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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-avs-end-jets-four-game-win-streak>

Three things - Avs end Jets four game win streak Kupari and Vilardi score in 5-2 loss to Colorado

By Jamie Thomas

The Winnipeg Jets fought back from a one goal deficit twice but ended up losing to the Colorado Avalanche 5-2 in the final game of 2024. Rasmus Kupari and Gabe Vilardi scored for the Jets who lost for the first time in five games. Eric Comrie made 33 saves for Winnipeg who will have New Years Day off and return to action Thursday when they begin an eight game homestand against Anaheim.

VILARDI PARTY CONTINUES

The Jets top line has done a lot of damage lately and while Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor have been getting a lot of attention, Gabe Vilardi deserves just as much attention as his linemates. Monday night, he scored twice on the power play and Tuesday night in Denver, Vilardi found a way to fight off a defender and chip the puck over Mackenzie Blackwood for his 18th of the season and fifth goal in his last six games which put the score at 2-2.

BIG GOAL FROM FOURTH LINE

Colorado opened the scoring in the first period but in the second period at the 10:20 mark, Neal Pionk sent a great pass up to Morgan Barron at the Avs blueline. Barron skated in and hit a streaking Rasmus Kupari at the far post and the Finnish forward tapped in his third goal of the season. Barron now has an assist in back-to-back games.

NO POWER PLAYS

Something the Jets have been able to count on this season is getting a big goal from their power play. Monday against Nashville, the Jets got two huge goals with the man advantage on route to a 3-0 win. Tuesday against Colorado, the Jets did not get one power play, the first time this season that has happened.

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/winnipeg-jets-colorado-avalanche-game-recap-december-31>

Mittelstadt breaks tie in 3rd, Avalanche top Jets for 5th straight win Scores at 7:22, Rantanen gets goal to push point streak to 11; Winnipeg had won 4 in row

By Ryan Boulding

DENVER -- Casey Mittelstadt scored the go-ahead goal at 7:22 of the third period, and the Colorado Avalanche extended their winning streak to five games with a 5-2 victory against the Winnipeg Jets at Ball Arena on Tuesday.

Mittelstadt gave the Avalanche a 3-2 lead when he deflected Josh Manson's shot from the point just above the crease. It was his first goal since Nov. 18, a span of 19 games.

"I think it's been well documented. Obviously, it hasn't been a great stretch," Mittelstadt said. "So it was good. Obviously, I feel like that's how usually you get your first one after a while. It was a heck of a play by [Josh Manson], and I'm just happy that it was at a good moment for the team, and a big win for us."

Mikko Rantanen scored to extend his point streak to 11 games, and Artturi Lehkonen and Devon Toews also scored for Colorado (23-15-0), which has won nine of 11. Manson had two assists, and Mackenzie Blackwood made 20 saves.

"They're a good team. I mean, that's why they're sitting where they are in the standings," Avalanche coach Jared Bednar said. "It's earned, in my opinion. So you got to play the right way and you got to be disciplined. We talked about our discipline this morning. Didn't take a penalty the whole game. I thought we did a nice job there. We were highly competitive without reaching, using our legs to check. It's a good, solid game."

Jonathan Drouin had two assists for Colorado in his return after missing 16 games with an upper-body injury.

"I thought he skated really well. I think there's plays throughout the game, I probably could pick a handful, that he'd generally execute on that he didn't tonight, but that's usually pretty typical," Bednar said. "He looked like he had pretty good hands and pretty good feel and was doing all the right things on the defensive side and on the offensive side. Just like the last little bit of finishing touch on some of his execution wasn't quite there, but he's missed a lot of time. I expected that."

Rasmus Kupari and Gabriel Vilardi scored for the Jets (27-11-1), who had won four straight and were coming off a 3-0 win against the Nashville Predators on Monday. Eric Comrie made 33 saves.

"We knew we were going to be in for one against a well-rested team, but you know what, we've never used that excuse," Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel said. "I liked the way that we battled back. Every time we got down one, we battled back. Any time you can go into the third period tied 2-2 in this rink, you hope that you can come out on the right side of it, and we didn't."

Lehkonen gave Colorado a 1-0 lead at 11:51 of the first period, deflecting Manson's shot from just inside the blue line while taking contact from Jets defenseman Logan Stanley.

Kupari tied it 1-1 at 10:20 of the second period when he finished Morgan Barron's crossing pass at the right side of the crease on the rush.

"[Neal Pionk] just made a nice quick up to me. I thought I kind of got a step on my defenseman and Rasmus jumped on the ice and drove to the back post and I heard him yelling," Barron said. "It was good for him to finish that one."

Toews put the Avalanche back ahead 2-1 at 16:37. He whiffed on his initial shot, but his second attempt went off the stick of Comrie and snuck in five-hole.

Vilardi tied it 2-2 at 18:32 off Stanley's centering pass, which was deflected by Lehkonen and landed in the crease.

“With three [games] in four nights, when you’re traveling, it’s [about] trying to make sure that you do the right things at the right times, and I thought that we did a lot of that to get ourselves in that position,” said Arniel. “We had a lot of chances, a lot of looks there ourselves to maybe get ahead, but at the end of the day, it just wasn’t enough.”

Rantanen made it 4-2 with an empty-net goal at 18:31 of the third period. He has 19 points (six goals, 13 assists) during his streak.

Ross Colton also scored into an empty net at 19:53 for the 5-2 final.

Avalanche forward Valeri Nichushkin left the game in the second period with a lower-body injury and did not return.

“He’ll get evaluated, I’m sure, tonight, tomorrow,” Bednar said. “It [stinks] because, like we talked about, [we’re] just trying to get deeper through our lineup, and I feel like the guys that are playing are giving us everything they got, but we just constantly have [injuries].”

Jets defenseman Dylan DeMelo also left the game at 16:01 of the third period after blocking a shot and did not return.

“He got hit with that shot. He got hit on the inside of the leg,” said Arniel.

NOTES: Nathan MacKinnon had an assist to finish the 2024 calendar year with 143 points (46 goals, 97 assists) in 83 games. He became the fifth different player in the past 35 years to record 143 or more regular-season points in a calendar year (Connor McDavid (2021 and 2022), Jaromir Jagr (1995 and 1999), Mario Lemieux (1989 and 1992), and Wayne Gretzky (1989 and 1991). ... With the win, the Avalanche became the third team in NHL history to post 50-plus regular-season wins in four straight years (Edmonton, four from 1983-86) and Montreal (four from 1975-78).

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/12/31/jets-rally-falls-short>

Jets rally falls short Avalanche earn 5-2 victory Tuesday

By: Ken Wiebe

On this night, the third time was not a charm for the Winnipeg Jets.

After battling back on two separate occasions, the Jets fell behind a third time in the third period and the Colorado Avalanche pulled away for good, earning a 5-2 victory at Ball Arena on Tuesday.

The Avalanche broke the tie at 7:22 of the third period and put the game on ice with a pair of empty-net goals to snap the Jets’ four-game winning streak.

“Yeah, certainly, especially against a team like that, they always have a lot of o-zone time, a lot of skill,” Jets defenceman Neal Pionk told reporters in Denver. “So you give up the lead early, and you’re chasing the game the rest of the game, and it makes it tough.”

Ultimately, the Avalanche made the extra play when it counted.

“We had a lot of chances, a lot of looks there ourselves to maybe get ahead,” Jets head coach Scott Arniel told reporters. “But at the end of the day, it just wasn’t enough.”

The Jets and Avalanche are now square at 1-1 in the four-game season series and Winnipeg is now 9-4 against Central Division opponents.

“At the end of the day, it would have been nice to dig in a little bit more and find a way to come up with a win,” Jets left-winger Morgan Barron told reporters. “At the end of the day, it’s a 20-minute period and we had a chance to win a game. The effort is there. It’s just (about) finding ways to kind of make those plays at the end of the game. We’re a resilient group. We know that. We’ll reset, go home and kind of get on a streak here.”

With the loss, the Jets close out the calendar year with a record of 27-11-1, which leaves them first overall in the NHL in wins and points as they get set to open an eight-game homestand on Thursday against the Anaheim Ducks.

Let’s look a little closer at what transpired:

Familiar theme

Jets backup goalie Eric Comrie dropped a sixth consecutive game, but this was another night where he did his part to keep his team in the game.

Comrie finished with 33 saves in the contest, several of the highlight-reel variety, though his record dropped to 3-6 for the season.

“That’s the tough part. He’s played so well for us. We haven’t gotten him the win,” Arniel told reporters. “We feel awfully confident when he’s in there. We just have to find a way to get one for him. He’s been real good and he continues to give us a chance.”

Comrie won his first three starts of the season, but the Jets have scored 10 goals during his past six outings, which means he needs to be nearly perfect — which is tough when you consider several of those starts came in the back end of the team playing on consecutive days.

“He’s fantastic. Wish like hell we could get him a win one of these times because he’s playing great,” Pionk told reporters. “He made a couple big saves there. And you know (he’s) one of the hardest working guys. He deserves a win here.”

This was Comrie’s ninth start of the season and his 10th is likely to come next weekend, either on Friday against the Los Angeles Kings or Saturday in the third game of the season series with the Avalanche.

“He’s been great,” said Barron. “Going over his last number of starts, it’s kind of unfortunate that we’ve wasted his efforts and haven’t been able to get a few (more) wins for him.”

The streak

For the first time in his NHL career, Logan Stanley has recorded a point in three consecutive games.

The Jets' defenceman set up Gabe Vilardi late in the second period to tie the game 2-2.

Stanley's initial pass was blocked, but he stuck with it and knocked his second attempt over the net and onto the stick of Vilardi, who scored his 18th goal of the season.

Stanley didn't get an assist on the Jets first goal, but his tight gap in the neutral zone was essential as it allowed defence partner Pionk to hit Barron with a stretch pass.

Stanley also delivered a big hit on Jusso Parssinen in the first period and finished with three in the contest.

However, on the first goal scored by the Avalanche, Stanley did a good job of knocking Artturi Lehkonen to the ground, but Lehkonen still managed to get his stick on the point shot from Josh Manson.

Stanley needs to win those one-on-one battles in front of the Jets' net and this was a case where he did most of the job properly, but if he's able to take care of the final piece — taking away the stick as an option for a redirection — that will boost his stock.

Another positive showing

Jets defenceman Dylan Coghlan was in the lineup for consecutive NHL games for the first time this season and once again, he did not disappoint.

Coghlan had two shots on goal, six shot attempts, one hit and one blocked shot in just under 16 minutes of work.

Much like Kyle Capobianco did a few seasons ago, Coghlan has done an excellent job of staying sharp despite some extended absences. If he can continue to play the way he has in his three NHL games this season, he's going to force himself into the middle of the competition for playing time on the Jets' third pairing.

Fourth line delivers

Jets forward Rasmus Kupari scored his third goal of the season at 10:20 of the second period, using his speed to drive to the far post and bury that pass from Barron.

Kupari has been in and out of the lineup as of late, but with Mason Appleton sidelined week-to-week with an injury, this is an opportunity to build his confidence and get into a groove.

"(Pionk) just made a nice quick up to me. I thought I kind of got a step on my defenceman and Rasmus jumped on the ice and drove to the back post and I heard him yelling," said Barron. "So, it was good for him to finish that one."

The key play

With the game tied 2-2, Casey Mittelstadt provides a perfect redirection of a point shot from Josh Manson at 7:22 of the third period to give the Avalanche their third lead of the contest.

The three stars

Josh Manson, Avalanche, Set up two goals, including the game-winner.

Casey Mittelstadt, Avalanche, Delivered the game-winning goal, snapping a 17-game drought.

Eric Comrie, Jets, 33 saves on 36 shots on goal.

Extra, extra

Jets defenceman Dylan DeMelo left the contest late in the third. Arniel didn't have an update on his status, other than telling reporters he blocked a shot on the inside of the leg. The Jets are already without Dylan Samberg (broken foot) and Haydn Fleury (knee).

The Jets healthy scratches were defenceman Ville Heinola and forward Dominic Toninato.

Jets left-winger Kyle Connor had his seven-game point streak snapped on Tuesday.

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/happy-new-year-not-jets-fade-in-third-lose-to-avs>

Happy New Year--Not!: Jets fade in third, lose to Avs

By Paul Friesen

Both teams were on a roll, winners of four straight and owners of nearly identical nine-win records in December.

But one was rested and at home, the other playing on a second straight day after late-night travel.

That hasn't been a good scenario for the Winnipeg Jets this season and it wasn't in Denver on New Year's Eve, the Avalanche popping the cork on a 5-2 win.

Four times the Jets have played on consecutive days, and four times they've lost.

Shots were 13-5, Colorado, in the third period, suggesting the visitors were low on fuel, although one of the Jets' goal scorers was having none of that.

"The schedule is what it is," Rasmus Kupari told CJOB radio. "It's the same for everyone... so that can't be an excuse for us. We still played better than in the past back-to-backs this year. It's just an unfortunate loss and we can learn from this."

"We knew we were going to be in for one against a well-rested team," head coach Scott Arniel added. "But we've never used that excuse. There were some momentum swings. But I liked the way we battled back. Every time we got down one we came back."

Three different times Colorado grabbed the lead and the last one stuck: Casey Mittelstadt breaking a 2-2 tie about eight minutes into the third, ruining yet another fine performance from Jets backup goalie Eric Comrie.

Empty-net goals from Mikko Rantanen and Ross Colton sealed the deal.

Comrie has now taken the loss in his last six starts.

"That's the tough part is he's played so well for us and we haven't got him the win," Arniel said. "We've just got to find a way to get one for him. He just continues to give us a chance."

Defenceman Neal Pionk echoed those sentiments.

“Wish like hell we could get him a win one of these times because he’s playing great,” Pionk said. “And one of the hardest working guys, he deserves a win.”

The loss drops Winnipeg to 27-11-1, while the Avalanche improve to 23-15, the four-point swing pulling them to within nine points of the first-place Jets in the Central Division.

The Jets will face them twice more, including another back-to-back situation, this time at home, in 11 days.

“We did some good things, sloppy at times, gave the top line a lot of chances,” Pionk said. “But overall, a decent game. Sure, it’s hard. We’re all pros. We’ve been through it before. And we get some teams at home that go through that travel, so can’t use that as an excuse.”

Jets winger Morgan Barron wasn’t the least bit happy with the final 20 minutes.

“It just feels like a bit of a wasted effort, to be in that game in the third, regardless of the shots,” he said. “Our goalie, Coms, has been putting in great efforts for us and we haven’t been able to dig in for those last 20 minutes. It’s a 20-minute period and we had a chance to win a game. It’s unfortunate that we’ve wasted his efforts and haven’t been able to get a few wins for him.”

The home side had the bulk of the play in the first period and got on the board first, Artturi Lehkonen tipping a point shot past Comrie some 12 minutes into the game.

“That’s what they do. They throw stuff in from the blue line,” Pionk said. “They have good sticks in front, two big bodies, and they beat us on that a couple times.”

Winnipeg killed off the only penalty of the game in that opening period, with shots 14-10 for Colorado.

The Avs were a perfect 9-0 when leading after one, so the Jets had a challenge on their hands.

It took until midway through the second for them to beat Mackenzie Blackwood, and it didn’t come from one of the usual suspects.

Kupari, set up by fellow fourth-liner Morgan Barron, ended a 20-game drought with his third goal of the year.

“Our guys were changing and I just hopped on the ice,” Kupari said. “Bears made a nice play, quick feet and a nice pass to the back door and I had an easy job to just tap it in.”

“I heard him yelling,” Barron said. “It was good for him to finish that one.”

The Avs regained the lead when defenceman Devon Toews whiffed on a shot, fooling and opening up Comrie, then sliding the puck between his legs.

Not two minutes later Gabe Vilardi got that one back, flipping a loose puck over Blackwood for No. 18 of the season.

Shots were 24-17, Avs, through two, 38-22 overall.

“We’ll reset, go home and get on a streak,” Barron said.

The Jets play their next eight at home, beginning Thursday against Anaheim.

Associated Press

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/jets-four-game-win-streak-comes-to-an-end-with-loss-to-avalanche/>

Jets' four-game win streak comes to an end with loss to Avalanche

By Associated Press

DENVER — Casey Mittelstadt ended a 19-game scoring drought with a tiebreaking goal in the third period and the Colorado Avalanche beat the NHL-leading Winnipeg Jets 5-2 on Tuesday night.

Mittelstadt last scored on Nov. 18 in Philadelphia and had been demoted to the fourth line. He broke that slump Tuesday by deflecting Josh Manson’s shot by Winnipeg’s Eric Comrie at 7:22, sending Colorado to its fifth straight win.

Artturi Lehkonen and Devon Toews also scored, Mackenzie Blackwood had 21 saves and Mikko Rantanen and Ross Colton scored empty-net goals to seal it.

The Avalanche led by a goal in the first and second periods, but Rasmus Kupari and Gabriel Vilardi tied it each time for Winnipeg, which had its four-game winning streak halted.

TAKEAWAYS

Jets: Comrie came into the game with a 3.05 goals-against average, 1.05 more than Connor Hellebuyck, but played well against Colorado, making 31 saves. Defenceman Dylan DeMelo left late in the third after taking a shot off the leg and didn’t return.

Avalanche: Jonathan Drouin had an assist in his first game since Nov. 25. He missed 16 games with an upper-body injury and played on the second line. However, Ivan Ivan is out multiple weeks with the same injury, allowing Juuso Parssinen to become the 38th player to skate for Colorado this season.

KEY MOMENT

Winnipeg pressed for the equalizer after Mittelstadt’s goal and nearly got it when the puck ricocheted off the back boards to Kyle O’Connor. But Blackwood made a pad save with 3:02 left.

KEY STAT

Excluding 2020-21 and 2012-13, when the seasons started in January, and 2021-22, when the game against Dallas was postponed, the Avalanche have hosted 10 straight games on New Year’s Eve. They are 5-3-2 in those games.

UP NEXT

Jets: Host the Anaheim Ducks on Thursday.

Avalanche: Host the Buffalo Sabres on Thursday.

Denver Post

<https://www.denverpost.com/2024/12/31/avalanche-mittelstadt-nichushkin-manson-lehkonen/>

Casey Mittelstadt goes from doghouse to hero in Avalanche's win against Winnipeg

By Corey Masisak

Casey Mittelstadt began the night with a demotion. He ended it the hero.

Mittelstadt's first goal in 19 games helped the Avalanche defeat the division-leading Winnipeg Jets, 5-2, Tuesday night at Ball Arena. It was the Avs' fifth win in a row and ninth in the past 11 contests.

"That was great," Avs coach Jared Bednar said. "You could tell (Mittelstadt) had a little extra giddy up in his step today. Just hanging onto the puck, counter-flowing, skating, trying to make plays. He was much quicker on the defensive side of it.

That's the best game he's played in a while."

The Jets played the night before and didn't start 2024 Vezina Trophy winner Connor Hellebuyck, but backup Eric Comrie had a great outing in his place with 33 saves. The Avs began the night as healthy as they've been all season, which led to the recently slumping Mittelstadt starting the game as the center on the fourth line.

He made it a 3-2 advantage by re-directing a shot from Josh Manson, who had a pair of primary assists.

"It's been a while, so it was good," Mittelstadt said. "I feel like that's how you usually get first one after it's been a while. It was a heck of a play by (Manson). I'm just happy it was at a good moment for the team and a big win for us."

This was the first time Colorado's top-10 offensive players were in the lineup together all season, but that bit of good health lasted fewer than 36 minutes.

Valeri Nichushkin did not play in the final 24:47 of this game after getting hit along the boards by Winnipeg's Logan Stanley. Nichushkin appeared to be elbowed in the head, and he had some words for the nearest official as he went to the bench. The Avs said Nichushkin was officially out with a lower-body injury, and Bednar confirmed the hit to his head wasn't part of the injury.

"It shouldn't surprise me at this point, but it sucks," Bednar said. "We've talked about just trying to get deeper through our lineup. I feel like the guys who are playing are giving us everything they've got, but we just constantly have ... that will push us back up to four guys out again. It's not easy. It makes your job that much more difficult."

Artturi Lehkonen put the Avalanche ahead midway through the opening period. He got position on Stanley in front of the Winnipeg net and was able to deflect a shot from the right point by Manson despite being checked to the ice at 11:51.

That was Lehkonen's 14th goal in 26 games this season, and four in the past two contests after a hat trick in Salt Lake City four nights ago.

Colorado had several chances to extend the lead early in the second period, but couldn't find a second goal and Winnipeg leveled the score on a counterattack. Juuso Parssinen, acquired Saturday from Nashville, dumped the puck off the side boards while the Avs were going for a line change but didn't get enough on it.

Jets defenseman Neil Pionk collected the puck and snapped it back in the other direction for a 2-on-2 where Rasmus Kupari had a clear advantage on Manson coming from the bench and directed a feed from Morgan Barron past Mackenzie Blackwood at 10:20 of the second.

Devon Toews has had some Grade-A chances to score in recent games but collected his second goal of the season at 16:37 on a fortunate bounce. Cale Makar hit Toews cutting to the net in the left circle. He whiffed on the first attempt but was able to get enough of the second for it to trickle through Comrie's legs and across the goal line.

Gabe Vilardi brought Winnipeg back again late in the period. Stanley's attempt to get the puck to the front of the net was deflected but still ended up bouncing right to Vilardi at the edge of the crease with 1:28 left in the second.

Colorado's Ross Colton added an empty-netter to finish off the scoring. Blackwood won for the fifth time in six starts since arriving in a trade from San Jose, but Mittelstadt getting back on track could be the biggest development from this contest ... assuming Nichushkin's injury isn't serious.

"I understand. I'm not mad at anyone," Mittelstadt said of his demotion. "I think I have myself to blame. (The coaching staff) has been great, watching a lot of video with me. Ray (Bennett) has been working with me the whole time.

"He said, 'We're going to get back to where you we know you can be. We're going to rebuild it a little bit.' I'm on board with that. I want to play better and I want to be a better player."