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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-vilardi-s-four-point-night-leads-jets-to-win>

Three things - Vilardi's four-point night leads Jets to win Comrie gets first win since November in 5-2 victory

WINNIPEG - Gabe Vilardi, Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor combined for nine points as the Winnipeg Jets won their third game in a row with a 5-2 victory over the Calgary Flames. Vilardi with two, Scheifele, Connor and Mason Appleton had the other goals for Winnipeg (34-14-3). The Jets scored five goals in a game for the 16th time this season - the most among all clubs. Winnipeg is 16-0-0 in those games. The Jets will head out on the road for a three-game road trip starting Tuesday in Montreal against the Canadiens.

COMRIE WINS!

Eric Comrie won his first game since November 11, ending a personal eight game drought (0-7-1). The 29-year-old made 21 saves for his fourth win of the season. In his previous eight starts, the Jets scored just 12 goals. In fact, Winnipeg scored more goals tonight than in the last three starts (4) from Comrie combined.

CONNOR GOT IT ALL STARTED

In the last meeting between these two teams, the Jets didn't have many chances in close on Flames netminder Dustin Wolf. Sunday, Kyle Connor made sure that wasn't going to happen again as he put together another one of his highlight reel goals. Connor hit the Flames blueline at full speed and split through Clark Bishop and Daniil Miromanov and then beat Dan Vladar with a backhand for his 27th of the season.

POWER PLAY GETS IT DONE

A lot has been made about the Jets top power play not getting a lot of opportunities as of late (six power plays in the last five games) but once again they made the most of the ones that they got. The Jets went two-for-two tonight against the Flames and the timing of the goals were perfect. Winnipeg was up 3-1 at the start of the third period when Vilardi took a pass from Connor in his office in front of the net and beat Vladar to push the lead to three goals.

Calgary had crept within two goals thanks to a Nazem Kadri goal to make it 4-2 but Winnipeg went back to the power play. This time, the Jets scored off the rush with Vilardi spotting Scheifele in the slot and he made it 5-2.

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/calgary-flames-winnipeg-jets-game-recap-january-26>

Vilardi gets 4 points, Jets defeat Flames for 3rd win in row Connor has goal, 2 assists; Calgary denied 4th straight victory

By Darrin Bauming

WINNIPEG -- Gabriel Vilardi had two goals and two assists for the Winnipeg Jets in a 5-2 win against the Calgary Flames at Canada Life Centre on Sunday.

"He's got great vision," Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel said. "He's a good passer, whether that's coming through the neutral zone, he makes good plays, but then once he gets down around that goal, he's obviously so dangerous. I really liked that shot coming off the wing. He's a goal-scorer."

Kyle Connor had a goal and two assists, and Mark Scheifele had a goal and an assist for the Jets (34-14-3), who have won three straight. Eric Comrie made 20 saves.

"To be honest, the whole line (Connor, Vilardi, and Scheifele) is pretty good," Comrie said. "They score a lot of goals. ... They know how to score and they know how to play the game, and it's a pleasure to watch them play and it's a lot of fun."

MacKenzie Weegar and Nazem Kadri scored for the Flames (24-17-7), who had won three straight, including 5-4 at the Minnesota Wild on Saturday. Dan Vladar made 22 saves.

"Five-on-five I thought we played a patient game," Weegar said. "It's a good team and a good building coming from Minnesota. We played patient, we had some opportunities, but obviously we didn't get the job done. It's two points that we needed for the standings, for sure. It was a good opportunity for us."

Connor gave the Jets a 1-0 lead at 5:28 of the first period. Connor skated into the Calgary zone, split the defense with a lateral move and lifted a backhand under the crossbar.

"Pretty nasty," Vilardi said of the highlight-reel goal. "That's what he does. It was cool to see."

Mason Appleton made it 2-0 at 10:17 of the second period when he intercepted a clearing attempt from Flames forward Mikael Backlund and shot into an open net.

"When we made a few mistakes they were able to capitalize," Calgary coach Ryan Huska said. "That's kind of the difference in the game. But for our team, I thought our effort was where it needed to be, and there were stretches of the game where I thought we did a lot of good things. We just weren't able to keep them out of our net when we needed to tonight."

Weegar cut it to 2-1 with a one-timer from the point on the power play at 15:08.

"Our team, it's got a lot of character, and we've had that identity all year where we work hard, we work hard for each other no matter what the score is," Weegar said. "We competed but it just wasn't enough tonight, unfortunately."

Vilardi made it 3-1 at 19:09, taking a drop pass from Dylan Samberg near the blue line and scoring with a wrist shot from below the right face-off circle that went in off the far post.

Vilardi then pushed it to 4-1 with a power-play goal from in close at 3:07 of the third period.

"I think we just have so many threats, you've got to worry about different options," Vilardi said of the power play. "You've got to worry about [Connor] on the half wall taking that one-timer."

Kadri scored off a setup from Jake Bean at the edge of the crease to cut it to 4-2 at 4:27.

"[Scoring chances were] a little limited tonight, but I definitely feel like we had some opportunities and we were definitely in the game for a great portion of it," Kadri said. "I thought it

could have went either way, but they got a couple of power-play goals that ended up being the difference. We've got to find a way to try to tie it up."

Scheifele responded at 7:08, scoring with a one-timer on the power play for the 5-2 final.

"We're doing a good job of interchanging," Vilardi said. "You saw Scheifele's goal, we're attacking off the rush as well. It's not like we're just looking to get into a set and then go from there. We take what they give us, and I think that's the key to a good power play."

Winnipeg's NHL-leading power play (33.3 percent) went 2-for-2.

"They've got some threats, obviously," Weegar said. "They've got a lot of good shooters on that power play, but I thought we kind of kicked ourselves a little bit with those two, one off the rush and just a little bit harder in front of the net on that other one."

The Jets are 19-0-2 this season when leading after the first, and 25-0-1 leading into the third.

"Very tough. I mean, even if they don't have a lead they're tough to play against," Kadri said. "Obviously, their power play is deadly and you've got to be able to stay out of the box in those certain situations. But like I mentioned, I don't think we gave up a ton. They made some nice plays and scored some nice goals."

NOTES: The Jets are a League-best 20-5-3 at home. ... Comrie won for the first time in nine starts. The Jets scored a combined 12 goals in his eight previous starts, with Comrie going 0-7-1. ... Flames forward Martin Pospisil had nine hits in 14:56 of ice time.

Canadian Press

<https://www.chrisd.ca/2025/01/26/winnipeg-jets-calgary-flames-game-recap/>

Jets' Goaltender Comrie Puts 'Curse' to Rest with 5-2 Win Over Flames

By Jim Bender, The Canadian Press

Some were starting to whisper about a 'Comrie Curse.'

Winnipeg Jets backup goalie Eric Comrie just could not buy a win in his previous eight outings (0-7-1). Although he played well, his teammates were not scoring enough goals for him to be able to post his fourth win of the season.

Well, Comrie finally got the support he need on Sunday when Winnipeg scored five goals and beat the Calgary Flames 5-2 before 14,491 witnesses at Canada Life Centre.

Comrie's teammates had expressed how badly they felt for him during that dry spell and celebrated his victory.

"It feels really good," said Gabriel Vilardi, who had two goals and two assists to lead Winnipeg. "He's earned that. He's played so well for us, and we haven't been giving him any run support. And finally, we did, and per usual, he played his game and we got the win for him."

Comrie admitted he was relieved to finally post his fourth victory — his first since Nov. 1.

“Probably a little different than the first three, a little more relieving, I’d say,” said Comrie, who made 20 saves.

“But you know what? I know it has been a while since I won, but my game was right the whole time. I thought I was playing the right way. I mean, of course, it’s very frustrating. You’re not winning, and it’s tough. I think Flats (goalie coach Wade Flaherty) and Helle (Connor Hellebuyck) kept my head on straight. But they were really happy the way I was playing.

“I was really happy with the way I was playing. Just wasn’t getting wins, and at the end of the day, our job is to get wins, but I was happy with my game. So, the result finally came.”

Was he starting to wonder if he would ever win again?

“Yeah, you know, honestly, it did creep in,” Comrie responded. “But you don’t ever want to think that. You never want to think that.

“I mean, you never want to say, ‘Hey, I got to be perfect. I got to do this, and I got to be that.’ But I want to just play my game and be me and be what I have to and just do what I do, and have fun out there and play my structure. ... I’m a competitive guy. I’m a human being. I want to win games. I want to win stuff.”

The Jets had supported him throughout the drought.

“We’re a very tight group in this room,” Comrie said. “All of us are very good friends. (Mark) Scheifele ... was the officiant at my wedding. So, we’re a very close group in here. We have a lot of fun together and it’s a great time.”

Kyle Connor, who had a goal and two helpers, Mason Appleton and Scheifele also scored to help Comrie get over that hump.

“Yeah, that was good to see,” said Jets coach Scott Arniel. “Obviously, we talked about it a few times here, us not scoring goals (for Comrie). For us to get up like we did was real good, and then he still got tested.

“There were some good looks where he had to come up big, but the boys were pretty excited for him after the game.”

The Jets continued their dominance on the power play, going 2-for-2.

“We are capitalizing when we get the opportunities,” Vilardi said.

MacKenzie Weegar and Nazem Kadri scored for Calgary.

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/01/26/comrie-clutch-in-second-win-since-november>

Comrie clutch in first win since November Solid team support out front helped netminder to Sunday night success

By: Mike McIntyre

It hadn't quite reached "Win one for the Gipper" territory, but it's safe to say the Winnipeg Jets were motivated to start giving backup goaltender Eric Comrie a little support.

Eight straight starts scattered over nearly three months had led to eight straight losses — seven in regulation, one in overtime — with the Jets producing just 12 goals in those outings.

Just as George Gipp's University of Notre Dame teammates would rally around him during that famous 1928 college football game against Army, Comrie's compatriots came through on well Sunday in the form of a 5-2 victory over the Calgary Flames in front of 14,491 fans at Canada Life Centre.

"I'm a competitive guy. I'm a human being. I want to win games," Comrie said of trying to balance his emotions during a tough personal stretch.

"It has been a while since I won, but my game was right the whole time. I thought I was playing the right way. Of course it's very frustrating. You're not winning, and it's tough. I think Flats (goalie coach Wade Flaherty) and Helly (starter Connor Hellebuyck) kept my head on straight."

Comrie stopped 20 of 22 shots as he won for the first time since Nov. 1 in Columbus. Highlights included great saves off Yegor Sharangovich, MacKenzie Weegar and Andrei Kuzmenko. Only Weegar (late in the second period on the power play to cut Winnipeg's lead to 2-1) and Nazem Kadri (early in the third to make it a 4-2 game) could beat him.

"It feels really good. He's earned that," said Jets forward Gabe Vilardi, who led the way with two goals and two assists.

"He's played so well for us, and we haven't been giving him any run support. And finally we did, and per usual he played his game and we got the win for him."

Comrie appreciated that the Jets as a whole had his back and had openly spoke of being better in front of him.

"I think Flats and Helly told me, if I keep doing it my way and keep playing my way, the results will come. Don't worry. Don't stress about it. Helly, he said the same thing. Just keep doing your thing," he said.

"We're a very tight group in this room. All of us are very good friends. I mean, (Mark) Scheifele married me — he was the officiant at my wedding. So, we're a very close group in here. We have a lot of fun together and it's a great time."

Winnipeg has now won three straight games to improve to 34-14-3 overall. They remain first in the Central Division, first in the Western Conference and second-overall in the NHL behind only Washington. (Both teams have 71 points, but the Capitals have two games in hand).

Calgary, which had beaten Winnipeg 3-1 eight days ago in the very same building, falls to 23-17-7. They currently own the final wildcard spot which means, if the season ended today, they'd be facing the Jets in the first round.

QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY: No doubt word has got out around the NHL that the Jets can kill you with their power play. But opportunities have been few and far between lately, with Winnipeg getting just 16 chances over the last 12 games prior to facing the Flames.

It looked like Winnipeg might get shutout in that department again (for what would have been the fourth time since Dec. 31) as Calgary hadn't been sent to the sin bin at all through 40 minutes.

But an obvious too-many-men penalty in the third period and a clear hooking infraction couldn't be ignored by the men in stripes. And the Jets, as they typically do, made their opponent pay.

First was Vilardi demonstrating why he's such a net-front force as he created time and space for himself and flicked the puck past Calgary goaltender Dan Vladar on the first man advantage.

Then it was Vilardi setting up Scheifele on the second one.

Winnipeg is now clicking at 33.3 per cent on the power play through 51 games — nearly five percentage points ahead of the next-best team, the New Jersey Devils. To put that in perspective, the 2022-23 Edmonton Oilers set the all-time benchmark for power play efficiency in a season at 32.4 per cent.

"I don't have the answer for why we've only gotten that many. At the end of the day we just have to make sure it's dangerous every time. (Sunday) was really dangerous," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel.

"I'm sure there's times where guys get frustrated because you see the other team getting on the power play and us not. Certainly for our power play guys. But it's part of the game, you gotta work through it. We can't change that."

Vilardi, asked why he thinks opponents have avoided the sin bin so much lately, bit his tongue.

"I have my opinion on that. I can't say much about that, obviously," he said. "It's like you've got to get to the hard areas, you've got to draw penalties. But at the same time it's been 10 games. I don't know. We get one power play, two power plays a game. Yeah, we are capitalizing, though."

HOME COOKING: The Jets have been feasting at home lately, playing 10 times at the downtown rink over the past 25 days and going 6-2-2 in that time to improve to 20-5-3 in their own backyard.

"I think we did a great job. I really do. When you get that many (home) games in a month at home here, you have to take advantage of it. And I thought that we did," said Arniel.

Now they're about to experience a bit of a famine, with just two home dates over the next 28 days and three over a 33-day span.

A big reason is the upcoming 4 Nations Face-Off in which the NHL will pause its season for two weeks. But the Jets will also now hit the road for three straight contests starting Tuesday night in Montreal and play six of their next nine overall in enemy territory.

SLUMPS AND A STREAK: Four games without a point is hardly a slump for a typical NHL player, but it probably felt like one to Kyle Connor.

He quickly put that to bed early in the first period with a dazzling move that made Flames defenceman Daniil Miromanov look silly and ended with his 27th goal and 61st of the year. At the time, that tied Scheifele for the team lead, but the top centre would net his 28th in the final frame.

David Gustafsson drew an assist on the goal, giving him a career-best three game point streak (1G, 2A). Gustafsson had just come on the ice for Scheifele, who was shaken up after a collision with Andersson and would briefly leave the game later in the first period after running into another Calgary player.

"He just got banged around a couple times there," said Arniel. "The one was a shot and the other one he got run into. He had to go and kind of reset himself and get back out there."

With Adam Lowry missing a third straight game with an upper-body injury and not expected to return until after the 4 Nations break, the Jets can ill-afford to see Scheifele go down.

Jets forward Mason Appleton, who began the night in a nine-game scoring drought dating back to Dec. 10 (he missed nearly a month of action as well with an injury) then made it a 2-0 game when he scored midway through the first period.

KEY PLAY: Gabe Vilardi's first goal of the game, with 51 seconds left in the second period, restored Winnipeg's two-goal cushion.

THREE STARS: 1) Winnipeg RW Gabe Vilardi: 2 goals, 2 assists. 2) Winnipeg LW Kyle Connor: 1 goal, 2 assists. 3) Winnipeg D Dylan Samberg: 1 assist, team-high 22:35 of ice time.

EXTRA, EXTRA: Josh Morrissey was a game-time decision due to illness but was able to go. However, his ice time was noticeably reduced at just 20:24. The healthy scratches were defencemen Ville Heinola and Colin Miller.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2025/01/26/vilardi-firing-on-all-cylinders-on-top-line>

***Vilardi firing on all cylinders on top line
Jets forward flourishing on the power play, racking up points***

By: Ken Wiebe

Gabe Vilardi isn't a big fan of talking about himself.

Even after doing something he'd done just one other time in his NHL career, the Winnipeg Jets forward preferred to send praise to others after a 5-2 victory over the Calgary Flames on Sunday at Canada Life Centre.

You can understand why Vilardi spoke so passionately about finally providing some run support for backup goalie Eric Comrie and you can also understand why he focuses on the other weapons on the Jets' top-ranked power play.

But there's no denying the impact Vilardi made in this contest as he scored twice and produced a four-point outing.

The only other time he achieved that feat was on Dec. 13 of 2023 in what was his second game against the Los Angeles Kings, the team that traded him to the Jets in a blockbuster deal in the summer of 2023.

Vilardi has fit extremely well on the Jets' top line with Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor and that trio has been driving the offence for the majority of this season.

Sunday was no different, with Vilardi (two goals, four points), Connor (one goal, three points) and Scheifele (one goal, two points) combining for four goals and nine points — though five of those came on the power play.

"The biggest thing this year is being healthy," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. "He complements those guys extremely well with his ability to hold on to pucks, to get pucks, to win his battles to get pucks ... I've mentioned a few times, he's got great vision. He's a good passer, whether that's coming through the neutral zone, he makes good plays.

"But then once he gets down around that goal, he's obviously so dangerous. I really liked that shot coming off the wing. He's a goal scorer. We see a lot of his goals, probably 10 feet from the net, but I've seen that one in practice a few times, a couple of times in games, where he fires that puck. For goaltenders, it's a hard one to read."

Going into the season, Vilardi said he was hoping to add a few more goals from distance and he's done a good job on that front.

He's also flourishing on the power play, where he leads the Jets with 11 markers on the man-advantage and has collected 22 of his points.

Comrie was asked about Vilardi's ability to handle the puck in tight spaces, specifically on the power play.

"The thing is, I try to stop him every single day in practice and it's hard to do. He's an excellent player," said Comrie. "But, you know what, I've had his number in shootout attempts in practice, so it's good on that one. But he's unbelievable and he's got some pretty good hands."

Those hands have been on display pretty much since Vilardi arrived on the scene as the centrepiece in the deal with fellow forwards Alex Iafallo and Rasmus Kupari and a draft pick for Pierre-Luc Dubois.

The latest entry came during a second-period power play, where Vilardi used his patented drop step and eventually roofed a wrister over the glove of Dan Vladar.

That gives him 22 goals, which is just one shy of his career-high, set during the 2022-23 season with the Kings.

He's already eclipsed his career-high for points, as he's up to 47 (and counting).

Vilardi is third on the Jets in goals behind Scheifele (28) and Connor (27).

That the trio has combined for 67 goals through 51 games is incredibly impressive.

During the third period, a puck was in the vicinity of Vilardi but Flames defenceman Rasmus Andersson tied him up to prevent the second hat trick of his career.

"Not very close," said Vilardi. "He had me, and that was that."

Asked about the highlight-reel backhand goal scored by Connor — which included him dancing past Flames defenceman Daniil Miromanov before roofing his shot — Vilardi was brief and to the point.

"Pretty nasty," said Vilardi. "That's what he does."

No argument here.

Vilardi was also quick to provide props for Jets defenceman Dylan Samberg for the drop pass he made on his first goal.

"He's an underratedly-smart player out there," said Vilardi. "He makes a lot of good reads, he holds onto the puck, he's got good patience. You see him more in the D-zone making those types of plays. But then you saw it there obviously in the O-zone as well."

"I was also yelling as loud as I could from the far blue line, so I was hoping he gave it to me."

That's part of the full Gabe Vilardi experience: several assessments that are to the point, combined with a side order of humour mixed in.

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/eric-comrie-breaks-skid-jets-power-play-deadly-in-win-over-flames>

Eric Comrie breaks skid, Jets power play deadly, in win over Flames

By Paul Friesen

Eric Comrie was starting to wonder if he needed to play a perfect game to get his fourth win of the season.

Instead, the Winnipeg Jets finally produced some offence for their beleaguered backup goalie.

After scoring just 12 goals in Comrie's previous eight starts — he went 0-7-1 — the Jets broke out for five on Sunday, including two on the power play, in a 5-2 home-ice win over Calgary.

It marked Comrie's first win since Nov. 1, a span of nearly three months between celebrations.

"Probably a little different than the first three (wins)," is how the 29-year-old, after a long exhale, described the feeling. "A little more relieving, I'd say. It has been a while since I won, but my game was right the whole time. Of course it's very frustrating when you're not winning."

Frustrating enough to take it personally, to the point where he started to wonder if he needed a shutout.

"It did creep in," he acknowledged. "But you never want to think that. You never want to say, 'Hey, I've got to be perfect.' I want to just play my game and be me, do what I have to do and have fun out there."

"You don't want it to creep in your mind. But sometimes it does. I'm a human being, and it does."

A crowd of 14,491 saw Comrie face just 22 shots from a Flames team that had played in Minnesota the night before.

The Jets fired 27 at Calgary backup Dan Vladar, riding his own five-game winless streak.

He and his defence were no match for the NHL's deadliest power play and its most lethal threesome: Gabe Vilardi scored twice, Kyle Connor and Mark Scheifele once each as the Jets won their third straight and finished a home-heavy January with a 7-3-2 mark.

Mason Appleton had the other Winnipeg goal, as the Jets improve to 34-14-3, their 71 points two more than they had at this point a year ago.

Continuing a recent trend, Winnipeg drew fewer penalties than it took, but went two-for-two with the extra man, Vilardi and Scheifele pulling the trigger.

"I have my opinion on that," Vilardi said of the lack of penalties opponents are taking. "I can't say much about that, obviously. It's like you've got to get to the hard areas, you've got to draw penalties. But at the same time it's been 10 games. I don't know. We get one power play, two power plays a game. We are capitalizing, though."

His head coach is equally puzzled.

"I don't have the answer for why we've only gotten that many," Scott Arniel said. "At the end of the day we just have to make sure it's dangerous every time. You've got to work through it. We can't change that."

It was dangerous on both Sunday chances, scoring in completely different ways.

Vilardi's came on his patented spin move in tight, Scheifele's on a feed off the rush, set up by Vilardi, who had a four-point day.

"We just have so many threats, you've got to worry about different options," is how Vilardi put it. "We're doing a good job of interchanging. We take what they give us, and that's the key to a good power play."

Calgary's Nazem Kadri, who had one of the Flames goals, simply called the Jets power play "deadly."

It took the Flames more than 10 minutes to get their first shot on Comrie.

By then, Connor had left Daniil Miromanov without his jockstrap, stickhandling through the defenceman and roofing a backhand behind Vladar for his 27th goal of the season.

"Pretty nasty," Vilardi said of Connor's goal. "That's what he does. It was cool to see."

Appleton, playing his third game since returning from injury, made it 2-0 on a scramble midway through the second, his seventh of the year but first since Dec. 10.

The Flames finally got on the board with some five minutes left in the second, defenceman MacKenzie Weegar cashing in with Appleton in the box for cross-checking.

Vilardi restored the two-goal lead in the last minute of the second and added his second goal on a power play early in the third, giving him 22 on the year.

Barely a minute later Kadri cut the deficit back to two.

Within three minutes of that, Scheifele's tally, his team-leading 28th, wrapped up the scoring and ensured Comrie a better night's sleep.

"He's earned that," Vilardi said. "He's played so well for us, and we haven't been giving him any run support. And finally we did, and per usual he played his game and we got the win for him."

Up next for the Jets, road games in Montreal and Boston, Tuesday and Thursday, respectively.

Calgary Sun

<https://calgarysun.com/sports/three-takeaways-as-flames-fall-to-jets>

Three takeaways as Flames fall to Jets

By Daniel Austin

The Calgary Flames weren't about to come out and call it a "schedule-loss."

Making excuses isn't in their DNA.

But playing their third game in four nights and their second straight on the road in less than 24 hours probably was never going to be the recipe for the Flames' best performance of the season.

And with that in mind, the Flames (24-14-7) probably won't lose much sleep about seeing their three-game winning streak snapped in a 5-2 loss to the Western Conference-leading Winnipeg Jets (34-14-3).

"There's never really any excuses," Flames centre Nazem Kadri told reporters in Winnipeg. "Obviously, playing a back-to-back and two games in less than 24 hours was significant, along

with the travel. It was nice to split the road trip up and now we've got to go back home and get some points."

The Flames did well enough to hang around in five-on-five play against the Jets, but any objective analysis of Sunday evening's game would ultimately have to come to the conclusion that the home side in Winnipeg was the better team on the night.

After Kyle Connor scored an absolutely beautiful opener, dancing around Daniil Miromanov before slotting the puck in the top corner past Dan Vladar, the Jets always felt like they were in control.

Goals from MacKenzie Weegar and Nazem Kadri kept the Flames in it despite two from Gabriel Viladri for the Jets, but there was never a sustained period where it felt like they had it in them to fully flip the script. Two power-play goals in the third for the Jets sealed the deal.

"In a situation we were in against a good team in their building on a back-to-back, I thought we did a lot of good things to slow them down and keep them at bay," Flames head coach Ryan Huska told reporters.

Ultimately, it was two points dropped for the Flames, who remain three points ahead of the Vancouver Canucks and sitting in the second Wild Card position in the Western Conference.

Here's three takeaways from Sunday's loss:

TOUGH START

By no means was Vladar at fault for Sunday's loss. There were lots of reasons behind the Jets being the better team, and it would be unfair to place the defeat squarely at Vladar's feet.

But he stopped only 22-of-27 shots and didn't come up with the big saves that would have given the Flames a chance to stay in it.

He wasn't great, basically. And he needed to be.

"There were certain situations where I felt we could use a save, which isn't something we have said a lot this year," Huska told reporters.

Vladar has been on the bench for the Flames' previous four games as Dustin Wolf has asserted himself as the team's go-to starter.

Nothing that happened on Sunday night will have changed that approach going forward.

TOUGH TIMES AGAIN

The Flames had shown improvement on the penalty-kill in recent games, but their struggles returned on this weekend road-trip.

After allowing a goal on one of the Minnesota Wild's two attempts in Saturday night's 5-4 win, the Flames allowed goals on both the man-advantages they gave up against the Jets.

The Jets have the NHL's best power-play and score on 33.3% of their opportunities, while the Flames have the league's fourth-worst penalty-kill, at 71.2%.

Maybe that was always a recipe for a tough game and the priority should have been staying out of the box.

“(There are) certain situations where we have to find a way to be better whether they’re a top power-play team in the league like they are or they’re near the bottom,” Huska told reporters.

GETTING UNDER THEIR SKIN

Rasmus Andersson broke out of his goal-scoring slump against the Wild, and while he didn’t manage to get another against the Jets he did provide a reminder that he can be very good at being a bit of a pest.

That happened against the Wild, too, when he gave Marc-Andre Fleury a little jab during a scrum on Saturday night.

And on Sunday, he proved unpopular with the Jets when he got a little too close to goaltender Eric Comrie. It was a pretty inconspicuous play, honestly, but Andersson did managed to draw a penalty from Neal Pionk and it bugged the Jets enough that Morgan Barron gave the Flames blueliner a few shoves later in the third-period.

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/flames-takeaways-rare-goalie-letdown-stops-momentum-in-loss-to-jets/>

Flames Takeaways: Rare goalie letdown stops momentum in loss to Jets

By Eric Francis

Goaltending is the biggest reason why the Calgary Flames have been able to claw their way into a playoff position.

On Sunday it let them down.

Ryan Huska said as much, albeit diplomatically, after a 5-2 loss in Winnipeg.

“I actually thought we played a pretty good road game,” Huska told Flames TV following a game in which his tired squad trailed the West’s best Jets 2-1 late in the first period.

“There were certain situations where I felt like we could have used a save tonight, which isn’t something we have said a lot this year.

“We just weren’t able to keep them out of our net like we needed to tonight.”

This isn’t to suggest the loss was on Dan Vladar, as the odds were stacked against him by virtue of their game in Minnesota less than 24 hours earlier.

However, it is fair to say he was victimized on at least two goals the Flames haven’t generally allowed this year.

The first was Gabriel Vilardi’s first of the night, which extended the Jets lead to 3-1 in the final minute of the second period. His snapshot in off the far post beat Vladar cleanly and stopped

the momentum the Flames appeared to have after MacKenzie Weegar's power-play goal minutes earlier.

Two bad penalties in the third — a too-many-men infraction and an unnecessary Martin Pospisil hook in the offensive zone — allowed the league's best power play to break the game wide-open with two more goals.

The final dagger was a Mark Scheifele one-timer from the high slot that beat an off-balance Vladar between the wickets.

Making just his second start in the last three weeks, Vladar was placed in yet another tough position by playing the second half of back-to-backs for the sixth time this season.

He's 1-5 in those starts and has now lost six in a row, allowing 24 goals in that span.

While he's been a victim of poor run support all year, the reality is he's lost 15 of his 21 starts this season while Dustin Wolf has won 18 of his 27.

It's a pretty safe bet to suggest Vladar will continue to play spot duty as long as the Flames remain in playoff contention.

Weegar on call?

It was announced Sunday that Vegas defenceman Alex Pietrangelo has withdrawn from playing in next month's 4 Nations Face-off due to injury, opening the door for Weegar to be his potential replacement on the right side.

Weegar is a right-shot defenceman, who has spent the majority of his career playing on the left side.

Weegar's effort as the tourney's top defenceman for Canada at the Worlds in 2023 demonstrated the versatility of the Flames veteran.

He certainly possesses a more complete game than Edmonton power play specialist Evan Bouchard, who has more points than Weegar.

Weegar is one of just four players in the NHL with over 100 hits and 100 blocks.

Weegar's power play blast Sunday in Winnipeg was his sixth goal of the season (and 25th point), putting him one point ahead of talented Islanders youngster Noah Dobson.

Others in the mix would include right-shot defencemen like Aaron Ekblad and Drew Doughty, the latter of which is skating with the Kings and appears ready to make his season debut following ankle surgery in the fall.

The Canadian team has until Feb. 11, one day before the tourney, to announce Pietrangelo's replacement, but would likely make an announcement much sooner than that.

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/jets-should-ink-impressive-samberg-to-long-term-deal/>

Jets should ink impressive Samberg to long-term deal

By Jacob Stoller

WINNIPEG — Forget about what Kyle Connor's next extension could look like, if the Jets should re-sign Neal Pionk, or if there's any way they can make Nikolaj Ehlers stay.

It's time to think about about Dylan Samberg's next contract.

Lost in the weeds of Sunday's 5-2 win over the Calgary Flames — a game highlighted by Gabriel Vilardi's four-point night, a filthy breakaway goal by Connor and the Jets' red-hot power play — was yet another rock solid showing from Samberg.

In other words, Exhibit Z as to why he's due for a hefty raise.

The 26-year-old finished the night with one assist, a +2 rating, one takeaway and one hit while logging a team-high 22:35 minutes. When he was on the ice, the Jets outchanced Calgary 8-2 during five-on-five play. And throughout his 3:45 minutes of penalty-kill time (another team-high), Calgary didn't generate a single scoring chance.

"He's the goalie's best friend out there," Eric Comrie said after stopping 20 of 22 shots.

Samberg's rise from a raw, third-pairing defenceman to workhorse, top-four defender has been one of this season's best stories.

Samberg's on-ice impact this season

Output
Percentile
Corsi For % relative
6.23
94

Expected goals for % Relative
7.79
93

Scoring chances for % Relative
6.00
91

"He's become such a well-rounded defenceman," coach Scott Arniel said. "His skating ability ... and it's not just going forward. His ability to pivot and his ability to catch people with speed, he does such a great job with his transition. And he's grown into the role."

There's nothing more that needs to be shown — it's time for the Jets to lock him up. Long-term.

Players like him don't grow on trees.

Defensively, aside from Connor Hellebuyck, you could argue that no player is as valuable as Samberg. The six-foot-four defender has morphed into an elite defender, all-the-while being deployed against opponents' top lines.

His underlying numbers are sparkling.

Not only does he rank seventh in takeaways per 60 minutes (1.83) among defencemen, but according to data tracked by AllThreeZones.com, Samberg ranks seventh in zone denials per 60 (4.20). Oh, and he's recorded the 20th-most penalty kill blocks per 60 minutes (10.48) among defencemen (minimum 50 minutes).

What Samberg has done this year isn't surprising to those that have seen him up close.

This quote from Dylan DeMelo back in September was telling.

"With the physical tools he has, I don't see why he can't be like a Jacob Slavin or a Gustav Forsling," DeMelo told Sportsnet before the 2024-25 season started. "I think he can be that type of big, rangy guy that moves well and can defend."

At the time, DeMelo pointed out how the next step for Samberg was to refine his offensive game. And while his three goals and nine points through 30 games is nothing to write home about, Samberg's poise with the puck is night and day from last year.

I mean, look no further than his primary assist on Vilardi's goal. That little no-look, well-placed pass? The Samberg we used to know would have never pulled it off.

"That's all part of the growth, too," Arniel said. "If you ask him, too, he still thinks there's lots of things that he can work on to improve his offence. At the end of the day, he makes those little plays coming out of our end. If you can do it in our end, under pressure [and] under a heavy forecheck, usually when you get a little bit more space in the offensive zone, you feel a little bit more confident."

Samberg may be 26 but we're talking about a player with just 186 career games played — his best hockey is still ahead of him. And that's why the Jets shouldn't think twice about offering him a seven- or eight-year deal.

It'd be a similar "gamble," that the club made on Josh Morrissey, whose \$6.25 million cap hit makes for one of the NHL's best value deals. If he signed a one-year deal, he'd become a UFA after the 2025-26 season.

Samberg will be an RFA with arbitration rights at the end of the season. If he signed a one-year deal, he'd become a UFA after the 2025-26 season. Samberg may have switched agents recently but as Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman reported on the 32 Thoughts Podcast, it's not because he's unhappy with the Jets. While that's surely a relief, it shouldn't be a surprise — the Minnesotan has always proclaimed his love for Winnipeg.

As we inch closer to the NHL salary cap rising significantly in the not-so-distant future, it's imperative for a small-market team like the Jets to cash in on value deals during this Cup window.

What're the odds Winnipeg has buyer's remorse with an eight-year deal with an AAV somewhere around \$5 million? Slim.

Even if the salary cap stayed flat at \$88 million (which it isn't) that's not a bad bet at all. But keep in mind that we're not far off from the salary cap reaching \$100 million, and by then a \$5-million AAV would amount to five per cent of the salary cap — which equates to \$4.4 million in today's climate.

This is a player that the organization has long believed in. A player that, before he became an NHLer, was as close to an 'untouchable' as you can get whenever teams called.

The Jets bet on Samberg this summer when they let Brenden Dillon walk, with the intention of the former filling the latter's void. And it's paid off.

But this summer, it's time for them to gamble once more. On a long-term deal.

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10978938/winnipeg-jets-tables-turn-analysis/>

ANALYSIS: Winnipeg Jets respond to roller-coaster NHL season

By Cameron Poitras CJOB

Oh, how the tables can turn. And turn. And turn.

Listen, they just keep turning. Who knows when they'll stop? I don't think they're ever going to stop. There's just no controlling those tables.

Ups and downs, a roller-coaster ride, a whirlwind adventure — all are true when you're describing what a year is like in the National Hockey League.

It's the epitome of the league, really, and the game of hockey in general.

Things can change in an instant with a bad turnover at the blue line leading to a rush chance up the ice.

Maybe you get a "bad call" against your club, and they allow a power-play goal against, and suddenly, in this fantasy of mine, it's a one-goal game midway through the second period. Your team was cruising along! They were ahead 2-0!

This has kind of been the Winnipeg Jets, hasn't it?

I don't think you could describe the Jets' 5-2 loss to the Utah Hockey Club just a week ago as a low point, but it was likely their lowest result of the year.

So, how have the Jets responded?

Well, they put together three straight victories, including a gutsy win over Colorado, which they followed up with two 'keep grinding' victories against teams that had recently beaten them, Utah and Calgary.

There are so many good things going for Winnipeg right now, a list that far exceeds the things that aren't up to the team's standards, but that doesn't delist the lows.

Because more are coming. There are 31 games left. So, if you're worried about that, brace yourself.

The Jets aren't a perfect club, but the tables are turning in the right direction — and they keep hitting every challenge and piece of adversity head-on, coming out on top the other side.

And to me, that sets the table for a Jets team that has perhaps its best-ever chance at a Stanley Cup.

SI.com

<https://www.si.com/onsi/breakaway/news-feed-page/winnipeg-jets-gabriel-vilardi-continues-breakout-season>

Jets Forward Continues Breakout Season

A Winnipeg Jets forward is having a breakout season in his second year with the team.

Jacob Punturi

It's been another fantastic season for the Winnipeg Jets, and as the second half of the season continues the team is in a prime position to win another Central Division title. The team's success is headlined by the reigning Vezina Trophy winner, Connor Hellebuyck, and a fantastic season from top forwards Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor.

Lost in the shuffle for the Jets is another forward having a breakout season. Forward Gabriel Vilardi is having an excellent campaign for Winnipeg, and if not for the MVP performances from some of his teammates, the 25-year-old forward would be the main story of the Jets' season.

This is Vilardi's second season with the Jets, after he was a piece of the trade that brought center Pierre-Luc Dubois to the Los Angeles Kings. The Kings originally drafted Vilardi in the first round of the 2017 NHL Draft, and that's where he debuted in the NHL. With the Kings, he began to show signs of being a top-six forward and had his previous best campaign of 23 goals during the 2022-2023 season.

His first season with the Jets was another tantalizing sample of what he can bring. Injuries cut his season short, limiting him to just 47 games, but he managed 22 goals in that span.

But this year is the definitive breakout campaign for Vilardi. The young winger has found a home on the right wing of Scheifele's line, and he's scoring at a career-best pace in 2024-2025. Though the first 51 games, he has 22 goals already and 25 assists as well for 47 points.

This comes after he had arguably the best game of his career in the team's recent victory over the Calgary Flames. He led the team in scoring and was efficient and dominant each shift. He finished the game with two goals, two assists, and over 16 minutes of ice-time.

It's clear that Winnipeg is a perfect situation for Vilardi, and the Jets are seeing the results on a nightly basis. Vilardi has already established new career highs in assists and points with more

than 20 games left to play in the regular season. He's found a home with the Jets, and the Jets have a top-line winger that is just beginning to get the league-wide recognition he deserves.

The Hockey News

<https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/winnipeg-jets/latest-news/jets-prospect-listed-as-one-of-nine-players-who-could-be-used-as-a-trade-asset>

Jets Prospect Listed As One Of Nine Players Who Could Be Used As A Trade Asset

By Julian Gaudio

Winnipeg Jets prospect Colby Barlow was listed as one of nine players that The Hockey News' Tony Ferrari believes could be used as a trade asset.

The Jets selected Barlow with the 18th overall pick in the 2023 NHL Draft after he showcased immense scoring abilities in the OHL and on the international stage. He scored 46 goals in 59 games, captaining a weak Owen Sound Attack roster.

In the most recent offseason, the 19-year-old was traded to the Oshawa Generals but struggled to find his game early in the season. The adjustment period took a bit longer than he would have liked, but he is now flourishing, and his four-goal, five-point performance last night highlighted this.

Now on pace to record 40 goals and 68 points in 65 games, the Orillia, ON. native is back to his best and could be a valuable trade piece for the Jets as we approach the trade deadline. With forward prospects like Nikita Chibrikov, Brad Lambert and Brayden Yager showing they are closer to NHL ready than Barlow, the Jets could dangle him in front of teams looking for skilled forward prospects.

"They have a few prospects they could look to deal," said Ferrari. "Brad Lambert has been so good at times, but he has moments when he disappears. Nikita Chibrikov is incredibly skilled and fun to watch, and he looked solid in his stint with the big club earlier this year, but it was just announced that he would miss the rest of the year with a lower-body injury. Colby Barlow has plenty of hype around him thanks to his north-south attacking style of play, which brings a bit of grit and a wicked shot. Barlow seems like the prospect they would likely use to try and bolster the lineup for a run."

Reports from many respected insiders around the NHL believe the Jets are considering this year to be an "all-in" season. No player or prospect is off the board and whatever move helps the team win a Stanley Cup is the correct one.

Barlow could be the difference in acquiring a game breaking player that sets the Jets apart from other contending teams.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/vilardi-s-four-point-night-leads-the-jets-to-a-win-over-the-flames%7E3069124>

Vilardi's four point night leads the Jets to a win over the Flames (VIDEO)

TSN's Dan Robertson and Kevin Sawyer discuss Gabriel Vilardi's four point night against the Flames, and how the Jets' power play has continued to be dangerous this season.