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<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-top-line-dominant-in-montreal>

***Three things - Top line dominant in Montreal
Scheifele, Connor, Vilardi combine for five points in 4-1 win***

By Jamie Thomas

The Winnipeg Jets started their three-game road trip in style beating the Montreal Canadiens 4-1 at the Bell Centre. Kyle Connor scored twice, Mark Scheifele and Rasmus Kupari had the other goals for the Jets who won their fourth straight and improved their record to 35-14-3. Scheifele is now at 326 career goals and is three goals away from becoming the franchise leader in that department, Ilya Kovalchuk (328) is the current leader. Winnipeg travels to Boston and will face the Bruins on Thursday.

TOP LINE DOING TOP LINE THINGS

The Canadiens came out looking to take the game to the Jets in the first period and got on the board first thanks to Juraj Slafkovsky at 11:03, Montreal outshot Winnipeg 12-4 at that point of the period. The Jets took over in the final five minutes of the first, Kyle Connor would tie the game at 15:36 pouncing on a Dylan DeMelo rebound and beat Samuel Montembeault for his 28th of the season.

Winnipeg carried play for the majority of the second period and took the lead for the first time at 10:44 when Scheifele went to the front of the net and fired home a perfect pass from Gabe Vilardi for his 29th. In total, Connor, Scheifele and Vilardi combined for five points.

GUS STREAKING

David Gustafsson played in his 15th consecutive game and his confidence keeps growing and tonight he extended his career high point streak to four games. With time winding down in the second and Montreal pressing, Gustafsson won a puck battle behind the Canadiens net and passed to Connor who scored his second of the night to make it 3-1 at 19:58.

"There were five or six seconds left when I looked up and Gustafsson made an incredible play down low to win that battle," said Connor.

"They lost coverage and I found some time in the slot. He did all the work there and teed it up for me."

ANOTHER ONE FOR HELLEBUYCK

Connor Hellebuyck watched Eric Comrie win his fourth game of the season on Sunday against Calgary. Tonight, Hellebuyck held his team in the game while the Canadiens pressed in the first 15 minutes of the contest. Montreal pushed again in the third period, but Hellebuyck closed the door making one of his best saves of the night on Canadiens captain Nick Suzuki, who was left all alone in front, Hellebuyck stopped Suzuki with his right pad. The Vezina Trophy winner stopped 24 of 25 shots and won his 31st game of the season. Hellebuyck has helped the Jets

earn a point in 18 of his past 20 starts (16-2-2) and has held the opponent to two or fewer goals in seven of his past eight games.

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/winnipeg-jets-montreal-canadiens-game-recap-january-28>

Connor scores twice, lifts Jets past Canadiens for 4th straight win Scheifele gets goal; Montreal drops 3rd in row

By Sean Farrell

MONTREAL -- Kyle Connor scored twice, and the Winnipeg Jets extended their winning streak to four games with a 4-1 victory against the Montreal Canadiens at Bell Centre on Tuesday.

Mark Scheifele also scored, and Gabriel Vilardi had two assists for the Jets (35-14-3), who are 8-2-1 in their past 11 games. Connor Hellebuyck made 24 saves.

"We've just played simple, we haven't tried to overcomplicate the game," Scheifele said. "We get pucks deep, we're a tough team when we play in the O-zone. We hold onto pucks, we make the other team defend, and tonight was a prime example of that."

Juraj Slafkovsky scored, and Sam Montembeault made 20 saves for the Canadiens (24-21-5), who have lost three straight (0-2-1) for the first time since going 0-5-1 from Oct. 29 - Nov. 9.

"We were very engaged," Montreal coach Martin St. Louis said. "We just didn't win."

Slafkovsky gave the Canadiens a 1-0 lead at 11:03 of the first period. He snapped a one-timer past Hellebuyck's glove from the left face-off circle on Nick Suzuki's pass from behind the net.

Connor tied it 1-1 at 15:36 when he got to a rebound of Dylan DeMelo's initial shot from the left point and scored on a wrist shot past Montembeault stick side.

"I kind of just roam around the slot there and try to catch them when they're shooting the puck going towards the net and lose coverage a bit," Connor said. "And I was able to do that and find a loose puck and able to put it upstairs."

Outshot 15-7 in the first, Winnipeg had a 13-3 shooting advantage in the second period.

"The first 10 minutes Montreal came out really hard and had us on our heels," Jets coach Scott Arniel said. "We spent a lot of time in our end of the rink, but we finally got back and got playing our game. We did a better job of getting through the neutral zone and got our forecheck going. And at the end of the day, that was pretty much what turned that second period around."

Scheifele put the Jets up 2-1 at 10:44 of the second. He drove to the net from the left corner to put Vilardi's return pass from behind the net between Montembeault's legs.

Connor's second goal of the game extended it to 3-1 with two seconds remaining in the period. He snapped a one-timer over Montembeault's left shoulder on a centering pass from David Gustafsson, who won a puck battle with Kaiden Guhle behind the net to retrieve Connor's dump-in.

"That was amazing, unbelievable play by 'Gussy,'" Scheifele said. "Just poise and vision in a chaotic situation, so that was an unbelievable play by him."

Rasmus Kupari scored into an empty net with 1:45 left in the third period for the 4-1 final.

"They're a really deep team, strong offensively," Suzuki said. "We just didn't have a great second period and the game got away from us. And we just missed on some good scoring chances in the third. We had a pretty good start and bad second, and I thought we had a good third. So, we've got to clean up the second period."

Guhle left the game 5:38 into the third and had to be helped to the dressing room after an awkward fall into the boards. The Montreal defenseman sustained a lower-body injury that will require further evaluation.

"We'll have to see the extent of it," St. Louis said. "But even when you lose Guhle for one game, he's a guy who plays a lot of minutes and has big responsibilities, he's not an easy player to replace."

NOTES: Connor and Scheifele have each scored 29 goals and are tied for the Jets lead. ... Connor is one goal short of his seventh 30-goal season, which would tie Ilya Kovalchuk for the most in Jets/Atlanta Thrashers franchise history. ... Scheifele, who is one goal short of his fourth 30-goal season, has 326 goals, two behind Kovalchuk (328) for the all-time franchise lead. ... Montreal forward Brendan Gallagher played his 802nd NHL game to move ahead of Jean-Guy Talbot for 20th all-time in Canadiens history.

Canadian Press

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/kyle-connor-scores-twice-as-jets-beat-canadiens/>

Kyle Connor scores twice as Jets beat Canadiens

By Canadian Press

Kyle Connor tilted his head up to the jumbotron and saw the clock winding down. When he looked back down, he spotted an opportunity to score.

The Winnipeg Jets' star winger chipped the puck in deep and parked himself in the slot.

Teammate David Gustafsson then went to work with a powerful forecheck before setting Connor up with 1.5 seconds left in the second period of Winnipeg's 4-1 win over the Montreal Canadiens on Tuesday.

"There was only five or six seconds (left)," Connor said. "Gussie made an incredible play down low just to win that battle, and they kind of just lost coverage there.

"Found some time in the slot."

While Connor found time, the Canadiens lost track of it.

"That third goal hurts," Canadiens head coach Martin St. Louis said. "At the end of the period, I don't think we had to give that up. We didn't play the clock."

The back-breaking goal was Connor's second of the night and 29th of the season, putting the Jets up 3-1 heading into the final frame.

"Tough one for them to have, big one for us," said Jets coach Scott Arniel, before marvelling at Connor's wicked release from the hash marks.

"We've seen that, right? That shot," he added. "I've seen a lot of good shooters, guys with quick releases, but he's in the top five for me with some of the best at shooting that puck."

Gustafsson, a fourth-liner, earned a point in his fourth consecutive game thanks to his effort. Otherwise, the Jets' top guns led the way for Winnipeg.

Vezina Trophy favourite Connor Hellebuyck made 24 saves and helped Winnipeg withstand a dominant opening 10 minutes from the Canadiens.

After the Jets controlled the second period, Winnipeg took its foot off the gas in the third and Hellebuyck stood tall again.

"We didn't want to put him in a position where he's sitting point blank on a breakaway, with a few from dead centre, right in the middle of the ice," Arniel said. "Montreal wasn't quitting, we knew they were going to come. Helly had to make some big stops for us and that's what he does."

Mark Scheifele also scored, while Gabriel Vilardi provided two assists to help Winnipeg (35-14-3) win its fourth straight.

"A lot of good plays, going to the right areas. Those two guys are a real treat to play with," Scheifele said of linemates Connor and Vilardi.

Scheifele's second-period goal held up as the winner on a night he was public enemy No. 1, as boos rained down from the Bell Centre crowd each and every time he touched the puck.

Canadiens fans still haven't forgotten Scheifele's devastating hit that put Jake Evans on a stretcher during the 2021 playoffs, a play that also earned him a four-game suspension.

"You don't even really hear it, to be honest," Scheifele said of the jeers. "This is a fantastic rink to play in, obviously a lot of history for the Canadiens. You kind of drown it out. Once in a while if there's no pressure on you, you hear it a little bit and you laugh a little bit.

“It was a fantastic win by us, and move on to the next one.”

Connor and Scheifele each have 29 goals on the season, tying them for second in the NHL behind Leon Draisaitl’s 35.

WORRY FOR GUHLE

The Canadiens also lost one of their most reliable blueliners.

Kaiden Guhle, a key penalty-killer and all-around defenceman, crashed awkwardly into the boards in the third period and did not return. The Canadiens said he had a lower-body injury that would need further evaluation before establishing a timeline.

The 23-year-old held his right knee as he pushed toward Montreal’s bench in noticeable pain and rushed to the locker room.

“(Crappy) feeling seeing him skate off like that,” captain Nick Suzuki said. “Hopefully he’s all right. I haven’t heard anything, will go check up on him after this.”

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10982789/connor-scores-twice-as-winnipeg-jets-overcome-slow-start-in-4-1-win-in-montreal/>

Connor scores twice as Winnipeg Jets overcome slow start in 4-1 win in Montreal

By Christian Aumell & Russ Hobson Global News

Just over a week ago in Utah, the Winnipeg Jets played perhaps their worst game of the season. They haven’t lost since.

The Jets extended their win streak to four games Tuesday night in Montreal as they bested the Canadiens 4-1 to start a three-game road trip.

The Jets had an extremely slow start and were badly outplayed for much of the opening period, but after allowing the game’s first goal, the Jets scored four unanswered markers for their seventh victory in their last nine games.

“The first 10 minutes Montreal came out really hard, and had us on our heels, and we spent a lot of time in our end of the rink,” said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. “But we finally got back and got playing our game. We did a better job of getting through the neutral zone and got our forecheck going.

“At the end of the day that was pretty much what turned that second period around. We got pucks in and got after them and created the zone time and got them on the heels. It wasn’t real clean and crisp in the third, but at the end of the day, we did what we needed to do.”

Kyle Connor scored twice, while Mark Scheifele and Rasmus Kupari also found the net in the win. Connor and Scheifele are now tied for the team lead with 29 goals apiece.

The Canadiens had five of the first six shots on goal of the game as they outshot the Jets 15-7 in the first period.

“Definitely a slow start,” said Scheifele. “Not what we’re looking for but the back half of that first period we kinda got going, had a good second period, and just kinda rolled with it.”

The Jets turned the tables on the Canadiens in the middle frame with a 13-3 shot advantage and scored a backbreaker with just over a second left in the second period to take a two-goal lead.

“We simplified it through the neutral zone and just kinda supported each other more,” Connor said. “Talked on our breakouts and just made a couple adjustments and once we got rolling, playing in the offensive zone, you could see the type of damage we can create.”

David Gustafsson recorded one assist to give him a four-game point streak after not registering a single point in his first 16 games of the season until last week.

Scheifele was booed throughout the game with the Montreal fans still holding ill will for his hit on Jake Evans following an empty-net goal in the 2021 Stanley Cup Playoffs.

“You don’t even really hear it, to be honest,” said Scheifele. “It’s a fantastic rink to play in. Obviously a lot of history with the Canadiens. So, you kinda drown it out. Once and awhile if there’s no pressure on you and you hear it a little bit, you laugh a little bit.”

The Jets weren’t assessed a penalty the entire game and went 0-for-3 on the man advantage themselves.

Montreal was the much stronger team out of the gate, spending lots of time in Winnipeg’s end and controlling play before opening the scoring at the 11:03 mark.

An initial rush chance from Cole Caufield was stopped by Connor Hellebuyck, sending the rebound to the corner. Several Jets players collapsed on Caufield, who spotted Nick Suzuki open behind the net. Montreal’s captain got the puck and quickly fed a wide-open Juraj Slafkovsky in the slot for the game’s first goal.

The Canadiens outshot the Jets 13-4 over the first 13 minutes of the game before Winnipeg started to play better, and their red-hot top line got the game back on level ground late in the period.

A point shot from Dylan DeMelo resulted in a net-front scramble, where Connor was first to locate the puck before depositing it past Sam Montembeault at the 15:36 mark for his 28th goal of the campaign.

Montreal managed to kill off a late penalty to send the game to intermission tied 1-1 with the Habs still ahead on the shot counter 15-7, but Winnipeg's strong play to finish off the period carried over into the second.

Scheifele gave the Jets their first lead of the night with 9:16 to go in the second. He won a faceoff in the Montreal end, the puck going back to the point where Josh Morrissey slid it along the boards. Gabriel Vilardi tracked it down below the goal line and fed Scheifele in front, who knocked it home for his 29th of the season.

It looked like it would stay 2-1 going into the third before the Jets struck in the dying moments of the second. Connor dumped the puck into Montreal's end and Gustafsson, fresh off the bench, flew into the zone and won a puck battle before feeding Connor in the slot for his second of the night with just 1.5 seconds to go in the period.

Montreal pushed to get back in the game in the third, and roughly seven minutes into the frame they had two great chances as Lane Hutson rang a shot square off the post and Suzuki was denied from point-blank range by Hellebuyck after the Jets mishandled the puck and turned it over deep in their own end.

After the Canadiens killed off a third Winnipeg power play, they had perhaps their best chance of the period when Josh Anderson was sprung on a breakaway but he missed the net on a backhand.

Montreal pulled Montembeault for an extra attacker with just over two minutes left but it didn't take long for Winnipeg to seal the win with an empty netter. Nikolaj Ehlers carried the puck out of his own end before feeding Kupari, who skated the puck into the net for his fourth goal of the season to secure the victory with 1:45 left.

Hellebuyck turned aside 24 shots as he picked up his 31st win of the season.

The Jets will look to extend their win streak to five when they visit Boston Thursday night. Puck drop is just after 6 p.m. with pregame coverage on 680 CJOB starting at 4 p.m.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10986424/analysis-winnipeg-jets-trade-patrik-laine/>

ANALYSIS: Remembering the Jets trade that keeps on giving

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

It was four years ago this month that the Winnipeg Jets parted ways with Patrik Laine. It was a difficult transaction for many reasons, as he was a fan favourite and an offensive weapon, and it was during COVID-19.

But Laine wanted out, and for the Jets' organization since, it's been a trade that keeps on giving.

Since that original January 2021 day, the Jets have parlayed Laine's move into acquiring Pierre-Luc Dubois, and then subsequently into Gabe Vilardi, Alex Iafallo and Rasmus Kupari – all of whom have become vital pieces to the Jets' first-place standing this season.

And if you weren't paying attention on Tuesday night, it was Vilardi who helped pace the Jets to a 4-1 win over Laine's new team, the Montreal Canadiens, with two assists, while Kupari chipped in with a goal and Iafallo another solid fourth-line effort.

Laine, for the record, was held off the scoresheet.

Looking back, what that trade did was eventually provide Winnipeg with more depth up front, a variety of talents that complement others and a more cohesive group altogether.

And the results speak for themselves as the Jets have won more games in the last two seasons – this one included – than any other team in the NHL. And they're not only sitting atop the entire league standings but are also starting to run away with their division.

Now, Laine may again hit 40 goals in his career in a season and, respectfully, he's battled through some personal issues, but since the trade, in combination with dealing Dubois, the Jets are a better team.

Of course, Vilardi, Kupari and Iafallo will all need new contracts at the end of this season, especially Iafallo, who is set to become an unrestricted free agent. But in hindsight, the last four years post-Laine have worked out well for the Jets.

In other words, it's the trade that just keeps giving. Beyond this season and perhaps over a few more for Winnipeg, it might yet still have a little more to give.

Global Montreal

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10981167/call-of-the-wilde-montreal-canadiens-winnipeg-jets-jan-28-2025/>

Call of the Wilde: Montreal Canadiens' energy falls short with 4-1 loss to Winnipeg

By Brian Wilde Global News

After three days without a game for the first time since Jan. 14, the Montreal Canadiens finally had a chance to bring some energy and rested bodies to the Bell Centre for their affair against the Winnipeg Jets on Tuesday night.

While Montreal had more jump, they couldn't handle the west's best club, losing 4-1 to Winnipeg.

Wilde Horses

It was an interesting change of defensive pairings by Head Coach Martin St. Louis for this contest, after he decided that Mike Matheson was too uncomfortable on his wrong side.

Matheson was moved back to his more natural left side and was partnered with Alexandre Carrier.

That broke up the excellent partnership of Carrier and Kaiden Guhle. The shock was that Guhle stayed on his preferred left side, and the player who had to beat a lifetime of instincts moving to the off-side was, shockingly, the rookie with 50 NHL games Lane Hutson.

The confidence that the organization has in Hutson is astounding. It's difficult to not think of previous regimes, and how they would have handled with care a small rookie making his way into the NHL.

Hutson would have probably had 10 minutes per game, with no power play time, and no 3-on-3 overtime either under Michel Therrien. With this regime, he's given the toughest assignment possible in his rookie season.

Hutson didn't only have to play his first game on the wrong side, he also had to do it against one of the best clubs in the league. Hutson didn't get a point on the Canadiens' first goal, but he was instrumental in the final result.

Hutson saw that the Jets were doing a line change and he passed it quickly up ice about 120 feet to the Jets blue line. That's where the outstanding Nick Suzuki line took over. It was Cole Caufield to Suzuki. From behind the net, he quickly fed Juraj Slafkovsky, who one-timed it home.

This top line is playing with so much chemistry. All three have a strong awareness where the other will be at all times. It is difficult to defend when the puck is moving that quickly.

Hutson finished the game with the top Expected Goals share for Montreal. His first game on the wrong side, Hutson was the Canadiens' best defender by that valuable metric. There wasn't much to like in that contest, but if Hutson could handle that difficult assignment, it would be massive for the team's fortunes.

Wilde Goats

Consternation and complaint is everywhere around Mike Matheson recently. It's not difficult to understand the issue. Matheson is a second-pair defender being asked to defend against the top players in the league. Matheson is playing out of his role.

This is the basic "success vs. failure" explanation for all players. When third-liners have to play against second-liners, they fail. Fourth-liners who shouldn't be in the NHL fail. When second-pair defenders have to face the world's best, naturally, they are overmatched.

Everyone comfortable with the assignment is what makes a terrific team. An example is everyone loves Jake Evans right now. However, give him Aleksander Barkov and Connor McDavid as the assignment and let's see how it goes. As a fourth-liner, Evans is as good as it gets in the entire league.

For Matheson, offensively he can do it all. He is a first-pair blue liner offensively, but in his own zone, he needs to be facing a second tier of forwards. Take the first goal when Kyle Connor and the first line scored for Winnipeg. Matheson was overmatched on his man and it was 1-1. The same pairing was on for the second goal against as well.

The point is Matheson has a lot to give, but he needs to be in the role that he can handle well.

Who then are the top-pairing defenders on the Canadiens? The truth is defensively that they probably don't have two capable blue liners. That only Kaiden Guhle can handle the assignment against the world's best players isn't just Matheson's issue; it's the organization's issue to solve.

Any team that has eyes on the Stanley Cup has to have a first pair that can handle the best line on the other club. Oddly, it is fair to say that the Canadiens have four top-four, but they don't have two top-two — not in all three zones.

There is plenty of prospect strength in the organization. When they drafted David Reinbacher, they hoped that he would be that right side top-pairing defender. After a serious injury, Reinbacher is now practicing with the club in a non-contact jersey.

Reinbacher's recovery is ahead of schedule. He should be in Laval before February is completed. His ceiling will start to come into view next season. Montreal is trusting that they drafted well when they made him the first defender taken in the 2023 draft.

If who will be the top pairing right-side player were the only concerning topic, that would be acceptable. However, the Canadiens most likely suffered a very upsetting injury. Guhle suffered a non-contact right leg injury. He was holding his knee after he fell. He could not put any weight on the leg as he left the ice.

When the head coach got word of how bad the injury was minutes later, Martin St. Louis could not hide his disappointment. This could be a significant moment. The Canadiens will have an update likely on Wednesday or Thursday.

Wilde Cards

This isn't an ordinary trading deadline. Usually, there is 35 days of hockey remaining as January ends, but this year, with the two-week break for the Four Nations event, there isn't actually a lot of hockey left. In truth, from a hockey point of view, it is already Feb. 15.

What that means is each team has to make a decision soon how they are going to approach the trading deadline. The Canadiens are right on the cusp of contender or pretender, so any chance for insight from management creates a lot of interest.

Jeff Gorton, VP Of Hockey Operations, was on The Sick Podcast recently where he indicated a game plan for the trading deadline that is exciting. Gorton said, "We definitely have a plan, and we are not gonna deviate from that plan that makes us successful for a long time."

With that thought, we learn that the organization is committed to the long-term benefits of stockpiling: “You’re not gonna see us deviate from not trading away young players, so if anyone is looking for that, they are looking for the wrong thing.”

They have traded away one young player in Justin Barron, so it is more a concept than a 100-per cent hard-and-fast rule. Sometimes an opportunity to acquire a player can improve the squad so significantly, the trade has to be made. It is a safe bet to say, as well, that management felt that there wasn’t much ceiling left in Barron’s game.

This doesn’t address if the squad believes it is time to get stronger, because the fan base is clearly hungry for a playoff spot.

Gorton was surprisingly forthright in his response: “If there is an opportunity to help these guys, they deserve it. We want every game they play to be the biggest game of the year, and they’re doing it, so if we can help them along, we’re gonna look to do that”.

If we put all of these quotes together, it sounds more like they are ready to acquire a veteran to the roster while giving up only a draft pick as high as a second- or third-rounder. It doesn’t sound like a blockbuster where they give up a first-round pick.

The final thought from Gorton indicates how quickly the trade window opens up this season: “We will see what happens with their play leading up to the Four Nations break.”

The Canadiens are off from Feb. 9 to Feb. 22. General managers are treating the break as kind of a soft deadline. Expect more action than usual before Feb. 10. Gorton is indicating that is the target to assess the Canadiens plans.

The next two weeks in the NHL could be quite entertaining.

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/canadiens-painful-loss-to-jets-reinforces-need-to-keep-raising-standard/>

Canadiens' painful loss to Jets reinforces need to keep raising standard

By Eric Engels

It gets harder.

That’s what this young Montreal Canadiens team is learning with each passing game, and the lesson is painful to endure.

It was excruciating in Tuesday game, and not just because Kaiden Guhle left it in obvious distress and didn’t return.

Canadiens captain Nick Suzuki called it a “shitty feeling” watching the team’s top shutdown defenceman hop his way off the ice after catching a rut and twisting his right leg so bad he couldn’t put any weight on it, and it was fair to assume Suzuki wasn’t feeling great about a few of the other things he saw in this 4-1 loss to the Winnipeg Jets.

A missed assignment here, a missed breakaway there, and, oh, that one half-second lapse in between that really wounded the Canadiens.

There was exactly that much time left in the second period when Kyle Connor, who had already scored his 28th goal of the season in the first, somehow found himself completely unmarked in the slot for Goal 29.

Just like that, it was 3-1 Jets.

We know what was running through Canadiens coach Martin St. Louis’s mind seeing that, and so did Suzuki.

“He really preaches that every play out there is important, no matter how big or small, and we kind of got caught holding hands there,” the captain said. “Guy’s open in the slot... It’s things that we’ve talked about a lot... That last-second goal, it’s kind of a dagger going into the break.”

The wound proved too deep for the Canadiens on this night, despite a valiant effort in Guhle’s absence.

In truth, the Canadiens put one in with and without him. They recorded 11 of the first 15 shots in the game before Juraj Slafkovsky gave them a one-goal lead, they took only three penalties against the league’s most lethal power play and killed all three of them off, they attacked in waves and defended with purpose, and they had chances to tie the game up before Rasmus Kupari put it out of reach with an empty-net goal. They did much of what they did through a two-month run from Nov. 15 to Jan. 15 that earned them the seventh-best points percentage in the NHL over 26 games before a recent slip.

“I felt, defensively, we had some pace,” said St. Louis. “I feel our exits, we were organized. We possessed the puck plenty in their zone. We were dangerous, we were hunting in the O-zone, keeping pucks alive for second and third opportunities. We were blocking shots. We were very engaged.”

It was a big step up from what the Canadiens were over their three games last week.

But the result was the same as it was in the last two.

“We just didn’t win,” said St. Louis.

At least the Canadiens gave themselves a chance.

But to win games at this time of year, in the thick of the insanely tight playoff race that’s developed in the Eastern Conference, they need to give themselves a better chance, and that

means not only just getting back to the standard they set for themselves over those two months from mid-November to mid-January.

It means lifting it higher.

That's the phase the Canadiens are in right now.

They started with learning how not to beat themselves, and there was too much pain endured over that phase.

There were 12 losses in the first 17 games, and it shouldn't have taken that many for the Canadiens to finally commit to a more conservative style of play and begin learning how to win.

Now the Canadiens are hoping the pain of this recent stretch subsides much quicker, as they continue to learn how to win under pressure.

That's what they're under now, and they earned that by climbing back into the race.

The Canadiens also earned some recognition along the way from their opposition, which no longer takes them lightly.

"They're so dangerous, power play's great, their top six is as talented as anyone's in the league, so you give them some space, and they'll make you pay," said goaltender Jake Oettinger 11 days ago, just after his Dallas Stars finished the second of two games within a week against the Canadiens.

"No easy games against them," texted Ben Chiarot on Jan. 23, after his Detroit Red Wings beat the Canadiens to avenge consecutive losses to them a month prior.

Every player we spoke to on the Jets Tuesday morning talked about having to play their best in Montreal to come out with a win, and that was after Canadiens defenceman Mike Matheson acknowledged that he and his teammates were aware of how teams were looking at them and needed to elevate even higher than they had previously to push through the next series of games.

"I think we've done a good job of getting back into the conversation with the way we've played, but I think now teams are ready for us," said Matheson. "We're not surprising teams by any means, and as we go deeper into the season, the hockey's only going to be more difficult. We have to be able to up our level if we're going to be where we hope to be at the end of the year."

Matheson's wasn't high enough in a loss to the New Jersey Devils on Saturday, and it wasn't quite where he hoped it would be in this one to the Jets.

Matheson was beat by Connor on Winnipeg's tying goal in the first period, and he lost position on Gabriel Vilardi on the play that allowed Mark Scheifele to make it 2-1 Jets 10:44 into the second period.

The 30-year-old defenceman did plenty of good things, too, especially at the start of the game — and at the end of it, when he had to step up in Guhle's absence — but now Matheson and the rest of the Canadiens will have to step up regardless of whether or not Guhle misses a lot of time.

Otherwise the pain will continue.

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/scheifeles-newfound-assertiveness-key-to-lethal-play-of-jets-top-line/>

Scheifele's newfound assertiveness key to lethal play of Jets' top line

By Jacob Stoller

Anytime you ask Mark Scheifele about a goal he scored, he always begins his answer with a caveat.

That he's a pass-first player.

While that may be true — he is indeed one of the best passers in the sport — it sells his goal-scoring ability short.

After scoring the game-winning goal Tuesday — where the Winnipeg Jets defeated the Montreal Canadiens 4-1 — Scheifele sits tied for the second most goals in the league (29).

Joining him in a three-way tie for second is Sam Reinhart and his running mate, Kyle Connor. When asked after the game if there's a bit of healthy competition between him and the latter, Scheifele answered as you'd expect.

"I'd like to have a lot more assists right now. I think I'd love for him to have more than me," Scheifele told reporters. "I pride myself on my passing. I think I have more goals than I do assists right now, so I've got to set him up for a few more in the future."

For a while, this mindset held him back. In previous years, Scheifele — a three-time 30-plus goal scorer who scored a career-high 42 goals in 2022-23 — would oftentimes defer to a teammate even when he had a clear lane to the net. He's got a knack for holding onto pucks along the wall, creating deception and firing off the perfect pass. Oftentimes, he'd elect to do that instead of cutting into the home plate area and firing off a shot himself — even when he had the time and space to do it.

This year, though, Scheifele has been a heck of a lot more assertive. And overall, hungrier to score.

What you saw on the game-winning goal — where he darted to the low slot and smacked home a pass from Gabriel Vilardi right above the blue paint — was a prime example of that. He's not just scoring all these goals from breakaways or slick dekes against the goalie in-tight.

"He's getting inside to get these looks," Scott Arniel said after Winnipeg beat Seattle on Jan. 16. "It's different if you're standing outside the dots and trying to take one-timers from there. They're probably not going in. But he does a fantastic job of getting himself into scoring areas. I think he realizes that it's not just his linemates that need to score. When he has a chance, he has to take those shots, too."

According to NaturalStatTrick.com, Scheifele has recorded 4.47 five-on-five high-danger shot attempts per 60 minutes this season — placing him in the 91st percentile among forwards (minimum 200 minutes). According to NHL Edge, 16 of his 28 goals have come from high-danger areas.

Amidst all the talk of him playing a more refined 200-foot game this season, that Scheifele has adapted his pursuit of offence is arguably more crucial. Scoring more of these greasy goals has been the reason he's even in the Rocket Richard conversation.

And it's played a big part in the Jets' top line becoming one of the NHL's most lethal trios.

Where do you park the Gus Bus?

It's time to give David Gustafsson his flowers.

It's beyond the four-game point streak.

Over the last little while, the 25-year-old centre has started to look closer to what many thought he'd become — a defensively responsible bottom-six centre who can contribute off the cycle.

His forechecking efforts on Connor's second goal — where he picked up a primary assist after winning a battle along the wall and feeding Connor net front — was the type of sequence that makes coaches salivate.

"When we're on our game, our forecheck is one of our strengths," Arniel said. "We hem teams in, we get in and turn pucks over. And that was a great example."

One perceived benefit of the Jets acquiring a second-line centre at the deadline is that it bumps a guy like Vladislav Namestnikov down to a fourth-line role. And while Namestnikov would be far more efficient if he were shouldering a lighter workload, isn't Gustafsson the archetype of a prototypical fourth-line centre?

Gustafsson's won 51.8 per cent of his draws this year, posted superb on-ice shot metrics — with the Jets controlling 59.1 per cent of the five-on-five expected goals share when he's on the ice — and his instincts are off the charts.

The 2018 second-round pick isn't getting any better by sitting in the press box, either.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/leading-vezina-candidate-connor-hellebuyck-in-hart-trophy-consideration-1.2243506>

Leading Vezina candidate Hellebuyck in Hart Trophy consideration

By TSN.ca Staff

Winnipeg Jets goaltender Connor Hellebuyck is in the driver's seat to win his second straight Vezina Trophy and third overall, but he has also now put himself firmly in the conversation to be the NHL's MVP.

Hellebuyck has the opportunity to be the first goaltender to win both the Hart and Vezina trophies in the same season since Carey Price achieved the feat in 2014-15, when he went 44-16-6 with a .933 save percentage and 1.96 goals-against average.

Jacques Plante (1961-62), Dominik Hasek (1996-97, 1997-98) and Jose Theodore (2001-02) are the only other goalies in NHL history to claim both trophies in the same season.

Hellebuyck is pacing ahead of his previous Vezina-winning seasons so far this season.

The 31-year-old is first among NHL goaltenders in GAA (2.00), tied for first in save percentage (.927) and leads with six shutouts. He was also honoured earlier in the month for reaching 500 games played, 300 wins and 40 shutouts.

In comparison, his first Vezina season came in 2019-20, where he went 31-21-5 with a .922 save percentage and 2.57 GAA. Last year, he had a .921 save percentage with a 2.39 GAA.

The Jets have a lot of players having strong seasons with the team scoring a league-high 184 goals, but it's the play of Hellebuyck that has propelled Winnipeg to second in the NHL.

He has backstopped the team to wins in seven of his eight past starts, with his most recent outing turning aside 25 shots in a 4-1 victory over the Montreal Canadiens on Tuesday night.

FanDuel has Hellebuyck as the favourite to win the Vezina at -2400, edging out Washington's Logan Thompson at +2200 and Colorado's Mackenzie Blackwood at +5500.

For the Hart, Hellebuyck is third at +350, behind only Edmonton's Leon Draisaitl at +170 and Colorado's Nathan MacKinnon at +260.

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/is-the-jets-top-line-one-of-the-best-in-the-nhl~3070538>

Is the Jets' top line one of the best in the NHL? (VIDEO)

TSN Hockey analyst Frankie Corrado joins SportsCentre to share if he thinks the Jets' top line is one of the best in the NHL, and discuss if the Habs are facing their biggest test of the season during their current schedule.

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/jets-recover-from-quiet-start-to-hand-habs-their-third-straight-loss~3015959>

Jets recover from quiet start to hand Habs their third straight loss (VIDEO)

A strong opening frame from the Canadiens saw them tied with the Jets heading into the second period, but that's where Winnipeg found their game and pulled away. Laura Diakun and Carlo Colaiacovo breakdown a third-straight loss for Montreal.

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/01/28/jets-bounce-back-from-weak-first-period-to-bury-habs>

***Jets bounce back from weak first period to bury Habs
Hellebuyck stands tall while Jets find their form***

By: Ken Wiebe

MONTREAL – Mark Scheifele did his best to block out the noise.

Booed mercilessly every single time that he touched the puck — and sometimes before it even arrived on his stick — Scheifele did his part as the Winnipeg Jets earned a 4-1 victory over the Montreal Canadiens on Tuesday before a raucous crowd at the Bell Centre.

There's little doubt the Canadiens fans have a long memory and still haven't forgiven Scheifele for the hit in Game 1 of the 2021 series that left Jake Evans with a concussion and removed the Jets' top centre from the post-season with a four-game suspension.

Scheifele has done his best to move past the incident and has no ill will toward those voicing their disdain.

“You don't even really hear it, to be honest,” said Scheifele. “This is a fantastic rink to play in, obviously a lot of history for the Canadiens. You kind of drown it out. Once in a while, if there's no pressure on you, you hear it a little bit and you laugh a little bit.

“Obviously it was a fantastic win by us, and (we) move on to the next one.”

Early in the second period, Scheifele did his part to quiet that crowd, getting loose in the slot and burying a pass from Gabe Vilardi that gave the Jets a lead they would not relinquish.

The goal moved Scheifele to 29 goals for the season and tied with Kyle Connor for the team lead.

It was Scheifele's only point of the contest, but it was another strong outing for him and the Jets' top line, as Connor had two goals and Vilardi had two assists.

That gave the trio 14 points during the past two games — with nine of them coming at even strength.

Connor settled things down in the first period at a time when the Jets were being soundly outplayed, then supplied the dagger with 1.5 seconds to go in the second period to move to 29 goals for the season.

"I'd like to have a lot more assists right now. I'd like for him to have more (goals) than me. I pride myself on my passing," said Scheifele. "I think I have more goals than I do assists (28) right now, so I've got to set him up for more in the future."

The Jets, who are riding a four-game winning streak, improved to 35-14-3 on the season and are back in action Thursday as they continue this three-game road trip against the Boston Bruins.

Let's take a closer look at how things unfolded:

STABILIZING FORCE

This was not the type of start the Jets were looking for as they were outshot and outplayed for a good chunk of the first period.

Thanks to the play of Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck, the Jets surrendered only one goal on 15 shots.

Connor's first of two goals, after a point shot from Dylan DeMelo, left the Jets tied after the opening 20 minutes of play.

Making his 40th start of the season, Hellebuyck was at his best, earning his 31st victory of the campaign.

"He is such a calm presence in there and the game just comes to him and it seems he is never under duress no matter how much stress or pressure," said Connor. "He stands tall in there and plays his game."

THE STREAK

Jets centre David Gustafsson has been one of the players who has elevated his game in the absence of captain Adam Lowry.

Gustafsson extended his point streak to four games by earning the primary assist on Connor's second goal of the game.

With time winding down in the second period, Gustafsson hustled on the forecheck, won a board battle with Canadiens defenceman Kaiden Guhle and had the presence of mind to locate Connor in the slot and make a perfect pass to him.

"It was one of those where I was at the end of the shift and I was just trying to get behind them," said Connor, who is up to 65 points in 52 games this season. "There were five or six seconds left when I looked up and Gustafsson made an incredible play down low to win that battle. They lost coverage and I found some time in the slot. He did all the work there and teed it up for me."

Connor's goal came with 1.5 seconds and gave the Jets a two-goal cushion.

"Just poise and vision in a chaotic situation," said Scheifele. "That was an unbelievable play by him."

Gustafsson has one goal and four points in 20 games this season.

"We've talked about it in the past. When we're on our game, our forecheck is one of our strengths," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. "And we hem teams in, we get in and turn pucks over. And that was a great example. That's a tough one for them. Big one for us."

THE DISRUPTION

With 3:27 to go in the second period, the Canadiens were buzzing in the offensive zone and nearly tied the game.

A low shot from Canadiens captain Brendan Gallagher was kicked out by Hellebuyck to an area where it looked like Michael Pezzetta would have a glorious chance to even the score at 2-2.

Jets defenceman Haydn Fleury made a desperation play and disrupted Pezzetta's ability to bury the rebound and tie the game.

"We had a breakdown, but when there's a loose puck sitting there and you get a stick on it — whether that's a save by Helly or us kind of (giving) a second effort, that's what it takes," said Arniel.

THE KEY PLAY

Gustafsson forces a turnover and finds Connor alone in the slot for a dagger that gave the Jets a two-goal cushion.

THE THREE STARS

Kyle Connor, Jets, two goals, two points,

Gabe Vilardi, Jets, two assists,

Connor Hellebuyck, Jets, 24 saves, including 14 in the first period.

EXTRA, EXTRA

Rasmus Kupari snapped a 12-game goalless drought by scoring an empty-netter with 1:45 to go after Nikolaj Ehlers skated the puck into the offensive zone and dished it over to Kupari.

Kupari is up to four goals for the season and his career-high is five, set with the Los Angeles Kings during the 2021-22 season.

The Jets dressed the same lineup, which meant the healthy scratches were defencemen Colin Miller and Ville Heinola and forward Brad Lambert, who was recalled from the Manitoba Moose of the American Hockey League on Monday.

Guhle left the game in the third period with what appeared to be a right knee injury.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/01/28/morrissey-driven-to-be-better>

***Morrissey driven to be better
Jets blue-liner gets taste of Montreal's hockey culture ahead of 4 Nations Face-Off***

By: Ken Wiebe

MONTREAL — Josh Morrissey was skating on the ice that will serve as his home rink for next month's 4 Nations Face-Off as a member of Team Canada, so it was only natural to be asked by a member of the Montreal press corps what it was like to finally be getting the recognition he deserves.

"I'm not sure if you deserve anything as a player. You have to earn everything you get," Morrissey said after the morning skate and before the Jets faced the Montreal Canadiens at Bell Centre. "I've just worked hard every single day to try to improve as a player. It's what I love about the game, competing with my teammates and trying to work on things I can work on and try to get better. That's what drives me. That's all I really focus on."

The Winnipeg defenceman is having another fantastic season, with five goals and 43 points in 52 games after Tuesday's action.

Morrissey's modesty is admirable, but there's little doubt being on the international stage will boost his profile.

He enjoys coming to Montreal as a member of the visiting team, but he's eager for the opportunity to play several additional games inside Montreal's home rink representing Canada.

"The atmosphere here is outstanding," Morrissey said. "The hockey culture in Quebec is just in the DNA of the people. It's a special place to play."

It was anticipated Morrissey would skate alongside Alex Pietrangelo on a defence pairing, but the Vegas Golden Knights blue-liner has pulled out of the event to deal with an ailment.

That opens the door for Morrissey to potentially be skating beside Colton Parayko of the St. Louis Blues or with whoever is named to replace Pietrangelo.

Among those believed to be under consideration are Drew Doughty of the Los Angeles Kings, MacKenzie Weegar of the Calgary Flames, Brandon Montour of the Seattle Kraken, Chris Tanev of the Toronto Maple Leafs and Dougie Hamilton of the New Jersey Devils.

While Colorado Avalanche teammates Cale Makar and Devon Toews are expected to remain on a pair together, it's possible Makar and Morrissey could play some shifts together, depending on the circumstances.

FINDING HIS STRIDE

Former Jets forward Patrik Laine is thoroughly enjoying a renaissance in Montreal after getting back to full health.

Laine had 12 goals (including 10 on the power play) and 18 points in 21 games going into Tuesday's action and has quickly become a fan favourite in la Belle Province.

"His shot is lethal," said Canadiens defenceman David Savard. "Every time he's on the ice and every time he takes a shot, he's just a dangerous player. It's always fun to have those guys on your team and he's brought more scoring. Our power play has been hot with him on it. It just opens up more guys when you have a guy like him on the power play.

"He's been really good for us."

Canadiens defenceman Alexandre Carrier was recently acquired in a trade with the Nashville Predators and definitely prefers having Laine as a teammate instead of an opponent.

"He's such a good shooter, you've always got to respect where he is when you're in the D-zone against him," Carrier said. "It's nice to finally play with him and try to find him when we can.

"It's also about what he can do with the puck on his stick. He can make plays, too, and he's really creative offensively."

Playing in front of a passionate fan base has been a boost for Laine, who has recaptured the joy he felt on the ice when he broke into the NHL as a teenager with the Jets after being chosen second overall in the 2016 NHL Draft.

"Montreal has really embraced having him and he's been fun to watch," said Savard. "He's fallen in love with the game again and it's good to see."

PRAISE FOR HUTSON

Canadiens rookie Lane Hutson has done a fantastic job this season of making an immediate impact on the blue line.

Thanks in part to putting together a nine-game point streak that was snapped last week, Hutson has moved into top spot in the rookie scoring race with 39 points.

“He really gets involved in that rush,” said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. “Hutson has got vision, he makes plays and he’s a great skater. Just another young guy that’s jumping into this league and there’s no fear. They get right into it and they show what they can do.”

Hutson has also caught the attention of Morrissey.

“He’s obviously very dynamic. He’s fun to watch,” said Morrissey. “With what he’s been doing, I try to tune in and see what he’s bringing to the table and what’s been working for him. He’s confident and when you look around at the top offensive D in the league, there’s a lot of similarities. Obviously, moving well at the offensive blue line, activating in the play at the right time. To think he’s doing that in his rookie year, he’s only going to get better.”

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/kyle-connor-scores-twice-jets-down-canadiens-4-1-for-fourth-straight-win>

Kyle Connor scores twice, Jets down Canadiens 4-1 for fourth straight win

By Gordon Anderson

Kyle Connor displayed his lethal shot on two occasions, the winger scoring twice as the Jets beat the Canadiens 4-1 at the Bell Centre on Tuesday night.

“Connor is amazing,” Mark Scheifele told reporters in Montreal. “We see it everyday in practice by the way he shoots the puck and the way he can get the shot off. He is a real treat to play with.”

Both of Connor’s goals were on and off the stick at lightning speed, the puck darting to places where Sam Montembeault had zero chance.

The first goal went high over the right shoulder of the Montreal keeper. His second one was a one-timer from the right face-off circle that found the far side with less than two seconds left in the second period.

“Yeah, we’ve seen that, right?,” head coach Scott Arnie said. “That shot, that’s like I said. I’ve been around a lot of, seen a lot of good shooters, guys with quick release, but he’s in the top five for me, some of the best, best that shooting.”

Connor and Scheifele are tied for the team lead in goals, both with 29. Scheifele scored the game winner at 10:44 of the second period.

“I would like to have more assists, right now,” Scheifele said. “I would love for him to have more goals than me. I pride myself more on my passing. I have to set him up for a few more in the future.”

Rasmus Kupari also scored for the Jets (35-14-3). Winnipeg extends its win streak to four games. The Jets improv to 15-9-0 on the road and 26-0-1 when holding a lead after 40 minutes.

Scheifele was booed every time he touched the puck. The animosity towards the Jets forward dates to the spring of 2021 when he hit Jake Evans during the playoffs. The hit left Evans with a concussion. The Montreal centreman left the game on a stretcher.

“You don’t really hear it, to be honest,” Scheifele said of the crowd noise. “This is a fantastic rink to play in with a lot of history. You drown it out. Once in a while, when there is no pressure on you, you hear it a bit.”

Connor Hellebuyck (31-7-2) stopped 24 shots for the win.

Juraj Slafkovsky scored for the Canadiens (24-21-5). The Canadiens are 10-7-3 when tied after the first period and 13-9-4 at home this season. Kaiden Guhle left the game in the third period and did not return when he caught an edge and tumbled awkwardly into the boards.

Montembeault (17-18-3) turned aside 21 shots.

The Jets went 0-3 on the powerplay. The Canadiens went 0-0 on the man advantage.

The Jets are in Boston on Thursday. Puck drop is 6 p.m.

The Canadiens took a 1-0 lead at 11:03 of the first period when Slafkovsky blasted a one timer past the glove of Hellebuyck for his eighth goal of the season.

Nick Suzuki had the puck behind the net and spotted the Montreal forward in the face-off circle to the right of the Winnipeg net. His shot caught Hellebuyck by surprise as the Winnipeg netminder was caught deep in his net.

The goal came on Montreal’s 11th shot of the period. At that point, the Jets had mustered just three shots on Montembeault.

“That first 10 minutes Montreal came out hard and had us on our heels and we spent a lot of time in our own rink,” Arniel said.

The Jets tied the game at 15:36 when Connor pounced on a rebound and beat Montembeault to the short side for his 28th goal in 51 games.

Dylan DeMelo’s point shot bounced off traffic to the right of the Montreal net. Connor was alone when he picked up the puck and quickly went over the right shoulder of the Montreal goaltender.

The Jets grabbed a 2-1 lead at 10:44 of the second period when Scheifele beat Montembeault to the glove side with a quick shot from close range for his 29th of the season.

Josh Morrissey passed the puck to Gabe Vilardi behind the net. Vilardi shielded the puck from his check before sliding a pass to Scheifele for the one timer to the far side.

The Jets extended the lead to 3-1 at 19:58 when Connor sniped his second of the game with a shot from the right face-off circle for his 29th of the season.

Connor dumped the puck behind the Montreal net, David Gustafsson getting there first. As Connor continued towards the net, Gustafsson's pass from behind the goal line found the Jets forward alone in the face-off circle to the right of the net.

"Gustafsson made an incredible play down low to win the battle," Connor said. "They lost coverage on me, and I found some time in the slot, and he teed it up for me."

"That was a tough one for them (to give up)," Arniel said. "And a big one for us."

Kupari scored an empty-net goal at 18:15 of the third period, his fourth of the season.