

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/02/25/coming-up-on-the-history-channel-the-winnipeg-jets>

Coming up on the History Channel... the Winnipeg Jets Soaring squad has multitude of NHL, franchise and personal-best records in its sights as regular season rounds the clubhouse turn

By: Mike McIntyre

OTTAWA — The Winnipeg Jets can't seem to stop rewriting the record books.

It began with a sizzling 15-1 start to the season, something no other NHL team had ever done. It continued Monday night with the organization's first double-digit winning streak, courtesy of Mark Scheifele's overtime winner, which left him alone on top of the franchise's all-time scoring list.

As if that wasn't dramatic enough, the Jets became the first team in league history to win a second consecutive game in which they were trailing entering the final minute of regulation.

When you're hot, you're hot.

So where do they go from here? The literal answer is the nation's capital, where the 41-14-3 Jets will be seeking an 11th-consecutive triumph Wednesday night as they open a quick two-game road trip against the Senators. Then they'll boot scootin' boogie down to Music City to face the Nashville Predators Thursday.

Dig a little deeper and you'll find there are a whole bunch of benchmarks that could soon fall. With 24 regular-season games left, let's count up and break down the different ways an already special season could get even more surreal.

Best regular-season in franchise history? Who can forget the 2017-18 campaign in which the Jets compiled a record of 52-20-10 to finish with 114 points, trailing only Nashville (117 points) for top spot in the league that year? Winnipeg ultimately made it to the Western Conference final before succumbing to the Vegas Golden Knights.

The wins and points were franchise-bests (Winnipeg also had 52 last season, along with 110 points) — and that goes for both the 2.0-Jets/Atlanta Thrashers AND the 1.0 Jets.

Those seem likely to fall this year with the Jets just needing 11 more wins in the final two dozen games and 30 points over that span. As of today, the club is on pace for a stunning 58 wins and 120 points.

First division title in Winnipeg history? Yes, the Atlanta Thrashers captured the now-defunct Southeast Division back in 2006-07. A team playing out of Winnipeg has never finished a year looking down on its closest rivals. The 2.0 Jets have been runners-up on three occasions, most recently last year, while the 1.0 Jets were second on two occasions (in the old Norris and Smythe divisions).

Could this finally be the year?

Winnipeg enjoyed a nine-point cushion over second-place Dallas heading into action Tuesday night. That's a huge gap, although the Stars have one game in hand and the two teams will face each other two more times in a proverbial "four-pointer" (March 14 in Winnipeg and April 10 in Dallas).

In other words, don't hang the banner just yet, but it's certainly looking like Canada Life Centre could be getting some new decor.

Winning the division (and the Western Conference, where the Jets had an 11-point lead over the Pacific Division-leading Vegas Golden Knights entering play Tuesday) would mean being the No. 1 seed and facing the second wild-card team in the opening round.

First Presidents' Trophy in franchise history? Obviously, being the Stanley Cup champion is the ultimate goal, but crossing the finish line of the 82-game marathon that is the regular-season in first-place is quite a feat in and of itself.

Winnipeg is very much in the mix. They had a one-point lead over Washington heading into Tuesday night — the Capitals were playing their one game in hand by hosting the Calgary Flames — and then you go all the way down to Dallas to find the next closest competitor.

A two-team race? It's shaping up that way, and how big might that March 25 meeting in Winnipeg between the Jets and the Capitals be? (In addition to Alex Ovechkin perhaps being on the cusp of his own scoring history by then).

You can argue winning the Presidents' Trophy is a bit of a curse — the most recent regular-season winner to capture the championship was the 2012-13 Chicago Blackhawks — but it would be one heck of an accomplishment in addition to guaranteeing home-ice advantage throughout the playoffs.

Most wins by a goaltender in a single season in NHL history? Connor Hellebuyck is already up to 35 wins this year (in his 44 starts), with Dallas netminder Jake Oettinger a (very) distant second at 27. The Jets' two-time Vezina Trophy winner seems destined to add a third to his resumé, and he's making a compelling case for the league MVP's Hart Trophy, as well.

With 24 games left, Hellebuyck is a safe bet to make as many as 18 more starts. And if he keeps winning at his current pace, that would equate to 14 more wins for a total of 49.

The NHL record by a goaltender in a single year is 48, currently shared by Martin Brodeur of the New Jersey Devils (2006-07) and Braden Holtby of the Washington Capitals (2015-16).

Hellebuyck's personal career high (and the franchise high) is 44, which he set in 2017-18 and has him tied for eighth-best all-time. There's a very good chance his name is going to rocket up that list — perhaps all the way to the top.

At this point, is 50 wins entirely out of the question?

Franchise record for points by a player in a single season? Marian Hossa of the Atlanta Thrashers currently holds the franchise record with 100 points, which he put up in 2006-07. If we're just looking at the 2.0 Jets portion of that history, Kyle Connor has bragging rights with the 93 he had in 2021-22.

Connor seems likely to break his own record at the very least, and perhaps the organizational one, too. He has 71 points through 58 games, which has him on pace for exactly 100. Mark Scheifele isn't far back either, with 65 points in 58 games, on pace for 92.

Various players setting new career offensive highs? As mentioned above, Connor and Scheifele (career-best 84 points in 2018-19) both seem like good bets to exceed their previous highs in points. They would have some company.

Linemate Gabe Vilardi has already smashed his personal record. Forward Cole Perfetti is just three points away from a new benchmark and rock-steady blue-liner Dylan Samberg needs six more. Defenceman Neal Pionk, a pending unrestricted free agent, is 10 away. Captain Adam Lowry needs 11 more (despite missing eight games recently with an injury). Fellow UFA Nikolaj Ehlers needs 15, as does linemate Vlad Namestnikov.

That's nine players — half the regular lineup! — who are in the conversation for best point production in addition to their all-world goaltender. Remarkable, really.

First Stanley Cup? We saved the best for last, but also the biggest question mark.

No Canadian team has captured Lord Stanley's silverware since the Montreal Canadiens did it in 1993, so you could argue a club from north of the border is long overdue.

Why not Winnipeg?

When you add up all of the numbers presented above, it's easy to see why the Jets should be considered a legitimate hockey heavyweight and a true contender. With the March 7 trade deadline rapidly approaching and general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff having ample salary cap space to weaponize, a deep and talented team could get even more dangerous.

Yes, they'll need lots of good luck and good health to make it all the way. If there's one thing we've learned about this group, they're not afraid to make some hockey history.

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/ehlers-focused-on-cup-not-contract>

Nik Ehlers focused on Cup, not contract, in historic season for Jets

By Paul Friesen

Practice? Who needs practice?

Certainly not the hottest team in hockey.

The Winnipeg Jets cancelled their scheduled Tuesday workout and hopped a plane bound for Ottawa and, potentially, an 11th straight win.

That gave a busy sportswriter time to empty his notebook and revisit a tidbit or two that may have been overlooked, initially.

Like the end of my chat with winger Nik Ehlers just before the 4 Nations tournament break.

Ehlers was one of three players I sat down with – Josh Morrissey and Kyle Connor were the others – to ask what advice they'd give their younger selves.

We talked for some 12 minutes about life in the NHL in general, about Winnipeg, about contracts and money and about chasing the Stanley Cup.

The question about contracts and money produced this bit of advice for his 18-year-old self: "You have no idea what you're in for."

A heavy sigh followed. The business side of pro hockey isn't something teenagers think about. They just want to make it.

At the end I asked Ehlers about his current status as a pending unrestricted free agent, and that's the part that remained in my notebook.

"There's not much to say," Ehlers said. "I have the same answer I had in training camp. Right now it's about winning the Stanley Cup this year, and digging in. Focusing. I understand a lot of people have questions. But if I start thinking about that too much I'll start getting away from the hockey part of it."

Putting it in the back of his mind, he said, isn't all that hard.

"Not for me. But I understand you guys have a lot of questions that you obviously want answered, and I wish I could."

Then Ehlers said something that puzzled me, initially.

"If I end up getting away from the hockey part of it, you guys will come after me, too," he said.

While I wasn't sure what he meant at first, I soon realized he was saying he'd be criticized if the contract distraction affected his play.

He's right.

"I'm so focused on being the best version of myself out on the ice right now," he continued. "And playing the best I can to help these guys get to where we all want to be. Where we've wanted to be (for) 10 years now."

If he concentrates on that, he feels the rest will take care of itself.

That approach is working.

Despite missing nine games, Ehlers is on pace for a career-high 70-plus points — and a nice raise in pay no matter where he signs his next contract.

As for his team, it's on track for the best NHL regular season in Winnipeg hockey history: 58 wins and 120 points.

Even if they slow down a little, the Jets will probably have no trouble beating the 52 wins they rolled to in 2017-18 and again last year, as well as the 114 points they piled up in 2017-18.

The best season the 1.0 Jets ever had was 1984-85, when they had 43 wins and 96 points in 80 games, two less than they play now.

That team, led by the late, great captain Dale Hawerchuk and coach Barry Long, went to the Smythe Division final and lost to eventual Stanley Cup champion Edmonton.

The 2017-18 team, led by former captain Blake Wheeler and coach Paul Maurice, lost to Vegas, one round shy of the Cup final.

Since then, it's been quiet as a mouse in the postseason.

Two years ago, with Rick Bowness and a shared leadership group at the helm, but Wheeler still the de facto captain, it folded in the first round against eventual Cup champion Vegas.

Last year's Jets, with Adam Lowry wearing the 'C' and Scott Arniel calling the shots, caved to Colorado with barely a squeak.

This year's team has the potential to be the mouse that roars.

They're first in goals per game, tied for second in goals against and boast a league-best differential of plus-70.

They still have the most deadly power play in NHL history, although by just a hair: Three straight scoreless games have dropped their rate to 32.5 percent, .01 percent better than Edmonton's record-breaking power play of two years ago.

On the down side, their penalty kill is in the middle of the pack, their ability to win faceoffs a little worse. No team does everything well, though.

Still up in the air is how they'll handle the completely different game that wins in the playoffs — and who they might bring in before the March 7 trade deadline to help with that.

The needs seem to be the same every year: A second-line centre and some depth on defence.

GM Kevin Cheveldayoff has less than two weeks to fine-tune a machine that keeps humming along with striking consistency.

So far his team has stacked up month-by-month records that fit together like poker chips: 9-1 in October, 9-5 in November, 9-5-1 in December, 9-3-2 in January and 4-0 so far in February.

But as good as his hand already is, Cheveldayoff has to add another card or two.

Wednesday in Ottawa, the Jets will try to add to a franchise-record 10 straight wins. That doesn't mean they can't get better.

In fact, they have to.

They've had practice at this and learned.

Great regular seasons only go so far.

CBC Sports

<https://www.cbc.ca/sports/the-buzzer-newsletter-stanley-cup-contenders-1.7468274>

Sizing up Canada's Stanley Cup contenders Is this the year the drought ends?

By Jesse Campigotto · CBC Sports

Connor McDavid's overtime goal to beat the United States in the 4 Nations Face-Off final last week was the best Canadian men's hockey moment of the last 15 years. Could Canada's first Stanley Cup parade since 1993 be next?

The chances aren't terrible, with three Canadian-based NHL teams currently ranked in the top seven overall, two more holding a playoff spot and another very much in the hunt for the post-season. One betting site has the implied probability of a Canadian team winning the Cup at around 29 per cent, while the seven clubs' title odds on the hockey-stats website Money Puck add up to about 25 per cent.

Here's a quick check-in on the seven Canadian teams as they enter the final ~25 games of the regular season.

The big 3

Leading the way is Winnipeg, which won its league-high 10th consecutive game last night to reclaim first place overall from the Washington Capitals. Mark Scheifele's overtime goal — his 329th for Winnipeg, breaking Ilya Kovalchuk's Thrashers/Jets franchise record — gave him 32 on the season, which ranks third in the NHL. Kyle Connor is sixth in goals with 30 and tied for fifth in points with 71. Along with the league's best record, the Jets (41-14-3) own the top power-play success rate (32.5 per cent) and goal differential (plus-70).

Winnipeg also has the NHL's best goalie. Connor Hellebuyck leads the league in all the major traditional stats — wins (35), goals-against average (2.04), save percentage (.925) and shutouts (6) — as well as the advanced Goals Saved Above Expected. He's a virtual lock to win his second straight Vezina Trophy and third of his career, which would be a record for a U.S.-born player, and Hellebuyck might even be in the MVP conversation too.

Toronto (35-20-2) sits fifth overall, holding a one-point edge in the Atlantic Division over the Stanley Cup champion Florida Panthers, who will be without star forward Matthew Tkachuk for a while due to the groin injury that forced the American to watch most of the 4 Nations final from the bench.

While reigning NHL goals champ Auston Matthews still seems bothered by the upper-body injury that has caused him to miss 15 games this season, William Nylander has helped fill the void with 33 goals — second-most in the league. Mitch Marner has also stepped up. The pending free-agent winger is tied with the Jets' Connor for fifth in the league with 71 points, putting him on pace for his first 100-point season. Marner was fantastic in the 4 Nations final too, setting up Sam Bennett's game-tying goal and McDavid's OT winner.

Of course, the Leafs are famous for looking good in the regular season and then flopping in the playoffs. But there's hope for a different outcome this year as new head coach Craig Berube has

shored up the team's defensive play while Joseph Woll and Anthony Stolarz supply solid goaltending for a change.

Edmonton (34-19-4) ranks seven overall, thanks largely to the efforts of (this will shock you) McDavid and Leon Draisaitl. The latter is running away with the Rocket Richard Trophy with 42 goals — nine more than the second-place Nylander — and his 86 points put Draisaitl just one behind Colorado's Nathan MacKinnon for the league lead. Despite missing a total of six games due to an early-season ankle injury and a suspension, McDavid ranks fourth with 72 points, including 22 goals.

However, if the defending Western Conference champs are going to catch Vegas for the Pacific Division lead (the Golden Knights are up two points), they might need more from inconsistent goalie Stuart Skinner and talented defenceman Evan Bouchard, whose scoring numbers are down while his defensive play remains shaky.

The other 4

In many ways, Vancouver is going through the season from hell. A feud between its two best forwards, Elias Pettersson and J.T. Miller, dogged the team until Miller was traded to the Rangers a month ago. But the change hasn't helped the struggling Pettersson, who has zero goals and only two assists in six games since the deal. Pettersson went pointless in three games for Sweden at the 4 Nations, and it's now been over a month since his last goal. "He's not moving his feet," coach Rick Tocchet said after Sunday's loss to Utah.

Meanwhile, Norris Trophy winner Quinn Hughes has missed the last six games with the unspecified injury that kept him out of the 4 Nations, and goalie Thatcher Demko is hurt again after missing the first two months of the season with the unusual knee injury that knocked him out of last year's playoffs.

And yet, Vancouver (26-20-11) holds the final playoff spot in the Western Conference — one point ahead of Calgary (27-21-8), which probably has no business being here either.

The Flames missed the playoffs by 17 points last season, then clearly signalled they were in rebuilding mode by trading No. 1 goalie Jacob Markstrom to New Jersey. But that proved to be a savvy move as young Dustin Wolf, the MVP of the American Hockey League two years ago, sports a 20-11-3 record and a .913 save percentage.

Ottawa gets full marks for resiliency too. The Senators finished 26th overall last year, and they're big off-season acquisition, goalie Linus Ullmark, missed all of January with an injury. But young forward Tim Stutzle is back to averaging more than a point per game, and Ottawa (29-24-4) is clinging to the final wild-card spot in the East, just ahead of Columbus, Boston and the Rangers.

One area of concern for the Sens: forward Brady Tkachuk left early from today's practice due to the injury that bothered him at the 4 Nations. He said he might sit out Wednesday's game against Winnipeg so he can come back full-steam and "be an animal the next 25 games."

At the moment, Montreal (26-26-5) is the only Canadian team we can probably rule out of the playoff race. The Habs are five points out of a spot in the East, which may not sound like a lot. But they've lost eight of their last 10 and there are four teams between them and Ottawa. That leaves the Habs with less than a five per cent chance of making the playoffs, according to Money Puck.

Daily Faceoff

<https://www.dailyfaceoff.com/news/winnipeg-jets-downright-dangerous-should-they-stay-course-nhl-trade-deadline>

The Jets are downright dangerous – should they stay the course ahead of NHL Trade Deadline?

By Tyler Kuehl

While they might not be gaining the same attention as other teams as we near the NHL Trade Deadline, the Winnipeg Jets are still an absolute wagon.

With a 2-1 overtime victory over the San Jose Sharks on Monday night, the Jets have reeled off 10 straight wins, keeping them in first place in the league standings.

Yet, as good as this team is right now, some are wondering if general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff should be working the phones with the deadline a little over a week away. It's hard to see what the Jets really need to address. Goaltender Connor Hellebuyck is playing lights out. They have a stable defense led by Josh Morrissey and Kyle Connor and Mark Scheifele lead a deep-scoring lineup.

While they could add some experience to help prepare for a deep postseason run, this current Jets roster is looking like a team that will be tough to beat.

On Tuesday's edition of Daily Faceoff LIVE, Frank Seravalli and Tyler Yaremchuk discuss what the Jets should or should not do heading into the deadline.

Frank Seravalli: How big of a swing do the Jets take after a pretty significant trade deadline period last year? Bringing in [Tyler] Toffoli, bringing in Sean Monahan. Neither one of those guys stick and they flame out in the first round. I think the Jets are in the Cup contender circle and conversation but are facing more pressure than a lot of teams might realize because they have to break through...they've got to do something with it.

Tyler Yaremchuk: The Kevin Cheveldayoff will have a little bit of space and assets to work with. \$12.4 million in projected deadline cap space.

Frank: \$42 million next season?

Tyler: Maybe they should be looking at guys on the market with term...The Jets are one of those teams if they wanted to go get a high-price-tagged player, they can absolutely afford it at the deadline. That just gives them some options that, quite frankly, a lot of those other contending teams in the West don't have.

Frank: For a team that went out and made big moves and it didn't work out for them, should they just stay the course?

Tyler: I just think the Jets need a second-line center.

Frank: Just take Brock Nelson and plug him right in.

Ottawa Citizen

<https://ottawacitizen.com/ottawa-senators/tkachuk-may-not-be-ready-takeoff>

Senators captain Brady Tkachuk may not be ready for takeoff against Winnipeg Jets It looks like Josh Norris will return, but Senators may have to wait for Shane Pinto and Tkachuk

By Bruce Garrioch

The Ottawa Senators likely will have to soldier on without their captain for at least one more night.

Brady Tkachuk returned to the ice on Tuesday with the Senators for the first time since he was injured playing for Team USA in the 4 Nations Face-Off last Monday, but it doesn't sound like he'll be ready to face the Winnipeg Jets on Wednesday.

It does appear the club will have centre Josh Norris back from his mid-body injury while centre Shane Pinto skated with the club in a non-contact jersey.

Tkachuk left the ice at the Canadian Tire Centre after 16 minutes and didn't return, which doesn't bode well for him playing after he missed the club's 5-2 loss to Montreal on Saturday with a lower-body injury he gutted through while playing for the Americans in the final last Thursday.

"I'm feeling all right. It was just a smart decision (to leave early). I didn't feel like I had the pop. I just started to feel it a little bit," Tkachuk said. "I'm still hopeful that I can play (Wednesday), but I just need to make a smart decision because I don't want to re-aggravate it and miss any more time."

So there is a possibility he won't play?

"I guess. We'll just have to wait and see. I'm going to continue to do everything in my power to play tomorrow," Tkachuk said. "We'll see how it goes the rest of the day today and tomorrow."

"Of course I want to battle with these guys. But I think everybody in here and Sens fans don't want to see me with something nagging and taking away from my game for the next 24 or 25 games. Maybe take the time for one more to be ready to go. We'll have to wait and see."

The Senators are trying to halt a four-game losing streak against one of the National Hockey League's best teams, and the Jets have won 10 straight.

Tkachuk said he suffered the ailment going to the net against the Swedes before he crashed into the post.

"I don't want to get into exactly what it is," Tkachuk said. "It's nothing major, but it's just something that's nagging. I'd rather address it and be an animal for the next 25 games."

“It was just before I went into the post. I made a move and felt it right away.”

Tkachuk knows the importance of the role this stretch of games will play in whether or not the Senators will make the playoffs for the first time in eight years, and he wants to be part of the solution.

He skated before the rest of the group went on the ice and the plan always was for him to leave early so Tkachuk's departure wasn't a surprise to head coach Travis Green or the rest of the staff.

Tkachuk feels it's better to deal with this ailment now, and if that means missing another game or two to make that happen, that's the best move.

“The guys in here know that a 50 per cent Brady knows that I don't want to keep that 50 per cent for the next 25 games,” he said. “I realize the importance of these games, and I'm really excited about it because I know what we're going to do in this room and what we're going to provide for the city.

“I've got nothing but confidence and faith in this group. Maybe it takes an extra day to be 100 per cent and be ready to go and show everybody what we're made of. To show that tournament wasn't a fluke for me individually and that I can play like that for 24-plus games.”

Tkachuk and his brother, Matthew of the Florida Panthers, were forces to be reckoned with for Team USA in the 4 Nations tourney and they played a large role in helping the club get to the final against Canada.

Brady has yet to play in the playoffs in his career, but he learned what that felt like in those four games with the Americans, and that's something he'll carry with him down the stretch with the Senators.

“The preparation that guys had is something that opened up my eyes and to do whatever it takes to win,” Brady said. “Everybody went into it not knowing what to expect, but the way everybody played and everybody was doing whatever it took to win stood out.”

As for Norris, it would appear he will return after missing six games with an injury he suffered on Feb. 1 against Nashville. He was a full participant for the whole skate and it would be more surprising if he doesn't play.

“Today was a good day on the ice. I felt pretty good so we'll see tomorrow,” Norris said.

He spent the break rehabbing from the ailment with the club's other injured players because he'd like to get back as quickly as possible.