in the second, but that shot tied the game.

After Ross Johnston was called for a questionable roughing penalty, the Jets won the ensuing faceoff. The puck found its way to Ehlers who rifled a pass towards the front of the net where it hit the skate of Vilaridi, trickling into the crease where Vilaridi whacked it into an open net to level the score.

Anaheim had two power plays after the Jets scored that goal but they were unable to cash in as the score remained 1-1 after two but the Ducks through 40 minutes had outshot the Jets 22-8 and out-attempted Winnipeg 50-25.

The Jets came out stronger in the third period, leading to the go-ahead goal by their top line. Kyle Connor collected the puck behind his own net and zoomed up the ice, dodging multiple defenders before stopping on a dime in the Anaheim and sliding a cross-ice pass to Scheifele that he blasted past Lukas Dostal at the 4:13 mark.

Winnipeg couldn't get to the finish line with the lead, however. Off an icing with just under five minutes left, Anaheim won the draw and got the puck back to the point where Vatrano threw the puck on goal and it took a weird bounce, winding up in the back of the net to tie the game.

The contest looked destined for overtime before disaster struck for Winnipeg in the defensive end in the final minute. Neal Pionk had the puck in the corner and as he tried to send the puck up the boards, Vatrano got a stick on it, sending the puck towards open ice near the slot. Terry raced to it, outwaited Comrie and tucked it in with 26 seconds left.

The Jets did manage to get a great look before time expired as Josh Morrissey found Vilardi streaking through the Anaheim zone, but as he tried to put a deke on Dostal, the goalie knocked the puck away with a perfectly-timed poke check to secure the victory.

Winnipeg managed to outshoot the Ducks 15-9 in the third but Anaheim won the shots battle for the game 31-23. Comrie turned aside 28 shots.

The Jets also placed Dylan Coghlan on waivers earlier in the day for the purpose of sending him to the AHL's Manitoba Moose.

The Jets now return home for their final home game before Christmas Saturday against Minnesota. The puck drops just after 6 p.m. with pregame coverage beginning at 4 p.m. on 680 CJOB.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10923864/winnipeg-jets-neal-pionk/>

ANALYSIS: Winnipeg Jets' Neal Pionk marks 500th NHL game

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

Winnipeg Jets defenceman Neal Pionk played in his 500th NHL game Tuesday night in San Jose. In addition to the milestone already making for a memorable evening, it was likely more complete for two reasons.

First — and a priority in the business of hockey — his team won.

And second, but more sentimentally, was that his mother, Karen, along with many other players' moms on the team's female guest, trip was in attendance to see it, just like she was at his first game eight years ago when he was a member of the New York Rangers.

But amid all of the specialties to the game and the season that Pionk is producing to this stage, one wonders how many more games he'll play as a Jet after this — his sixth year with Winnipeg.

At 29 years old, Pionk becomes an unrestricted free agent at the end of this campaign — and on the open market, he would certainly be a sought-after commodity given his offensive flair, ability to quarterback a power play, defensive prowess and competitive bite.

For an undrafted player and a defenceman who has always had to shrug off the undersized label at six feet tall, the Minnesota product has carved out a solid career while playing like a wounded badger.

Now, the Jets and Pionk could surprise all of us with an announcement regarding a contract extension, but like others on the team's roster with the same expiring status, the silence is deafening.

That is interesting in and of itself because after playing his 399th game as a member of the Jets Tuesday night too, there is little argument that he's been a great fit for Winnipeg, and the city likewise for him.

How many more games Pionk has left with the Jets remains to be determined, of course, and given last night's special surroundings to his 500th in the NHL, one also wonders how many more his mom will see him play as a member of the Winnipeg Jets.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/sawyer-jets-were-lousy-in-first-period-against-ducks%7E3050226>

Sawyer: Jets were 'lousy' in first period against Ducks (VIDEO)

Dan Robertson and Kevin Sawyer explain how the Jets didn't start the game 'cleanly' against the Ducks, and give Anaheim a lot of credit for being fast, crisp and creating a lot of action in and around the net.

Winnipeg Sun

[https://winnipegsun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/if-it-walks-like-a-duck-evidence-against-winnipeg-jets-piles-up-in-anaheim'](https://winnipegsun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/if-it-walks-like-a-duck-evidence-against-winnipeg-jets-piles-up-in-anaheim)

If it walks like a Duck: Evidence against Winnipeg Jets piles up in Anaheim

By Paul Friesen

Eric Comrie might want to sue his teammates for lack of support.

The Winnipeg Jets backup goalie would have little trouble finding a California lawyer to take on the case, given how his team hung him out to dry against the Ducks in Anaheim Wednesday night.

The Jets, boasting the NHL's third-best scoring machine, wrung just eight shots on goal from their ice-cold sticks through two periods.

And while they played a decent 20 minutes in the third, most of the evidence was already in. The conclusion: they couldn't beat a team that had a league-low five home wins in 15 games.

Make that six in 16, as the Ducks pulled out a 3-2 win on a goal with 26 seconds to go.

Comrie wasn't to blame on that one, either, as Jets defenceman Neal Pionk turned the puck over, allowing Troy Terry to catch the goalie by surprise.

"We hadn't done anything for two periods," Jets head coach Scott Arniel said. "Comrie stood on his head, like he's done this last three or four starts for us. And just not a very good effort."

Comrie has now lost his last five starts, his team scoring just nine combined goals over that span.

The Jets out-shot Anaheim 15-9 in the third, but it came far too late and they fell to 23-10-1.

Comrie's work had kept his team in it, the proceedings tied at 1-1 despite a 22-8 deficit in shots through 40 minutes.

Mark Scheifele broke a 1-1 tie a few minutes into the third, but the Ducks' Frank Vatrano tied it with less than five minutes to go, setting the stage for the verdict.

"We didn't deserve that win," Jets forward Nik Ehlers said.

Ehlers returned to the lineup after missing the last nine games with a foot injury, replacing Nikita Chibrikov on the second line.

And while he picked up an assist on Gabe Vilardi's power-play goal in the second period – on a half-shot, half-pass that Vilardi took off his skates – he wasn't thrilled with his play, either.

"My game wasn't very good," Ehlers said. "I had some good shifts but also some real bad stuff. I've got some work to do."

The stats showed Ehlers with a team-high three giveaways and a couple shots on goal.

"A player that was rusty," is what Arniel saw of his speedy winger.

That could have been expected.

The rest of his team's play wasn't.

"We're usually pretty good when we get up, especially in the third period," the coach said. "Made some mistakes, obviously critical mistakes. One off a faceoff play and then just the turnover near the end of the game."

The first period was a disaster waiting to happen for the Jets.

They gave up the first 10 shots on goal, watched passively as Anaheim attempted 22 of the first 23 shots and didn't register one on goal of their own until well past the midway point.

But if it walks like a Duck, talks like a Duck and scores like a Duck, it's probably a Duck: the NHL's 31st-ranked offence couldn't put the puck in the net.

So the Jets escaped the first in a scoreless tie, despite being out-shot, 12-4.

"We didn't do anything," Vilardi said. "It was just Eric, he was the only one playing... the first period was terrible. Took us too long to get into the game."

Things didn't get much better for Arniel's bunch to start the second.

The Ducks' Vatrano scored on their 18th shot, while the Jets were still stuck on four.

Only yeoman's work from Comrie kept things close.

It had taken the Jets more than 11 minutes to get their first shot of the opening period, and it took them more than 10 minutes to get their first shot of the second.

On the bright side, they scored on it.

Vilardi cashed in on the one thing his team can count on these days: the power play.

When Kyle Connor went end-to-end in the third, pulled up and set up Scheifele for the Jets' second goal, it appeared they might steal one, much like they'd escaped San Jose with a win the night before.

This time justice prevailed, even if it came down to the wire.

That's three games in a row the Jets have been pushed to the limit against bottom-feeding teams: Montreal, San Jose and Anaheim.

Arniel's closing argument on this night: there are no easy nights, and still many more to come.

"It's a tough league," the coach said. "You knew there were going to be some hard days. The schedule is hard for everybody... at the end of the day we're still right in the thick of things. We're still sitting at the top of our division... on top of the league right now.

"For us, there's a lot of hockey to play. Nothing has ever been handed out in December."

No, it hasn't. It's just evidence being compiled, game by game. More meaningful evidence, you could argue, as the season goes on.

Following that line of thought, the Jets' 8-9-1 mark of late probably carries more weight than their 15-1 start.

We'll discover a little more about this team on Saturday, when it returns home to take on the team hot on its tail, the division rival Minnesota Wild.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/i-felt-humiliated-former-jets-captain-blake-wheeler-unplugged>

'I felt humiliated': former Jets captain Blake Wheeler, unplugged

By Paul Friesen

Being the captain of the Winnipeg Jets was taking its toll on Blake Wheeler.

Panic attacks before games, anxiety over his role on a team failing to meet expectations – it was all eating him up during the 2021-22 season, his second-last with the Jets.

The following summer, Wheeler set his ego aside and took some steps to becoming a better captain, a less in-your-face one, reaching out to players to ask how he could more effectively lead them.

With the help of a professional leadership coach, he transformed how he was going to help take the Jets to the next level.

“I’m on a really good trajectory,” is how Wheeler put it. “And then the rug gets pulled (from) underneath. ‘Oh, by the way, you’re not the captain anymore.’”

“My first instinct was to take the bait of being the victim: ‘I just got screwed.’”

Wheeler made those comments on a podcast called Beyond High Performance that aired this week.

In a discussion with Dan Leffelaar, his leadership coach at Novus Global, and former teammate Andrew Ladd, the Jets captain before him, Wheeler laid bare some of the struggles he went through over his final two seasons in Winnipeg.

“I was thinking about this 24 hours a day, being the captain of the Winnipeg Jets,” he said. “Like, how can I be better? How can I make our team better? From the moment I wake up to the moment I go to bed, everything I do is structured around that.”

The constant mental battle caused anxiety that he didn’t know how to handle during that ’21-22 season.

“That was the worst year for a lot of reasons for me,” he said. “The worst year in the sense of having panic attacks before every game. I was in a really bad place and I became somebody who I was not proud of.”

At the time, Wheeler spoke about some of the pressures he felt, but never as openly and vulnerably as he did on this week’s podcast.

His lowest days were a far cry from where Wheeler had been just a few years earlier.

Named Ladd’s successor as Jets captain in 2016, his team reached the Western Conference final two years later.

“There’s this honeymoon phase, you’re the best,” Wheeler said. “Our team got really good, we were knocking on the door of being a Stanley Cup team – everything was really good for a few years. It was like, ‘Man, maybe I am this great. This isn’t so hard.’”

“And I remember when it started going the other way.”

The Jets never reached those heights again.

And cracks began to form in the ‘C’ Wheeler wore on his chest.

He knew some teammates thought he was too surly. Some days, he was.

Others, he was just exhausted from a lack of sleep and helping take care of three kids at home.

But he knew his leadership style needed to change.

Hockey itself had changed from when he first entered the NHL. Yelling at and calling out young players didn't always work anymore.

What Wheeler thought he knew about leadership was incomplete.

"You bust your ass all the time, every practice, every game, and then you can say whatever you want," he said of the old way. "You earned the right to say the thing that needed to be said. And if you think that's being an a——, then call me an a——. I was OK being the guy to say the thing that nobody wanted to say. Because I was backing it up every day, I believed."

Knowing his leadership style wasn't working for everybody, he got help.

What he did that summer, reaching out to those teammates he'd been clashing with, scared Wheeler to death.

"Go find out how maybe you're falling short – to put yourself out there like that was horrifying," he said, comparing it to being naked in public.

"What Blake did was super courageous," Ladd said. "There's a lot of people not willing to do that."

Ladd had introduced Wheeler to Leffelaar, the leadership coach, and was thrilled to see the results that off-season.

Enter new Jets head coach Rick Bowness for 2022-23.

Seeing the need for a change, Bowness told Wheeler he would no longer be the captain.

The timing was both terrible and perfect.

Terrible for Ladd, watching from afar.

"Knowing Blake and what he wanted for that organization... I knew he was working at it. So I was pissed off," Ladd said. "You've had this person in your organization who is actively working, like 'Hey, how can I become a better leader for this group?' And then he didn't even get the chance to implement that."

Ah, but in some ways he did. Not as captain, but as the humiliated, former captain.

Thanks to his recent leadership therapy, for lack of a better word, he at least had the tools to deal with the very public demotion.

"Because of the previous year and a half, working together, I was able to slow all that down," Wheeler told podcast host Leffelaar of his initial emotional reaction. "The question I asked myself pretty quickly after all that happened was, 'When my career is over with... when my kids look back on this, what would I be proud of? When I look in the rear-view mirror, how I handle this, that's going to dictate whether or not I'm proud of this moment or ashamed of it."

"And were you ever a leader if you could only lead when times were good?"

Not that it was easy.

Opening that season at home only made it worse.

“Embarrassed probably doesn’t do justice how I felt,” Wheeler said. “I remember the first time I went out for our first game of the season, and I didn’t have the ‘C’ on my jersey anymore. I felt humiliated. I felt like everyone’s staring at me.

“Every day was hard.”

Some days, he acknowledged, he had to fake it. At least, to start.

“By the end of the day... I was who I wanted to be.”

Part of his inspiration, Wheeler told the podcast, came from having watched Ladd reach the 1,000-game mark, and knowing what he’d overcome to do it, including a demotion to the minors.

“I used that a ton that year,” Wheeler said. “I didn’t get sent down to the minors. I don’t know what that feels like. So there was an element of, ‘Quit feeling sorry for yourself.’ Using Ladder’s determination to get what he wanted out of that s— situation was gold for me.”

Instead of folding, Wheeler had another productive season and the Jets rebounded from a year out of the playoffs to get back in.

Teammates lauded him for how he handled it all, some saying he was still the de facto captain.

The following summer the Jets cut ties with him completely, buying out the last year of his contract, allowing him to sign with the New York Rangers.

Today, at 38 years old, he sounds like somebody with no regrets about how it ended in Winnipeg.

“When the most challenging moment of my career and life at that time happened, I was equipped with tools to handle it in a way that I can be proud of,” Wheeler said. “Do you need to have a letter on your sweater to show up?”

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/no-gas-left-in-the-tank-former-jets-captain-wheeler-calls-it-a-career>

No gas left in the tank: former Jets captain Wheeler calls it a career

By Paul Friesen

Former Winnipeg Jets captain Blake Wheeler never did say he’s retiring after last season, but his appearance on a podcast this week left little doubt.

Talking to leadership coach Dan Leffelaar on the Beyond High Performance podcast, the 38-year-old said getting emotionally wired up for an NHL season is something he just can’t see himself doing anymore.

“My body, can I still go play a hockey game? Hell, yeah. I can still play,” Wheeler said. “It’s just the emotional, get up 82 times – I don’t want to do that. There’s only so much gas in the tank for that.”

After having his contract bought out by the Jets, Wheeler played last season on a one-year deal with the New York Rangers.

A serious leg injury in February limited him to 54 games – he scored nine goals, 21 points – plus one in the playoffs.

The emotional toll of a season, though, can’t be measured in statistics.

On the podcast, Wheeler and fellow guest Andrew Ladd, also a former Jets captain, said former Winnipeg coach Paul Maurice’s greatest strength was helping players get excited to play.

“His gift is helping people get their energy up,” Ladd said. “He was exceptional at that. It was amazing seeing what that did for that group.”

Wheeler says his former teammate hit the nail on the head.

“As an emotional person, that was my battery every game. Tapping into the emotion,” Wheeler said. “What was really challenging for me as a leader was after the game, you’ve got to dial that down and talk to the media in a way that’s respectful. And I’m like a 10 out of 10 on the emotion scale for the last three hours. I can’t get there.”

Leffelaar, the podcast host, noted there were some “famous clips” out there of Wheeler’s prickly interactions with reporters.

“I know,” Wheeler said. “And I think, I don’t think – that’s where some of the media stuff in Winnipeg, they probably don’t like me very much. But it was never personal. An hour after every game I could have a great conversation, even if I had the worst game of my life. It’s just 10 minutes after, I’m still here.”

He held his hand up above shoulder level.

“I can’t come down that fast.”

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/12/19/jets-wrap-california-road-trip-with-3-2-loss-to-ducks>

Jets wrap California road trip with 3-2 loss to Ducks

By: Ken Wiebe

In the end, the Winnipeg Jets probably got what they deserved.

But the heartbreaking fashion in which the Jets went home with nothing to show for a third period rally won’t make this any easier to swallow.

In a span of less than five minutes late in the third period, the Jets went from exhilaration to utter disappointment as they dropped a 3-2 decision to the Anaheim Ducks on Wednesday at Honda Center.

After Mark Scheifele had given the Jets a 2-1 lead early in the third, Frank Vatrano tied the game with 4:46 to go before Troy Terry took advantage of a Jets defensive-zone turnover to ensure overtime wasn't required as he put the game away with 26 seconds to play in regulation.

"Well, it was a tie game going into the third, we knew we hadn't played our best. We were a little better in the third, but not good enough," Jets forward Nikolaj Ehlers told the team website. "We didn't deserve that win."

That forced the Jets to settle for a split of Northern California after rallying to defeat the San Jose Sharks one night earlier.

"We're usually pretty good when we get up, especially in the third period," Jets head coach Scott Arniel told the team website after the game. "Made some mistakes, obviously critical mistakes. One off a faceoff play and then just the turnover near the end of the game, and Anaheim gets the win."

The Jets, who slipped to 23-10-1, face the Minnesota Wild on Saturday at Canada Life Centre in what will be their final home game before the holiday break.

Let's take a closer look at this one.

THE RETURN

The Jets welcomed Ehlers to the lineup on Thursday, activating him from injured reserve so he could suit up for the first time in 10 games after suffering a lower-body injury on Nov. 29 against the Vegas Golden Knights.

Ehlers was reunited with Vladislav Namestnikov and Cole Perfetti and while there was certainly some rust to shake off, the Danish winger chipped in an assist on Gabe Vilardi's second period power play marker.

"That was not a pass, it wasn't a shot, I don't know what that was," said Ehlers. "But he's pretty good around the net and he was able to get that puck and put it in the back of the net."

Ehlers is no stranger to harsh self-assessments and this was no different.

"It felt nice to be back out there," said Ehlers, who finished with two shots on goal in just under 17 minutes of ice time. "My game wasn't very good. I had some good shifts but also some real bad stuff. I've got some work to do."

NO SUPPORT

After watching Connor Hellebuyck become the first NHL goalie to reach 20 wins on Tuesday, Eric Comrie was between the pipes for his eighth start of the campaign.

The trend of Comrie not receiving much offensive support continued as he dropped a fifth consecutive start despite another solid performance as he finished with 28 saves.

The Jets have scored only eight goals during Comrie's past five starts, leaving little margin for error.

"He didn't deserve that. Our goalies give us a chance to win every single night and he did that again," said Ehlers. "We weren't good enough in front of him. It's disappointing."

The Jets had a sleepy start for the second consecutive game and that contributed to the eventual defeat as the Jets were held to four shots on goal in the first period – and one high-danger chance, according to Natural Stat Trick.

"We didn't do anything in the first period. It was just Eric, he was the only one playing in the first period," said Vilardi. "He did a good job at keeping us in it. But the first period was terrible. Took us too long to get into the game."

STAYING HOT

With the Jets struggling to generate much offensively at even strength, they leaned on their red-hot power play to even the score in the second period as Vilardi scored his eighth with the man-advantage.

During the past six games, the Jets have scored eight times with the man-advantage, which helped them regain top spot in the NHL in power-play efficiency, leapfrogging the New Jersey Devils.

Vilardi is up to 14 goals for the season, including six on the power play.

THE RUSH

For a good chunk of time, as the Jets seemingly found their legs, it looked like an outstanding individual effort early in the third period from Kyle Connor might allow the Jets to come away with two points.

Connor picked up the puck behind the net in the defensive zone and began to head up ice.

But the end-to-end burst of speed before finding Scheifele for a one-timer was only part of the play, even if it concluded with a highlight-reel one-timer from his longtime linemate.

It was an impressive backcheck from Connor that got the entire play started and then a perfect cross-ice feed.

"That's Kyle doing what he does, making a great play," said Vilardi.

THE KEY PLAY

Troy Terry got loose in front of the Winnipeg net and put the game away after Frank Vatrano forced a turnover in the Jets' defensive zone.

THE THREE STARS

1. Frank Vatrano, Ducks, Scored two goals, set up the game-winner.
2. Troy Terry, Ducks, Delivered the GWG in the waning moments.
3. Kyle Connor, Jets, Two assists, three shots on goal.

EXTRA, EXTRA

Ehlers replaced Nikita Chibrikov, who blocked a shot on the inside of his right knee in the first period of Tuesday's game against the San Jose Sharks. Chibrikov has two goals and three points in four games with the Jets. He's done a good job of making an impact during this audition in the top-six and it will be interesting to see if he sticks around and gets a look on the fourth line at some point over the next several games.

The Jets made one other change among its skaters, inserting Ville Heinola on the third pairing with Logan Stanley, leaving Colin Miller as a healthy scratch.

The Jets have moved forward David Gustafsson to injured reserve, retroactive to Dec. 10 when he suffered a concussion in a fight with Boston Bruins forward Trent Frederic.

Earlier in the day, the Jets placed defenceman Dylan Coghlan on waivers, with the purpose of assigning him to the Manitoba Moose of the American Hockey League. Coghlan appeared in only one game for the Jets to go along with 32 healthy scratches.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/12/18/blue-line-battle-in-full-swing>

Blue-line battle in full swing Healthy competition for playing time on Jets defence

By: Ken Wiebe

Not all runways are created equally.

When it comes to the fringes of an NHL roster, beauty is almost always in the eye of the beholder — with multiple factors weighing in to who is in the lineup and who might be on the outside looking in, not to mention for how long.

As the Winnipeg Jets prepared to face the Anaheim Ducks on Wednesday night in a game that wasn't over at press time, the latest shoe in Survivor: defence corps edition dropped earlier in the day when Dylan Coghlan was placed on waivers.

Should Coghlan clear waivers at 1 p.m. CT on Thursday, he's likely going to be assigned to the Manitoba Moose of the American Hockey League.

The Jets are hoping none of the other 31 teams in the NHL put in a claim for Coghlan, who has been limited to one game this season after he was acquired for future considerations from the Carolina Hurricanes during the off-season.

Coghlan actually showed well in his lone action with the Jets, especially when you consider the circumstances.

With Nikolaj Ehlers activated from injured reserve on Wednesday afternoon and Nikita Chibrikov not eligible to be sent down because he sustained an injury when he blocked a shot in the first period of Tuesday's 4-3 win over the San Jose Sharks, the Jets needed to make a move to create an open roster spot.

Where does that leave things in the battle for playing time on the Jets third defensive pairing?

Well, let's just say the competition is ongoing and figures to be for the foreseeable future, though some hints are being dropped along the way by Jets head coach Scott Arniel, both in terms of his words and his deployment.

What's been apparent is Haydn Fleury has taken the biggest strides while Dylan Samberg has been sidelined by a broken foot that figures to have him on the shelf until the calendar turns to 2025.

Just how long he remains out is up in the air, though Fleury has taken advantage of the additional playing time on the second pairing with Neal Pionk and he appears to have a leg up in this multiplayer competition.

Fleury has showcased his mobility and been used on the penalty kill during Samberg's extended absence, demonstrating a willingness to get into shooting lanes and block shots.

Although he's been on the ice for more goals allowed (13) than goals scored (10) at five-on-five, Fleury has the early edge and will be in consideration for inclusion in the lineup even after Samberg returns to full health.

That's an impressive development for someone who is with his fifth NHL organization after being chosen seventh overall in the 2014 NHL Draft and entered the season in a battle for the seventh and eighth spots on the depth chart.

Checking in next is Logan Stanley, who has suited up in 11 consecutive games since returning to the lineup on Nov. 29 from a mid-body injury.

Stanley is a polarizing figure with a certain segment of the fan base, but it's clear the Jets organization and coaching staff believes in the player and is waiting for him to take the next step in his development.

Arniel has spoken at length about wanting Stanley to use his physical attributes on a more consistent basis and to become someone who is leaned on in penalty-killing situations.

Given his stature at 6-7 and 231 pounds, clearing the front of the net, winning one-on-one battles and throwing a few more hits is the expectation.

Stanley has been on the ice for 10 goals for and six against at five-on-five this season, though he has also been for six goals against while shorthanded (four-on-five).

Ville Heinola had appeared in seven games going into Wednesday's action as he works his way back from a second surgery related to the fractured ankle he suffered in October of 2023.

Heinola hasn't looked out of place and he's shown he's made some improvements on the defensive side of the game.

While recognizing the sample size is small, Heinola has been on the ice for four goals for and just one against at five-on-five.

The next step for him is continuing to show he can be trusted defensively, while activating a bit more on the rush as the offensive part of his game comes to the forefront.

That's been the easy part for Heinola for most of his pro career, but as he's getting his feet beneath him, it's the area where he needs to do more.

With no points and five shots on goal so far, Heinola's best chance to get into the lineup more frequently is to bring his offensive flair while not raising his risk profile too much.

That's a delicate balance, but also an essential one for him to navigate — especially with limited power-play time available to show off some of his better attributes.

Veteran Colin Miller is also involved in the competition and he's the most-known commodity, clearly in the pole position to occupy the right side with regularity, given that's his strong side.

Miller handled a recent string of healthy scratches well and didn't miss a beat when he jumped back into the lineup.

Before the team went out on the road for this two-game stretch, Arniel pointed out Miller was well aware of his situation when he opted to re-up with the Jets rather than pursue another opportunity in free agency.

With Samberg expected to return at some point in January, the level of urgency for guys such Stanley and Heinola should be on the rise.

Now the tricky part is finding that delicate balance of knowing they need to elevate their respective games while not putting too much pressure on themselves to do so.

That figures to be fascinating to watch during the coming weeks.

Now, it would come as a surprise if the Jets didn't look to upgrade the defence prior to the NHL trade deadline no matter how the next few weeks unfold.

Whether that means taking a bigger swing for someone to play in the Top-4 or adding a physical player for the third pairing remains to be seen.

Trade boards are being put together and some deals are being made around the league, but for the time being, the Jets are trying to figure out what they have internally before finalizing the shopping lists they will pursue in the near future, most likely in the form of a pre-emptive strike.

Orange County Register

<https://www.ocregister.com/2024/12/18/ducks-stun-nhl-leading-jets-on-troy-terrys-late-goal/>

Ducks stun NHL-leading Jets on Troy Terry's late goal

By Andrew Knoll

ANAHEIM — In their biggest victory of the season to date, the Ducks dominated early and rallied late to beat the NHL-leading Winnipeg Jets, 3-2, on a Troy Terry goal with 24.2 seconds left on Wednesday night at Honda Center.

The Ducks had won just one of their previous six games while the Jets entered the evening with the league's best point total and best goal differential. That didn't stop the Ducks from

dominating possession, scoring chances and nearly every barometer for most of a match that saw them circle the wagons and surmount a 2-1 deficit with two goals in the final 4:46.

After focusing on the minutiae of their play during a rocky stretch, the Ducks have won consecutive games for the first time in nearly a month, following Saturday's overtime victory in Columbus with Wednesday's rousing triumph.

"You need wins to actually validate the process. You need to have these wins that are going to give the guys the confidence and the belief – belief is huge – that they can win," Ducks coach Greg Cronin said. "Tonight was one of those games."

Frank Vatrano scored two goals and assisted on Terry's game-winner. Captain Radko Gudas set up both of Vatrano's goals. Lukáš Dostál made 21 saves and aided a clutch penalty kill shortly before Terry deposited the game-winner.

Gabriel Vilardi and Mark Scheifele each scored for Winnipeg. Backup goalie Eric Comrie made 28 saves.

After being hectored for two periods, the more familiar Jets showed up in the closing frame, sustaining pressure early and tilting the ice in their favor early before the Ducks drew even late and then scored in the dying embers of the tilt.

After a monstrous hit by Jacob Trouba helped break up the Jets' possession, the Ducks went the other way and forechecked aggressively. That culminated in Vatrano's disruption of Haydn Fleury's pass, which went directly to Terry, who waited out Comrie to sweep in the winner with 24.2 seconds remaining.

"I was the first guy in [on the forecheck] and then the puck came up the wall, so I just made my way back to the front. Frank is such a good forechecker, he was able to just get a stick on it," Terry said. "When the puck came to me, I knew where everyone was, they were in the corner that I was just coming from, so my first instinct was to hold onto it and take it to the far side where I knew there was space."

In addition to Troubas' check, the Ducks killed a penalty that expired with 1:19 left in the game and later quelled a frantic six-on-five sequence, which ended with Dostál poke-checking the puck off of Vilardi's stick on a breakaway in the game's final gasp.

"The last 30 seconds were so hectic, with everything, but, overall, I think that might have been one of if not our best game all year," Terry said.

With 4:46 left in regulation, Vatrano flicked a shot from the blue line that caromed off Winnipeg forward Vladislav Namestnikov's stick and then the ice surface before knuckling into the net. Whether Vatrano called "bank" or not, it was his second goal of the game, ninth of the season and his seventh in his past 11 appearances.

"I've been like that my whole career. I'll go through slumps and then score in bunches," Vatrano said. "At the end of the day, you don't have to worry about scoring, you've got to worry about the things that get you scoring goals."

Early in the third period of a tie game, the Ducks weathered a pair of defensive breakdowns thanks to Dostál, but could not survive a third as the Jets took their first lead of the night with 15:47 to play.

Kyle Connor's intrepid foray began behind his own net and continued as he broke down the Ducks through the neutral zone, skating to the right circle and dishing deftly to Scheifele for a one-timer.

"We got a little bit negligent with the puck in the third period, and they took advantage of it. They're a team that makes you pay if you turn it over and give them odd-man rushes," Cronin said.

The Ducks' momentum from the first period carried over into the second but a Ross Johnston roughing penalty cracked the door open for an equalizer.

Just nine seconds after Johnston was sent to the box for throwing a jab, the NHL's top-ranked power play knotted the score at 1-1, 24 seconds past the game's midpoint. Nikolaj Ehlers, who played for the first time since Nov. 29, sent a puck into the crease that first struck Vilardi in the leg and then was easily pushed across the line by the former King, who'd gotten early position on Gudas. Vilardi's 14 goals put him on pace to cruise past his career high of 23.

"We had complete control of the game and then they scored that goal. It happened so quickly, I think that kind of stunned us for a little bit," Cronin said.

Seven seconds after Ryan Strome and Jackson LaCombe pieced together the kind of successive-scoring-chance sequence that typified the Ducks' start to the game but not the season, the Ducks finally broke through. A point shot from Gudas was tipped home by Vatrano to open the scoring.

The first period brought 20 of the best minutes of the Ducks' season as they registered the first 10 shots on goal of the game and had tripled up the Jets' shot total, 12-4, at the first intermission. Yet either Comrie or the posts flanking him had the answer for all the Ducks' bids, including three of the frame's four high-danger chances recorded by Natural Stat Trick.

"The first two periods were like textbook hockey in terms of moving the puck vertically and keeping it simple," Cronin said. "They're a heck of a hockey team, and you can't mess around with the puck against Winnipeg. We stuck to our plan."