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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-lowry-overtime-hero-in-buffalo>

***Three things - Lowry overtime hero in Buffalo
The Jets end four game losing slide with 3-2 win in Buffalo***

By Jamie Thomas

The Winnipeg Jets ended their season high four game losing streak with a 3-2 overtime win over the Buffalo Sabres. Adam Lowry, Kyle Connor and Gabe Vilardi scored for the Jets. Mark Scheifele (2A) and Josh Morrissey (2A) had multi-point nights and Connor Hellebuyck made 28 saves. The Jets are the fourth team in the NHL to reach double digit wins on the road. They will now travel to Chicago to face the Blackhawks on Saturday afternoon.

WAS THAT GOALTENDER INTERFERENCE?

On the Jets first goal of the night? No. After Gabe Vilardi redirected a Haydn Fleury shot to tie the game up at one, the Sabres challenged saying the Jets forward contacted Luukkonen. Vilardi did make contact with the Sabres goaltender's glove but not enough for the goal to be overturned.

"You never really know with those on the bench, you're just kind of hoping I don't want to say anything here, but I think they made the right call, just because I said at the intermission interview as well, I'm out of the crease," said Vilardi.

"I'm not in the crease. So, if there's nothing I can do, if he's out, and obviously I did touch his glove there, but where am I supposed to go? Right? I'm doing my job."

On the Sabres go-ahead goal that made it 3-2? Yes. Manitoba product Tyson Kozak found a loose puck and scored what looked to be his first NHL goal. The replay showed that Sabres Beck Malenstyn's skate made contact with Connor Hellebuyck's skate, which didn't allow Hellebuyck a chance to reset.

POWER PLAY

Winnipeg went 0-for-2 on the power play on Tuesday, the third consecutive game in which they could not cash in on the man advantage. After going 0-for-3 in the first period in Buffalo, the Jets finally took advantage on a 5-on-3 power play, Kyle Connor one-timed a Mark Scheifele pass under Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen to tie the game up at two at 3:06. The Jets finished the night 1-for-5 on the power play.

FIND A WAY

The game went to overtime and Connor Hellebuyck made a couple of saves on Alex Tuch and Dylan Cozens. Seven seconds after Cozens was stopped, Josh Morrissey and Adam Lowry raced out of the Jets zone, the Jets captain was denied before Morrissey hit him with a pass at the side of the Sabres goal, Lowry ended the game going from his backhand to his forehand. The Jets are now 4-0 in overtime this season.

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/winnipeg-jets-buffalo-sabres-game-recap-december-5>

***Jets end 4-game losing streak, defeat Sabres in OT
Lowry wins it with 1:01 remaining for Winnipeg; Buffalo is 0-3-2 in past 5***

By Heather Engel

BUFFALO -- Adam Lowry scored with 1:01 left in overtime to give the Winnipeg Jets a 3-2 win against the Buffalo Sabres at KeyBank Center on Thursday.

Josh Morrissey knocked a rebound through the top of the crease toward Lowry, who picked it up and scored near the right post after Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen stopped his initial chance off the rush from the left circle.

"Just trying to get up in the rush," Lowry said. "[Morrissey] is so good at jumping up. When he's got speed, I just try to join him. I end up with the puck. The first one was a bit of a scramble, but all of a sudden it comes back to me. [Morrissey] made a heck of a play to get it over to me. It's nice to see that go in the back of the net."

Gabriel Vilardi had a goal and an assist, Morrissey and Mark Scheifele each had two assists, and Connor Hellebuyck made 28 saves for the Jets (19-8-0), who ended a four-game losing streak.

"It's huge," Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel said. "We've been on the wrong side the prior four games, and I just liked the way we battled. Lots of specialty teams, but at the end of the day, we got into that third period, and like the prior games where we were tied, we gave up the lead in those games, and tonight I just liked the way we hung in. Took a little longer than 60 (minutes), but it was a real good effort."

Tage Thompson and Dylan Cozens scored for the Sabres (11-12-3), who have lost five straight (0-3-2). Luukkonen made 28 saves.

"I think we played a good game tonight," Luukkonen said. "That's why it kind of stings so much. Defensively, we were really solid tonight. We didn't give them much. We created enough chances to win the game, and I feel like we didn't get what we wanted, but it was a good turnaround from last game (a 5-4 loss to the Colorado Avalanche in which they led 4-0)."

Thompson gave Buffalo a 1-0 lead with a power-play goal at 3:27 of the first period. He took a pass from Jason Zucker in the right circle and scored with a wrist shot that went in off the far post.

Vilardi tied it 1-1 at 4:14, redirecting Haydn Fleury's point shot past Luukkonen's glove. The Sabres challenged the play for goaltender interference, but the call stood after a video review.

Cozens put Buffalo back in front 2-1 at 11:29, tapping a return pass from Zach Benson under Hellebuyck's left pad on a 3-on-2 rush.

Kyle Connor tied it 2-2 during a 5-on-3 power play at 3:06 of the second period. He scored with a one-timer from the right circle that hit Luukkonen's stick and slid under his pads.

“The way we battled back and the way we stuck with it, I know we were down 2-1 after the first, but I thought our response after a real lackluster St. Louis game (a 4-1 loss on Tuesday) was pretty good,” Lowry said. “For the most part, we got some more pucks to the net, we got bodies to the net, evident on the first goal, and then the power play scores a big goal to get us back in the game. ... It’s been tough sledding the last week or so trying to pick up wins, so it’s nice to find a way to win. Hopefully we can keep that good feeling going into Chicago (on Saturday) now.”

Tyson Kozak appeared to score in his NHL debut for the Sabres at 17:36 of the second, but the Jets challenged for goaltender interference, and the call was reversed after a video review determined Beck Malenstyn impaired Hellebuyck’s ability to play his position.

“Playing in my first game, it’s really cool and I’m super grateful,” Kozak said. “And to think I had scored in my first game is an unreal moment.”

NOTES: Sabres coach Lindy Ruff coached in his 1,800th NHL game, becoming the fourth coach in League history to reach the mark. ... Buffalo defenseman Rasmus Dahlin did not play because of back spasms. ... Winnipeg is 4-0 in overtime games. ... Thompson has 15 points (10 goals, five assists) in his past 12 home games. ... Kozak went 5-for-8 on face-offs in 8:26 of ice time.

Associated Press

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/adam-lowry-scores-in-ot-to-lift-jets-over-sabres-and-end-four-game-skid/>

Adam Lowry scores in OT to lift Jets over Sabres and end four-game skid

By Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Adam Lowry scored 3:59 into overtime to end the Winnipeg Jets' four-game losing streak in a 3-2 win against the Buffalo Sabres on Thursday night.

Gabriel Vilardi and Kyle Connor also scored for Winnipeg, and Connor Hellebuyck made 28 saves. The Jets' losing streak was their longest this season, and Winnipeg is 4-7-0 after starting the season 15-1-0.

Tage Thompson and Dylan Cozens scored for the Sabres, who are winless in their past five games (0-3-2). Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen also made 28 saves.

Lowry’s winning goal came on a rebound from defenseman Josh Morrissey’s shot that slid to the left of Luukkonen in the crease.

Sabres head coach Lindy Ruff became the fourth coach to reach the 1,800-game mark behind the bench joining Barry Trotz, Paul Maurice and Scotty Bowman.

Takeaways

Jets: This was the third time in the past seven games the Jets scored more than one goal, and they’ve won two of those games.

Sabres: Thompson's power-play goal in the first period ended a run of 16 consecutive power plays without a goal. The most recent one before that came Nov. 20 in Los Angeles from Jason Zucker.

Key moment

An apparent goal by Sabres rookie Tyson Kozak at 2:24 of the third period was overturned after a goalie interference challenge by Jets coach Scott Arniel. Replay determined Sabres forward Beck Malenstyn impeded Hellebuyck's attempt to make a save.

Key stat

The Sabres five-game winless streak is their longest since they lost eight straight games (0-8-0) from Nov. 4-19, 2022.

Up next

The Sabres' five-game homestand continues Saturday against Utah, while the Jets will face the Blackhawks in Chicago on Saturday.

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/lowry-embodies-everything-jets-want-to-be-in-win-over-sabres/>

Lowry embodies everything Jets want to be in win over Sabres

By Jacob Stoller

In a lot of ways, Adam Lowry is the Winnipeg Jets' heartbeat.

For all that their Vezina-calibre goaltender, Norris-Trophy darkhorse and several high-end forwards do, nobody embodies the team's identity — as a competitive, well-structured team that generates chances off the cycle — like their captain.

Lowry sets the tone.

In the midst of what has been a bumpy stretch for the Jets, Lowry has played some of his best hockey over the last few games. And during Thursday's 2-1 overtime win over the Buffalo Sabres, Lowry had his most impactful game of the season — scoring the overtime winner and snapping the Jets' four-game losing streak.

After Connor Hellebuyck denied Alex Tuch on a two-on-one chance late in overtime, Josh Morrissey scooped the puck up and burst down the middle of the ice before dishing it off to Lowry in the outer slot. After Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen denied Lowry's initial shot, Morrissey fished out the puck from above the blue paint and fed Lowry, who was wide-open on the doorstep.

"It was right in his wheelhouse," head coach Scott Arniel told reporters post-game.

It was the type of goal that Arniel had called for after Winnipeg's loss to St. Louis on Tuesday, where the Jets coach stressed the importance of striving for "greasy" goals instead of making "cute" plays to generate offence.

But above all, it was the cherry on top of a game where Lowry, as he does best, led by example.

“He had to do some heavy lifting,” Arniel explained. “He was seeing a lot of the (Tage Thompson) line. He was doing a lot of penalty killing.”

Lowry finished the night with four shots, two hits, two blocks and a 71.4 faceoff win percentage, in addition to his overtime winner. He looked like a man on a mission, willing his — and the Jets' — style of play over Buffalo's skilled attack.

One of the most telling moments came in the dying seconds of the first period.

Lowry received a touch-pass from Mason Appleton and skated into the top of the faceoff circle. Seconds after releasing the puck, Peyton Krebs attempted to hit Lowry. The six-foot-five centre tucked his elbow and stopped Krebs in his tracks — bouncing the Sabres forward off him like a racquetball off a concrete wall. Then, Lowry stared Krebs down for three seconds, sporting an expression that screamed “What are you going to do about it?”

At a time when the Jets look like a far cry from the group that put together the best start in NHL history — not to mention the injuries to Dylan Samberg and Nikolaj Ehlers — Lowry has done everything he can to change the course of games.

You saw it against the St. Louis Blues on Tuesday, when Lowry sent Brandon Saad airborne with a massive hit in the second period. And on Sunday against the Dallas Stars, he scored the Jets' lone goal, made a handful of key stops on the backcheck and delivered three hits.

Lowry, who is tied for 17th in plus-minus league-wide (plus-13), is the epitome of consistency. And that's why he dons the 'C.'

Goalie interference(s)

Everyone's favourite grey area was on full display on Thursday night.

The game featured two coach's challenges — one was upheld, while another was overturned.

At the 15:47 mark of the first period, Buffalo coach Lindy Ruff challenged for goaltender interference on Gabriel Vilardi's net-front tip. The latter was never in the blue paint, although he made contact with Luukkonen's glove, and the goal counted.

“I'm not in the crease. So if there's nothing I can do, if he's out (of the net) — obviously I did touch his glove there — but where am I supposed to go?” Vilardi told reporters post-game.

Late in the second period, the Jets challenged for goaltender interference on what would've been Tyson Kozak's first career goal. But the play was overturned after it was determined Beck Malenstyn made contact with Hellebuyck's pad as the latter extended to make a save.

Arniel said he was confident the goal would be overturned.

“One hundred per cent,” Arniel said. “It's what the league tells us. The first (challenge) by Buffalo, on Gabe, we were outside the crease and (on this) one the guy was standing in (the crease). To me that's what the rule is.”

The real question is — what does Hellebuyck think? If only we could get ahold of that presentation he made for the NHL a couple years ago.

Top line in top flight

Vilardi, Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor were cooking tonight.

The trio responded after a poor showing against the Blues, combining for a goal and eight scoring chances during five-on-five play.

"They could have had three or four (goals)," Arniel said. "There was a lot more attack. They did a good job of getting in the o-zone and then they attacked the net when they had opportunities."

A big reason for the turnaround can be attributed to Scheifele taking faceoffs again. Before Tuesday, Scheifele spent six games lining up as a winger on faceoffs while nursing an undisclosed injury.

"I was playing centre but it's not like I was even playing centre. There was a lot of switches and a lot of confusion and it just kind of wrecks the flow," Vilardi said. "That's how I kind of felt. It was nice to kind of be in our positions from the start and not have to worry about switches off of faceoff losses or stuff like that. I thought we did a good job of recovering pucks in the O-zone and generating off the cycle, which is what we've got to do."

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/sabres-baffled-by-goalie-interference-reviews-in-loss-to-jets/>

Sabres, Blue Jackets, Flames baffled by rulings on goalie interference reviews

By Sportsnet Staff

Several NHL teams seem to be struggling to understand the definition of goaltender interference after a busy night for the Situation Room on Thursday.

The Buffalo Sabres, Columbus Blue Jackets and Calgary Flames all came away wondering why rulings didn't go their way after losses in their respective games.

The Sabres watched a couple of controversial goalie interference calls go against them in a 3-2 overtime loss to the Winnipeg Jets, extending Buffalo's losing streak to five games.

The trouble started early when Sabres coach Lindy Ruff challenged a Jets goal tipped in by Gabriel Vilardi in the first period. Vilardi, just outside the crease, made contact with Sabres goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen's glove just before the tip tied the game at 1-1.

The NHL denied the challenge, saying afterward: "According to Rule 69.1, 'Incidental contact with a goalkeeper will be permitted, and resulting goals allowed, when such contact is initiated outside of the goal crease, provided the attacking player has made a reasonable effort to avoid such contact. The rule will be enforced exclusively in accordance with the on-ice judgement of the Referee(s), but may be subject to a Coach's Challenge.'"

"You don't know unless you challenge. It's that kind of grey. You don't know," Ruff told reporters after the game. "I thought just the fact he wasn't allowed to make a save, it's an interference penalty. He knocked his hand down. That's where the puck was going, you've got to challenge that.

"They used he was out of crease. Does that mean the guy can run the goalie over cause he's out of the crease? No. It's always a hit and miss. But the only way you'll know is challenging."

Luukkonen was angry about the call.

"I don't know if there's a smart way to say this, but I feel like it's (expletive)," Luukkonen said, per Matthew Fairburn of The Athletic. "There's no way I can make a save on that. I'm not that far out from the crease."

In the second period, yet another goalie interference call went against the team with the league's longest playoff drought.

Sabres forward Tyson Kozak, a Manitoba product making his NHL debut, appeared to give Buffalo a 3-2 lead when he corralled a rebound and beat Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck from the slot.

Jets coach Scott Arniel challenged, feeling Sabres forward Beck Malenstyn interfered with Hellebuyck.

The officials agreed upon review, even though it appeared Malenstyn was hit by Winnipeg's Brad Lambert.

"Video review determined Buffalo's Beck Malenstyn impaired Connor Hellebuyck's ability to play his position in the crease prior to the puck entering the net," the NHL said. "According to Rule 69.3, 'if an attacking player initiates contact with a goalkeeper, incidental or otherwise, while the goalkeeper is in his goal crease, and a goal is scored, the goal will be disallowed.'

Again, Ruff didn't see things the same way.

"It either goes your way or doesn't," Ruff said of the two reviews. "I don't like the call (on the Jets' goal). I didn't like it either way. It didn't go the right way for us and went the right way for them."

In Edmonton, the Blue Jackets felt that Oilers forward Zach Hyman interfered with goaltender Daniil Tarasov on the play and challenged Leon Draisaitl's goal that put the home side up 2-1. The challenge was unsuccessful and the Oilers scored again on the resulting power play to go up 3-1 in a game they won 6-3.

"We're trying to get an explanation because our view is different from what they said they've seen," Columbus coach Dean Evason said.

"I don't blame the refs because they're looking at a little iPad. But when I came in here, our guys were adamant that he got hit in the head, he couldn't move his stick because (Hyman) went freely in the crease, a foot and a half, so Tarasov couldn't get over to make that save."

The NHL, in its explanation, said Hyman "did not impair Tarasov from playing his position in the crease prior to" the goal.

In Calgary, the Flames were not happy when the St. Louis Blues left the building with a 4-3 win on a controversial overtime goal.

Blues defenceman Colton Parayko jammed a rebound by Flames netminder Dan Vladar before a review was initiated by the Situation Room.

The Flames believed that Parayko was only able to score the goal because he pushed Vladar's pad with his stick.

But after a lengthy review, the call on the ice was upheld and the Blues walked away victorious.

The NHL said in a statement that video review determined that "no goaltender interference infractions occurred as Parayko made a play on a loose puck in the crease prior to his goal."

Rule 69.7 of the NHL rule book states that "in a rebound situation, or where a goalkeeper and attacking player(s) are simultaneously attempting to play a loose puck, whether inside or outside the crease, incidental contact will be permitted, and any goal that is scored as a result thereof will be allowed."

"The referees didn't come over and explain it, they just skate themselves right off the ice," Flames coach Ryan Huska said post-game. "That's to me, the part that bothers me a little bit... the way I see it, (Vladar) probably would've kept it out if his pad wasn't pushed in. But that's the way it is."

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/analyzing-team-usas-4-nations-roster-are-they-the-tournament-favourite/>

Analyzing Team USA's 4 Nations roster: Are they the tournament favourite?

By Adam Vingan

Now that the rosters for the 4 Nations Face-Off have been revealed, there will be plenty of debate over the next couple of months about which country has the best collection of talent.

The United States could certainly stake its claim. The Americans boast the NHL's most dominant goal scorer of the past decade, as well as the reigning Norris Trophy and Vezina Trophy winners.

"It will be a talented group that I think can compete against any team in any environment," U.S. coach Mike Sullivan told NHL.com. "There's speed. There's skill. There's size. There's abrasiveness. There's defensive conscience. There's dynamically offensive players."

With the inaugural edition of the 4 Nations Face-Off fast approaching, be sure to catch up on all the latest news about the highly-anticipated best-on-best event. Puck drops on Feb. 12, 2025, on Sportsnet.

Here are the players selected by U.S. general manager Bill Guerin, followed by our analysis of a roster many will see as the tournament favourite:

Forwards: Matt Boldy (Minnesota), Kyle Connor (Winnipeg), Jack Eichel (Vegas), Jake Guentzel (Tampa Bay), Jack Hughes (New Jersey), Chris Kreider (New York Rangers), Dylan Larkin (Detroit), Auston Matthews (Toronto), J.T. Miller (Vancouver), Brock Nelson (New York Islanders), Brady Tkachuk (Ottawa), Matthew Tkachuk (Florida), Vincent Trocheck (New York Rangers)

Defencemen: Brock Faber (Minnesota), Adam Fox (New York Rangers), Noah Hanifin (Vegas), Quinn Hughes (Vancouver), Charlie McAvoy (Boston), Jaccob Slavin (Carolina), Zach Werenski (Columbus)

Goaltenders: Connor Hellebuyck (Winnipeg), Jake Oettinger (Dallas), Jeremy Swayman (Boston)

TEAM STRENGTHS

The Americans' most obvious advantage is in net. Hellebuyck, who is the projected starter, has saved a league-leading 15 goals above expected this season. The U.S. has two of the top four goaltenders in that category in the tournament.

There is no shortage of speed on the roster, either. Eichel and Jack Hughes are third and fourth in the league, respectively, in offensive-zone carry-ins and end-to-end rushes. Quinn Hughes is the league leader in end-to-end rushes among defencemen. (The Hughes brothers are also the league's top two skaters in possession-driving plays.)

Physicality will be plentiful. U.S. players have the most combined hits (463) in the field — 52 more than the next-closest team (Finland). Expect hard-nosed play around the net and along the boards led by Brady Tkachuk, whose 35 inner-slot shots and 53 cycle scoring chances are the most of any skater in the tournament. (The forward group has an average weight of 202 pounds, compared to Canada's 190 pounds.)

AMERICAN X-FACTORS

Players who could be difference-makers in depth roles

Larkin: Sullivan could lean on the Red Wings captain in shutdown situations. Larkin's 107 blocked passes are tied for eighth most in the league with Boldy, and his 32 stick checks are tied for 12th. He is reliable in the faceoff circle as well, winning 56.3 per cent of his total draws and 58.4 per cent of his defensive-zone draws this season. Only Sidney Crosby has won more puck battles than Larkin among tournament participants.

Nelson: The Islanders forward has quietly been one of the league's most consistent scorers over the past few years, recording 117 goals since the start of the 2021-22 season (19th over that span), including 90 in the slot. Nelson, who centres New York's second line, ranks ninth out of 415 forwards this season (minimum 100 minutes played) with 3.84 scoring chances per 20 minutes. He also impacts games with his forechecking ability, averaging 2.59 defensive plays per 20 in the offensive zone — 20th among qualified forwards.

Kreider: Kreider is the leader in the "Cy Young" race with 10 goals and zero assists in 21 games. The veteran winger, who has been dogged by trade rumours, could be a special-teams specialist for the Americans. Kreider is tied for the league lead in deflections on net (6) and tied for fourth in inner-slot shots (14) on the power play, where he has scored four times. Since becoming a full-time penalty killer four seasons ago, Kreider has scored a league-high 11 shorthanded goals, including two this year.

Werenski: Columbus' recent surge (6-2-1 since Nov. 15) has deservedly put Werenski in the spotlight. He leads all skaters in average ice time, playing a whopping 26:06 per game, and is third in scoring at his position with 26 points. Werenski is fifth in offence-generating plays (5.93) and seventh in possession-driving plays (22.4) per 20 among 223 defencemen who have played

at least 100 minutes this season. It is possible that Werenski could slot in behind fellow left-handers Quinn Hughes and Slavin on the U.S. blue line, which speaks to the Americans' impressive depth.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/the-top-line-was-outstanding-sawyer-praises-connor-scheifele-and-vilardi-in-jets-win%7E3041918>

'The top line was outstanding': Sawyer praises Connor, Scheifele and Vilardi in Jets' win (VIDEO)

TSN's Kevin Sawyer joins Dan Robertson to discuss the Jets' hard fought victory on the road against the Sabres, and praise the top line of Kyle Connor, Mark Scheifele and Gabriel Vilardi in the win.

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10904765/jets-snap-losing-streak-with-ot-win-over-sabres/>

Winnipeg Jets snap losing streak with OT win over Sabres

By Tyson Rewucki & Russ Hobson Global News

The slump is finally over.

The Winnipeg Jets ended a four-game losing streak in Buffalo with a 3-2 overtime win against the Sabres to move to 19-8 on the season.

Adam Lowry potted the game winner in overtime, while Connor Hellebuyck made 28 saves to end their slide.

The Jets tied up the game in the second period, were outplayed for a lot in the third, but Lowry ended the slump with just 61 seconds left in the extra frame.

"I think we can be really happy with that win," said Lowry. "You don't love the start. You give up a goal early, a special teams goal, but the way we battled back and the way we stuck with it. I know we were down 2-1 after the first, but I thought our response after a real lackluster St. Louis game was pretty good

"Been tough sledding for the last week or so picking up wins, so, it's nice to find a way to win and hopefully we can keep that good feeling going into Chicago now."

The Jets are unbeaten in overtime this season, winning all four games that went to the extra period.

Gabriel Vilardi and Kyle Connor also scored for Winnipeg as Connor ended a six-game goal scoring drought.

The Sabres recorded seven of the first eight shots in the third stanza, but the Jets managed to get it to overtime where they pulled out the victory.

“We just stuck with it,” said Vilardi. “We didn’t open up the game. When they did have chances we got Bucky (Hellebuyck). I thought we had some good chances too. It was one of our better games as of late, just sticking to the structure and playing the right way.”

With a 31-30 edge in shots, the Jets outshot their opponent for the first time in their last seven games. And they also notched a power play goal for the first time in four contests after failing to score in 11 straight opportunities with the man advantage. The Jets looked much faster after a few sluggish showings.

“We’ve been on the wrong side here the last prior four games,” said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. “I just liked the way we battled and lots of specialty teams, but at the end of the day, we got into that third period kinda like the prior games where we were tied and we gave up the lead in those games. And tonight I just like the way we hung in. Took a little longer than 60 (minutes), but it was a real good effort.”

The game started off with the Jets giving up an uncharacteristic high-danger scoring chance to JJ Peterka, but Hellebuyck was there to make the quick glove save.

Vlad Namestnikov took the first penalty of the game just a little over two minutes into the game with a hooking penalty. The Jets were able to get the puck out early, but after some possession, veteran Jason Zucker found Tage Thompson from behind the net and the hulking forward ripped a shot from the top of the faceoff dot that beat Hellebuyck on the blocker side, post and in.

The Jets responded shortly after the Thompson goal. The top line for the Jets controlled the puck in the Sabres end, Mark Scheifele worked the puck to the blue line where Haydn Fleury ripped a shot that was tipped on a fly-by by Vilardi for his 10th of the year. The Sabres would challenge the call after Vilardi made some contact with Sabres goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen’s glove, but the contact was outside of the blue paint. The goal was confirmed and the Jets headed to the powerplay after the unsuccessful challenge.

The Sabres got their second goal of the game after former Winnipeg Ice forward Zach Benson drove the net and sent a little saucer pass over to Dylan Cozens for his sixth of the season after he tipped it by Hellebuyck through the five-hole.

Logan Stanley would drop the gloves the first shift after the goal with Dennis Gilbert where not many punches were thrown. Both players would receive a 10-minute misconduct penalty after the tilt.

The Jets would get some momentum after the fight. The Jets top line put together a high-danger scoring chance, but Sabres forward Nicolas Aube-Kubel would hook Scheifele preventing him from getting a good shot off. The powerplay was unable to generate any notable scoring opportunities.

The first period ended with the Jets ahead on the shot clock 14-11, but the Sabres were up 2-1 on the scoreboard.

The second period action started with the Sabres taking two penalties on the same shift, giving the Jets a full 2-minute 5-on-3 powerplay. Mark Scheifele whiffed on a one-timer chance set up by Connor, and Connor returned the favour with a missed one timer of his own, but shortly after

that Connor got that miss back after hammering in a seam pass from Scheifele for his 14th of the year. The Jets only had 25 seconds worth of powerplay time left after the goal.

The 2nd period went on with not much action until there were eight minutes left in the period. Fleury snuck in from the point and had Luukkonen beat, but he hit the post. Off that shot off the post, Vilardi found Connor in front for a chance, but it would not go.

The two teams traded shifts where they each would possess the puck in the other team's zone, but nothing materialized for either team until the 2:24 mark of the second period. On a delayed penalty the Sabres generated some chaos in front off a point shot and Tyson Kozak, the Souris, Manitoba native potted his first NHL career goal in his first game... or so he thought. The Jets would challenge the play and it was called off after it was determined that enough contact was made to Hellebuyck's skate that prevented him from making the save.

In the third period, there weren't too many scoring chances through the first 10 minutes with both teams sustaining pressure in the other's defensive zone. Hellebuyck made two nice saves on Alex Tuch and Bowen Byram. The Sabres did come close, but Ryan Mcleod shot the puck through the crease while he stared at an empty net. The Sabres outshot the Jets 8-1 just after the halfway mark of the period.

The two teams would remain tied at the end of regulation sending this one into overtime. The Sabres outshot the Jets 7-3 in the period.

In overtime, the teams would trade rushes back and forth throughout the period. Hellebuyck made a great save on a 2-on-1 that rebounded out in the slot. Morrissey grabbed the loose puck and took it up the ice along with Lowry. Lowry took the shot and was stopped but stuck with it and the loose puck would make its way back to Lowry where he would close the game.

The Jets look to start a new winning streak when they take on the Chicago Blackhawks on Saturday. The pregame show will begin at 1 p.m. on 680 CJOB with puck drop just after 3 p.m.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10900932/analysis-winnipeg-jets-brad-lambert/>

ANALYSIS: Addition of Brad Lambert a glimpse into Jets' future?

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

In addition to a frustrating loss Wednesday night, what Winnipeg Jets fans witnessed was perhaps a glimpse into the future — a future with Brad Lambert as a full-time member of the team and a lineup without Nikolaj Ehlers.

After being recalled from the Manitoba Moose on Tuesday morning, Lambert skated in place of Ehlers, who is out with a lower-body injury. As one might expect, Lambert didn't look out of place at all.

His speed, vision and offensive skills were certainly on display, but he also was responsible defensively — and in the Jets' fourth consecutive loss on Tuesday, where blame and responsibility could be shouldered by many on the team, Lambert was not one of them.

Since the start of the season there have been many discussions about the contract situation of Ehlers. His expiring deal has led to much speculation and, to date, it doesn't appear like the two sides are aggressively trying to get an extension done.

In fact, it seems far from that and the prospect of Ehlers playing elsewhere next year more likely as this season progresses. As such, it was easy to see the irony last night in Lambert being inserted into Winnipeg's top six forward group, assuming a role on the power play and soaking up 15 minutes of ice time — all in Ehlers' absence.

Now, how long the soon-to-be 21-year-old Lambert remains up with the Jets will probably depend on how long Ehlers is out, but in the business of hockey, replacing one dynamic forward with another — albeit a younger and significantly cheaper one — does appear to be what might be at play here for next season.

And what last night provided was possibly an early glimpse into what the Jets might look like in the not-too-distant future, one with Brad Lambert on the roster full-time, while at the same time a future without Nikolaj Ehlers on the roster at all.

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/jets-struggle-with-simple-mistakes-as-losing-streak-hits-four/>

Jets struggle with simple mistakes as losing streak hits four

By Jacob Stoller

WINNIPEG — Mark Scheifele's demeanour in the Winnipeg Jets locker room said it all.

From the moment the Jets star centre approached the reporters and cameras awaiting him, up until the end of his nearly three-minute-long scum, his eyes remained glued to the floor. His dejection was palpable.

The way Winnipeg played throughout its 4-1 loss to the St. Louis Blues on Tuesday — its fourth straight defeat — made the result sting even more.

"We just didn't play our game," Scheifele said.

Bit by bit, the Jets have slowly veered away from the style of game that propelled them to a record-setting 15-1-0 start to the season. Prolonged stretches of offensive zone time have been few and far between, while mistakes have continued to pile up. Throughout these last four games, the Jets have averaged just 1.5 goals per game, capitalized on just one of seven power play opportunities and shot themselves in the foot with numerous defensive breakdowns.

But that game against St. Louis was the tipping point.

It all came crashing down in the second period, where the Blues outchanced the Jets 11-3 during even-strength play and scored two 4-on-4 goals late in the middle frame. The team was flat-footed on the first goal against and neither Dylan DeMelo nor Scheifele were able to nullify Jordan Kyrou, who crept right in front of Connor Hellebuyck, even as they stood within arms reach. Less than a minute later, Neal Pionk was out of position and Dylan Holloway capitalized.

Part of it has to be attributed to fatigue. The Jets' fourth straight loss comes on the heels of a six-game road trip that was spread throughout three different time zones. But publicly, no Jets player is leaning into that narrative.

"Everybody in the league is going through it," Haydn Fleury deadpanned when asked about fatigue by a reporter, later citing how with the 4 Nations Face-Off coming up, the condensed schedule is impacting everyone.

But the amount of lapses against St. Louis was jarring, with players struggling to execute something as simple as a tape-to-tape pass on a consistent basis.

"There's some mental things that are happening and you go 'wow, where did that come from?'" head coach Scott Arniel said. "It's happening and it's happening at the wrong time for us now."

The Jets finished the game with just six even-strength high-danger shot attempts and over the last four games, they've generated just 17.05 5-on-5 scoring chances per 60 minutes — the lowest mark in the league through that span.

"The attack mindset is something that we've had for most of the year but now we're deferring," Arniel said. "We're trying to maybe make one more play. Our D aren't getting pucks down from the top to the net front but also we (aren't creating) that second chance or getting into that battle to get that second chance."

In other words, they're playing "cute."

"You're not going to just get those one-timer situations with nobody standing around you. It's going to take greasy goals, getting inside, deflections, those type of things," Arniel said. "Right now... we haven't been able to score as of late, so it's probably going to take greasy ones. It isn't going to take highlight-reel ones."

Especially for a team that'll be without Nikolaj Ehlers for the next few games. And when it comes to exhibiting simplicity, the loss of sturdy defencemen like Dylan Samberg doesn't help.

From the start of training camp — after an off-season where Sean Monahan, Tyler Toffoli and Brenden Dillon walked as free agents — the Jets have prided themselves on a next-man-up mentality. Now, more than ever, that'll be put to the test as they look to stop the bleeding.

"We have to look ourselves in the mirror and really dig deep because this isn't going to get any easier," Fleury said.

OTHER TAKEAWAYS

- I'm struggling to wrap my head around Arniel healthy scratching Colin Miller. Miller has been a stabilizing force on the team's bottom pairing and while it's great to see Ville Heinola get an opportunity, not dressing Miller and putting both Heinola and Logan Stanley in the lineup is a head-scratcher. Especially with Heinola playing on his off-side. Unsurprisingly, that pairing really struggled tonight.
- All things considered, Brad Lambert looked pretty decent in his season debut. The 20-year-old, who was recalled Tuesday after Ehlers was placed on injured reserve, leveraged his speed on the forecheck and held his own in physical one-on-one battles. But alongside Gabriel Vilardi and Cole Perfetti — two players that aren't lauded for their foot-speed — Lambert wasn't in the best

position to generate offence in transition. Given that Ehlers is on the shelf and the Jets have been hard-pressed for offence, it wouldn't surprise me at all to see Arniel shuffle the top six up even more, in an effort to maximize Lambert's talent. Now, that's not to say Lambert has the potential to be a saviour, but the reality is the Jets are in desperate need of a spark and the 20-year-old has the toolkit to potentially provide them that — if put in the right situation.

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/12/05/slump-busted>

Slump busted

Lowry the OT hero as Jets grind out win against Sabres to end losing skid at four

By: Ken Wiebe

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Adam Lowry went to the hard area, stuck with it and made sure the Winnipeg Jets went home with an extra point and left a four-game losing skid in the rearview mirror.

Josh Morrissey made a brilliant rush up ice and although Lowry didn't convert the first chance, the puck came back to him and capped off a 3-2 victory over the Buffalo Sabres at 3:59 of overtime on Thursday night at KeyBank Center.

"I honestly don't remember a whole lot," said Lowry. "J-Mo is so good at jumping up. When he's got speed I just try to join him. I end up with the puck. The first one was a bit of a scramble, but all of a sudden, it comes back to me. (Morrissey) made a heck of a play to get it over to me. It's nice to see that go in the back of the net."

Jets head coach Scott Arniel felt it was a just reward for Lowry, who scored the second OT winner of his career and is up to seven goals in 27 games.

"He had to do some heavy lifting. He was seeing a lot of the Thompson line. He was doing a lot of penalty killing. That was great for him to get that one," said Arniel. "Took a couple of whacks, and it was right in his wheelhouse."

The Jets, who improved to 19-8, close out this two-game road swing Saturday afternoon against the Chicago Blackhawks, who fired head coach Luke Richardson on Thursday.

"I think we can be really happy with that win," said Lowry. "I thought our response after a real lacklustre St. Louis game was pretty good. It's been tough sledding the last week or so trying to pick up wins, so it's nice to find a way."

Let's take a closer look at this one.

POWER PLAY AWAKENS – The Jets had been struggling mightily with the man-advantage of late, slogging through a two-for-19 stretch — including zero-for-three in the first period — before they got a golden opportunity to snap out of the funk early in the second period.

At 1:33 of the second, the Sabres were given a pair of minors — an interference call on Jacob Bryson and a tripping call to Tage Thompson — giving the Jets a full two-minute five-on-three.

After some strong puck movement, the Jets finally struck with 28 seconds left in the two-man advantage, Mark Scheifele found Kyle Connor in the slot and his quick shot squeezed through Sabres goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen.

That tied the game 2-2.

“You do gotta cash on those,” said Jets forward Gabe Vilardi. “They don’t come around often.”

The Jets got off to an incredible start to the season, spending the bulk of the opening quarter of the season in the No. 1 spot for power-play efficiency before the recent issues knocked them out of that spot.

THE AGONY – Souris product Tyson Kozak made his NHL debut for the Sabres on Thursday and he felt the full range of emotions in this one, from taking his hot lap to being in the starting lineup and then scoring what he thought was his first NHL goal.

Kozak found a loose puck in the slot and wired it past Connor Hellebuyck for what appeared to give the Sabres a 3-2 lead with 2:24 left in the second period.

However, the Jets used a coach’s challenge to argue that there was goalie interference on the play and after video review, it was ruled to be the case, so the goal got wiped off the board.

The issue on the play was that Sabres forward Beck Malenstyn’s left skate made contact with the skate of Hellebuyck inside the crease and that’s why Kozak is left waiting for his first goal.

Kozak’s parents, Trevor and Michelle, were in attendance for the monumental moment, along with his younger sister Paige.

Kozak, who was chosen by the Sabres in the seventh round of the 2021 NHL Draft, played AAA hockey for the Southwest Cougars before joining the Portland Winterhawks of the Western Hockey League.

It was the second coach’s challenge of the game, as the Sabres believed that Vilardi had interfered with Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen on the Jets’ first goal.

Vilardi was engaged with Sabres defenceman Bowen Byram and was outside the blue paint when he grazed the glove of Luukkonen.

After review, the goal counted and the Sabres were shorthanded after the delay of game call for the failed coach’s challenge.

“You never really know with those on the bench, you’re just kind of hoping,” said Vilardi. “I’m out of the crease. So if there’s nothing I can do, if he’s out, and obviously I did touch his glove there, but where am I supposed to go? Right? I’m doing my job. And he kind of comes out a little bit, and it’s a tight call.”

Vilardi is up to 10 goals for the season joining Connor (14) and Scheifele (13) in double digits.

THE ADVENTURE – It was the second consecutive game as a pairing for Ville Heinola and Logan Stanley and let’s just say there was a lot happening when the two of them were on the ice together.

As the Sabres took a 2-1 lead late in the first period on a rush chance, Heinola was unable to prevent a cross-ice pass by former Winnipeg Ice forward Zach Benson and Stanley was unable to tie up the stick of Dylan Cozens, despite being right beside him.

Stanley picked up 17 minutes in penalties, five minutes for dropping the gloves with Dennis Gilbert, a 10-minute misconduct and coincidental roughing minors with Jason Zucker.

The Jets are looking for Stanley to be more physically involved and he certainly accomplished that, though he still needs to elevate his game in order to solidify a spot on the third pairing.

As for Heinola, things were a bit more chaotic for him in this one. He needs to calm things down in the defensive zone, since his vision and offensive instincts have never been in question.

AFTERBURNER

The key play

Lowry bangs home a loose puck in front of the net after a great rush up the ice by Morrissey during three-on-three overtime.

The three stars:

1. Josh Morrissey, Jets, two assists, three shots on goal, 29:54 of ice time.
2. Adam Lowry, Jets, scores overtime winner, kept Sabres' top line in check.
3. Mark Scheifele, Jets, two assists, two shots on goal, 24:49 of ice time.

Extra, extra – Hellebuyck finished with 28 saves as he made his 21st start of the season. You can expect Hellebuyck and backup Eric Comrie to split the starts this weekend, with Comrie's seventh start of the campaign expected to come on Sunday against the Columbus Blue Jackets.

The Jets healthy scratches were forward David Gustafsson and defencemen Colin Miller and Dylan Coghlan. The Sabres were without captain Rasmus Dahlin, who is out with back spasms.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/12/05/jets-thrilled-to-represent-their-countries>

Jets thrilled to represent their countries

Morrissey, Connor and Hellebuyck heading to 4 Nations Face-Off

By: Ken Wiebe

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Kyle Connor has never been big on hypotheticals, so when the Winnipeg Jets left-winger was asked about the many pundits predicting the United States should be the favourite for the upcoming 4 Nations Face-Off, he swatted away the question like he was doing his best Connor Hellebuyck impression.

“No comment,” Connor said after the morning skate inside the KeyBank Center in Buffalo, where the Jets faced the Sabres Thursday night. “There’s a lot of good teams there.”

Connor was more than happy to talk about the strengths of Team USA and the pride he felt in being selected to participate in the best-on-best tournament that will also feature Canada, Sweden and Finland.

He simply wasn't interested in making any bold declarations about where his team was going to finish.

Connor was a safe bet to have his name called, based on his consistent offensive production over the past several seasons and it will be interesting to see who he lines up beside when the event begins in February.

Whether he's skating alongside Jack Eichel, Auston Matthews, Jack Hughes or Dylan Larkin, Connor will be one of the scorers Team USA will rely on.

"Just a ton of speed. Everybody kind of brings something different at the table, but at the same time everybody's pretty dynamic. It's going to be fun," said Connor. "There's a lot of different line combinations you can probably come up with. Head coach is gonna have a tough job. But also, as a player, you relish the opportunity to be able to get to play with somebody that you might never get a chance to."

Connor is also thrilled to be able to share the experience with a teammate in Hellebuyck.

"He's obviously a world class goaltender and obviously a great teammate and a great friend," said Connor. "I couldn't be more excited to share the experience with him, and I know he's excited as well."

Hellebuyck has the inside track to start in goal for the U.S. squad and he's one of the reasons some observers are giving that country an early edge.

"He's been one of the best here for a while," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. "He's going to give all those other teams a tough time."

The third member of the Jets that heard his name called is Josh Morrissey and the defenceman is eager to suit up for his country again.

"It's just a huge honour for me to have the chance to represent Canada again," said Morrissey, who got the call from Team Canada on Sunday night after the game against the Dallas Stars. "It's something that I've taken a lot of pride in, in the past, and I've had the opportunity to do it throughout my career at different points in time. With the NHL being back on the international stage, with best-on-best competition again for the first time basically since 2016 and the World Cup, it's exciting to have that opportunity."

Morrissey was asked if he'd given much thought to whether he might be on a pairing with Alex Pietrangelo, Colton Parayko or Cale Makar?

"I mean, there's lots of good options, obviously. Whatever it ends up being, with how it all shakes out, you can't go wrong any way," said Morrissey. "Definitely you start playing the armchair coach and you start thinking about different options. It's fun, it's exciting and it will be an experience that I can't wait to be a part of."

To be able to be on a team with Pittsburgh Penguins captain Sidney Crosby for the first time is something Morrissey is looking forward to.

“It’s exciting to see the names and have the opportunity to play with the best players in the world. I’ve had the chance to play with a number of those guys in the past, so it’s exciting to connect again with a bunch of them and it’s pretty exciting (because) I’ve never had the chance to play with a guy like Sid, amongst other great players,” said Morrissey. “It’s a huge honour to be selected. There’s a ton of great players in the league from Canada and to get that opportunity is something I definitely don’t take lightly. I’m just excited to have that opportunity to represent my country and to play alongside the league’s best and compete among the league’s best.”

As for the strengths of Team Canada, they are easy to identify.

“There’s depth throughout the lineup. Obviously, there’s a ton of great players,” said Morrissey, noting a lot of great Canadian players have been left off the roster as well. “The high-end talent, when you look at (Nathan) MacKinnon, (Connor) McDavid, Sid, Makar, among others, there’s some pretty elite guys there. But I like the balance throughout the lineup.”

What will be required for Canada to finish atop the four-team tournament?

“My experience in short-term competitions, it’s all about coming together as fast as possible,” said Morrissey. “Most of the guys on the team are the top players on their NHL teams, so, buying into your role and coming together in the short-term is important. Being dialed into the system. It’s always exciting to play for your country, with one goal, which is to win.”

Morrissey has experience going up against Hellebuyck and Connor in practice, but recognizes it will be a bit strange to view them as opponents — even if it’s only for a short period of time.

“Everyone has done it before at different levels. Once you get into the game, you’re just playing,” said Morrissey. “But beforehand and leading into the tournament, I’m sure we will give each other the gears a little bit.”

Jets centre Mark Scheifele was hoping to be part of this Canadian roster and despite not being named on Wednesday, he’s likely one of the guys Bruins general manager Don Sweeney was talking about when he mentioned several players being on the radar as potential injury replacements

“I’ve had the conversation with Don and I’ve had a conversation with Scheif. He’s right there on the bubble,” said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. “Don’t know where everything is going to be in February. Again, with this schedule you’re starting to see bodies drop around the league. You never know where things may shake out. He’s disappointed but he’s going to go out and continue to play the way he plays. He wants to be that guy if there is an opportunity for him to get on the team.”

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***Jets thrilled to represent their countries
Morrissey, Connor and Hellebuyck heading to 4 Nations Face-Off***

By: Ken Wiebe

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<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/12/04/time-to-show-what-theyre-made-of>

Time to show what they’re made of Jets need to work together to get out of slump

By: Ken Wiebe

BUFFALO — So, where do the Winnipeg Jets go from here?

Now that this season-long losing streak has reached four games, it’s threatening to slide into tailspin territory when you zoom out and look at the last 10 games.

With the Jets set to embark on a stretch of three games in four days against teams currently below the playoff line, beginning with Thursday against the Buffalo Sabres, it’s up to the group to show what they’re made of.

Centre Mark Scheifele suggested it was as simple as going back to the blueprint that’s made them successful through 26 games of the campaign, which led to a 15-1 record out of the gate before this 3-7 stretch that has them at 18-8 overall.

The reasons for the wobble are fairly easy to identify and head coach Scott Arniel laid several out during his post-game address Tuesday after the 4-1 loss to the St. Louis Blues.

“We need to be better as a group. That’s the biggest thing,” said Arniel. “We won all those games as a team and this isn’t going to change here. Everybody’s had a little bit of fault (with) these losses and now it’s a case of us sticking together and going on to the next game on the road here and finding a way to win that hockey game.”

On Tuesday, the tide turned in the second period when the Blues took advantage of blown assignments in coverage to score twice at four-on-four during a 39-second span.

When it comes to the recent scoring woes, which include the Jets scoring only six goals during the four-game losing streak and being held to one goal in four of the past six games, Arniel also had a simple explanation.

Too often, the Jets were looking for the perfect play and being too cute when a more direct option was available.

“We were trying to make highlight-reel plays,” said Arniel. “We weren’t playing north-south and forcing them to defend like we did in the first.”

The Jets' lone goal on Tuesday was a prime example of the team going back to their strengths, even if it came at six-on-five with the goalie pulled in favour of an extra attacker.

Josh Morrissey fired a D-to-D pass across at the blue line, Neal Pionk found a lane and got a good low shot to the net and the rebound kicked out to Scheifele, who fired the puck home to snap a six-game goal-scoring drought that extended back to the ninth hat trick of his NHL career.

Finding the back of the net was an important development for Scheifele, who was back to taking draws on a more frequent basis as he continues to deal with an undisclosed upper-body ailment.

Scheifele is sticking to his guns and not unveiling any hints about what appears to be an injury located somewhere between the elbow and shoulder.

Asked if the fact he took 15 draws after barely taking any during the past several games was a sign of progress related to what he's been dealing with — Scheifele kept it to a one-word answer.

"Yes," he said.

There's little doubt the Jets could use some additional offensive production from his usual linemates Kyle Connor and Gabe Vilardi. This lull isn't going to be solved by one player or one line.

One of the many reasons the Jets got off to a dynamic start is related to their depth and even with Nikolaj Ehlers sidelined for at least one more week with a lower-body issue, the recall of Brad Lambert provides an opportunity that could extend beyond spot duty.

Lambert was steady in just over 15 minutes of work.

You could tell Lambert was focusing on not giving up much defensively and that's essential to earning the trust of the coaching staff. The next step is to incorporate his offensive gifts, which include his explosiveness and ability to shoot the puck.

Lambert can't worry about anything except the next game and practice, but he has a chance to show he might be able to compete for the second-line centre job sooner than later.

Given his skating ability, that's something that could help the Jets get themselves back up to speed after going through a stretch when the opposition has clogged things up and often taken away one of the team's biggest strengths.

"You saw his speed a few times. When he gets pucks, he makes plays," said Arniel. "For him, I know he was nervous, but I thought he showed well. There's still some teaching things. You know, it's a different league up here. It's more about without the puck but, all in all, I was happy with his game."

What made the Jets' successful through the bulk of the first quarter was their ability to get contributions throughout the roster, including goals from all four lines and offence from each of the defence pairings.

“No, I don’t think so. That’s disrespecting the league and the other teams. This is a hard league.”

—Scott Arniel

Certainly there is room for individuals to elevate their respective games, but the quickest way for the Jets to snap out of it is to do so as a collective.

The Jets, having slipped to second spot in the Central Division behind the Minnesota Wild, will be facing an ornery Sabres team that blew a four-goal lead in their last game against the Colorado Avalanche.

Arniel was quick to dismiss a theory that the 15-1 start made it difficult for the Jets to stay motivated to play the aggressive style that can be tough to sustain over the course of the 82-game grind.

“No, I don’t think so. That’s disrespecting the league and the other teams. This is a hard league,” said Arniel.

“I think it’s just us and getting back to our mindset of being an attack team when we do get the puck. That’ll go a long way towards us spending more zone time, having more zone time and creating more opportunities.”

Winnipeg Sun

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/12/03/offence-missing-in-action>

Jets end four-game skid, escape Buffalo with 3-2 overtime win

By Paul Friesen

Things weren’t looking good for the Winnipeg Jets in the third period in Buffalo on Thursday.

An energetic effort through 40 minutes had turned sloppy, the Sabres getting all kinds of chances as the Jets were either running out of gas or reverting to the tentative, unaware play that had them in a four-game swoon — or both.

The game deadlocked at 2-2, chance after chance was turned aside by Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck. On others, he got lucky.

Shots were 8-1 at one point in favour of the team that had won just 11 of 25 games, not the one tied for third place in the overall NHL standings.

Overtime, though, is a whole different ball game.

And when Josh Morrissey and Adam Lowry broke down the ice on a near breakaway, it produced the scramble that allowed Lowry to score his second career OT winner and end his team’s slide with a 3-2 escape job.

The captain’s seventh goal of the season came with 1:01 left in overtime, salvaging a game that could have easily slipped away.

"It's huge," a relieved Jets coach Scott Arniel said. "We've been on the wrong side the prior four games, and I just liked the way we battled. Lots of specialty teams, but at the end of the day we got into that third period and like the prior games where we were tied, we gave up the lead in those games, and tonight I just liked the way we hung in."

"Took a little longer than 60, but it was a real good effort."

An uneven one, perhaps, but definitely better than it's been of late.

Shots favoured the Jets, 31-30, with Hellebuyck out-dueling Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen in the Buffalo net.

"We can be really happy with that win," Lowry said. "Obviously you don't love the start, you give up a goal early, a special teams goal. But the way we battled back and the way we stuck with it, I know we were down 2-1 after the first, but I thought our response after a real lackluster St. Louis game was pretty good."

Kyle Connor and Gabe Vilardi had the other Winnipeg goals, Morrissey and Mark Scheifele, who was back at centre and taking faceoffs, picked up two assists each as the Jets improved to 19-9, back into a tie with Minnesota for top spot in the Central Division, the Western Conference and the overall standings, at least for a day.

"Losing four in a row isn't ideal," Vilardi said. "Hopefully we can get on a streak of our own."

Vilardi was back on the top line with Scheifele and Connor, a unit that generated a lot.

"They were really good," Arniel said. "They could have had three or four. There was a lot more attack. They did a good job of getting in the O-zone and then they attacked the net when they had opportunities. I really liked Gabe. He spent a lot more time around the net front which probably had a lot to do with the fact that Scheif was in the middle a lot more."

"Him and KC, those guys, when they're on like that, they're hard to defend."

Winnipeg's power play continued to struggle, although it did score with a two-man advantage, ending the night one-for-five.

Up next for the Jets, a Saturday afternoon tilt in Chicago, before it's home, sweet home for the next four, beginning Sunday against Columbus.

"It's been tough sledding the last week or so trying to pick up wins," Lowry said. "So it's nice to find a way... hopefully we can keep that good feeling going into Chicago."

Thursday's game started on uneven footing.

The teams traded quick first-period goals, the Sabres' Tage Thompson getting his team on the board just 3:27 in while Vlad Namestnikov was serving a hooking call.

The Jets responded less than a minute later, Vilardi tipping Haydn Fleury's point shot for his 10th.

Soft defence cost the Jets another one before the first was up, Logan Stanley leaving Dylan Cozens' stick unchecked for an easy tap-in.

Stanley worked out some of his frustration seconds after the ensuing faceoff, dropping the gloves with Dennis Gilbert. After a relatively uneventful scrap, both got extra time to cool off with 10-minute misconducts.

The Jets had three power plays in the first, but couldn't cash in.

That changed early in the second when they were handed a two-man advantage, Connor collecting his first goal in seven games, 14th of the season.

It was Winnipeg's first power-play goal in four games.

"Anytime you get a two-minute five-on-three, you come out of that (without scoring), the momentum is going the other way," Arniel said. "It was obviously a huge goal, and it took a while, but it was great to see it go in the net."

Before the second was up, the town of Souris, Man., weighed in on the proceedings, as 21-year-old Tyson Kozak, playing his first NHL game, appeared to give the home team the lead, thrilling family members who'd made the trip from Manitoba.

Proving sentiment has no place in pro sports, the Jets challenged the goal, suggesting Hellebuyck had been interfered with.

The replay officials agreed, and Mr. and Mrs. Kozak saw the thrill they'd just experienced erased like an unwanted file in a data base.

"That's what the rule is and I'm glad the way it worked out," Arniel said.

Arniel shuffled his defence pairings, putting Morrissey and Neal Pionk together, sending Dylan DeMelo to a second unit with Fleury.

Stanley and Ville Heinola served as the third pair for a second straight game.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/12/03/lambert-gets-the-call-with-ehlers-on-injured-reserve>

Mark Scheifele still 'on the bubble' for Team Canada, says Jets coach

By Paul Friesen

Don't count Mark Scheifele out of the 4 Nations Face-Off just yet.

His head coach says the Winnipeg Jets No. 1 centre remains in the mix for Team Canada, based on the conversations he's had with GM Don Sweeney.

"He's right there on the bubble," Scott Arniel told reporters in Buffalo, where his team was to take on the Sabres on Thursday night. "Don't know where everything's going to be in February. With the schedule you're starting to see bodies drop around the league. You never know where things may shake out."

For some, Scheifele was a surprise omission from the Canadian squad unveiled on Wednesday. Tied for the Jets goal-scoring lead with Kyle Connor at 13 and two behind Connor in points with 27 (going into Thursday night), Scheifele is playing some of the best two-way hockey of his career.

At 31, he's on pace for his third 30-goal season and is averaging at least a point per game for the seventh time in his 12 NHL seasons.

"He's disappointed," Arniel said. "But he's also going to continue to play the way he plays. He wants to be that guy if there is an opportunity for him to be on that team."

With a team stacked at centre – Nathan MacKinnon, Sidney Crosby, Connor McDavid and Brayden Point are all options – the thinking is Team Canada was looking less at offence and more at a well-rounded game from its final additions.

Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey, who cracked the Team Canada roster, told the Winnipeg Sun on Wednesday seeing his teammate passed over tainted his joy of being selected.

"It was bittersweet," Morrissey said. "I tried to be there to support him and just let him know that I was feeling for him because I know how much he wanted to be there."

Scheifele has played for Canada in the world championship and for the young Team North America in the 2016 World Cup.

The 4 Nations Face-Off is seen as a precursor to, and potentially an audition for, the 2026 Winter Olympics.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/relish-the-opportunity-jets-connor-to-don-the-stars-and-stripes>

'Relish the opportunity': Jets' Kyle Connor to don the Stars and Stripes

By Paul Friesen

Kyle Connor and Josh Morrissey look at their teams' rosters for the upcoming 4 Nations Face-off and feel like kids in a candy store.

So much sweetness — where do you begin?

The two Winnipeg Jets skaters and goalie Connor Hellebuyck will represent their countries in the February tournament, surrounded by many of the best players on the planet.

"Just a ton of speed," Connor, in Buffalo where the Jets were to take on the Sabres on Thursday, said about the American squad. "Everybody brings something different to the table, but at the same time everybody's pretty dynamic. It's going to be fun. A lot of different line combinations you can probably come up with. Head coach is going to have a tough job.

"But as a player you relish the opportunity to get a chance to play with somebody you might never get a chance to (again)."

When Connor hits the ice with Team USA he'll look around him and see Auston Matthews, Jack Eichel, the Tkachuk brothers, Matthew and Brady, the Hughes brothers, Jack and Quinn – the star-studded list goes on.

"Anyway you slice it, there's a ton of options," he said.

A ton of people he knows well, too. Five of Connor's teammates are from his home state of Michigan: Hellebuyck, the Hughes brothers (Jack from the New Jersey Devils, Quinn with Vancouver), Dylan Larkin from the Red Wings and Columbus' Zach Werenski.

"We skate with those guys all summer," the Jets winger said. "And to be able to get a chance to be in live competition and compete for something, it's going to be really fun. It's a great honour. Something I'm looking forward to. It's a close-knit group between a lot of those U.S. guys."

Like Connor, this will be Morrissey's first experience with this many of the world's top players in a tournament.

Having watched as a 15-year-old when Sidney Crosby scored the golden goal for Canada in the Vancouver Olympics, the Jets defenceman will now be passing the puck to 37-year-old Sid the Kid.

"I've never had the chance to play with a guy like Sid, among a bunch of other great players," Morrissey said. "You start playing the armchair coach and thinking about different options ... it's fun. It's exciting. It'll be an experience I can't wait to be part of."

Among Morrissey's other Canadian teammates: Nathan MacKinnon, Connor McDavid and Cale Makar, only the best in the world at their positions.

"If you're a coach sitting in the dressing room looking at the white board picking out lines and power plays and combinations, there's so many great options," he said. "My experience in short-term competitions it's all about coming together as fast as possible. Buying into your role and coming together in a short term is important, and being dialled into the system."

Morrissey has played for Canada in two World Junior Championships and one World Championship, the last one coming seven years ago.

Connor has pulled on the Stars and Stripes for a world championship, but it's been eight years for him.

His NHL coach says his recognition as one of the best in the game is long overdue.

"We often talk about (how) he goes under the radar at times," Scott Arniel said. "Not everybody knowing his skill set and how well he plays."

Some early prognostications have the U.S. as the favourite going into the tournament.

"No comment," Connor said. "There's a lot of good teams there."

His current teammate and future rival is on one of them.

"The goal," Morrissey said. "Is to go there and win the tournament."

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/three-jets-crack-4nations-rosters-mark-scheifele-left-out>

Winnipeg Jets' Morrissey 'gutted' over Scheifele's Team Canada snub

By Paul Friesen

Josh Morrissey made the grade, Mark Scheifele did not.

The Winnipeg Jets defenceman earned a spot on Team Canada for the 4 Nations Face-off, while the Jets No. 1 centre was left off it.

Morrissey is the only Jets player on Canada's 23-man roster, but he'll see familiar faces playing for other countries.

Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck and winger Kyle Connor both cracked the U.S. team, while former teammates Patrik Laine and Joel Armia, both with the Montreal Canadiens, will suit up for Finland.

On the phone from Buffalo, where the Jets take on the Sabres on Thursday, Morrissey called it a "huge honour."

"International competition is something I've never experienced at this level, but I have had the chance to do at various levels throughout my career," he said. "And putting on a Canadian jersey is just a real honour for me and something I really hoped I would get the opportunity to do on this stage."

Morrissey entered the NHL in 2016, just after the last World Cup of Hockey, and just before the NHL began pulling out of the Olympics.

So his timing was horrible.

Until now.

"We haven't had international competition now for a long time," Morrissey said. "Throughout my entire career there hasn't been any best-on-best competition."

This is a guy who dreamed of playing for his country, watching Sidney Crosby score the gold-medal, overtime winner in the Vancouver Olympics when he was 15.

With 23 points in 26 games, Morrissey ranked fourth in scoring among NHL defencemen going into Wednesday night's slate of games.

All three players ahead of him will also play in the event: Colorado's Cale Makar for Canada, Vancouver's Quinn Hughes and Zach Werenski of Columbus, both for the U.S..

Connor leads the Jets with 29 points, putting him in the NHL's top-20.

Scheifele isn't far behind with 27 points.

Morrissey says when players first got the news a couple days ago, he felt gutted for his friend and teammate.

“I was hoping that we would both have the chance to do it, and do it together,” the defenceman said. “So it was bittersweet. Obviously excited and honoured, but at the same time my heart went out and I felt pretty gutted for him that it shook out that way. He’s an amazing hockey player and has the ability to be there.

“I tried to be there to support him and just let him know that I was feeling for him because I know how much he wanted to be there.”

As for lining up opposite Connor and Hellebuyck: “I’ve been very lucky to play my entire career with those two guys,” Morrissey said. “I benefit from playing with both those guys, night in and night out. Playing against them will be weird, for sure.”

The joking around has already started.

In the morning skate before Tuesday’s game against St. Louis, Morrissey says Connor missed him by two feet with a pass.

“And I said, ‘So it’s starting already.’ It’ll be fun to have some jokes like that among each other as we get ready for the tournament.”

Injuries, of course, could open some spots in the tournament, which runs Feb. 12-20 in Montreal and Boston.

“We left off some great players that could easily represent Canada in this event, and they very well may,” Team Canada GM Don Sweeney said. “And that was the messaging afterwards... some guys will be waiting in the wings. We have a lot of hockey to be played between now and February and quite frankly the rosters may change a little bit.”

Keeping the news quiet the last few days wasn’t easy for those selected.

“A bunch of people have been asking me, non-stop,” Morrissey said. “I tried to do my best to keep things under wraps.”

Three Manitobans will skate alongside Morrissey on the Canadian team: Mark Stone of the Vegas Golden Knights, fellow Winnipegger Seth Jarvis of Carolina and Travis Sanheim of the Philadelphia Flyers, via Elkhorn, Man.

The Florida Panthers, with eight, have the most players in the tournament. Vegas was next with seven, the Rangers, Tampa Bay, Colorado and Minnesota five each, Toronto, Boston, New Jersey, Vancouver and Dallas with four.

The Panthers and Maple Leafs are the only NHL teams with players on all four rosters.

Having a Stanley Cup on the resume seemed to be a factor in who’ll play for Canada: its roster includes 15 Cup winners, by far the most of any team.

There's international experience aplenty, of course, as 85 of the 92 players selected to play for their countries have at least one medal from either the Olympics, World Championships, World Cup of Hockey, World Junior Championship or the Under-18 World Championship.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/cracked-mirror-not-crystal-ball-tells-jets-story>

Cracked mirror, not crystal ball, tells Jets story

By Paul Friesen

Mental lapses, a lack of will, a lost blueprint, getting too cute, lousy luck — it's hard to put just one finger on the reason for the current slide of the Winnipeg Jets.

All the theories listed above were offered up by players and head coach Scott Arniel after a fourth straight loss, at home against St. Louis on Tuesday.

While the reasons are hard to peg, the problems are not: Scoring has dried up and team defence has sagged, a lethal combination no matter how you slice it.

The Jets cancelled a scheduled Wednesday practice and hit the road, bound for Buffalo and determined to rediscover the mojo that carried them to a historically good start.

One thing Arniel discounted after Tuesday's 4-1 loss is the idea that success had gone to their heads, that with nobody nipping at their heels they lacked the drive to make the sacrifices it takes to play hard, winning hockey.

"That's disrespecting the league and the other teams," the coach said. "We're not the '80 Oilers, just go out and have the puck the whole game. This is a hard league. I don't think that's our case right now."

We'll see how the Jets handle a very average Sabres team in Buffalo on Thursday and a bad one in Chicago on Saturday afternoon.

The table is set for them to at least end their skid before they get back home for four in a row next week, beginning Sunday. Will they feast, or throw up at it?

For now, let's take one more look back at what came out of their mouths on Tuesday night, as they searched for answers to a growing pile of questions.

Arniel was asked about his team's poor coverage on a pair of four-on-four goals by the Blues in the first period.

The situation called for more man-on-man defence than the Jets usually play, but they got caught twice, and paid for it.

"There's some mental things that are happening and you go, 'Wow, where did that come from?'" the coach said. "It's happening and it's happening at the wrong time for us now."

In four of their last six games the Jets have produced just one goal.

Mark Scheifele ended a six-game drought on Tuesday, Kyle Connor hasn't scored in six and Nik Ehlers was shut out in nine before he got hurt, missing the last two.

The coach cited too much passing and a failure to get into the dirty area around the net for Tuesday's paltry output.

"Sometimes it's the opposition trying to keep you out of there," Arniel said. "But sometimes it's your will to go inside there and go get those second chances. The attack mindset is something that we've had for most of the year, but now we're deferring."

Seven losses in their last 10 games is the result.

It has been humbling for what was hockey's surprise team over the first month and a half.

The skid has cost the Jets top spot, not only in the NHL but in their own division. Minnesota holds that, now.

Not that Arniel and Co. care so much about that.

"We don't look where we're sitting," he said. "Everybody's had a little bit of fault... and now it's a case of us sticking together and going on the next game on the road here and finding a way to win that hockey game."

Scheifele was one of two players who spoke after a game in which he started on the wing but finished back at centre, scoring the Jets' only goal.

There's still no word on whatever he's dealing with that's often kept him out of the faceoff circle, but he did acknowledge returning to the dot late in the game was a sign he's feeling better.

As for what's ailing his team, No. 55 wasn't exactly lighting the lamp.

"I don't know if I can pinpoint it right now," he said. "I think it's just a matter of wearing teams down. Obviously everyone's gunning for us, and they know they've got to play us hard. It's just a matter of getting back to looking at the blueprint that we were doing earlier, and just try to get back to that."

The Jets looked as lost as their blueprint in the second period against the Blues, out-shot 19-3 and out-scored 2-0.

This was a St. Louis team that has been rejuvenated since their coaching change, but still touched down in Winnipeg a game below .500.

Being dominated like that on home ice got the Jets exactly what they deserved: Some booing from their crowd.

"We were trying to play cute hockey," is how Arniel put it. "We were trying to make highlight-reel plays. We weren't playing north-south and forcing them to defend like we did in the first. They spent pretty much the whole period in our end of the rink."

When they did get the puck, they'd come up the ice as individuals looking for the home-run play, instead of as a tight unit.

“We started to make 50-foot passes and 100-foot passes coming through the neutral zone,” Arniel said.

Defenceman Haydn Fleury’s take: “We just really didn’t get pucks in deep until the third. I thought we made the game harder on ourselves then we needed it to be. And we paid for it.”

Arniel tried something new on his blue line for this game, pairing Logan Stanley and Ville Heinola for the first time.

They weren’t on the ice for any goals against, so you can’t say the experiment was a disaster.

But one injury on defence (Dylan Samberg) has already driven home the fact the blue line isn’t as deep as it was a year ago.

“As a group, we all... didn’t simplify enough,” Arniel said.

There was no silver lining produced by the season debut of the one of the Jets’ brightest prospects, either.

The lackluster effort overshadowed the appearance of Brad Lambert. In 15 minutes of ice time at centre on the second line, the 20-year-old didn’t register a shot.

That entire line, with Cole Perfetti and Gabe Vilardi, managed just one, leaving that experiment in the “failed” file in the coach’s desk, at least for now.

Arniel can’t expect a rookie or a brand new third defence pair to get his team out of this.

The solution will have to come from the same veterans who were driving this bus when it was in the express lane.

“We had a lot of good fortune here long before these four games,” Arniel said. “It’s swung the other way now. It’s sticking together and making sure that we go out and do what we do best, and that’s defend first and play a simple game.”

Sounds simple enough.

We’ll leave you with this age-old bit of wisdom: That you don’t truly know the character of a team until adversity shows up at its door.

Knock-knock.

“The first little bit of adversity we’ve had this year,” Fleury acknowledged. “Nobody likes to deal with it, but the only way to get through it is as a team... we have to look ourselves in the mirror and really dig deep, because this isn’t going to get any easier.”

For a while, it looked like it was easy. Too good to be true, almost.

That mirror has cracks in it now.

But it’ll still show exactly what the Jets are.

It's not a crystal ball, though.