

## **Winnipegjets.com**

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-jets-come-up-short-in-ot>

### ***Three things - Jets come up short in OT Winnipeg drops second meeting this season with LA in 2-1 loss***

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – The Winnipeg Jets fell 2-1 in overtime to the Los Angeles Kings at Canada Life Centre and are now 1-2-1 at the halfway mark of their season high eight game homestand. Mark Scheifele scored the lone goal for the Jets who are now 28-12-3 on the season. Eric Comrie made 21 saves in the loss. Winnipeg will return to action on Saturday when they host the Colorado Avalanche.

#### ***CELEBRATING GREATNESS***

Before the game, the Jets held a special ceremony celebrating Connor Hellebuyck hitting three significant milestones this season. The Jets star goaltender reached 500 career games, 40 shutouts and his 300th win and was rewarded with silver stick (for 500 games), gold stick (for 300 wins), a puck (for 40 shutouts) and special artwork. Hellebuyck's wife Andrea, children Hugh and Violet and his dad Chuck took part as well as Jets executive chairman Mark Chipman.

#### ***COMRIE WATCH CONTINUES***

After starting the season 3-0, Eric Comrie had dropped his last seven starts. The Jets backup goaltender has certainly deserved a better fate as he was brilliant tonight much like he was his last start in Denver against the Avalanche in the second game of a back-to-back situation. With the Kings leading 1-0 in the third period, Winnipeg started the take over the game and got back-to-back power plays and finally got the puck past Kings goaltender Darcy Kuemper during the second man advantage. Kyle Connor started the play finding Gabe Vilardi who sent a perfect pass to Mark Scheifele and the Jets leading goal scorer fired home his 24th of the season.

"I think when you let the game kind of come to you and just stick to our structure and stick to the game that we play. And when opportunity presents itself, you go and take advantage," said Scheifele on the Jets patience tonight.

"So, I thought tonight was a great game. Comms played amazing again. And would have been nice to get him to get him a win."

#### ***THE RETURN OF SAMBERG***

Dylan Samberg missed 21 games after breaking his foot blocking a shot from Steven Stamkos back on November 23. The Jets missed one of their top four defencemen especially his shot blocking ability on the penalty kill. Samberg blocked a shot in the first period and joked with 680 CJOB's Mitchell Clinton during the first intermission that the shot hit a spot where there was no padding. The 25-year-old finished the night playing 22:35, recording two blocked shots and one hit and helping the team's penalty kill go a perfect three-for-three.

**NHL.com**

<https://www.nhl.com/news/los-angeles-kings-winnipeg-jets-game-recap-january-10>

***Kempe lifts Kings past Jets in OT for 5th victory in row  
Forward scores in 4th straight game, has assist; Winnipeg 1-2-2 in past 5***

By Darrin Bauming

WINNIPEG -- Adrian Kempe scored 1:14 into overtime, giving the Los Angeles Kings a 2-1 win against the Winnipeg Jets at Canada Life Centre on Friday.

It was the Kings' first game in six days. Their home game against the Calgary Flames on Wednesday was postponed because of the wildfires in the Los Angeles area.

"I think in a building like this tonight, you know, they're expected to win at home," Kempe said. "Going into OT I think we're pretty confident. I think everybody played for all the people back in L.A. tonight and I think everybody showed that tonight, so that was fun to see."

Kempe, who also had an assist, scored for the fourth game in a row (four goals) and extended his point streak to six games (four goals, four assists). He kept the puck on a 2-on-1 with Anze Kopitar and snapped a high wrist shot from the left face-off circle to the far side.

"It felt like we had another Christmas break when we haven't played, and obviously with everything going on back home it's pretty emotional and all that kind of stuff," Kempe said. "But I think everybody showed up to play, everybody did their part. We kept it simple and played a solid 60 minutes against one of the best teams and one of the best home teams in the League."

Alex Turcotte also scored, and Darcy Kuemper made 18 saves for the Kings (24-10-5), who have won five straight.

Kuemper stopped Kyle Connor's wrist shot from the high slot 20 seconds before Kempe scored.

"The save [Kuemper] made on Connor obviously is the one that gives us a chance to come down and get the game," Los Angeles coach Jim Hiller said. "We played well, and right from the start we were on our game. I was worried about it for a lot of different reasons; we talked about some of them. Proud of them. They came out and played hard in a really tough building against a really good team."

Mark Scheifele scored for the Jets (28-12-3), who have lost four of five (1-2-2). Eric Comrie made 21 saves.

"It was a hard-fought game," Scheifele said. "Both sides protected the inside ice and didn't give much easy ice inside. So it was a tough battle right till the end. ... We still had some chances, we still had some opportunities to score some goals. But they're a tough team there. They play solid D, they make it tough to get the inside. They have good sticks, so they made it tough."

Jordan Spence appeared to give Los Angeles a 1-0 lead 4:01 into the first period, but the goal was overturned after the Jets challenged for offside.

"That's as close to a playoff game as we've seen so far," Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel said. "That's exactly the type of game that gets played at the end of the season. Not a lot of room to make plays. When you did have some time, it got closed off pretty quick. Both teams, for us, we tried to defend the guts of the ice and you saw it both ways."

Turcotte made it 1-0 for the Kings at 4:39 of the second period. Kempe threw the puck toward the net from the point, and Turcotte tipped it from the left hash marks.

"I think we played them really well the first 40 minutes," Kempe said. "We kept them on the outside, not that many high-danger chances, so that's something that we're really happy with. But obviously it's hard to keep doing it for 60 minutes, especially when you're up one goal."

The Kings held the Jets to nine shots on goal through two periods.

"I think the Kings way is just playing well defensively," Spence said. "That's our biggest goal is keeping them away from high-quality chances, and I think we did that really well in the first two periods. I think we minimized their chances, and that's one of the reasons why we're having success with the teams that we're playing against. If we do that, we can win a lot of games [and] we're going to have success."

Scheifele tied it 1-1 with a power-play goal at 10:22 of the third period. He scored with a wrist shot from the left circle off Gabriel Vilardi's pass across the slot.

**NOTES:** The Jets recognized the ongoing wildfires with a message of support for the Kings, their fans and the city of Los Angeles prior to the national anthems. "I just think that it's great when there's times of tragedy people band together," Hiller said. "And there's two teams out there battling hard against each other, but ultimately we stand together. We understand there's a bigger humanitarian issue going on and in that point you stand together. So we appreciated that from them, for sure." ... Kuemper is 8-0-2 in his past 10 games, becoming the fourth goaltender in Los Angeles history with points in 10 consecutive games and the first since Robb Stauber (nine wins, one tie) did it from Oct. 10-Dec. 12, 1992. ... The Jets have earned at least a point in nine of their past 10 home games (7-1-2) and are 15-4-3 at Canada Life Centre this season. ... Scheifele has five points (two goals, three assists) during a four-game point streak. ... Connor (assist) has 18 points (seven goals, 11 assists) in his past 12 games. ... Jets defenseman Dylan Samberg had two blocked shots and a hit in 22:35 of ice time in his first game since breaking his foot against the Nashville Predators on Nov. 23.

### **Canadian Press**

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/kempe-nets-ot-winner-as-kings-ground-jets/>

### ***Jets hit turbulence as offence starts to sputter***

By Canadian Press

WINNIPEG — The Winnipeg Jets have hit some turbulence in what has been a strong season — they've lost four of their last five games, including three at home.

Friday's 2-1 overtime loss to the Los Angeles Kings was another example of the goal-scoring well running dry.

Taking on the emotionally drained Los Angeles Kings at Canada Life Centre, the Jets posted just 19 shots on goal, finding the twine once on a third-period, power-play marker from Mark Scheifele.

The Kings, who opened the scoring on Alex Turcotte's fifth marker of the season early in the second period — gave up the late game-tying marker to Scheifele, but rebounded for the overtime victory on a sloppy Jets line change.

"They got off in time," Jets head coach Scott Arniel said of the miscommunication at the benches. "We weren't sure about that. But we were trying to do the same thing, and the puck came out to the weak side, obviously, pretty quick, and you get caught.

"That's the problem there when you're trying to make those changes. It's almost like a who gets there first type of thing."

Leaving family and friends behind in a city battling its worst set of wildfires on record, the Kings picked up their fifth-straight win as they began a gruelling five-game road trip through Western Canada and Seattle.

"... Obviously with everything going on back home, it's pretty emotional and all that kind of stuff," Kempe said. "But I think everybody showed up to play, everybody did their part.

"We kept it simple and played a solid 60 minutes against one of the best teams and one of the best home teams in the league. So, really proud of the guys tonight, all the way from Darcy (netminder Kuemper) up to the top."

For the Jets (28-12-3), it's been a difficult start to what was expected to be a highlight-filled, eight-game homestand. Through four games, Winnipeg has only one win but has managed two additional points by way of overtime losses (1-1-2).

On Friday, it wasn't for a lack of trying, either. The Jets were just unable to get the puck through Los Angeles' solid defensive structure.

"It's tough," Schiefele said. "Obviously, we still had some chances. We still had some opportunities to score some goals. But they're a tough team there. They play solid D, they make it tough to get to the inside. They have good sticks, so they made it tough."

Down a number of bodies, Winnipeg received a boost defensively as Dylan Samberg made his return to the lineup following a broken foot that kept him out of action for 21 games.

"It's great, he's a really important part of our D-corps," forward Gabe Vilardi said of Samberg. "He does things so well, especially on the PK. Very good defensively. I'm very happy for him, he's been grinding away the past month, month-and-a-half, whatever it's been. We're happy to have him back."

For netminder Eric Comrie, it was another difficult result despite a strong showing. He has now gone 0-6-1 in his last seven games. But the team in front of him hasn't helped much either. Winnipeg has scored just 11 times in Comrie's seven most recent starts.

“We haven't scored many goals when he's been in the pipes,” Scheifele added. “But he's been playing amazing. He's kept us in games. He's made some fantastic saves. And, again, tonight he was awesome.”

With a quick turnaround, the Jets will need to need to shake off the loss, as the Colorado Avalanche make their way to Canada Life Centre for a Central Division showdown on Saturday night.

Winnipeg will have Connor Hellebuyck back in net as he looks for career win No. 301.

## **TSN.ca**

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/kings-suffocate-jets-defensively-to-secure-overtime-win%7E3059858>

### ***Kings 'suffocate' Jets defensively to secure overtime win (VIDEO)***

TSN's Dan Robertson and Kevin Sawyer discuss the Jets' overtime loss to the Kings, the two teams playing a low-scoring tightly contested game, Los Angeles taking away Winnipeg's speed and Adrian Kempe's game-winner.

## **Global Winnipeg**

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10954001/winnipeg-jets-fall-in-overtime-to-los-angeles-kings-in-tight-checking-affair/>

### ***Winnipeg Jets fall in overtime to Los Angeles Kings in tight-checking affair***

By Ross Levitan & Russ Hobson Global News

There wasn't a whole lot of open ice for either team.

The Los Angeles Kings won a tight-checking contest as Adrian Kempe scored the game-winning goal at 1:14 of overtime for a 2-1 win over the Winnipeg Jets on Friday.

Neither team was able to generate much in the way of offence in the first two periods of play. They combined for only 10 shots in the first period and Winnipeg had only nine shots on goal over the first 40 minutes.

“That's as close as a playoff game that we've seen so far,” said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. “That was exactly the type of games that get played at the end of the season. There was not a lot of room to make plays. When you did have some time, it got closed off pretty quick.”

Mark Scheifele scored the Jets lone goal in the third period as they settled for a single point.

“I think it was a hard-fought game,” said Scheifele. “Both sides protected the inside ice and didn't give much easy ice inside. So, it was a tough battle right to the end.”

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For news affecting Winnipeg and surrounding communities, sign up to receive Winnipeg news alerts when they break.

The win gives L.A. its fifth straight victory, while the Jets fall to 1-1-2 through four games of their season-long eight-game homestand.

The shots finished 23-19 in favour of the visitors.

“It was tight-checking throughout the whole game,” Jets forward Gabriel Vilardi said. “Not a lot of space for either side. I thought we kinda gained the momentum in the third a bit.”

Jets goalie Eric Comrie suffered his seventh straight loss, but the Jets have only scored 11 goals during his losing streak.

“It’s giving him some run support,” Arniel said. “I’d love to see us get out three or four goals and be able to do it, but again, he made some big stops.”

Josh Morrissey and Dylan Samberg were both in the lineup for the Jets after dealing with injuries. Samberg had missed the past six weeks with a broken foot.

It was a battle of two top Western Conference teams at Canada Life Centre – and offence was coming at a premium.

Los Angeles thought they opened the scoring at 4:01 when Jordan Spence took a point shot that found the net, but Winnipeg challenged and the play was deemed offside.

The Kings struck first just under five minutes into the second period on what looked like a harmless shot from Kempe, however it was deflected in front by Alex Turcotte and flew past the glove of Eric Comrie.

Scheifele gave the Jets life in the third period with a power play goal after the Kings took consecutive penalties. It was a redemption of sorts after Scheifele took two penalties of his own in the middle frame.

Connor Hellebuyck was honoured during a pre-game ceremony for recently playing in his 500th NHL game, earning his 300th win and recording his 40th career shutout.

The Jets are back in action tomorrow night when they host the Colorado Avalanche with puck drop just after 6 p.m. at Canada Life Centre.

### **Sportsnet.ca**

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/how-gabriel-vilardis-sense-of-self-helped-him-fit-in-perfectly-with-jets/>

### ***How Gabriel Vilardi's sense of self helped him fit in perfectly with Jets***

By Jacob Stoller

WINNIPEG, Man. — Gabriel Vilardi knew he was good at tipping pucks, although he didn't know he was this good.

Since joining the Winnipeg Jets in 2023-24, Vilardi ranks second in tipped goals per game (0.12) among forwards that have played 50 games.

When Sportsnet.ca informed him, Vilardi was taken aback.

"In the entire league?" he asked. "Then, who's first? Tkachuk?"

No, it's Chris Kreider. Valeri Nichushkin, Brock Boeser and Mikko Rantanen round out the top five. All-in-all, pretty impressive company.

"I mean, that's a little surprising. But I guess I'm always net front," Vilardi said. "In the summer, I'll always work a lot on my hands and it translates to tipping pucks, making plays with the puck when it's bobbling or off the corners on the wall. Having good hands and working on your hand coordination plays into that. But so does positioning. It's a bigger factor than people think when you're net front."

Tipping pucks is an often understated skill. But having a player with that weapon in their arsenal is vital in today's NHL.

"Teams are so good at keeping you away from getting quality chances from the slot and from getting those one-on-one with the goalie situations," Scott Arniel said. "The goals, especially in the second half of the year... come from tips and rebounds."

The six-foot-three forward's smooth hands, stick work and sound positioning haven't just made him excellent at tipping pucks, it's also helped him become one of the NHL's best complementary forwards in the league.

Now, at first glance, the word complementary may not sound all that kind. And maybe it's a weird phrase for a player who's recorded 18 goals and 37 points through 42 games (which puts him on pace for a career-high 37 goals and 72 points).

But on his own, Vilardi's not a play driver. However, his skillset, when weaponized properly, makes him the perfect piece to pair alongside elite talent. And that's been on full display while playing alongside Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor.

"I've found a home in playing with 'KC' and 'Scheif,'" Vilardi said during a Friday morning one-on-one conversation. "In LA, I was more of a bottom-six type forward. Whenever I was going out there, I wouldn't say I was trying to do too much, but a lot of the time I got caught trying to do too much. Coming here and playing with Scheif and KC, who are such possession-focused guys, I find that I don't have the puck as much as I did when I was playing with LA and I just have a different mindset towards my attack. It's translated into me being more of a shooter and goal scorer, as opposed to a playmaker like I was growing up."

Not only does Vilardi rank second in power play goals (10) this year, but according to NHL Edge, he also ranks in the 99th percentile in high-danger goals. Each of his 17 goals has come from right in the blue paint, or the inner slot.

But let's discount the flashy stuff for a second. Vilardi's most impactful skill may just be his puck-protection ability.

“Rush offence is one thing — it’s really difficult to create in the O-zone,” Kings coach Jim Hiller, who coached Vilardi as an assistant during the 2022-23 season, said on Friday morning. “Gabe does that really well. When you got a big body like he does, that helps. You can protect [the puck] and keep it away from you further against the defenders.”

And buy time and space.

“Whether he’s whacking the other defender’s stick or he’s staying heavy on top of it. He does a real good job in tight, around his feet, with that protection and it allows him to create himself maybe a foot, two feet [more] to make a pass [or] get a shot off,” Arniel said.

Vilardi’s ability to master that skill stems from an understanding of what he is — and what he’s not.

“I’m never going to be a guy that’s going to beat a guy down the wall with my speed, right? I’m not a quick guy,” he said. “So, I have to figure out how I can be effective in other ways. Since junior, and then translating into pro, a lot of it has been about puck protection — trying to hold onto pucks down low and trying to create below the hash marks.”

Which is why he’s gelled so well with his linemates. Scheifele is one of the best players in the league when it comes to puck protection and making plays off the wall.

“That’s one thing I talked about with the guys last year — how surprising it was to see [Scheifele] hold onto the puck, while a guy’s on his shoulder, and then draw another [opposing player],” Vilardi said. “Hockey is all about trying to break down coverages. Every team is so structured. When you can bring two guys to you, that’s where plays happen and he’s so good at that, because he beats his guy off the wall. He’ll hold it long enough that the other team says ‘Okay, we’re in a dangerous spot here, someone else go get him.’ That’s when the two-on-one happens.”

He’s also subtly become a very effective forechecker. Vilardi may not exhibit the prototypical dog-with-a-bone characteristics that are often associated with efficient forechecking but he’s found a way to leverage his strengths.

“I’ve never been a guy that’s going in and has the mindset that I’m going to go out and make a big hit. For me, it’s more about stick positioning,” Vilardi said when asked about being the first player in on retrievals. “If I can get a tap on the puck, it just slows the other team’s transition play and they can’t get a clear exit out. Or a high chip wall play where I knock it down and help us keep it in the zone. I think it goes hand-in-hand with the hand-eye coordination stuff.”

Vilardi’s play along the wall and on the forecheck has been instrumental to Scheifele and Connor having career years.

Is this a bad time to mention he’s an RFA at the end of the year? Another two-year bridge deal would walk him right to free agency.

One ought to think Jets GM Kevin Cheveldayoff will try to go long-term with Vilardi, who is due for a big raise from his current \$3.43 million AAV.

He may not be a traditional ‘driver,’ but there’s no doubt he’s solidified himself as a vital part of this team’s core.



And a player this market would hate to lose.

## **Winnipeg Free Press**

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/01/10/hellebuycks-milestone-cements-his-incredible-talent>

### ***Hellebuyck's milestone cements his incredible talent Michigan product is the 30th goalie in NHL history to reach 500 games played, 300 wins and 40-plus shutouts***

By: Ken Wiebe and Mike McIntyre

Whether you're looking at the numbers or the accomplishments, even some of the people that have been around Connor Hellebuyck from the beginning of this ride with the Winnipeg Jets are left shaking their heads in amazement.

So on an evening where Hellebuyck was honoured in a pre-game ceremony by the organization he's spent his entire career with — including the presentation of a golden stick prior to the Jets hosting the Los Angeles Kings — it only made sense to get their reaction to the Michigan product becoming the 30th goalie in NHL history to reach 500 games played, 300 wins and 40-plus shutouts.

"When you look at what he's accomplished, what do you say?" Jets goalie coach Wade Flaherty asked rhetorically in a recent interview. "At the end of the day, I'm seeing all of the stuff come up on TV and some of the names that are on these lists, it's like 'wow.'"

Wow is an apt way to describe what the 31 year old has done to date, while also recognizing just how much more could be on the horizon.

"It's pretty special. Especially for me, to be here through the whole thing," said Flaherty, who has been the Jets' goalie coach since the franchise returned to Winnipeg in 2011. "Seeing it night after night. To see Helly grow as a goalie, but more importantly, as a person and as an individual. To see that over the years is special."

Special is a great way to describe Hellebuyck's journey, which includes countless examples of having to overcome adversity before hitting his stride.

Whether that was being passed over in the USHL Draft, taking a tryout with the Odessa Jackalopes of the NAHL or beginning as the backup before taking over the starting job in college, Hellebuyck's mentality has helped him reach extraordinary heights.

Chosen in the fifth round of the 2012 NHL Draft, Hellebuyck has transformed from a late-round gamble to an absolute steal who has grown into a foundational pillar for the Jets' franchise.

That Hellebuyck has been able to build his resumé the way that he has over time is a testament to his intrinsic desire to improve, coupled with his mechanics and that's all been tied together with an incredibly high level of belief.

“His consistency comes from his awareness of the situations and his management of the game,” said Flaherty.

“His competitive nature is what drives his consistency. He wants to get better. When he leaves the ice after practice, he has to feel like he’s accomplished something and those are the rules that we have. When you come off the ice, you’re feeling like you’re a better goalie than when you stepped on the ice.

“His reads are amazing. When you watch him, he’s scanning the ice. If you wrap it up in a sentence, it’s the management of his game.”

At a time in the NHL when tandems and job-sharing situations are becoming more and more prevalent, Hellebuyck is an outlier. He’s someone that thrives on playing a high volume of games and the rhythm that comes with that.

“He’s a true, true No. 1,” said Jets backup goalie Eric Comrie. “He will not play less than 60 games a year. That’s his thing. He needs to play that many games.

“He plays an easy game. He could play all 82 games if he wanted to. Honestly, I truly believe that he could. Because he’s so efficient in his game and makes the game so simple.”

The scary thing for opponents is that Hellebuyck isn’t showing any signs of slowing down. In fact, he might still be in the early portion of his prime — even with two Vezina Trophies already in his collection.

“I feel like he can do it forever, too,” said Comrie. ““You see the work every single day. You see what he does, you see the way that he processes the game, how he watches his video, how he analyzes it.

“His game is constantly growing. No matter what, it’s constantly getting better and better.”

Comrie, who was chosen in the second round of the 2013 NHL Draft, has watched the evolution of Hellebuyck’s game over the years, citing the vast improvement in both his skating and puck handling as two prime examples.

Thanks in part to his preparation, Hellebuyck seems to have a superpower that is rare — even among the best of the best at his position.

“This is the biggest single compliment you can give a guy, on every single goal, it looks like he had a chance to stop it,” said Comrie.

“With a lot of guys, you think ‘he just had no chance.’ But on every single goal, it looks like (Hellebuyck) has a chance because he’s always in the right position and he’s always reading the play correctly. That is the most amazing thing because he’s always giving himself the edge.”

By giving himself the edge, Hellebuyck often gives his team an edge at one of the most important positions on the ice.

He’s well on his way to becoming one of — if not THE best — at his position to ever do it, which is also part of why the love affair between the marquee masked man and this community is only going to grow over the span of the seven-year contract extension he signed in October of 2023.

“He’s just a real cerebral goaltender. I guess you could say he’s always asking questions. He’s just a very curious mind of how to get better,” said Jets forward Kyle Connor.

“And it’s obviously helped his game tremendously. It seems like he’s getting better every single year. And you know, the hunger is there too. You can tell he wants to be great, and he wants to win a Stanley Cup.”

Around the glass

The NHL is putting together a quarter-century team (from 2000 to the present) for all its clubs this season based on voting from media members, retired players and executives in each market.

Friday was the day the 2.0 Jets/Atlanta Thrashers roster was revealed, with five current players making the cut.

**FIRST TEAM:**

F Ilya Kovalchuk  
F Blake Wheeler  
F Mark Scheifele  
D Dustin Byfuglien  
D Josh Morrissey  
G Connor Hellebuyck

**SECOND TEAM:**

F Bryan Little  
F Kyle Connor  
F Nikolaj Ehlers  
D Toby Enstrom  
D Jacob Trouba  
G Ondrej Pavelec

Both Ken and Mike had 11 of the 12 players on their respective ballots. Ken ultimately chose Neal Pionk over Trouba as his fourth and final defenceman, while Mike had Vyacheslav Kozlov edging out Ehlers as his sixth and final forward. Other strong considerations included Marian Hossa, Patrik Laine and Adam Lowry up front and Kari Lehtonen and Laurent Brossoit in goal.

Once all franchises’ teams are announced a league-wide vote will take place to determine the NHL Quarter-Century Team. Voting will take place Feb. 12-26 on NHL.com and X, with results to be announced at a later date.

A tip of the Dump & Chase cap to local product Denton Mateychuk, who scored his first NHL goal on Thursday night in a 6-2 Columbus Blue Jackets victory over the Seattle Kraken.

The 20-year-old defenceman from Dominion City, who was selected 12th-overall in the 2022 draft, also picked up his second big-league assist as he played in his eighth game since being called up from the AHL, with the first happening on New Year’s Eve.

Mateychuk also got to play against his second cousin, Owen Pickering of St. Adolphe, on Tuesday night in a 4-3 shootout win over the Pittsburgh Penguins. Pickering, selected 21st-

overall in the same year as Mateychuk, is up to 18 NHL games as a rookie and recorded his first goal and assist earlier this season.

Clearly, hockey is in this talented family's blood. Mateychuk's 14-year-old brother, Crosby, is currently tearing it up with the Eastman AAA U15 Selects and is viewed as a top-10 pick for the upcoming WHL Prospects Draft.

Brandon product Trent Miner made his first NHL start — and second NHL appearance — in goal for the Colorado Avalanche against the Chicago Blackhawks on Wednesday night at the United Center.

Although the Avalanche lost 3-1, Miner finished with 17 saves.

Miner, 23, was chosen in the seventh round of the 2019 NHL Draft and is into his fourth professional season

Speaking of Avalanche goalies, the deal to acquire Mackenzie Blackwood has paid immediate dividends for general manager Chris MacFarland and company.

In 10 appearances during the past month, Blackwood has allowed only 15 goals, is sporting a record of 8-1-1, a .940 save percentage and 1.61 goals-against average.

Saturday's game between the Jets and Avalanche should be a doozy — with Hellebuyck and Blackwood going head-to-head in a marquee matchup of teams battling for top spot in the Central Division standings.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/01/10/jets-fall-to-kings-2-1-in-overtime>

***Jets fall to Kings 2-1 in overtime  
Another close game and another tough loss for backup goaltender Comrie***

By: Mike McIntyre

Scott Arniel called it as close to playoff hockey as his Winnipeg Jets have seen this season.

So what to make of a 2-1 overtime loss on Friday night to a Los Angeles Kings team that put on a defensive clinic, grounding the normally high-flying Jets by giving them very little time or space?

Where some folks may see disappointment, Arniel thought he spotted some maturity and growth — especially after his group fell behind early in the second period, then rallied to tie in the third before Kings forward Adrian Kempe scored 74 seconds into the three-on-three session to give the visitors the bonus point.

"We've been learning that lesson for the last couple of years," said Arniel.

"We've had a few this year where we've stayed patient and not let it become a 2-0, 3-0 game. That's all you can do. You have to wait for your moments sometimes. We spent a lot of time in their end. We just had to continue to grind and hope that either it was a goal or it was a power play situation. And we got that. And I liked the way we played that game."

Winnipeg falls to 28-12-3 on the year, which is still good for first place in the increasingly crowded Central Division. They are now 1-1-2 at the halfway point of this season-long four-game homestand, which continues Saturday night against the Colorado Avalanche.

“It was a hard fought game. Both sides protected the inside ice and didn’t give much easy ice inside,” said Jets centre Mark Scheifele. “It was a tough battle right till the end.”

Los Angeles improves to 24-10-5 after a fifth straight triumph, putting them in second place in the Pacific behind league-leading Vegas.

The Jets mustered just 19 shots in the game and the only offence they generated came on a third-period power play in which Mark Scheifele finished off a pretty passing play with linemates Kyle Connor and Gabriel Vilardi to score his team-leading 24th goal.

That’s actually five shots more than they produced in a 4-1 loss on Nov. 27 in southern California. The Kings are the masters of shot suppression, no question.

“It was tight checking throughout the whole game,” is how Vilardi described it. “Not a lot of space for either side. I thought we kind of gained momentum.”

Kempe had a hand in his team’s other goal, as his shot was tipped by teammate Alex Turcotte early in the second period.

Let’s break this one down further:

#### *NO SUPPORT FOR COMRIE*

Another game, another tough loss for backup goaltender Eric Comrie. After winning his first three stars – in which the Jets scored a whopping 17 goals — Comrie has now gone 0-for-7 (0-6-1 to be precise) with teammates lighting the lamp just 11 times in that span.

That’s been a theme, and something they talked about prior to puck drop. Easier said than done against the Kings, of course.

Comrie had no chance on Turcotte’s goal, and Kempe’s winner was a wicked wrister on a two-on-rush — which came seconds after veteran Kings goaltender Darcy Kuemper had stopped Kyle Connor’s one-timer.

Typically the Jets play Comrie on the second night of a back-to-back, but they decided to flip the schedule this time around in order to have Connor Hellebuyck face the Avalanche.

Comrie stopped 21 of 23 shots he faced.

“He’s been playing amazing,” said Scheifele. “He’s kept us in games. He’s made some fantastic saves. And, again, tonight he was awesome.”

Winnipeg Jets Executive Chairman Mark Chipman (right) presents Connor Hellebuyck with special sticks to celebrate his 300th win, 500 regular season games and 40th shutout prior to the game.

Speaking of Hellebuyck, the reigning Vezina Trophy winner was given a well-deserved night off, but that still didn’t stop him from being the centre of the pre-game attention. Hellebuyck was

honoured for becoming just the 30th goalie in NHL history with at least 500 games played, 300 wins and 40 shutouts.

Hellebuyck's wife, Andrea, his two children and his father, Chuck, joined him on the ice for a ceremony in which owner Mark Chipman presented him with a framed puck, a portrait, a silver stick, a golden stick and a \$25,000 donation to a charity of his choice, which was Project 11.

There were also several video messages played on the scoreboard from current and former teammates including Laurent Brossoit, Andrew Copp and Dustin Byfuglien, who got a roar from the crowd when he told Hellebuyck to "keep kicking ass. I'll see you on the water."

"It was awesome. You know he's been the backbone of this team for a long time. And you know, it was bone chilling for sure," Scheifele said of the ceremony. "I definitely got the chills. He's been fantastic for us and to honour him like that. And for his family to be here and see that is pretty special. And I'm lucky to have him as our goalie."

### *SAMBERG'S RETURN*

It was a fairly high-event return for Dylan Samberg, who had missed the previous 21 games with a broken foot.

Early in the game, a soft clear in his own end turned into what appeared to be a goal from Kings defenceman Jordan Spence. However, the Jets challenged the play for a missed offside and it was quickly overturned. Give a tip of the hat to video coach Matt Prefontaine.

Later in the frame, with the Jets on the penalty kill, Samberg had to face his fears and step in front of the same type of slap shot that had sidelined him in late November. Although he's beefed up his skates with protection — he referred to them as Transformers — the puck hit him in the fleshy part of his leg.

Samberg ended up playing 22:35 — fourth on the team behind only Scheifele, Connor and blue-line partner Neal Pionk — and had three shot attempts, a hit, a takeaway and two blocked shots.

"He's a really important part of our D-core," said Vilardi. "He does things so well, especially on the PK. Very good defensively. I'm very happy for him, he's been grinding away the past month, month and a half whatever its been. We're happy to have him back."

### *HEAVY HEARTS*

You wouldn't know it from their play, but members of the Kings had a lot on their minds as they hit the ice Friday. The raging wildfire situation sweeping through southern California certainly hit home, with plenty of players and staff impacted.

"It's really tough. It's hard to be away right now," veteran Kings forward Trevor Moore said following the morning skate. "It's the worst fire I have ever seen in California in my time. It is just awful. We are thankful for the men and women who are the first responders and taking care of everything. We are thinking and praying for everyone."

The Kings just wrapped up a four-game homestand that was supposed to be five, but the finale on Wednesday against Calgary was postponed due to the emergency situation.

"We feel so bad for the people who have lost homes, had to be evacuated. It's truly like nothing we have seen before, certainly me, being a part of that," said head coach Jim Hiller.

"The men and women on the frontlines are courageous. They are fighting, saving lives, saving homes, we just want to make sure that even though we are not back in town, we are still thinking about what is going on back there. We really want to acknowledge all the tragedy that is going on. It has been hard for everybody."

The Jets joined the Kings in wearing decals of the Los Angeles Fire Department, and a message of support was announced in the rink prior to puck drop.

"I think it's super great that they're willing to do that," said Moore. "We are all playing against each other, but this is bigger than hockey and our competition."

#### *KEY PLAY*

Kempe's overtime winner was the difference.

#### *THREE STARS*

Los Angeles RW Adrian Kempe: 1G, 1A.

Winnipeg C Mark Scheifele: 1 goal.

Los Angeles G Darcy Kuemper: 18 saves

#### *EXTRA, EXTRA*

Winnipeg's two healthy scratches were defenceman Ville Heinola and forward Dominic Toninato, while defencemen Hayden Fleury and Colin Miller and forward Mason Appleton all remain sidelined with injury.

Brandon's Joel Edmundson, who is on the Kings, missed the game with an unspecified injury.

The Jets went 1-for-2 on the power play while killing off all three minors they took.

#### **Winnipeg Sun**

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/jets-smothered-by-stingy-kings-in-overtime-loss>

#### ***Jets smothered by stingy Kings in overtime loss***

By Paul Friesen

The Winnipeg Jets' plan on Friday night was to get backup goalie Eric Comrie his first win in seven starts.

The Jets hadn't been providing much run support for the 29-year-old of late, but they were facing the wrong team to do much about that.

The Los Angeles Kings, the stingiest team in the NHL, threw a blanket over the Jets, smothering one of the league's most potent attacks and winning 2-1 in overtime.

"That's as close to a playoff game as we've seen so far," head coach Scott Arniel said. "That's exactly the type of game that gets played at the end of the season. Not a lot of room to make

plays. When you did have some time, it got closed off pretty quick. Both team. We tried to defend the guts of the ice and you saw it both ways.”

Adrian Kempe scored the winner 1:14 into overtime as the Jets hit the midpoint of their eight-game home stand with a 1-2-1 mark.

Mark Scheifele’s power play goal midway through the third period, set up with some nifty passing by Gabe Vilardi and Kyle Connor, had tied it up.

“That was just all Gabe knowing where I was,” Scheifele said of his team-leading 24th of the year. “That was amazing. He’s got the knack around the net. He’s so crafty with the puck. A fantastic player.”

The Jets record falls to 28-12-3, while the Kings improve to 24-10-5.

The Kings had three power plays, the Jets two, with final shots favouring the visitors, 23-19.

Comrie dropped a seventh straight start, through almost no fault of his own.

“I’d love to see us get three or four goals,” Arniel said. “Again, he made some big stops in the third there. On some scrambles he came up big. Yeah, I just feel for him. It’s hard, because you want to see him get that win.”

That said, Arniel liked the way his team remained patient, something they’ll need to be as the games keep getting tighter.

He told his players to remember it, because the playoffs will be similar.

“Exactly what I said,” he said. “That’s the type of hockey that you’ve got to stay in those games... give yourself a chance. You can’t shoot yourself in the foot.”

The Kings win comes after their last game was postponed due to the wildfires and with their minds consumed by having to leave their families behind during such an uncertain, trying time.

“With everything going on back home, it’s pretty emotional,” Kempe said. “Everybody played for all the people back in L.A. tonight.”

“Proud of them,” Kings coach Jim Hiller said. “They came out and played hard in a really tough building against a really good team.”

It looked like the Kings got one in the opening 20 minutes, Jordan Spence’s wrist shot from the point going through a screen to beat Comrie just four minutes in.

But the Jets challenged L.A. had been offside coming into the zone, and they were right.

The Jets had just one shot on goal through the first 14 minutes.

Their second was their first good scoring chance, from Morgan Barron.

Midway through the game the Jets still had just six shots on Darcy Kuemper.



“It just felt choppy,” Vilardi said. “There wasn’t much going on offensively for us.”

Comrie stopped a breakaway by Brandt Clarke early in the second period, although he was helped by the fact Clarke lost the handle on the puck at the last moment.

He couldn’t handle a shot tipped by Alex Turcotte in the slot minutes later, as the Kings got on the board first.

Comrie had to fend off two Kings power plays in that middle period, both with Scheifele in the box, allowing his team to hit the third down just 1-0.

Up next, the Colorado Avalanche on Saturday night, with Connor Hellebuyck starting in goal against a team that’s hot on the tail of the Jets in the Central Division.

Friday’s opening faceoff was delayed to honour Hellebuyck for the three milestones he’s reached this season: his 500th game, 40th career shutout and 300th win, the last one coming Tuesday against Nashville.

The Jets presented Hellebuyck with a silver goalie stick, commemorative puck and a framed piece of art, while the NHL contributed a gold stick for becoming the third-fastest to reach 300 wins.

The biggest cheer, aside from the one for the goalie, came for former defenceman and fellow fishing nut Dustin Byfuglien’s video-taped message of congratulations.

“Keep kicking ass,” Byfuglien said. “See you on the water.”

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/opinion/columnists/currier-jets-need-playoff-run-to-rekindle-fan-passion-attendance>

### ***CURRIER: Jets need playoff run to rekindle fan passion, attendance***

By Geoff Currier

“If the people don’t want to come to the ballpark, how you gonna stop em?” — Yogi Berra

There are as many reasons people don’t attend sporting events as there are empty seats. Maybe the team is losing too much and is no fun to watch. Perhaps it’s too easy to stay at home and watch on TV. You may have family commitments that don’t allow going to a game. Your kids could be involved in extra-curricular activities that take up your time.

When it comes to big-time sports like the National Hockey League, the price of a ticket is surely a major factor in whether or not a person decides to show up in person. The majority of NHL teams sell out most nights or come close. The Winnipeg Jets do not. Not any more.

The Jets packed their 15,000 seat arena for the first nine seasons, even selling standing room tickets. The club sold 13,000 season tickets. That was enough to ensure sellouts.

When the Atlanta Thrashers relocated to Winnipeg, NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman advised the folks here that because the Jets played in the smallest building in the League at that time,

that they would have to sell out every game forever to remain viable. No problem, hockey fans said. We'll be there.

And they were, at least until Covid hit. Since then there have been empty seats at most games. Last season average attendance was under 13,500. Bettman paid the city a visit to drum up support. His efforts had minimal impact.

The numbers are better so far this year. The Jets are having a terrific season on the ice and that has seen average sales move up past 14,000 so far. But that's still not nearly good enough.

If you can't afford the lower bowl you can still pick up a ticket for under fifty bucks which is within reach of most hockey fans. If you want something closer to the ice, be prepared to pay. A night out for a family of four can run you around a thousand bucks once you park and eat. It just costs too much to go to an NHL game for most people.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle facing the club in terms of ticket sales is the fact that only 20% of the season tickets are corporate. In many markets that number is around 50%. Businesses which used to buy six or eight seats may now be down to two, or none at all. And any business knows that once you lose a customer, it's a steep hill to climb to get that person back.

Lockouts and cancelled seasons have failed to dampen the enthusiasm of Canadian hockey fans. The NHL can treat its customers with the utmost disdain, knowing full well that their passion for our game will remain. That doesn't mean, though, that they'll be back in the rink when the puck drops.

A lengthy playoff run would cure some of these ills. Only once has the team managed to go deep in the postseason. Early exits the last two years have seen enthusiasm for the club decline. Winning a couple of series this spring would no doubt rekindle the flame. But the price of a ticket is not going to go down.

None of this is to suggest that the team is on the verge of moving to Boca Raton or Albuquerque but the NHL must be wondering if the economics of a small market like Winnipeg are sustainable. It's unlikely that Atlanta will get a third shot at having an NHL club. Neither would we.