

Daily Faceoff

<https://www.dailyfaceoff.com/news/in-an-era-of-inconsistent-goaltending-winnipeg-jets-connor-hellebuyck-stands-alone>

In an era of inconsistent goaltending, Connor Hellebuyck stands alone

By Paul Pidutti

Take a moment and think of the NHL's best goaltenders.

You know, the ones whose teams pencil their guy in for 55 starts every year. Durable. Consistent. A true Number One. The goalies whose coaches rarely think about the position.

How many names came to mind?

Three? Five, maybe? Seven, if you were generous? But then you remembered those ugly few months of sketchy play or that lingering injury that still panics the fan base.

Goaltenders have never been better than right now. Bigger. Faster. More technically sound. More explosive. Stellar at handling the puck. Yet, despite the size and skill of the league's masked men, few NHL teams today boast consistently reliable goaltending. And then there's the Winnipeg Jets.

The NHL's Best Goaltenders

The NHL's biggest stars are typically its top scorers. Goals are always in style. But hockey's steadiest goalies hold a unique and revered place in the game's hierarchy. Plante, Sawchuk, and Hall in the Original Six. Dryden, Esposito, and Parent in the post-expansion world. Smith and Fuhr of the 1980s dynasties. Roy, Brodeur, and Hasek at the turn of the century. Luongo and Lundqvist in the post-lockout era.

Whom can you count on in the NHL today?

It's hard to appreciate greatness in your own time. League-wide save percentage has declined. Trends are moving toward splitting the starter's crease. There's been an uptick in scoring the last decade. It's certainly possible that this won't be remembered as a golden era for the position.

The chart below shows all goaltenders who meet two modest criteria over the last six seasons: 1. Played 100 games; and 2. Saved 10 or more goals above expected.

Goals saved above expected (GSAX) measures exactly what it sounds like. It counts how many goals a goaltender saves (or allows) compared to how many goals are expected to be scored on the specific shots they face. A GSAX of zero equates to average performance. We're using MoneyPuck.com's version, which factors each shot's distance from the net, its angle, type, and pre-shot activity.

It's a short list. After all, only so many goaltenders can be above average.

Yes, you're reading that right. Hellebuyck has saved 161 goals above expected over the last six seasons. Just look at the ebbs and flows of his fellow goalie union members. Hellebuyck hasn't

had a season with fewer than 20 goals saved above expected in six years. When we compare his play against his peers', a seismic gap emerges. Runner-up Igor Shesterkin is a shocking 62 goals behind the Jets' workhorse.

The Inconsistent Generation

The 31-year-old Hellebuyck's play has ensured many unspectacular Winnipeg rosters have been competitive. But it's not just his GSAX total that sizzles. Hellebuyck's brilliance is amplified by the fact he's had no down years or missed any notable stretch of time with injury. In the last six seasons, he's played in 78% of Jets' games. It's an absurd figure in an NHL where #1 goaltenders average 49 appearances, or roughly 60% of the schedule.

How does the current generation compare to Hellebuyck in providing consistently elite play?

Igor Shesterkin: When he's in the zone, Shesterkin is a weapon. A cheat code. A right bower in euchre. He's earned Vezina votes the last three seasons, winning in 2021-22, and capped each with excellent post-season play. Yet, Rangers fan can tell you there are times where Shesterkin gets lost and needs his modem reset. His 3-11-0 stretch earlier this season was hardly all on his shoulders, but it nearly sunk the Rangers.

Andrei Vasilevskiy: The Big Cat could retire today at 30 and rightfully earn serious Hall of Fame consideration. He's led the Lightning to three Cup Finals, winning two, including a Conn Smythe Trophy. Yet, it's certainly possible his last great season was at 28. Since his back operation, Vasilevskiy 2.0 has not looked like the original. Far from concerning, but also far from dominant.

Juuse Saros: Saros led the NHL in appearances the past three seasons — and it's starting to show. He's been Hellebuyck Lite — not just in stature but in carrying flawed teams that outpunch their weight. With a GSAX below average last season (-6) and a similar pace this season (-3), it's possible Juice has been oversqueezed.

Beyond Hellebuyck's three steadiest contemporaries is the field...

Sergei Bobrovsky? Bob's claim to fame is dominant runs checkered with inconsistency — his career is a split of great, average, and mediocre seasons... Linus Ullmark? Ilya Sorokin? Logan Thompson? GSAX tells us each has had only one special season... Frederik Andersen? Thatcher Demko? Often good when they play, but staying in the lineup remains elusive... Darcy Kuemper? Jacob Markstrom? Fine goaltending specimens, but they haven't combined to play on nine franchises because of their reliability... Jordan Binnington? He's not even on the above list, only preventing goals near league-average... Jeremy Swayman? His first season as a true #1 has been rocky... Jake Oettinger? Adin Hill? Neither's had a season with 10 GSAX yet.

Vezina Voting

If the season ended today, Hellebuyck would almost certainly get all 32 first-place Vezina votes from the league's general managers. Daily Faceoff's mid-season vote was a sweep. His season could end tomorrow and he'd still be a strong candidate after 40 starts.

But prepare to have your mind blown when it comes to Hellebuyck's career share of the Vezina. Now, NHL GMs are hardly the shrewdest voters — they've famously gushed over wins and game totals in their habits. But the Vezina vote plays a meaningful role in how goalies are perceived and form a key part of their legacy.

The Vezina Trophy was first voted on in 1981-82. Previously, it was awarded to the goaltender(s) on the team with the fewest goals allowed. In 43 years of voting, Hellebuyck is already fourth in Vezina share. Behind only Brodeur, Hasek, and Roy. Name a better goalie trio.

Let's assume Hellebuyck gets 90% of the voting points this year. He'd move up to 3.5 shares, distancing himself from the pack and all but assuring he'll retire #4 in award shares. It would also put him a couple of great seasons from Patrick Roy territory. A third Vezina would usurp two-time winners Belfour, Bobrovsky, and Tim Thomas in the voting era. He'd be looking up at only Hasek (six) and Brodeur (four), who won their last Vezinas at 36 and 35 years old, respectively.

With or Without Hellebuyck

While GM Kevin Cheveldayoff may not listen to Bono's heartfelt anthem when Hellebuyck dons a baseball cap every fourth game, he should lower his expectations at this point.

In the nine seasons Hellebuyck has been their starter, the Jets are two different franchises. Winnipeg morphs from a 102-point outfit with him into an 89-point team without him. That's the difference between Cup contender and being outside the playoff picture. And the Jets' haven't employed duds in the role — longtime understudy Laurent Brossoit was excellent for years. While backups often get the second half of back-to-backs, they're regularly slotted against bottom feeders where possible.

Closing Thoughts

When you peel back the layers, there's no shortage of NHL goaltending talent. It's an exceptional group in the blue paint right now. But how many teams feel great about their goaltending for a month straight? Or a full season? Hellebuyck is approaching a decade of outstanding and dependable play.

He has work to do when it counts most — the playoffs. While Hellebuyck's overall postseason body of work is more average than abysmal, he hasn't taken the Jets on his back in the spring since 2018. Vasilevskiy and Shesterkin have consistently elevated their games in the post-season. Bobrovsky struggled for years but selectively found a gear to make two Cup Finals, winning one, in his mid-30s. Hellebuyck is signed through 2031 in Winnipeg, and playoff success is surely atop his hockey bucket list.

Amidst a Jets' season oozing good vibes, Hellebuyck's performance at the 4 Nations Face-Off and in the postseason will be worth watching. But regardless of his team success or failure ahead, Hellebuyck is this era's most consistently dominant goalie. He's the rarest of finds in the NHL's goaltending collection. One of one.

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6095155/2025/01/30/winnipeg-jets-trade-targets-forwards/>

Winnipeg Jets trade targets: Which top forwards would be that elusive perfect fit?

By Murat Ates

Kevin Cheveldayoff made it clear to us last week that his trade conversations are still in their earliest stages.

“Right now there’s still a lot of dancing going around, a lot of conversations that are (still) at 30,000 feet,” Cheveldayoff said. “Everyone might have these guys out there in trade rumours or trade talks and stuff like that, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that’s what’s happening behind the scenes on the phone calls. Some teams might extend some players, some teams might decide to keep their own rentals because that’s where they’re at.”

Then Mikko Rantanen was traded to Carolina in a three-team blockbuster. Hurricanes GM Eric Tulsy followed that up by telling Pierre LeBrun he’s going right back to his phone to look for more deals, while Avalanche GM Chris MacFarland seeks to use some of the cap space Rantanen left behind.

All of this stokes the fires of more trade speculation. It’s open season now — a perfect mix of too soon for the market to have crystallized, while following on the heels of a spectacular trade. It gives us the leeway to talk about all of the biggest names rumoured to be available — and how they might fit in Winnipeg.

We’re focusing on the NHL’s top forwards in today’s piece. What would J.T. Miller, Elias Pettersson — or a third Canuck, with closer ties to the Jets organization — look like on Winnipeg’s roster? What about Brock Nelson or Ryan O’Reilly?

And who is the Jets’ best bet to replicate Paul Stastny’s massive impact during Winnipeg’s deepest playoff run?

J.T. Miller, C, Canucks

Age: 31

Contract: \$8 million cap hit, full no-movement clause, UFA 2030

Usage: Second line at five-on-five, first-unit power play, third-unit penalty kill

Production: 9 goals, 25 assists, 34 points in 39 games played

Canucks president of hockey operations Jim Rutherford has spoken openly about needing a new plan, admitting to *The Globe and Mail* that Miller and Pettersson are at the heart of Vancouver’s problems.

On the ice, Miller’s a great hockey player whose standard production rate is a point-per-game. He hit 103 points last season, still has 34 points in 39 games in this disappointing follow-up and is a force when he’s at his best: tough to play against, an elite faceoff man and a driver of play. Harman Dayal has written that Miller oscillates between hard-nosed, dominant force and something much less than that, even when he’s scoring points.

The assumption in discussing Miller to Winnipeg is that playing for a Cup contender would awaken the beast mode. The best-case outcome would see him take over Winnipeg’s second line, getting to the tough areas of the ice and helping Nikolaj Ehlers and Cole Perfetti produce playoff points. It would involve none of the off-ice conflicts that made headlines during Miller’s Canucks career. And it would see the 31-year-old Miller keep playing his hard-nosed game through the duration of a contract that pays him \$8 million for five seasons after this one. If it all worked out, Winnipeg would have the pieces to stay dominant while Connor Hellebuyck and Mark Scheifele are still at the height of their powers.

It’s also a big bet — one that would come at a considerable cost, according to Dayal and Shayna Goldman. Winnipeg could afford the cap hit; the Jets are also uniquely positioned to afford to pay a first-round pick, a middle-of-the-lineup NHL forward and a younger player. That’s

just a lot to give for a player whose intensity sometimes seems like a double-edged sword. Would you trade Cole Perfetti, Alex Lafallo, a first-round pick and a prospect for your memory of Blake Wheeler?

Remember, the worst-case scenario is a locker room problem with a full no-move clause who ages out of effectiveness and takes up a hefty chunk of cap space through 2029-30.

Brock Nelson, C, Islanders

Age: 33

Contract: \$6 million cap hit, 16-team no-trade list, UFA 2025

Usage: First line at five-on-five, first-unit power play, second-unit penalty kill

Production: 15 goals, 17 assists, 32 points in 49 games played

Nelson strikes me as an ideal stylistic fit for Winnipeg, matching speed and scoring with size and faceoff success. I think he'd perform really well on a sheltered second line with Ehlers and Perfetti and have written at length to that effect.

The problem — at least for the moment — is that no one told the Islanders they're supposed to be sellers. They're 8-2-0 in their last 10 games, four points back of a wild-card spot and have a game in hand over every team between themselves and Tampa Bay. Maybe Ilya Sorokin cools off, maybe the goals dry up, but until they do Nelson is a 6-foot-4, goal-scoring speedster who will help the Islanders make their playoff push.

Ryan O'Reilly, C, Predators

Age: 33

Contract: \$4.5 million cap hit, UFA 2027

Usage: Second line at five-on-five, first-unit power play, third-unit penalty kill

Production: 14 goals, 14 assists, 28 points in 45 games played

O'Reilly is the closest thing to a 2018 Stastny on our trade board. He's a veteran with great faceoff results and an elite two-way resume; Stastny was the same. O'Reilly is scoring at a 51-point pace; Stastny was scoring at a 52-point pace. O'Reilly plays a key role for a team that's underperforming; Stastny was available partly because the Jets beat St. Louis on the Friday before the 2018 deadline. Winnipeg could help end the Predators' playoff hopes for good when they play in Nashville on Feb. 27, potentially ensuring O'Reilly's availability.

O'Reilly is about to turn 34, mind you — Stastny was 32 when Winnipeg acquired him. He's still thought to have top-line impact, helping the Predators dramatically outpace their opponents despite playing tough opponents at five-on-five, and check this out: O'Reilly's 2.0 points per 60 minutes at five-on-five would land him third among Jets scorers, behind only Ehlers and Kyle Connor. His usage has changed and his power-play impact has dropped but O'Reilly can still score.

He's also won a Stanley Cup (and a Conn Smythe Trophy along the way) which would make him unique on that front in Winnipeg. He has two more years left on his contract after this one — a perk whether you're Nashville thinking about keeping him or Winnipeg making your pitch to acquire him.

Dylan Cozens, C, Sabres

Age: 23

Contract: \$7.1 million cap hit, UFA 2030

Usage: Second line at five-on-five, second-unit power play, third-unit penalty kill
Production: 10 goals, 16 assists, 26 points in 50 games played

I don't understand this one. If I'm Buffalo, I might have some regret paying for Cozens' percentage-driven offensive explosion in 2022-23 but he's still a good, young player. His \$7.1 million cap hit comes with sticker shock but Cozens is young, the cap is going up and it would be very easy for Buffalo to wait a couple more years for Cozens to grow into his contract.

For what it's worth, Cozens doesn't have trade protection — yet. A five-team no-trade clause kicks in starting 2027-28.

Yanni Gourde, C, Kraken

Age: 33

Contract: \$5.167 million cap hit, 23-team no-trade list, UFA 2025

Usage: Second line at five-on-five, second-unit penalty kill

Production: 6 goals, 10 assists, 16 points in 35 games played

Gourde won back-to-back Stanley Cups with Tampa Bay in 2020 and 2021 before being taken by Seattle in the expansion draft. He's been a versatile middle-of-the-lineup player for the Kraken since that time but has struggled with injuries this season. Gourde recently skated in a non-contact jersey after missing most of January with a lower-body injury.

The upshot of a Gourde acquisition is that he's fast, feisty and an excellent penalty killer with strong underlying numbers at even strength. His 23-team no-trade clause would be a barrier, while his AAV seems more like a reason the acquisition cost should be affordable than a problem in and of itself.

Trent Frederic, C/LW, Bruins

Age: 26

Contract: \$2.3 million cap hit, UFA 2025

Usage: Third line at five-on-five, occasional penalty kill

Production: 7 goals, 7 assists, 14 points in 50 games played

Frederic is best known in Winnipeg for knocking David Gustafsson out in a fight that never should have been offered. Frederic's fight card is extensive; Gustafsson's consists of that single abbreviated fight. If the Jets want to add that element — perhaps alleviating their concerns about taking Logan Stanley out of the lineup — then Frederic is a big, capable, affordable third-line player they might look into. He also skates well enough to fit into Winnipeg's forecheck, making him more useful before the whistle is blown than many of the alternatives.

Jean-Gabriel Pageau, C, Islanders

Age: 32

Contract: \$5 million cap hit, 16-team no-trade list, UFA 2026

Usage: Third line at five-on-five, second-unit power play, first-unit penalty kill

Production: 9 goals, 15 assists, 24 points in 46 games played

Pageau strikes me as a prototypical Islanders player: underrated outside of his market, shy on offence and annoying to play against. He hasn't been as effective on special teams this year as through most of his career, but Pageau is what most teams tend to get from the Adam Lowry spot in their lineup.

The Jets get more than most teams do, though — part of what makes Winnipeg's depth a formidable asset — which makes Pageau a thought worth exploring only if Winnipeg decides to keep the Lowry-Ehlers duo intact when Lowry returns from injury. I'm not sure that's in the cards.

Pageau comes with one more year on his contract after this one but has a 16-team no-trade clause.

Scott Laughton, C, Flyers

Age: 30

Contract: \$3 million cap hit, UFA 2026

Usage: Third line at five-on-five, first-unit penalty kill

Production: 10 goals, 15 assists, 25 points in 48 games played

Laughton has one more year left on his contract and has a more productive scoring resume than Pageau does. Laughton is a versatile player on the ice and glue guy off of it in Philadelphia, making him a desirable acquisition for many teams — and an important player for Philadelphia to keep.

If the Jets were to acquire Laughton, he might not be a substantial upgrade to Vladislav Namestnikov at centre so much as another helpful, versatile bottom-six option.

Brandon Tanev, LW, Kraken

Age: 33

Contract: \$3.5 million cap hit, 10-team no-trade list, UFA 2025

Usage: Fourth line at five-on-five, first-unit penalty kill

Production: 8 goals, 7 assists, 15 points in 50 games played

It's hard for me to see the Jets sending someone from their typical fourth line of Morgan Barron, Rasmus Kupari and Alex Lafallo to the press box for kicks. They'd need a meaningful upgrade somewhere else in the lineup to justify that — especially now that Gustafsson is getting into games and showing he can help too.

That said, there are fond remembrances of Tanev's tenacity in Winnipeg. He's still fleet of foot and still receives substantial penalty-killing duties. Note that Seattle balances its minutes more than the Jets do; Tanev's fourth-line deployment gives him at least two more minutes per game than anyone on Winnipeg's fourth line. He's scored more than Barron or Kupari have but they've beaten his considerable top speed — and have more impact as forecheckers, too.

Brock Boeser, RW, Canucks

Age: 27

Contract: \$6.65 million cap hit, 10-team no-trade list, UFA 2025

Usage: First line at five-on-five, first-unit power play

Production: 16 goals, 17 assists, 33 points in 42 games played

Winnipeg liked Boeser a lot at the 2015 draft. Had he not come off the board at No. 23 to Vancouver, the Jets would almost certainly have selected Boeser with the No. 25 pick they used on Jack Roslovic. Winnipeg even considered Boeser at No. 17 — the pick they used on Kyle Connor, one of only eight players from that draft class with more points (548) than Boeser's 417.

It makes loads of sense to me that the Jets would still be interested in Boeser, whether on the trade market right now or as an unrestricted free agent this summer. I don't view his no-trade list as a concern, either, given my understanding of Boeser's relationships with Jets management.

The obvious spot for Boeser to fit would be at second-line right wing. If he were to be acquired for draft capital, that could put Perfetti between Ehlers and Boeser on a scoring line. It's also possible Namestnikov will keep that job while Perfetti gets demoted, although I don't expect Scott Arniel to be of the same mindset that Rick Bowness was a year ago when Perfetti dressed for only one playoff game.

One concern? Boeser has never driven play at even strength, despite his considerable goal-scoring prowess. That concern is easy to mitigate — Winnipeg could keep him on Ehlers' sheltered secondary scoring line, while adding him to the second power-play unit — but it limits Boeser's versatility.

Kyle Palmieri, RW, Islanders

Age: 33

Contract: \$5 million cap hit, 16-team no-trade list, UFA 2025

Usage: Second line at five-on-five, first-unit power play, second-unit penalty kill

Production: 12 goals, 20 assists, 32 points in 49 games played

Palmieri is a feisty 5-foot-11 right wing who goes to the net hard and gets plenty of shots from dangerous areas. He used to score 20 goals per season like clockwork, is on pace to repeat that feat this year, and hit 30 as recently as last season. All of that is easy to like, despite the \$5 million contract, his rental status and his 16-team no-trade clause.

A bigger concern might be that Palmieri doesn't particularly control the flow of play. I don't expect that a worse version of Tyler Toffoli will be on Winnipeg's shopping list — even if the Islanders do become sellers.

Mikael Granlund, C/LW, Sharks

Age: 32

Contract: \$5 million cap hit, UFA 2025

Usage: Second line at five-on-five, first-unit power play, first-unit penalty kill

Production: 15 goals, 29 assists, 44 points in 51 games played

Granlund's second-line usage in San Jose sees him hit the ice more often than Miller or Boeser do in Vancouver. His power-play role attaches him to Macklin Celebrini, while his special teams usage helps Granlund lead all Sharks forwards in total ice time per game. On one hand, he's clearly versatile; on the other, it's more than fair to question his ability to replicate his offensive results in Winnipeg.

I'm not sure if the Jets remember Granlund fondly — or the right type of not-so-fondly — from his decade-plus in the Central Division, but he could be a middle-six upgrade with versatility to his game.

Elias Pettersson, C, Canucks

Age: 26

Contract: \$11.6 million cap hit, UFA 2032

Usage: First line at five-on-five, first-unit power play, third-unit penalty kill

Production: 11 goals, 20 assists, 31 points in 43 games played

My expectation is that Vancouver will trade the veteran Miller and keep the 26-year-old Pettersson, who is signed until he's 33. It makes the most sense from a team-building perspective, with Pettersson closer to Quinn Hughes' age and still capable of elite offensive production.

That said, those are exactly the same reasons why opposing teams should be willing to give Vancouver more for Pettersson than for Miller. Elliotte Friedman reported Vancouver was close to moving Pettersson to Carolina prior to the Rantanen blockbuster.

Do the Jets have a Martin Necas and Jack Drury-type package to send the Canucks? Could they offer something similar to what Buffalo got for Jack Eichel — a first-round pick, a scoring winger (Alex Tuch) and a quality prospect (Peyton Krebs?) I think Ehlers, Brad Lambert and a first-round pick could get in the ballpark and still fall short — especially with Ehlers as a pending UFA.

Pettersson's contract would blow up the Jets' salary hierarchy. I don't think that matters — Kyle Connor will do the same if they retain him in 2026 — but the Jets might not agree with me there. Pettersson was well worth the big ticket when he scored 102 points two years ago and when he hit 89 points last year. At full health, he could be one of the NHL's top players for the next several seasons, giving the Jets an elite centre duo and a succession plan beyond the heart of Scheifele's career.

If there's reason to believe he can get back to his 90-100 point, play-driving, defensively responsible peak, Winnipeg should join the lengthy list of Pettersson suitors.

If you ask me, O'Reilly is the ideal fit, Nelson would be a tremendous addition if the Islanders moved him, and Boeser makes sense to consider. Miller at his best is a phenomenal player but his contract scares me. And Pettersson's offensive drop-off remains a mystery to me — a mystery I'd bet on if he's healthy, given his age and elite ceiling.

Who's on your wish list?

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/injury-bug-bites-another-jets-forward>

Injury bug bites another Jets forward

By Paul Friesen

It seems the injuries that finally stopped depleting the Winnipeg Jets blue line have taken another forward.

Morgan Barron has joined captain Adam Lowry on injured reserve, taking him out of the lineup for Thursday's game in Boston.

The fourth-liner recorded 12:10 of ice time on 15 shifts in Tuesday's 4-1 win in Montreal. He's played all 52 games this season, registering five goals and three assists, with an average 10:27 of ice time.

Lowry remains on the shelf for a fourth straight game.

The Jets could insert prospect Brad Lambert against the Bruins, as he was a healthy scratch in Montreal, or call up another player from their AHL farm team and dress him.

They'll likely call one up as insurance even if they don't play immediately play him.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/jets-notes-no-power-no-problem-coming-off-a-season-first-as-they-head-into-boston>

JETS NOTES: No power, no problem, coming off a season first as they head into Boston

By Paul Friesen

Some say what separates the Winnipeg Jets from most of the other good teams in the NHL is their power play.

It was clicking at a historic, 33.3 percent clip going into their current road trip, a big part of why the Jets sit on top of the NHL's Western Conference.

Tuesday in Montreal, that power play misfired like it hadn't in two months, going 0-for-3.

Only three other times all season have the Jets had at least that many power plays and failed to make the other team pay: Nov. 29 in Vegas (0-for-3), six days earlier in Nashville (0-for-3) and Nov. 14 in Tampa (0-for-5).

The Jets lost all three of those games.

So Tuesday was a season first, as they beat the Habs, 4-1.

It's just the latest chapter of a lesson the Jets have been learning of late: they can't always count on their power play to bail them out.

The last couple of weeks it's usually been because they hardly get any.

On Tuesday they had three more than their opponent, just the second time all season Winnipeg hasn't been shorthanded even once.

Those things tend to be more even in the playoffs, when in general the refs let a little more go.

After the win in Montreal head coach Scott Arniel wasn't even asked about his team's play with the extra man. It's been so dependable, he probably won't lose a wink of sleep over it going into Thursday's game in Boston.

Barron joins injured list

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Picking nits

His team may have won its fourth straight, but, coaches being coaches, there were things in Tuesday's game for Arniel to pick nits off of.

Leaving goalie Connor Hellebuyck out to dry a few too many times while nursing a 3-1 lead in the third period, for instance.

"Yeah, we don't ever want to do that," Arniel said, post-game. "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. Those are really us taking our foot off the gas and not doing what we should have been doing."

Hellebuyck didn't buckle and the Jets slipped out of town with the two points.

Their slow start also stuck in the coach's craw.

"We just had to make sure that we got to Jet hockey sooner than later," he said. "We finally did."

The Jets next face a Boston team coming off a 7-2 embarrassment at the hands of lowly Buffalo.

The stiffest test of this trip, though, comes in Washington two nights later, a clash of the top teams in each conference, both with 73 points – the Capitals accumulating them in two fewer games than the Jets have.

Long memories

I'll admit, at first I wasn't sure why Montreal fans were booing Mark Scheifele every time he got within sniffing distance of the puck on Tuesday.

Then I remembered: Scheifele's dirty playoff hit from FOUR YEARS AGO. It has to be the only NHL barn where No. 55 gets that kind of reception.

Turns out he got a kick out of it.

"Once in a while if there's no pressure on you, you hear it a little bit and you laugh a little bit," he said.

I guess feelings die hard in Montreal. Tuesday marked Scheifele's third visit since the incident.

Big, bad Bruin

The last time the Jets squared off with the Bruins, they delivered an 8-1 beat-down in Winnipeg back in December, the game in which Boston's Trent Frederic knocked Jets forward David Gustafsson out cold.

If the Jets have held onto that grudge, and with captain Adam Lowry out with an injury, the most likely person to cozy up to Frederic is defenceman Logan Stanley.

Emotions aside, Winnipeg is the clear favourite in this one.

The Bruins (25-21-6) are one of the lower scoring teams in the league, with bad special teams – a power play ranked 30th, penalty kill 25th – and a goal differential of minus-25, better only than Pittsburgh in the conference.

They should get a boost on the blue line with the expected return of defenceman Charlie McAvoy on Thursday.

Boston went 5-2-1 without their top D-man, but Tuesday's flop in Buffalo was just the latest example of a team that's been up and down all year, already costing one head coach (Jim Montgomery) his job.

They might be tied for third in their division, but they don't exactly have a tight grip on a playoff berth and could easily be outside of the wildcard spots in the East if they don't pick it up.

Dressed to the nines

A win over the Bruins would continue the Jets streak of nine wins every month this season.

Their record by month so far: 9-1 in October, 9-5 in November, 9-5-1 in December, 8-3-2 in January.

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/01/29/season-long-success-proves-jets-are-a-legitimate-contender>

Season-long success proves Jets are a legitimate contender

By: Ken Wiebe

BOSTON — They're not quite ready to present their case, but the evidence is mounting for the Winnipeg Jets.

When it comes to assessing things with 30 games left in the regular season, it's becoming easier to identify why this edition has staying power as a legitimate contender.

As the Jets prepare to face the Boston Bruins on Thursday at TD Garden, they sport a record of 35-14-3, which leaves them tied with the Washington Capitals for top spot in the NHL.

Since the Capitals hold two games in hand, they hold the edge in the chase for the Presidents' Trophy by virtue of points percentage, but there's plenty of time for that to be resolved.

Besides, the Jets are more interested in raising a different banner than the one awarded for regular-season success.

There will be ample time to figure if the Jets can exorcise their playoff demons, so let's take a closer look at how Winnipeg has become one of the teams to beat in the West.

By virtue of a historic 15-1 start, the Jets put themselves in position to enjoy breathing room that is extremely rare.

Things were clicking on all cylinders and expectations were on the rise.

The combination of coming back to earth and letting the standard slip — even if ever so slightly — left the Jets with a 3-7 record during those next 10 outings.

Cause for concern?

Not exactly, but the caution flag was up and it was up to the Jets to get back to doing what they do best.

There was always going to be a course correction coming, the key for the Jets was to see if they could push through the most difficult portion of the schedule and come out of that in relatively good shape.

Any concern a swoon was on the horizon or if the league had figured out how to neutralize the Jets attack has been quieted by a stretch of 17-6-3 since Dec. 4.

Rocking a winning percentage of .711 is tough to do, especially when the games are being more closely-contested.

That leaves the Jets with a .702 winning percentage for the campaign, a number that is only eclipsed by the Capitals (.730), who will be the Jets opponent on Saturday as this road trip concludes.

The level rises once the calendar flips and more will be required when March arrives.

However, there are plenty of reasons to believe the Jets should keep themselves in the mix, first and foremost, to sit atop the Central Division — where they currently hold an eight-point cushion over the Dallas Stars (who hold two games in hand but just lost top blue-liner Miro Heiskanen to a knee injury).

The willingness to commit to the structure is at the foundation of the Jets' success and that is in lockstep with the brilliance of goalie Connor Hellebuyck.

The combination of those things has the Jets sitting fourth in goals against so far.

Hellebuyck continues to make a case for Hart Trophy consideration, as the sheer numbers (40 starts, 31 wins, a 2.00 goals-against average and six shutouts) continue to leave many observers simply shaking their heads.

In 15 of those 40 starts, Hellebuyck has allowed zero or one goal against, in 11 others, he's given up two.

The Jets have one of the most prolific top lines in the NHL — with only Leon Draisaitl having more goals this season than Kyle Connor and Mark Scheifele (29) — and Gabe Vilardi on pace to shatter his career-best (23) with 22 already notched.

Winnipeg has the top-ranked power play in the NHL, with an efficiency rating of 32.6 per cent, and that weapon has come in handy on numerous occasions this season.

Thanks to a recent surge, the Jets have moved back to the middle of the pack on the penalty kill (79.1 per cent), tied for 16th overall with the Florida Panthers.

Nikolaj Ehlers is having a tremendous season, averaging more than a point per game (45 in 43 games) and Josh Morrissey has himself firmly in the discussion for the Norris Trophy.

The Jets have shown their resourcefulness in playing without defenceman Dylan Samberg (for 23 games) and Ehlers (nine games) and have put together a four-game winning streak with captain Adam Lowry on the shelf and expected to remain there until after the 4 Nations Face-Off next month.

The Jets lead the league in goals with 184, which also means the supporting cast has been doing its part to chip in.

Once again, the numbers back that up as the Jets have three guys north of 20 goals and seven already in double digits, with Vladislav Namestnikov knocking on the door with nine.

According to NHL Edge stats, the Jets shooting percentage (12.5 per cent) is a full two points above the league average, and they've done an excellent job of burying high-danger chances, scoring 91 of their goals from the spot that is most dangerous on the ice.

Samberg's value has been evident all season long, with his ability to move up and excel in top-four minutes — and also during his extended absence with a broken foot.

He's a key cog on the penalty kill and his D-partner from his hometown of Hermantown, Minn., Neal Pionk, is having a great season beside him.

Dylan DeMelo remains a steadying force for Morrissey and has chipped in four assists during the past five games to get into an offensive groove.

The heaviest of the lifting is yet to come and there are certainly areas that require further improvement, as the search for cohesion on the second line and the competition for playing time on the third defensive pair is a work in progress.

The expectation is that Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff is going to provide some additional reinforcements via trade before the March 7 deadline arrives, which means there will be an adaptation of roles and new bodies to integrate into a winning formula.

Until that occurs, the Jets figure to keep striving to be better as they attack what is on the horizon.

“We’ll see what happens in April once we get there,” Jets head coach Scott Arniel said Tuesday morning. “This is all about building a brand and building a way we want to play consistently, so that when we know we hit those playoffs, we know what’s going to help us have success.”

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/01/29/jets-put-barron-on-injured-reserve>

Jets put Barron on injured reserve

By: Ken Wiebe

BOSTON — Morgan Barron is the latest Winnipeg Jets player to be bitten by the injury bug.

The Winnipeg Jets forward was placed on injured reserve on Wednesday, according to Puck Pedia.

That would leave the Jets with only 12 healthy forwards, so it probably wasn’t a coincidence Parker Ford was scratched from the Manitoba Moose on Wednesday night.

An official recall of a forward isn’t expected until Thursday morning, since the Jets had already recalled Brad Lambert for the three-game road trip.

Ford, 24, is an energetic winger who was signed by the Jets to a two-year, entry-level contract in March of 2023 after finishing his four-year career with the Providence College Friars of the NCAA.

Ford, who was the co-captain of the Friars during his senior season, turned heads at his first NHL training camp in the fall of 2023 and was one of the last forwards cut by the Jets.

He has seven goals in his past nine American Hockey League games and is up to 11 goals and 17 points in 36 games this season.

Although he was recalled by the Jets for the final game of the 2023-24 campaign, Ford has yet to make his NHL debut and as someone who hails from Rhode Island, having an opportunity to suit up against the Boston Bruins on Thursday would certainly have special meaning for him and his family.

Ford, who shoots right-handed, had 18 goals and 41 points in 72 AHL games as a rookie pro last season.

The timing of the undisclosed injury is unfortunate for Barron, who was playing some of his best hockey of the season.

Barron, who played his college hockey at Cornell, has five goals and eight points in 52 games this season and is doing a solid job on both the fourth line and the penalty kill.

The Jets are already without captain Adam Lowry, who has missed the past four games with an upper-body injury and isn’t expected to return to the lineup until after the 4 Nations Face-Off in late February.