

**Winnipegjets.com**

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-late-game-heroics-from-demelo>

***Three things - Late game heroics from DeMelo  
DeMelo scores game winning goal with 27 seconds left for Jets***

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – The Winnipeg Jets extended their winning streak to three games with a 2-1 victory over the Seattle Kraken at Canada Life Centre. Dylan DeMelo scored the game winning goal with 27 seconds left in the game and Mark Scheifele recorded his 27th goal of the season. Connor Hellebuyck made 18 saves as the Jets dominated the Kraken outshooting them 36-19 including 19-5 in the second period. Josh Morrissey had an assist and reached 40 points for the third consecutive season. Winnipeg (31-12-3) will close out their eight game homestand Saturday against the Calgary Flames.

***GWG IN GAME NUMBER 600***

Dylan DeMelo arrived tonight ready to play in his 600th career game and was clearly not expecting to be the late game hero for Winnipeg tonight. But with under 30 seconds left and the game tied at one, DeMelo took a pass from Nikolaj Ehlers and sent a perfect shot high glove side past Joey Daccord for his second goal of the season and second game winning goal of the campaign.

“600 games is obviously a great accomplishment, I’m proud of it. Takes a lot of people to help you get there,” said DeMelo.

“So that was kind of in my mind before the game. Your family, your friends, coaches, everybody, your teammates, all the staff to kind of get you here. To score the game winner just put the cherry on top.”

***SCHEIF KEEPS SCORING***

As we’ve seen a lot recently with this team, the Jets played another patient game. Trailing 1-0 almost to the halfway mark of the game, Jamie Oleksiak took an interference penalty. 34 seconds into that power play, Mark Scheifele took advantage of a juicy rebound given up by Joey Daccord and scored his 27th goal of the season. Since December 1, Scheifele has scored 14 times leading the league in that category along with the Oilers Leon Draisaitl.

***60 POINTS FOR CONNOR***

Kyle Connor had the primary assist on Scheifele’s power play goal in the second period and that got him to the 60-point mark (26-34-60) this season. Connor tied Blake Wheeler (46 GP in 2018-19) as the fastest player in Jets team history to reach the 60-point mark in a season. Ilya Kovalchuk (39 GP in 2005-06 & 44 GP in 2007-08) and Marc Savard (44 GP in 2005-06) hit the mark in fewer games with the Thrashers.

## **Canadian Press**

<https://www.chrisd.ca/2025/01/16/winnipeg-jets-seattle-kraken-game-recap-win/>

### ***Winnipeg Jets Defenceman Dylan DeMelo Scores Big Goal in 600th Career NHL Game***

By Jim Bender, The Canadian Press

The Jets found an unlikely hero Thursday night.

Defenceman Dylan DeMelo scored the winner with 27 seconds left to give Winnipeg a 2-1 triumph over the Seattle Kraken before 13,559 fans at Canada Life Centre.

Nikolaj Ehlers grabbed the puck that had bounced off a stanchion and then fed DeMelo at the point. DeMelo's screened shot beat Seattle netminder Joey Accord.

"Yeah, that was awesome," said DeMelo, who scored just his second goal of the season. "Obviously I'm a guy who doesn't score a lot."

DeMelo also happened to score in his 600th career NHL game.

"Six hundred games is a great accomplishment, I'm proud of it," said the 31-year-old from London, Ont.

"It takes a lot of people to help you get there. That was kind of on my mind before the game, between your family and friends, your coaches and teammates and all the staff to help get you here, that was special in its own right.

"To get the game-winner, that just kind of put the cherry on the top, and then to get the win, it was a really special night and one that I'll remember."

There was extra enthusiasm in his team's celebration of his goal.

"It was great," DeMelo said. "In our initial huddle, guys were going nuts, profanities and all that fun stuff. Then, you come to the bench and just see everybody's face just lighting up.

"But then, there's (27) seconds (left) and we need to get right back into it to get the win. Come into the room and everybody is all jacked up. We've got a special group. Everybody makes you feel special, no matter your role here."

DeMelo looked skyward after he scored the rare marker.

"It was just euphoria, to be honest with you," he said. "I was just so pumped. I had my hands up in the air for quite a while, so I just thought I'd look up there as well to see if there was anything up there. You just kind of let your emotions take over. And with the time of the game, you just kind of let loose a little bit.

“It wasn’t too crazy, but like I said, I wasn’t necessarily surprised, but you just let your emotions get the best of you a little bit there.”

Ehlers handled the lucky bounce off the boards for the Jets to set up DeMelo.

“A great bounce off the boards and I saw it coming out, right into the middle and tried to get my stick on it,” Ehlers said. “And saw the forward bite down on me, and Smoky (DeMelo) came in a pretty good position. (Adam Lowry) and Al (Iafallo) going to the net, creating some traffic, and a great shot.”

Daccord deserved a better fate, said Kraken coach Dan Bylsma.

“He probably doesn’t have a chance on the last one because he can’t see it,” he said. “Pretty much everything else he was turning aside and was real strong in there. Great puck play from him.”

Jets coach Scott Arniel was pleased for DeMelo.

“I’m sure he’ll remember that one,” he said. “That’s awesome. A big game like that and to finish it like that, top shelf, it’s nice to see.

“We have our captains and our assistants, but we also have our leadership group and he’s a part of that. He’s earned that. We just felt that he’s a guy, a voice.

“Six hundred games, he’s been around and he’s played in a lot of different situations. When you’re thrust into a role like he has been the last few years of playing top-pairing (minutes), there’s a lot of responsibility that comes with that.

“The biggest thing for those guys, for most of those guys, is they lead by example. How they play, how they practise, how they work out and how they do their things off the ice. That’s what Mel does. He’s a great example for young defencemen. He’s a great example for players that want to play 600 games or more. He just goes about his business every day and he’s pretty consistent.”

Mark Scheifele, who scored Winnipeg’s other goal on the power play, extended his point streak to seven games and his goal-scoring streak to four. Matty Beniers scored Seattle’s lone goal.

“It’s a disappointing result with the effort and the battle that we put in for 60 minutes,” Bylsma said.

*NOTES:* Scheifele’s goal extended Winnipeg’s NHL-leading power-play goal tally to 43 ... With an assist on the opening goal, Kaapo Kakko extended his point streak to four games ... Winnipeg’s Rasmus Kupari played in his 200th NHL career game.

**NHL.com**

<https://www.nhl.com/news/seattle-kraken-winnipeg-jets-game-recap-january-16>

***DeMelo breaks tie late, Jets edge Kraken to extend point streak to 5  
Defenseman scores with 27 seconds left for Winnipeg, which wins 3rd in row***

By Darren Brown

WINNIPEG -- Dylan DeMelo broke a tie with 27 seconds remaining in the third period, and the Winnipeg Jets defeated the Seattle Kraken 2-1 at Canada Life Centre on Thursday.

DeMelo scored top corner with a wrist shot through traffic. Seattle defenseman Adam Larsson's clearing attempt redirected off a stanchion to Nikolaj Ehlers, who then fed it to DeMelo toward the high slot.

"It was a very unfortunate bounce for Seattle, for sure," DeMelo said. "It went off a stanchion and then maybe [Ehlers] was the only guy to see it. He then just pulled up on a dime. I saw a hole and was able to take it. We had a great screen in front from [Alex Iafallo and Adam Lowry] and the goalie didn't see anything. I was able to put it top shelf."

DeMelo, who scored his second goal of the season, was playing in his 600th NHL game.

"That was awesome. Obviously, I'm a guy who doesn't score a lot," DeMelo said. "Six hundred games is a great accomplishment, I'm proud of it. It takes a lot of people to help you get there... That was special in its own right. And then to get the game-winner, that just kind of put the cherry on the top, and then to get the win. It was a really special night and one that I'll remember."

Mark Scheifele also scored for the Jets (31-12-3), who extended their point streak to five games (4-0-1) with their third straight win. Connor Hellebuyck made 18 saves.

"[DeMelo] plays the right way, every single game," Ehlers said. "Funny guy off the ice. Super-nice guy who wants to win as bad as everyone else in here. And it's a family. It's something special. I don't know if you guys will see the reaction we had in here (the locker room) after, when he came in, but that's the fun part. Special."

Matty Beniers scored for the Kraken (19-24-3), who have lost six of eight (2-5-1). Joey Daccord made 34 saves.

"(We) play a game like that against a good team -- in the battle, in the fight," Seattle coach Dan Bylsma said. "We played a great first period and disappointing how it ended there in the last 30 seconds... They got a bounce, yes. You make your own luck. There's 35 seconds left to go and we go back for a breakout and -- I don't know what it hit, it hit something trying to get it around and up the wall -- and gave them the puck in the offensive zone."

Beniers gave the Kraken a 1-0 lead at 8:12 of the first period, lifting Kaapo Kakko's centering pass high over Hellebuyck's leg.

"It starts with a good play by [Jaden Schwartz] bringing it up the wall, chips it over the two defensemen's heads," Beniers said. "Kaapo corrals it and makes an awesome backhand saucer pass to me. So, great plays by those two. You know, they're playing awesome."

Scheifele tied it 1-1 on the power play at 9:35 of the second period. The rebound from Kyle Connor's shot bounced to Scheifele, who one-timed it past Daccord.

"I liked how we played the last two periods. Not so much the first," Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel said. "You've got to [give] credit to Seattle, too. They came hard. We gave up four odd-man rushes... But we settled down, and like you mentioned, we took over the second and it carried right over into the third."

*NOTES:* DeMelo scored the second-latest go-ahead goal by a defenseman in Jets/Thrashers history behind only Dustin Byfuglien (59:50 on April 7, 2016). ... Connor (26 goals, 34 assists in 46 games) tied Blake Wheeler (46 games in 2018-19) as the fastest player in Jets history to reach the 60-point mark in a season. Ilya Kovalchuk (39 games in 2005-06 and 44 games in 2007-08) and Marc Savard (44 games in 2005-06) hit the mark in fewer games with the Thrashers. ... Kakko, who had an assist, has five points (three goals, two assists) during a four-game point streak, tied for the most in any four-game span in his career. He has 10 points (four goals, six assists) in 13 games with Seattle since being acquired in a trade with the New York Rangers on Dec. 18. ... Seattle forward Brandon Tanev was a game-time decision (illness) and did not play.

### **Sportsnet.ca**

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/euphoria-jets-demelo-celebrates-600th-game-with-clutch-performance/>

### ***Euphoria': Jets' DeMelo celebrates 600th game with clutch performance***

By Jacob Stoller

WINNIPEG — Dylan DeMelo couldn't have scripted his 600th game any better.

On the morning of his milestone night — ahead of the Winnipeg Jets' 2-1 win over the Seattle Kraken — the 2011 sixth-round pick said a younger version of himself would have laughed if you told him he'd play that many NHL games.

What would a young DeMelo do if he were told that he'd score the game-winning goal in that game?

"Go buy a lottery ticket or something," he said.

For a player like DeMelo — who had just 18 career goals before facing Seattle — what happened on Thursday night was the equivalent of hitting the lottery.

With the clock ticking down on regulation and the score deadlocked 1-1, Nikolaj Ehlers pounced on a botched clearing attempt that was redirected off the stanchion. Ehlers scooped up the puck, turned around and dished it to DeMelo, who unleashed a bullseye of a wrist shot over Joey Daccord's right shoulder to give Winnipeg a lead with 27.9 seconds remaining.

The 31-year-old defenceman raised his hands high and looked up at the sky before giving a double fist pump.

"It was just euphoria, to be honest with you," he explained. "I was just so pumped. I had my hands up in the air for quite a while, so I just thought I'd look up there as well to see if there was anything up there. You just kind of let your emotions take over. And with the time of the game, you just kind of let loose a little bit."

Teammates are bound to go bananas when a player scores a clutch goal like that, especially on such a significant night. But the reaction from the Jets — both on the ice, and on the bench — tells you all you need to know about one of the team's most beloved players.

"In our initial huddle, guys were going nuts. Profanities and all that fun stuff," DeMelo said. "Then you come to the bench and just see everybody's face just lighting up. So that was great. But then there's 30 seconds and we need to get right back into it to get the win. Come into the room and everybody is all jacked up. We've got a special group. Everybody makes you feel special, no matter your role here."

DeMelo has played a big role in fostering that culture.

"We have our captains and our assistants but we also have our leadership group and he's a part of that. And he's earned that," Jets coach Scott Arniel said.

Off the ice, DeMelo is one of the most personable people you'll encounter in an NHL dressing room. Spend a little bit of time with him — or scour the Jets social media platforms, where you his personality shines through in behind-the-scenes clips — and you can see why he's a glue guy in that room.

And on the ice, he's just as key of a cog.

Beneath DeMelo's wittiness and endearing personality lies a fierce competitor — the type of spirit that enables an undersized blue-liner, one who doesn't possess a flashy skillset, to play such a defensively sound game.

Some may argue that DeMelo — like many on the Jets backend — is miscast in his role on the depth chart. On paper, he doesn't fit the profile of a top-pairing defenceman. But DeMelo's ability to kill plays and win battles along the wall fits in perfectly with Winnipeg's defensively oriented system. It's what's allowed him to become a staple on the team's penalty kill. And help the Jets get more out of Josh Morrissey.

“When you're thrust into a role like he has been the last few years of playing top-pairing (minutes), there's a lot of responsibility that comes with that,” Arniel said. “And so the biggest thing for those guys, for most of those guys, is they lead by example. How they play, how they practice, how they work out and how they do their things off the ice. That's what 'Mel' does. He's a great example for young defencemen. He's a great example for players that want to play 600 games or more. He just goes about his business every day and he's pretty consistent.”

Among the long list of shrewd moves Jets GM Kevin Cheveldayoff has made, the acquisition of DeMelo — for a mere third-round pick — is near the top.

### Stoller Says

- Jets winger Alex Iafallo was fantastic Thursday night. He registered seven shots, four high-danger shot attempts and made several key defensive plays on the penalty kill and during five-on-five play. As much as we've talked about the growing chemistry between Ehlers and Adam Lowry, Iafallo has been a big reason those two have been able to spend prolonged periods in the offensive zone. Since arriving last season, Iafallo ranks second among forwards in forecheck pressures per 60 minutes, according to statistics tracked by AllThreeZones.com (minimum 200 minutes).

- How about that Nino Niederreiter — Rasmus Kupari — Cole Perfetti line? In three games together, the trio has been able to tilt the ice in the Jets favour during five-on-five play — winning the expected goals share (61.89 xGF%) and high-danger shot attempt share (75 percent). Most importantly, that lines chemistry has led to Perfetti playing some of his hockey of the season — his 9.53 scoring chances per 60 minutes through that span trails only Kyle Connor for the team lead. Perfetti had a couple nice tips and a few Grade-A opportunities against Seattle.

"I think there's one of everything on that line," Arniel said after Tuesday's 6-1 win over Vancouver. "Kup's got the speed and can skate. You got Nino's size and he knows to get to the net front. Fetts has the ability to make plays and hold onto pucks."

- Winnipeg's penalty kill has capitalized on 18 of 21 opportunities this month (85.7 per cent). Interesting thing to note — the Jets rank seventh in penalty kill expected goals for per 60 minutes (1.05) in January, according to Natural Stat Trick. That shouldn't come as much of a surprise, considering the team's "power kill" has created a couple offensive rushes over the last few games.

- The fourth line of Morgan Barron — David Gustafsson — Dominic earned big-time praise from Arniel after an excellent showing. And it was well deserved.

“Whether they're killing penalties or I get them to take D-zone draws, they get zone time, and that's the biggest thing," Arniel said. "They go out and hack, whack, chop and keep the opposition lines down there. It isn't just the fourth line that they're going against, either. They kept the Beniers line in their end of the rink a couple of times. That's big. We got the momentum running there and I probably should have run them out there a couple more times.”

We talk a lot about the Jets depth and the way that line — which features two guys in Gustafsson and Toninato who have not been NHL regulars this year — has played shouldn't go unnoticed. It's crazy to think both will likely be relegated to press box duty once Vladislav Namestnikov and Mason Appleton return.

## **Global Winnipeg**

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10963625/demelo-scores-winner-in-600th-career-game-as-winnipeg-jets-edge-seattle-2-1/>

### ***DeMelo scores winner in 600th career game as Winnipeg Jets edge Seattle 2-1***

By Christian Aumell & Russ Hobson Global News

On a milestone night for Dylan DeMelo, the stay-at-home defenceman earned himself quite the souvenir.

Playing in his 600th career NHL game, the light-scoring blueliner scored the game-winner in the final minute as the Winnipeg Jets edged the Seattle Kraken 2-1 Thursday night at the Canada Life Centre.

DeMelo's goal with just 27 seconds left broke a one-all deadlock to give the Jets their third straight victory.

"Obviously I'm a guy that doesn't score a lot," said DeMelo after scoring his second goal of the season. "To score the game winner obviously just kinda put the cherry on top and to get the win. So, yeah, it was a really special night, a night I'll definitely remember."

Mark Scheifele had the other tally for the Jets to give him goals in four straight games. He's also riding a seven-game point streak.

It was another slow start for the Jets, but they found their legs in the final 40 minutes.

"I liked how we played the last two periods," said head coach Scott Arniel. "Not so much the first. Where we had talked about being better with our starts and coming out of the gate.

"But we settled down, and then like you mentioned, we took over the second and it carried right into the third."

The Jets held the Kraken to only five shots on goal in the second and only three shots in the final frame as they outshot Seattle 36-19.

"I think most of the last 40 (minutes), like you said, we dominated," Nikolaj Ehlers said after setting up the game-winning goal. "We didn't give them much.



“When you’re rolling like you are, you don’t want to give them anything. You don’t want to give them a breath of fresh air and I think that’s something that, I personally, and we can do a little bit better of just keep jamming it down their throat.”

The Jets have at least a point in their last five consecutive games.

Seattle got the first power play of the game when Logan Stanley was given a questionable penalty for elbowing, and while the Jets managed to kill it off, it wasn’t long after the kill that the Kraken opened the scoring.

The play began innocuously as Seattle carried the puck out of their own end but the dynamic changed when Jaden Schwartz lobbed the puck into the Winnipeg end from the red line, giving Kaapo Kakko the chance to win a race to the puck against Kyle Connor. Connor sagged off, Kakko retrieved the puck and hit a wide open Matty Beniers in front of the net for the opener at the 8:12 mark.

Seattle wound up with an 11-8 edge in shots on goal heading to the second period, though Winnipeg started controlling more of the play as the middle frame rolled along, resulting in their first power play look with 10:59 remaining.

Winnipeg won the ensuing faceoff and the league’s best power play went to work. Eventually, Josh Morrissey slid a pass to the right faceoff dot where Connor’s one-timer was stopped by Joey Daccord but the rebound bounced to the other dot where Scheifele was waiting to blast the puck into the net for his 27th of the season, leveling the score 1-1.

A few minutes later, Winnipeg got a second power play of the period but Seattle managed to kill it off.

The Kraken nearly regained the lead with just over three minutes remaining in the period when Andre Burakovsky got loose behind the Jets defencemen as they made a line change but Connor Hellebuyck stopped him with a flashy glove save.

The game stayed tied 1-1 after a period in which the Jets outshot the Kraken 19-5.

Winnipeg continued to control play in the third and threatened to take the lead as both Stanley and Adam Lowry rang shots off the crossbar but it stayed 1-1 deep into regulation before DeMelo took centre stage.

Adam Larsson had the puck in the corner and chipped it up the boards but it took a funky bounce off a stanchion and into the slot where Ehlers collected it. He held onto the puck for a moment, turned and noticed DeMelo open at the point. DeMelo got the puck, saw that Daccord was screened and ripped a shot high over Daccord’s glove for just the 19th goal of his career.

The marker was also his second game-winning goal of the season and third of his career.

Hellebuyck only had to turn aside 18 shots in the game as Winnipeg outshot Seattle 28-8 over the final 40 minutes.

The Jets wrap up this season-long eight-game homestand Saturday night when they host the Calgary Flames.

### **TSN.ca**

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/power-play-pushes-jets-to-victory-over-kraken%7E3063667>

### ***Power play pushes Jets to victory over Kraken (VIDEO)***

After a slow start in the first period, the Jets made some adjustments and took advantage on the power play in the second period before getting the winner in the third. TSN's Dan Robertson and Kevin Sawyer break down how effective Winnipeg is with the man advantage, and how Joey Daccord was able to keep the Kraken in the game.

### **Seattle Times**

<https://www.seattletimes.com/sports/kraken/kraken-fall-victim-to-bad-bounce-lose-to-winnipeg-in-final-minute/>

### ***Kraken fall victim to bad bounce, lose to Winnipeg in final minute***

By Kate Shefte

The Kraken managed to keep pace Thursday night against the best in the West, the Winnipeg Jets. Seattle watched the clock tick down, almost assured of at least one standings point.

Then a stroke of luck and quick reaction 27 seconds before overtime secured the Jets a regulation win, 2-1.

A routine Adam Larsson clear up the boards hit something and the puck jumped out toward center ice, and Winnipeg's Nikolaj Ehlers. Pass recipient Dylan DeMelo's shot made its way through a thick screen and past Seattle goalie Joey Daccord (34 saves).

"It sucks. It's a tough pill to swallow," Kraken center Matty Beniers said. "But you've got to forget about it and move on. You've got to build off the way you were playing."

That included a better-than-usual start, where the Kraken actually outshot the Jets 11-8, followed by a less satisfactory second period and a perfectly fine third. It was almost great. Ninety-nine times out of 100, Larsson's clear continues up the boards.

"I thought we battled with them tooth and nail," coach Dan Bylsma said.

Daccord appeared in all five games of the Kraken's 2-3 road trip. He started three, including both victories.

“Probably doesn’t have a chance on the last one, because he can’t see it,” Bylsma said. “Pretty much everything else, he turned to the side. He was real strong in there.”

Due in part to where the Kraken (19-24-3) are in the standings, they don’t get every team’s marquee goaltender. The Jets (31-12-3) are happy to let defending Vezina Trophy winner Connor Hellebuyck handle an old-school workload, however. Hellebuyck had played the most games in the league as of Thursday with 35. He led the league in the three biggies — goals-against average (1.99), save percentage (.929) and shutouts (six).

It took a special sequence from the Kraken’s hottest line to beat him. Jaden Schwartz chipped a puck, with impressive accuracy and hang time, up the ice to linemate Kaapo Kakko, who in turn put a precise pass onto Beniers’ stick. Just shy of the goal line, Beniers elevated the puck into the net for a 1-0 lead in the first period.

Kakko picked up the primary assist, his 10th point (four goals, six assists) in 13 Kraken games since he was acquired in a trade with the New York Rangers. In more than twice as many games with the Rangers earlier this season, he had the same number of goals and just four more helpers.

He’s playing on Seattle’s top line and averaging more than three additional minutes of ice time per game.

“I like to play with those two guys. It’s been good to be playing a lot,” Kakko said. “I feel pretty good right now. Just need to keep going and hopefully get a couple wins.”

The potential winning goal was on Andre Burakovsky’s stick after he was sprung on a breakaway by Kraken defenseman Vince Dunn. He tried to squeeze the puck past Hellebuyck’s glove but the shot was saved.

The Kraken looked to be carefully staying on the straight and narrow Thursday. A lazy swat or stick between the legs could summon the Jets’ power play, which was a distant first in the league at 32.3% efficiency. That unit finally got to go out midway through the second period and Mark Scheifele scored 30 seconds into the man advantage to tie the game at 1.

It was a bad night for Seattle to be missing a top penalty killer. Winger Brandon Tanev was ruled out due to illness. Tye Kartye, who was scratched in favor of John Hayden during the Kraken’s last game in Pittsburgh, went back in for Tanev.

The Kraken took the Jets to overtime in their only other meeting this season Oct. 24 at Climate Pledge Arena. Beniers scored twice in that one, but the Kraken fell 4-3.

Nine of the Kraken’s next 10 games are Climate Pledge Arena, starting Saturday when the Los Angeles Kings are in town.

## Note

It's just over four hours from first-year Kraken assistant coach Jessica Campbell's Saskatchewan hometown, but Winnipeg has the closest NHL team. Dozens of Campbell's friends and family were in attendance. She told KHN it was her nephews' first NHL game.

## The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6064776/2025/01/17/jets-trade-deadline-2025-brock-nelson-mackenzie-weegar/>

### ***Brock Nelson? MacKenzie Weegar? What would a 'perfect' Jets trade deadline look like?***

By Murat Ates

Winnipeg is better positioned to compete for the Stanley Cup this year than last. In a best-case scenario, its trade deadline will reflect that.

A best-case, blue-sky Jets wish list is straightforward to compile. Start with a fast, veteran second-line centre who can produce offence while playing a playoff-caliber 200-foot game. Add a veteran top-four defenceman who can win net-front battles, protecting Winnipeg from the high-slot deflections, crease crashing and rebound goals that beat them in recent playoffs.

Let's start with the vitals. One year ago, the Jets' top-end talent didn't score as much as they score now. They didn't defend nearly as well. But the Jets doubled down on Kyle Connor, Mark Scheifele and Gabriel Vilardi as a line this season. The bet was that the trio could keep scoring goals while giving up fewer counterattacks for free; opposing coaches had started to line-match their top scorers against Winnipeg's stars.

That bet works in Winnipeg's favour now.

The Jets' top line gets outshot but has control of the most dangerous areas of the ice: Connor, Scheifele and Vilardi have given the Jets a 33-25 lead at five-on-five on the back of 54 percent of expected goals (in addition to their power-play brilliance). That's the stuff of Nathan MacKinnon and Mikko Rantanen or Jack Eichel and Mark Stone — a bar that was too high to clear just one year ago.

This creates opportunities for management. The Jets roster does have weaknesses but its depth remains a strength. But Connor, Scheifele and Vilardi are giving Winnipeg a better reason to believe in playoff potential than they did one year ago — and they went all-in back then, adding Sean Monahan, Tyler Toffoli and Colin Miller.

What should top the Jets' wishlist this season?

Here is one version of a "perfect" trade deadline: three acquisitions that could help Winnipeg compete with Colorado, Vegas, Dallas, or whichever team comes its way.

*No. 1: A big, strong, crease-clearing, PK-ready, veteran top-four D with plenty of physicality*

There is an element missing from Winnipeg's defence corps. Josh Morrissey is an elite, two-way defenceman worthy of his consecutive top-10 finishes in Norris Trophy voting. Dylan Samberg is big, makes great defensive reads and can handle tricky defensive coverage against elite forwards. Neither are brutal players by nature, nor is Logan Stanley who's been Winnipeg's most consistent attempt at a third-pairing left defenceman.

Stanley offers a certain type of physicality but is miscast as an enforcer. He's big and a heavy hitter, willing to lay lumber on players in front of the net, but he doesn't tie up enough sticks to take away scoring chances. Stanley's mishandling of a bouncing puck led directly to Vancouver's only goal on Tuesday. His erroneous pinch against Montreal on Saturday gave Phillip Danault a breakaway. There is an ideal form of Stanley's career arc — Jamie Oleksiak in Dallas, who overcame these types of mistakes to become a stalwart top-four defenceman — but Oleksiak was delivering top-four results by 25 years old. Stanley is 26, turning 27 in May: ideally in the middle of a long playoff run.

The Jets are in a tough spot, though. Stanley's physicality is unique on the Jets roster. Scroll through Winnipeg's fight card on Hockey Fights and Stanley leads all Jets with three fights, but then it's Lowry with two and Connor, Scheifele, Alex Iafallo and David Gustafsson with one each. Brenden Dillon has left a void, and whether or not you demand fighting and physicality from your favourite hockey team, it's abundantly clear the Jets believe in its importance.

If Stanley continues to make mistakes that lead to goals against — and if his physicality is meant to give the Jets a pugilistic option outside of Lowry, who they need on the ice — then Winnipeg needs someone else who can drop the gloves.

The answer isn't coming from the right side. Dylan DeMelo, Neal Pionk and Colin Miller all hit players with a similar frequency to Stanley — DeMelo and Miller more often, Pionk less — without the punishing effects. They protect the middle of the ice better, though, and aren't as prone to the slow-moving gaffes that lead directly to as many Grade A scoring chances. DeMelo's game is rounding into better form after a middling start, while Pionk has looked like his best self since Samberg's return to the lineup. Miller is a capable No. 5 and that's fine, but none of them are hitting as hard as Stanley does or taking fights away from Lowry.

That's why blue sky player No. 1 is big enough to win his physical battles, strong enough to lay punishing hits when the time is right and makes his reads well enough to tilt the ice against playoff competition. In an ideal world, he kills penalties (well), can move well enough to handle playoff pace, and will drop the gloves when needed: essentially, Dillon with better pace. If he plays on the right side, he's effective enough to give Winnipeg the option of playing him in the top four (or to make the third pairing hum no matter who plays beside him). If he plays on the left, he's the obvious choice to end the Stanley vs. Haydn Fleury vs. Ville Heinola debate on that side of the ice, claiming the third-pairing job while getting a heavy dose of PK minutes.

The incredible thing is that players like this do move at the trade deadline. Edmonton picked up Mattias Ekholm plus a sixth-round pick from Nashville in 2023 for defenceman Tyson Barrie, prospect Reid Schaefer and draft picks in the first and fourth rounds. Last season, Dallas picked up Chris Tanev from the Flames in a three-way trade with Calgary and New Jersey that cost the Stars prospect Artem Grushnikov, a second-round pick and a fourth-round pick. (The Stars

would have given Calgary a third-round pick, too, had they made the Cup final.) Ekholm continues to deliver sandpaper and stalwart defending for Edmonton, while Tanev signed in Toronto and is as competitive as ever at 35 years old.

Who is this year's Ekholm and Tanev, then?

The bluest of skies on that front is named MacKenzie Weegar, although it would be remarkable if Calgary gave up on one of the most effective pieces of its retool. The Flames cling to a wild-card spot right now and Weegar, 31, is having a big influence on that. He's in the second year of an eight-year contract that pays him \$6.25 million per season — abundantly affordable now, although one wonders about the long term — and he's having a tremendous impact playing shutdown minutes at five-on-five and on the PK alike. The right-handed defenceman is playing on his strong side on Calgary right now and is on a hitting spree, something he says is always the case for him when he plays on the right.

In a "perfect" scenario, Weegar plays with Morrissey on the Jets' top pair, giving Winnipeg the option of running Samberg-Pionk and then DeMelo with their choice of the right-handed Miller or lefties Stanley, Miller or Heinola on pair three. Try to ignore his absence from The Athletic's trade board as you come up with your own combinations, but Weegar can do all of the things Winnipeg might need.

There is another less thrilling but similarly physical player available: Rasmus Ristolainen, the bruising 30-year-old right-hander who has resuscitated his career in Philadelphia. The Flyers have helped Ristolainen become a patient, positional defenceman who chases hits far less often than he used to in Buffalo. They've also managed his minutes, keeping him at a respectable 21 minutes per night instead of the 25-plus scenario that overwhelmed him with the Sabres.

The result of all of this? A 6-foot-4, 208-pound defenceman who picks his spots and protects the middle of the ice. I wouldn't confuse him with a ready-made shutdown option for the top pair but Ristolainen has emerged as a dependable No. 4 or No. 5 option; the Flyers give up less with him on the ice at even strength and on the PK than they do without him. His \$5.1 million contract is a potential sticking point, given there are two years left on it beyond this one. The Jets have ample cap space, so it's possible that the contract just serves to lower Philadelphia's asking price (or make it more likely that the Flyers retain money on the deal.) There are other depth options on the market ranging from David Savard to Cody Ceci, but I'm under the impression the Jets like Ristolainen and have for some time.

The bluest sky  
Josh Morrissey  
MacKenzie Weegar  
Dylan Samberg  
Neal Pionk  
Colin Miller  
Dylan DeMelo

You might not like the all-righty Miller-DeMelo third pair but it's harder to imagine Colorado or Vegas getting as many high tips, slot shots and rebounds against this group as they have in the past.

*No. 2: A fast, faceoff-winning centre who can produce between Ehlers and Perfetti*

Stop me if you've heard this one before: The best-case scenario Jets would add a second-line centre at the trade deadline.

Vladislav Namestnikov gives Winnipeg tremendous value, particularly at his price point, and he's been more often underrated in the NHL than the other way around. He's a makeshift solution on the Jets' second line, though, which is why Winnipeg sent a first-round pick to Montreal for Sean Monahan last year.

The middle six had grown cold prior to Namestnikov's injury, and his line with Ehlers and Perfetti in particular. Scott Arniel says he's intrigued by his new combinations, with Ehlers-Lowry-Iafallo and Perfetti-Rasmus Kupari-Nino Niederreiter both generating offence, but Arniel had run the most consistent forward lines of any team in the NHL before Namestnikov got hurt. This probably means that Arniel's playoffs' Plan A puts Connor-Scheifele-Vilardi up top and reunites Niederreiter-Lowry-Appleton. Which means Winnipeg's second line needs help.

The blue sky is a player who does everything Namestnikov does well a bit better than Namestnikov does — and wins his faceoffs, too. Ehlers and Perfetti appear to need a player who bridges their strengths: someone who can play as fast as Ehlers does while making space for Perfetti to create offence with his hockey IQ. This is partly why Niederreiter has worked so well with Perfetti and Kupari — he creates space in the dirty areas, giving Perfetti an extra quarter second to work with, while Kupari's speed creates chaos and helps knock down pucks.

Enter Brock Nelson, the surprisingly fleet-footed 6-foot-4 Islanders centre who has averaged 71 points per 82 games in his last three seasons. Admittedly, Nelson is scoring a little bit less for the Islanders this year, but his average footspeed would put him second to Connor among Jets (and his top speed would tie with Connor for third). He's winning 54 percent of his faceoffs this season, despite being below 50 percent over the course of his career, and he's on pace for 48 points in a down year after scoring over 30 goals in three straight seasons.

Nelson isn't an elite defensive centre at five-on-five but he creates more than he gives up and can score in all sorts of different ways. He'd also be playing a slightly more sheltered role on the Jets' Ehlers-Perfetti line compared to the heavy lift he has in New York. He plays both special teams in New York and would be an option on their respective second units in Winnipeg, too.

The truth is that Nelson would be an enormous swing. The pending UFA makes \$6.0 million — a cap hit Winnipeg could afford — but will be a top commodity on a thin market for centres and has a 16-team no-trade clause. The 33-year-old Minnesotan might need to be persuaded that the Jets were an ideal spot from which to contend, if a trade were to be had.

There's a chance the Jets go after a centre further down the lineup — perhaps one that costs fewer assets to acquire (or none, aside from cap space, in the case of 36-year-old Jonathan Toews.) If so, there's a chance Winnipeg gets out of the deadline without trading a first-round

pick at all, but we're choosing to make the blue sky acquisition here. Winnipeg would do well to keep its scouts armed with first-round picks but seasons as good as this one is are rare.

The bluest sky up front

Kyle Connor

Mark Scheifele

Gabriel Vilardi

Nikolaj Ehlers

Brock Nelson

Cole Perfetti

Nino Niederreiter

Adam Lowry

Mason Appleton

Alex Iafallo

Vladislav Namestnikov

Rasmus Kupari

It's tough to force Morgan Barron out of the starting 12, but this Jets forward group would thread the needle between being stacked and filling the Jets' pre-established roles. There is an obvious set of two scoring lines and two shutdown lines available.

No. 3: A fast penalty-killing forward who will drop the gloves if the top-four D doesn't  
If the Jets do manage to shop in the luxury aisle and pick up a player like Nelson, they will have added a penalty killer and this item won't apply. If not, then they'll have the opportunity to pick up a crash-and-bang player who can kill penalties and who will also drop the gloves when required. A fourth-line, penalty-killing option like 27-year-old pending UFA Mathieu Olivier (who fights quite often) would be easier for Jets coaches to protect from elite competition than a third-pairing defenceman. Trent Frederic also appears on our trade board and while the optics of acquiring the player who knocked Gustafsson out could be difficult, he offers a ton of physicality from a middle-six role that puts him clear of Olivier.

There are lots of ways to add a physical element in spot duty if the Jets want to augment Stanley and Lowry in that role or limit Stanley to the press box. Pat Maroon may yet become available. Cody Ceci is meant to be on the market. Barclay Goodrow fights a bit but doesn't drive wins anymore and costs \$3.6 million for another two seasons after this one.

### *Summary*

This isn't the same as last year's piece, written shortly before the deadline, that correctly predicted the arrival of Tyler Toffoli and a depth defenceman, or its predecessor, which assumed the acquisition of Sean Monahan.

There is a greater degree of fantasy hockey happening here:

F

Kyle Connor

Mark Scheifele

Gabriel Vilardi



Nikolaj Ehlers  
Brock Nelson  
Cole Perfetti  
Nino Niederreiter  
Adam Lowry  
Mason Appleton  
Alex Lafallo  
Vladislav Namestnikov  
Rasmus Kupari  
Morgan Barron  
David Gustafsson  
D  
Josh Morrissey  
MacKenzie Weegar  
Dylan Samberg  
Neal Pionk  
Colin Miller  
Dylan DeMelo  
Haydn Fleury  
Dylan Coghlan  
Logan Stanley  
Ville Heinola  
G  
Connor Hellebuyck  
Eric Comrie

The cap hits mostly work, though, even with Ehlers retained: Winnipeg is projected to have just over \$11 million to work with at the trade deadline. Weegar and Nelson cost \$12.25 million between them, meaning the difference could be covered by moving two fringe roster players. Kevin Cheveldayoff has done a great job assembling a contender in a great cap position; that's why we can go through this exercise at all.

I wouldn't be surprised if the Jets end up acquiring Ristolainen and a depth forward, perhaps making it through the deadline without moving a first-round pick. The team is well worthy of an all-in approach, even if the Jets ultimately decide most of the answers are already in the room.

### **Winnipeg Free Press**

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/01/16/demelo-the-hero-on-special-night>

***DeMelo the hero on special night  
D-man snipes game-winner in dying moments of 600th regular-season game***

By: Mike McIntyre

Dylan DeMelo celebrated a milestone game in dramatic fashion.

The Winnipeg Jets defenceman — who is much more accustomed to preventing goals than scoring them — wired a seeing-eye wrist shot past Seattle Kraken goaltender Joey Daccord with 27 seconds left in regulation to give his team a 2-1 victory Thursday night at Canada Life Centre.

It was the 19th goal of DeMelo's career, coming in his 600th regular-season game, and sent the 13,959 fans in attendance into a frenzy.

"That was awesome. Obviously I'm a guy that doesn't score a lot," DeMelo said. "To score the game-winner just kinds of puts the cherry on top and to get the win. It was a really special night and a night I'll definitely remember."

Winnipeg improves to 31-12-3, including 4-1-2 on this season-long eight-game homestand, to remain alone on top of the Western Conference in both points and winning percentage. Seattle, which is desperately trying to stay in the wild-card playoff picture, falls to 19-24-3 after suffering the heartbreaking loss in what was the last stop of a five-game road trip.

To be clear, the Jets were the better team in this one and deserved the two points, outshooting the Kraken 36-19 (with shot attempts 72-49). However, it looked like it was going overtime until DeMelo's timely and very memorable goal.

"In our initial huddle, guys were going nuts. Profanities and all that fun stuff," DeMelo said of the on-ice celebration that ensued.

"Then you come to the bench and just see everybody's face just lighting up. So that was great. But then there's 30 seconds and we need to get right back into it to get the win. Come into the room and everybody is all jacked up. We've got a special group. Everybody makes you feel special, no matter your role here. Like I said, it was a special night."

#### *YOU GOTTA BE GOOD TO BE LUCKY*

With well under a minute left in the 1-1 game, Kraken defenceman Adam Larsson had the puck on his stick in his own zone and tried a routine bank off the glass which would have sent play back into the neutral zone. However, an odd bounce sent it right on to the stick of Nikolaj Ehlers, who quickly turned and found a wide-open DeMelo.

"A great bounce off the boards and I saw it coming out, right into the middle and tried to get my stick on it," is how Ehlers described it. "And saw the forward bite down on me, and Smoky came in in a pretty good position. Lows (Adam Lowry) and Al (Iafallo) going to the net, creating some traffic, and a great shot."

It couldn't have happened to a nicer guy, according to DeMelo's teammates.

"Plays the right way, every single game. Funny guy off the ice. Super-nice guy, who wants to win as bad as everyone else in here," said Ehlers. "And it's a family. It's something special. I don't know if you guys will see the reaction we had in here after when he came in, but that's the fun part. Special."

### *ECONOMIC BOOM*

Jets assistant coach Davis Payne, who was brought in last summer to re-tool a wildly inconsistent power play, described the NHL's No. 1 unit this year as "recession-proof" while speaking with reporters earlier this year. The idea, he explained, is to always have "an answer to create momentum."

That was certainly the case Thursday. After a bit of a sleepy opening period which saw the home team fall behind 1-0 off a Matty Beniers goal, the Jets drew a pair of man advantages in the middle frame and completely tilted the ice in their favour.

The first one led to the game-tying goal off the stick of Mark Scheifele, who finished off a dizzying sequence of dazzling puck movement with his team-leading 27th of the year. Every player on the ice had at least a touch, and the Kraken were powerless to prevent the inevitable.

Although they were unable to convert on their second chance, the Jets had several more quality looks and went on to outshoot the Kraken 20-8 in the second stanza, then carried that over into the third period as well.

Connor Hellebuyck took care of the rest, with his biggest stop of the night coming off an Andre Burakovsky breakaway late in the second period. The reigning Vezina Trophy winner finished with 18 saves and is now 28-6-2 on the year with a 1.97 goals-against-average and .929 save-percentage. All of those numbers are tops in the league.

### *SECOND LINE SHINES*

Not only were they responsible for the winning goal, but the new-look second line of Lowry, Ehlers and Lafallo had a dominant performance. They combined for 14 shots on goal (Lafallo with seven, Ehlers with six and Lowry with one) and significantly tilted the ice every time they were on it.

According to Natural Stat Trick, shot attempts were 27-11 in Winnipeg's favour with that trio doing their thing. (To put that in perspective, the top line of Scheifele, Kyle Connor and Gabe Vilardi were out-chanced 19-7 against the Kraken).

"I liked it a lot, honestly. Most of the last 40 we dominated, didn't give them much," said Ehlers.

"And what we did give them was turnovers off a high play in the O-zone... so obviously that's something that when you're rolling like you are you don't want to give them anything. You don't want to give them a breath of fresh air and that's something that I personally and we can do a little bit better, or just keep jamming it down their throat."

### *KEY PLAY*

Dylan DeMelo's timely and very memorable goal was the difference.

"I'm sure he'll remember that one. That's awesome," said head coach Scott Arniel. "Big game like that, and to finish it like that, top-shelf, it's nice to see"

### *THREE STARS*

Jets Dylan DeMelo: Game-winning goal.

Kraken Joey Daccord: 34 saves.

Jets Alex Lafallo: 7 shots on goal.

### *EXTRA, EXTRA*

For the first time all year, the Jets technically had no healthy scratches. Forward Vlad Namestnikov and defenceman Colin Miller are both on the active roster and missed their third and fifth straight games respectively with injuries. Defenceman Haydn Fleury and forward Mason Appleton remain on injured reserved.

Miller and Fleury were both full participants in the morning skate and could be cleared to return as early as Saturday. Namestnikov and Appleton both took a twirl on their own Thursday and could join the Jets at practice in non-contact jerseys as early as Friday.

Former Jets forward Brandon Tanev missed Thursday's game for the Kraken with an undisclosed injury.

The Jets will wrap up this healthy batch of home cooking by hosting the Calgary Flames on Saturday night.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/01/16/hard-work-paves-the-way-to-600>

### ***Hard work paves the way to 600 DeMelo reflects on reaching milestone game***

By: Ken Wiebe

This was a trip down memory lane that Dylan DeMelo was more than happy to take.

As the Winnipeg Jets defenceman was asked about suiting up in his 600th NHL game, there was an abundance of gratitude shown for the journey that took him to Thursday's tilt with the Seattle Kraken.

"Some days it feels like a long time ago. I guess when you look back at it, it goes by in the blink of an eye," said DeMelo, who has now played 341 games in a Jets' uniform. "It goes by pretty fast. Six hundred is pretty cool, pretty happy about that. Hopefully I can play maybe 600 more, we'll see, knock on wood. Obviously to do it here with this group of guys, to play the bulk of my games here in Winnipeg makes it even more special."

As for that debut against the New York Islanders?

"Nervous," said DeMelo, when asked for his recollection of his first NHL game with the San Jose Sharks. "I played on my left side and it was the first time I'd played on my left side in God knows how long. You always have more lefties than righties growing up and even in junior. I remember being really nervous and playing in Brooklyn in that arena that everyone said wasn't really the best hockey arena."

“I remember us losing unfortunately, but I remember it was good to get that first one out of the way and get those nerves out of the way. Playing in San Jose at that time, to share the ice with Joe Thornton, Patrick Marleau, Joe Pavelski, guys like that, it was a really cool experience.”

The cool experiences have been plentiful since that first outing.

All of Thornton, Marleau and Pavelski have retired and DeMelo is playing for his third organization.

A lot of ground has been covered in the years since the memorable moment.

“Yeah, if you told that guy in maybe year two or three in San Jose that he’d be here today, he would probably have laughed at you,” said DeMelo. “I definitely had to do it the hard way in San Jose, but I think that made me better for it.

“And learning to appreciate what it took to get where I am today. I saw all the hard work that goes into being a pro and I had some really good mentors to watch in San Jose. Even the nights I wasn’t playing, whether I was a healthy scratch or injured, just to be around those guys on a daily basis, I think that’s stuff I now use in my career and stuff I’m going to use to try to give to the young guys now about how to be a pro, because those were top-notch professionals off the ice, guys that will be Hall of Famers and had amazing careers.”

DeMelo has gone from skating on his off-side with Matt Tennyson to patrolling the Jets blue line on the top pairing with Norris Trophy candidate Josh Morrissey.

“It’s been a great relationship. I like to think I’ve played a little bit of a part in Josh’s success, as he has for me,” said DeMelo. “He’s made me a better player, and a better player off the ice, too. How to take care of myself. He’s a guy that I look up to in all aspects of the game and in life. It’s been a lot of fun, I hope we can play many, many years together and continue to grow in our partnership. It’s been an absolute pleasure playing with him.”

Cheveldayoff’s acquisition of DeMelo from the Ottawa Senators in February of 2020 for a third-round draft pick is going to go down as one of his shrewdest moves in his 14 seasons in the GM chair.

DeMelo had been looking to sign an extension with the Senators, but when a deal couldn’t be reached, he found himself on the trading block.

The Jets needed help on defence and at the time, DeMelo wasn’t sure what was going to transpire upon his arrival.

He’s signed a pair of four-year contract extensions with the Jets since and Winnipeg has truly become his hockey home.

“Yeah, it’s been fantastic for me. I feel like I’ve really grown as a player here. Off the ice, too, it’s been a great fit, the community has been awesome,” said DeMelo, whose four-year deal that

carries an AAV of US\$4.9 million. “Great neighbours, great people that we are friends with off the ice as well. And the group of guys here are just amazing guys. It’s been an amazing fit for me and couldn’t be happier to be here. Obviously, I was happy to re-sign here last summer.”

DeMelo gave a succinct answer when asked what advice DeMelo of today might offer to that wet-behind-the-ears rookie prior to his first NHL game.

“Control what you can control. Have fun. And enjoy every moment,” said DeMelo, who supplied some additional context earlier in the question-and-answer period. “Every situation in life, you can take it one way or another, depends on how you want to look at it. At the time there were some ‘poor me’s and why is this happening to me?’ But everything happens for a reason.”

After dealing with some of those challenges, DeMelo has grown into an important part of the fabric on one of the best teams in the NHL.

“He’s been a good leader for us,” said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. “He’s always out there matched up against the top-six forwards and that’s a big challenge every night. It’s one that he likes to sort of attack and he knows it’s part of what he has to do each game. He’s done a great job for us.

“He started in San Jose, kind of played with a veteran group there and learned some things along the way. And I think he recognizes, the biggest thing about any player is once they realize what their strengths are and what they’re good at and to do it every night on a consistent basis. Probably the biggest thing with (DeMelo) is that usually you know what you’re getting, 82 games of the year from him.”

## **Winnipeg Sun**

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/cherry-on-top-jets-demelo-celebrates-milestone-with-winner-against-kraken>

### ***'Cherry on top': Jets' DeMelo celebrates milestone with winner against Kraken***

By Paul Friesen

Winnipeg Jets defenceman Dylan DeMelo couldn't have dreamed it up any better.

Playing the 600th game of his NHL career, the 31-year-old scored the game-winner with 27 seconds left to lift the Jets to a 2-1 win over the Seattle Kraken on Thursday.

A crowd of 13,959 watched DeMelo's second goal of the season, 19th of his career, produce a third straight win for his team and fourth in five games.

“It was awesome,” DeMelo said post-game, and it showed in his celebration. “It was just euphoria to be honest with you. I was just so pumped. I had my hands up in the air for quite a while, so I just thought I'd look up there as well to see if there was anything up there. You just kind of let your emotions take over. Obviously I'm a guy that doesn't score a lot. Six hundred

games is a great accomplishment. I'm proud of it. It takes a lot of people to help you get there. That was on my mind before the game. That was special in its own right.

"And to score the game-winner just put the cherry on top."

The deciding play started with the puck taking a crazy bounce off the glass and straight to the stick of Nik Ehlers, who set up his defenceman for a wrist shot through a screen, top-shelf.

"In our initial huddle, guys were going nuts," DeMelo said. "Profanities and all that fun stuff. Then you come to the bench and just see everybody's face just lighting up. Come into the room and everybody is all jacked up. We've got a special group. Everybody makes you feel special, no matter your role here."

Ehlers was thrilled to be part of a milestone moment for a teammate as popular as any.

"It's funny how that works sometimes," he said. "It's special, for sure. (He) plays the right way, every single game. Funny guy off the ice. Super-nice guy, who wants to win as bad as everyone else in here. And it's a family. It's something special."

The win bumps the Jets' record to 4-1-2 on their eight-game home stand, 31-12-3 overall.

Seattle, seventh in their division, fell to 19-24-3.

The Kraken got cracking midway through the first period, Matty Beniers left all alone on Connor Hellebuyck's doorstep and finishing off a pass from Kaapo Kakko.

The NHL's top power play tied it midway through the second when Mark Scheifele ripped a rebound past Joey Daccord for his team-leading 27th goal of the season. Kyle Connor and Josh Morrissey had the helpers.

The Jets appeared to be taking over in that 20 minutes, out-shooting the Kraken, 19-5.

One of Seattle's shots, though, came on a clear-cut breakaway, Hellebuyck snapping out his glove to snare Andrew Burakovsky's attempt.

The Jets continued that pace into the third period, Logan Stanley and Adam Lowry ringing pucks off the crossbar and out.

"Most of the last 40 (minutes) we dominated, didn't give them much," Ehlers said. "And what we did give them was turnovers... you don't want to give them a breath of fresh air and that's something that I personally and we can do a little bit better, of just keep jamming it down their throat."

Things got more careful as the third wound down.

"It's a 1-1 game in our building. Just keep doing what we're doing," head coach Scott Arniel said, repeating his message going into the third. "Force them, they'll make a mistake. You don't

want it to always go the last 26 seconds or whatever, but when we play our way and we play our style, sooner or later we're hoping the opposition is going to bend and that's when we pounce on it."

The final shot count was 36-19, Winnipeg. Shot attempts, 72-49.

The Jets were one-for-two with the extra man, Seattle zero-for-one.

Winnipeg closes out its longest home stand of the season against Calgary on Saturday.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/in-the-blink-of-an-eye-jets-demelo-hits-the-big-6-0-0>

### ***'In the blink of an eye': Jets' DeMelo hits the big 6-0-0***

By Paul Friesen

Going into his 600th career NHL game on Thursday, Winnipeg Jets defenceman Dylan DeMelo took some time to revisit his first.

A little more than nine years ago, the kid from London, Ont., who four years earlier had been drafted way back in the sixth round and had clawed his way through two minor-league seasons, pulled on a San Jose Sharks sweater and hopped onto the ice at the home of the NBA's Brooklyn Nets, at the time the temporary home of the New York Islanders.

His teammates that October night included Sharks stars Joe Thornton and Patrick Marleau.

The 22-year-old DeMelo just tried to look like he belonged.

"Nervous," is how he recalled feeling that night. "I played on the left side and it was the first time I'd played on my left side in God knows how long. I remember being really nervous and playing in Brooklyn in that arena that everyone said wasn't really the best hockey arena. I remember us losing, unfortunately.

"But I remember it was good to get that first one out of the way and get those nerves out of the way."

Nine seasons and two teams later, a 31-year-old DeMelo is on the top defence pair of a team near the top of the NHL heap.

Thursday marked 341 games in a Jets sweater, after a move from Ottawa to Winnipeg as the 2020 trade deadline approached.

"You told that guy maybe Year 2 or 3 in San Jose that he'd be here today, he would probably have laughed at you," DeMelo said. "I definitely had to do it the hard way in San Jose, but that made me better for it. And learning to appreciate what it took to get where I am. I saw all the hard work that goes into being a pro and I had some really good mentors to watch."



Coming off a career-best 31-point season while producing the second-best plus-minus rating in the NHL at plus-46, DeMelo last summer signed a four-year contract extension to stay in what he called a “sneaky-good city.”

With a goal and seven assists he won't match that point total this season, but he's once again averaging more than 21 minutes of ice time per game next to a player he calls a “natural fit” for his style, in Josh Morrissey.

“I like to think I've played a little bit of a part in Josh's success, as he has for me,” DeMelo said. “He's a guy that I look up to in all aspects of the game and in life. I hope we can play many, many years together and continue to grow in our partnership.”

The fit in Winnipeg has been as natural off the ice.

The day the Senators traded him, DeMelo didn't have a clue how long he'd be a Jet. He was a pending unrestricted free agent at the time.

“I feel like I was wanted,” he said at the time. “I think I'll fit in seamlessly there.”

He has – 341 times.

His coach provided what might be the ultimate compliment for a defence-first player.

“Eighty-two games of the year,” Scott Arniel said. “You know what you're going to get from him.”

Staring at No. 600, overall, DeMelo almost can't believe how fast they've piled up.

“When you look back at it, it goes by in the blink of an eye,” he said. “Hopefully I can play maybe 600 more, we'll see. Knock on wood. To do it here with this group of guys, to play the bulk of my games here in Winnipeg, makes it even more special.”

Decisions, decisions

The lineup decisions will come hot and heavy for Arniel, likely starting with Saturday's home game against Calgary.

For starters, defencemen Colin Miller and Haydn Fleury will be options for the first time since they got hurt, giving the Jets nine available players on the blue line – presuming they got through Thursday night's game against Seattle unscathed.

“It's the first time all year we've been in this position,” Arniel said. “Don't know what my plan is, yet. But they do need to get in the lineup.”

Soon after his team hits the road for a couple after that, Arniel will welcome forwards Vlad Namestnikov and Mason Appleton back to full health.

“Both should be up and running maybe for the road trip,” the coach said.

