

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/01/08/kasdorf-gets-the-call>

Kasdorf gets the call

Originally drafted by Jets in 2011, construction company owner fills in as club's practice goalie

By: Mike McIntyre

It's a good thing Jason Kasdorf has an understanding boss. After all, the Winnipegger wasn't able to make it into work on Wednesday with barely any advance warning, following a pattern that will repeat itself at least a couple dozen more times this year.

Slacker? Not exactly.

Instead, the 32-year-old construction company owner dusted off his hockey equipment and hit the ice with a handful of members of the Winnipeg Jets who participated in an optional skate at Canada Life Centre.

Such is life as the team's unofficial "practice goalie," who can go from laying a foundation of a new house to fending off a Kyle Connor one-timer in the blink of an eye.

"I just wait for the Jets logo in the sky. Then I know," Kasdorf joked about being called into action in the same manner as the Bat Signal would notify Batman.

In reality, it's a simple phone call or text from Jets goalie coach Wade Flaherty, such as the one that came in late Tuesday night shortly after Connor Hellebuyck had become just the 30th netminder in NHL history to record at least 300 wins along with 40 shutouts following a 5-2 victory over the Nashville Predators.

Without a game until Friday and 33 starts already under his belt, the two-time Vezina Trophy winner wasn't going to practice. So Kasdorf, as he's been doing on occasion for the past five years, took Hellebuyck's spot.

"The first couple skates of the season are always a little bit tough, just because I haven't skated for four months. But then after a couple skates, I start to feel pretty good," Kasdorf told the Free Press.

"Flats is always giving me tips, which is good. You've got the best goalie coach in the world and the best goalie in the world, so it's pretty cool to be around those guys and having them give you advice and pointers. Because I always say to Flats, if there's anything you see, let me know. I want to keep getting better for the guys to shoot on, right."

Kasdorf is a lot more than just your basic beer leaguer and much better than a human Shooter Tutor. He's a Jets draft pick, from the first class of the 2.0 era in 2011.

Mark Scheifele went in the first round, while Adam Lowry went in the third. Three more hopefuls heard their name called by general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff (Brennan Serville, Zach Yuen and Austen Brassard) before Kasdorf was announced in the sixth-round, 157th-overall.

It was a dream come true for the graduate of the Portage Terriers, who was heading to the Des Moines Buccaneers that fall to play in the USHL, which would be followed by four seasons of college hockey with the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Engineers.

Unfortunately for Kasdorf, he never got to suit up for his hometown club. Instead, his name will forever be linked with a blockbuster deal as he was sent to the Buffalo Sabres along with Evander Kane and Zach Bogosian in exchange for Tyler Myers, Drew Stafford, Joel Armia, Brendan Lemieux and a first-round draft pick that turned into Jack Roslovic.

“At the end of the day the goal was to play in the NHL regardless of where that is,” Kasdorf said of the surprising swap.

“Obviously Winnipeg is special to me. It’s where I’m from, the team that drafted me, all the staff here are so awesome. I have nothing but the highest praise for them.”

History shows he would make his big-league debut on April 8, 2016 as the Sabres hosted the Columbus Blue Jackets. He faced 30 shots that night, stopping 26, but got little offensive support in a 4-1 loss.

“It was pretty short notice. I found out the day before. My family flew out, a bunch of my cousins and friends. That was really special,” said Kasdorf.

His first NHL game would also be his last.

Kasdorf spent the next two years bouncing between the American Hockey League (the Rochester Americans) and the ECHL (Elmira Jackals and Cincinnati Cyclones) before hitting free agency and heading over to Germany for the 2018-19 season.

At the time, his wife was pregnant with their third daughter and Kasdorf could see the writing on the wall despite only being 26.

“Growing family, I kind of knew at that point I probably wouldn’t be able to make it back to North America to play here. That was kind of always the dream, to have an NHL career,” he recalled.

“I decided I would move on. I knew the NHL was a very unlikely option.”

Back on home soil, Kasdorf happened to cross paths with Flaherty during a Jets game in the 2019-20 season just before the global pandemic hit.

“He asked me what I was doing. He was like, ‘You know, Helly sometimes doesn’t skate, do you want to come out?’ I was like ‘Sure!’,” said Kasdorf.

“After that, I started getting asked more and more. Helly obviously plays a lot, so rest is essential for him. I come out, so guys aren’t shooting on an empty net on the one end. It works out really good.”

Kasdorf said it truly is a full-circle experience, especially with so many familiar faces still in the organization from players to management to trainers.

“First of all he’s a great person. One of the best human beings,” said current Jets backup goalie Eric Comrie, who is typically in the other net when Kasdorf is on the ice.

“And he’s still a really good goalie. We’re hoping another NHL team doesn’t come in and snatch him from us, because he stops everything, he’s stopping all the guys out there. He works so hard at our practices, comes in and takes shots non-stop. It’s very rare to have that as a practice goalie, a guy that can step in and take one-timers and everything and just doesn’t care.”

Kasdorf, who runs Bower Constructors, is also scratching his hockey itch this season by serving as the goaltender coach for the Terriers of the Manitoba Junior Hockey League, which involves attending one practice per week.

“It’s the same coaches I had when I played there. I thought it was kind of a good way to sort of give back and help the organization that helped me,” he said.

“Me and Wade (Flaherty) always talk, and I get some ideas from him, some drills, get some advice on certain situations.”

He also does play beer league type hockey once a week with family members and friends — but as a forward.

Kasdorf can’t serve as Winnipeg’s emergency goaltender during games because NHL rules prohibit anyone with professional experience. He regularly attends as a fan, albeit with a slightly more personal connection than most.

“I know all the guys, so there’s a little bit more behind it for me,” he said.

In that sense, he feels like part of an extended Jets family — one that is recognized by the fact he has his own locker-room stall, complete with name plate.

“I think it starts from the top down with Mark Chipman. I’ve felt from day one that he’s somebody that really cares about the people around him. He’s always made me feel valued and special,” said Kasdorf.

“You see him and he’s happy to see you. He’s such a good guy and I think that just trickles down through the organization. I have nothing the highest praise to sing about this organization. To be involved like this, it’s been special.”

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/2025/01/08/injury-not-expected-to-cause-morrissey-to-miss-significant-time>

Injury not expected to cause Morrissey to miss significant time

By: Ken Wiebe

Scott Arniel stepped to the podium and didn’t have to be the bearer of bad news, which was a positive development for the Winnipeg Jets.

The head coach of the Jets sounded cautiously optimistic that star defenceman Josh Morrissey wasn’t going to miss much — if any — time after leaving Tuesday’s game in the second period with a lower-body injury.

Arniel stopped short of proclaiming Morrissey would be in the lineup when the Jets hit the midway point of this eight-game homestand Friday against the Los Angeles Kings, though he confirmed that he hasn't already been ruled out.

"Feeling better. We'll see. Just kind of getting some movement going here," said Arniel. "So he'll get some more treatment here and we'll see how he is (on Thursday)."

Not having Morrissey available for a chunk of the second period and all of the third meant that minutes were on the rise for Dylan DeMelo (who played a team-high 25:27), Neal Pionk, Logan Stanley, Dylan Coghlan and Ville Heinola.

If the Jets are able to avoid losing Morrissey for any length of time, that would be a bonus, as he's someone that contributes to all facets of the game and averages more than 24 minutes per game while chipping in at nearly a point-per-game clip.

Dylan Samberg, who has been out since Nov. 23 with a broken foot, was a full participant in practice again on Wednesday and if he can make it through Thursday's workout without incident, there's the potential for him to be activated from injured reserve and return to the second pairing with Pionk.

Samberg's presence has certainly been missed since he suffered the injury blocking a one-timer from Nashville Predators forward Steven Stamkos.

"Well, his importance is huge," Jets assistant coach Dean Chynoweth said last week. "I like his hockey IQ. I mean, his anticipation as a defenceman, that's a really important thing. You combine that with the reach and the length that he has, that allows him to close quicker, that allows him to eliminate plays, and then obviously at the netfront, as a big body, it helps clearing the net for our goalies."

Provided Morrissey stays in the lineup and Samberg is back, the Jets will need to scratch one of Coghlan, Heinola or Stanley.

Complicating matters somewhat is the Jets are set for their fifth set of games on consecutive days this weekend, so it's possible that one of the two players could be held out until Saturday's tilt against the Colorado Avalanche.

The other side of the equation is if the players are close to 100 per cent and get medical clearance, you can be sure Arniel would love to have both of them at his disposal for a defence that will be without Colin Miller (fractured larynx) and Haydn Fleury (lower body).

Arniel also provided a quick update on the status of right-winger Mason Appleton, who has missed the past five games and remains week-to-week.

"Yeah, he's still getting there. He's still on the table. He hasn't done a whole lot. Obviously he hasn't been on the ice," said Arniel, noting Appleton is getting some work done in the weight room. He's still a ways away."

Although only eight skaters were on the ice for the optional on-ice workout, a number of players hit the weights hard — a product of having two days between games and two days off the ice earlier this week.

THE RECOGNITION: Nikolaj Ehlers has watched Connor Hellebuyck mature and grow a great deal during his decade in the NHL, so he was elated to see the Jets all-world goalie reach another impressive milestone in Tuesday's 5-2 victory over the Nashville Predators.

"It was awesome. Obviously, he's waited for that one for a little bit. What he does for this team, for this organization, what he's done so far, it's pretty special," said Ehlers. To be able to be in the room with him and to be on the ice when he got No. 300 is pretty cool for me as well.

"Obviously, he's done his work to get to where he is. I've been with him since he got into the league, so it's been a fun last nine, 10 years watching him as a goalie to just grow, grow and keep on growing and get to that superstar level that he's at now. He's the best goalie in the league and he's a special guy, so that's exciting."

Jets forward Morgan Barron appreciates the connection Hellebuyck has built with the fan base during his tenure.

"He very much embraces Winnipeg, and I think Winnipeg embraces him. That's really cool to see, the connection that such a great player has with such a great city," said Barron. "You can tell he loves it here, he's passionate about being here and passionate about being a Winnipeg Jet. You can see it night in and night out, you saw it (on Tuesday), he was real pumped up.

"I know we kind of let him down to get that 300th win for him a few times, but it was really cool for him to get it, especially in that fashion. He made some huge saves for us at the end there."

The Jets will honour Hellebuyck for hitting 500 games played, 300 wins and 40-plus shutouts prior to Friday's game against the Kings.

THE NOD: Top Jets' defence prospect Elias Salomonsson was selected to participate in the American Hockey League All-Star Classic on Wednesday.

Salomonsson, 20, remains out of action with a suspected shoulder injury, but had three goals and 12 points in 17 AHL games before he was sidelined.

The second-round pick (55th overall) of the Jets in the 2022 NHL Draft is the second rookie defenceman, and seventh rookie in Moose franchise history, to take part in the AHL All-Star Classic.

The 2025 AHL all-star game is being hosted at Acrisure Arena in Coachella Valley, Calif., on Feb. 2 and 3

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipegsun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/a-celly-for-helle-jets-goalie-connor-hellebuyck-better-than-ever>

A celly for Helle: Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck better than ever

By Paul Friesen

Big and boring. Calm. Makes its look easy.

Those are all words used to describe Winnipeg Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck over the years.

Teammate Nik Ehlers chose another on Wednesday: Superstar.

"I've been with him since he got into the league," Ehlers said. "So it's been a fun last nine, 10 years watching him as a goalie to just grow, grow and keep on growing and get to that superstar level that he's at now. He's the best goalie in the league and he's a special guy."

The night before, Hellebuyck had joined a club of 30 NHLers when he recorded his 300th regular-season win to go along with 500 games and 40 shutouts.

Of course, he hasn't joined the Stanley Cup champions club, yet.

But this week is about the milestone he's achieved, not the millstone that continues to weigh him and his team down because of its lack of playoff success.

After hitting the big 3-0-0 against Nashville on Tuesday, the 31-year-old acknowledged he'd been getting a little antsy for it, as his last two tries had come up empty.

That's how opposing shooters often come away from an encounter with the Michigan product. Even in practice.

It seems they don't come away in awe, though, of any particular facet of his game: A snake-like glove hand, an elastic set of legs that can stack the pads in an instant, or the mobility of an acrobat.

"What I see when I come down against Bucky is he's very calm," Ehlers said. "You don't see him panicking, even in chaos situations. He's in the net and ready to get that puck. That would be my No. 1 thing about Bucky, just him being calm in all situations."

He was pretty hyped after Tuesday's game, soaking in some adulation from the crowd, then absorbing some more from his teammates.

"Obviously, he's waited for that one for a little bit," Ehlers said. "To be able to be in the room with him and to be on the ice when he got No. 300 is pretty cool for me, as well. We celebrated him a little bit and he was feeling pretty good about it."

As for his game, he should be feeling really good about that.

Coming off his second Vezina Trophy as the NHL's top goalie, Hellebuyck is putting up even better numbers. Career-best numbers:

- His 25-6-2 record has him on pace to top the 44 wins he amassed in 2017-18.
- His 2.08 goals-against-average is his best yet, by far.
- His .926 saves percentage is his career-best, by a hair.
- His five shutouts are already just one shy of his career high of six, which he hit twice.

All those numbers top the league.

At this pace, it wouldn't be a surprise to see Hellebuyck nominated for, or even win, both the Vezina and Hart Trophies, the latter as the league's most valuable player.

"You've got to tip your hat to greatness," is how head coach Scott Arniel put it after Tuesday's game. "You always love to see it when guys want to be here and how the fans reciprocate that. These guys, they only come around every so often. And we've got him for a few more years, which is great."

The seven-year contract extension Hellebuyck signed last summer ensures he'll be frustrating opposing shooters here for a while.

Jets forward Morgan Barron gets a kick out of watching it.

"There are times we're playing the other team and you just hear guys saying, 'What is going on? This guy is unbelievable.' Just muttering to themselves on the ice," Barron said after the 5-2 win over Nashville.

It was Predators forward Filip Forsberg's 27th regular-season game against Hellebuyck, and the career 297-goal scorer beat him for just a fourth time.

"He's been probably their best player since he came into this league," Forsberg said. "They have a good system in front of him, too. It makes it somewhat easy. I wouldn't call it easy. He's obviously made some great saves. But the combination of those two obviously is a winning factor for these guys. He keeps showing up."

When Hellebuyck shows up at the rink for Friday's game against the Los Angeles Kings, he'll be in the spotlight before the game even starts, as the Jets honour his triple-crown of achievements – wins, games and shutouts – this season.

With his wife, two kids and father there, Jets owner Mark Chipman will present him with some gifts to mark the occasion.

And then the big, boring and calm goalie will get back to work on what would be the ultimate gift.

Good luck making that look easy.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/morrissey-question-mark-samberg-close>

Jets' Morrissey a question mark for Kings, but Samberg getting close

By Paul Friesen

Winnipeg Jets head coach Scott Arniel wasn't ready to rule star defenceman Josh Morrissey out of Friday's game against the L.A. Kings.

He wasn't ready to rule him in, either.

"Feeling better," Arniel said on Wednesday. "He'll get some more treatment here and we'll see how he is. We have to see if he can get through practice (Thursday)."

Morrissey left the Jets' game against the Nashville Predators on Tuesday after sliding into the goal post in the second period. He returned for one shift, but missed the rest of the game.

Ranking fourth among NHL defencemen with 38 points (five goals, 33 assists), Morrissey's absence would leave a big hole on the Winnipeg blue line.

Dylan Samberg, potentially, could try to help fill it.

After missing the last 21 games because of a broken foot, Samberg is on the cusp of returning.

"He's a possibility," Arniel said. "He'll be a part of that practice and we'll make a decision then."

Samberg and Neal Pionk made up the Jets' second defence pair before his injury, a combination Arniel says he would lean to again, assuming Morrissey plays.

SHORT-TERM PAIN, LONG-TERM GAIN

Arniel says that the Jets' 5-2 victory over Nashville on Tuesday was only a "bits and pieces" return to the team the Jets want to be.

His players agree.

"The first few shifts weren't good, but then we took over in the last 15 minutes," Nik Ehlers said. "And then we started giving up way too much in the second period again."

Seven minor penalties threw a bit of a wrench into the works.

The Jets had surprised the media and even some players by cancelling Monday's practice and taking two consecutive days with no ice time.

The plan came after consultation with training and medical staff, concerned about the cumulative effect of a hectic schedule.

Someone like Ehlers, who likes to skate most days, had to be held back.

"They didn't want anyone on the ice," he said. "It was weird, especially jumping right into a game. But I came here and did some off-ice stuff instead and tried to get the body ready for that game. Luckily, we're skating (Thursday)."

Despite the shaky first few shifts on Tuesday, Arniel says recovery breaks like Sunday-Monday are designed to pay off long-term.

"This stuff isn't all just for the next moment," the coach said. "I hated the way we started. We got out slow and we can maybe throw it at the two days off. But ... the freshness we hope we're getting from it, because we're running two here, Friday-Saturday, two heavy teams, two big teams, it's going to be a lot of work."

"And then after that we go every other day for 10 straight games. So it's coming."

After facing the Kings on Friday, the Jets play host to the Colorado Avalanche on Saturday.

NO EXCUSES

Three games into their eight-game home stand, the Jets are 1-2 against three teams not in the playoff picture.

It gets harder from here.

“It’s been a weird, hard schedule this season,” Ehlers said. “We love playing games. Is it a lot sometimes? Absolutely. But we get paid to go out there and play some good hockey, so it’s up to us to do that.”

TSN.ca

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10948138/connor-hellebuyck-winnipeg-jets-career-milestone/>

Lu: Jets' defensive situation is fluid after Morrissey injury and Samberg nearing a return (VIDEO)

John Lu has the latest on the lower-body injury to Jets' defenceman Josh Morrissey and why a lot hinges on whether he can practice on Thursday. Head coach Scott Arniel didn't rule out Morrissey for Friday's game against the Kings.

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/video/which-team-is-the-best-in-the-western-conference/>

Which team is the best in the Western Conference? (VIDEO)

In this edition of Take Your Pick the Wednesday Night Hockey panel discusses which team is the best in the West, the leading contenders for the Calder Trophy, and the goaltender who has been the season's biggest surprise.