

**Winnipegjets.com**

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-vilardi-scores-twice-jets-win-streak-at-8>

***Three things - Vilardi scores twice, Jets win streak at 8  
Connor, Scheifele and Vilardi combine for six points***

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor and Gabe Vilardi combined for six points in a 4-3 win over the New York Islanders at Canada Life Centre. The Jets (39-14-3) extended their winning streak to eight games and moved back into first place in the league standings, two points up on Washington. Connor Hellebuyck made 32 saves to record his league leading 34th win of the season. Josh Morrissey (CAN), Kyle Connor (USA) and Connor Hellebuyck (USA) will represent their countries at the 4 Nations Face-Off tournament. The event is being held in Montreal and Boston from Feb. 12 to Feb. 20. The Jets next game will be on February 22 when they host the St. Louis Blues.

***MAGIC IAFALLO***

For the second straight game, Alex Iafallo put together a brilliant individual play to help the Jets score their first goal. Tuesday against Carolina Iafallo skated through the Hurricane defence to set up Nino Niederreiter for a power play goal. Tonight, with the Jets trailing 1-0 in the first period, Iafallo took a pass from Dylan Samberg in the Winnipeg zone and went coast-to-coast, fighting off Bo Horvat inside the Islander blueline and lifted the puck over Ilya Sorokin for his eighth of the season.

***HIGHLIGHT REEL SECOND PERIOD***

Winnipeg scored three times in the second frame to take a 4-2 lead into the intermission. Trailing 2-1, Kyle Connor sent a pass to a streaking Gabe Vilardi and the 25-year-old tapped in his 23rd of the season and hit 50-points for the first time in his career.

Just over 10 minutes later, Cole Perfetti sent a no-look pass from behind the net to Nikolaj Ehlers who had a wide-open net to score his 17th of the campaign. It was also Ehlers 218th career goal moving him past former linemate Bryan Little for fifth most in franchise history.

At 18:18, Mark Scheifele found Vilardi in the slot and he would wrist in his second of the night and 24th of the season, that is a career high and he did it in just 56 games.

***HELLE HOLDS THE FORT***

The Jets kept the Islanders to just 16 shots through the first two periods, but New York pushed the pace in the final frame. Kyle Palmieri cut the Jets lead to one at 11:09 and then Connor Hellebuyck closed the door. During an Islander power play, the Vezina Trophy winner stopped eight shots and 18 of the 19 shots thrown his way in the third.

"Yeah, he made some big saves," said Islanders head coach Patrick Roy.

"He made a nice save on [Casey Cizikas] there on the doorstep and, I mean, he's the goalie he is for a reason and his record shows that."

**NHL.com**

<https://www.nhl.com/news/new-york-islanders-winnipeg-jets-game-recap-february-7>

***Vilardi scores twice, Jets top Islanders for 8th straight win  
Winnipeg 1st team to reach 80 points; Sorokin handed 1st loss since Jan. 16 for New York***

By Darrin Bauming

WINNIPEG -- Gabriel Vilardi scored twice, and the Winnipeg Jets won their eighth straight game, 4-3 against the New York Islanders at Canada Life Centre on Friday.

"You learn your lessons as you play the games," Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel said. "You win games. You learn things. There's areas you need to improve. You lose games, you have to move forward. The biggest thing this group has done is put stuff behind us. Whether a win or loss, whether you individually had a great game or bad game... How we respond the next night is what I've always tried to pound away here."

Nikolaj Ehlers and Alex Iafallo also scored, and Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor each had two assists for the Jets (39-14-3), who became the first in the NHL to reach 80 points this season. Connor Hellebuyck made 32 saves, including 18 in the third period.

"It's just the usual from him," Vilardi said of Hellebuyck, who leads the NHL in wins (34) and shutouts (six). "He's incredible, always on top of his game. He's so consistent that it's really incredible to watch as his teammate on the ice and on the bench. It's pretty cool to watch day in and day out."

Hellebuyck will represent the United States in the 4 Nations Face-Off from Feb. 12-20.

"Our team defense, that's kind of what we pride ourselves on," Vilardi said. "When we're doing that well, we know we have a good chance to win because 'Bucky' is going to make the saves he's expected to make, and most of the time he's going to make the saves he's not expected to make. So as long as we keep the grade A's that the other team is able to have to a limited number, we feel pretty confident that we're going to win most nights."

Kyle Palmieri, Simon Holmstrom, and Marc Gatcomb scored for the Islanders (25-22-7), who had won eight of nine (8-1-0). Ilya Sorokin, who had won his previous seven decisions and lost for the first time since Jan. 16, made 23 saves.

"[Hellebuyck] made some big saves," New York forward Matt Martin said. "He made a nice save on [Casey Cizikas] there on the doorstep and, I mean, he's the goalie he is for a reason and his record shows that. So I think he's a guy who's going to give them a chance to win, and no different than than [Sorokin]. I think he gives us a chance to win every night."

Holmstrom gave the Islanders a 1-0 lead at 1:05 of the first period when his centering pass on a 3-on-1 rush caught Jets defenseman Neal Pionk's stick and slid under Hellebuyck.

Iafallo scored to tie it 1-1 on the rush at 4:27. After fighting off a check from center Bo Horvat, Iafallo made a backhand-to-forehand move and lifted it over Sorokin's glove from in close.

"That was nice too, eh?" Vilardi said. "He kind of used his body and [Horvat] pushed him up the ice, and that was a nice finish too. He's got low-key good hands. Don't underrate his hands."

Gatcomb put the Islanders back in front 2-1 at 12:07 when a loose puck rolled out front and he batted it in on the backhand.

"I thought we played a pretty good game, we were right there," said Islanders center Brock Nelson, who will represent the United States in the 4 Nations Face-Off from Feb. 12-20. "We had a couple of good looks. Hellebuyck made some good good saves... I felt like we had all the momentum."

Vilardi tied it 2-2 at 4:23 of the second. Connor one-touched the puck to himself, skated from the defensive to the offensive zone, and made a cross-ice pass to Vilardi, who quickly shot it.

Vilardi set a career high with his 23rd and 24th goals of the season, and eclipsed the 50-point mark for the first time in his career.

"It feels good. Just being able to stay healthy, I think that is a big reason why I am able to achieve that right now," Vilardi said. "And playing with such good players and the success we've had as a team is obviously worth looking at as well."

Ehlers gave Winnipeg a 3-2 lead at 14:50 when a Cole Perfetti backhand pass from behind the net allowed Ehlers to beat an out-of-position Sorokin.

"I made a quick glance and saw [Ehlers] coming," Perfetti said. "That was a little bit of a 'hoper,' I guess — sometimes they work and sometimes they don't. I'm glad it worked. He was in a great spot."

Vilardi said, "That was nasty. That was a nice play. [Perfetti is] constantly making great plays like that. He's playing so well for us lately, and that line has been doing really good. You've got to keep doing that after the break."

Scheifele set up Vilardi's second goal, a one-timer from the slot, that pushed it to 4-2 at 18:18.

"We played really well in the first and the third period," Islanders coach Patrick Roy said. "We were very good, took a 2-1 lead, and I think in the second period we lost a few coverages which caused two of the three goals. But it was a good effort by our guys. I thought it was a hard-fought game. We had our chances at the end, they made a really nice save on [Casey Cizikas] on that one. Sometimes, you know, the game is a question of inches."

"I don't know if it's just (Winnipeg's) first line. I mean, I think they got four lines that skate well and play well. And they play the right way, so they're really well coached and they do a really good job with that group."

Palmieri cut it to 4-3 at 11:07 of the third, scoring on the rebound from Alexander Romanov's point shot.

"They're a good hockey team playing at home," Martin said. "They were able to get some momentum and we maybe made it a little easy on them as far as giving pucks away and not being smart coming through the neutral zone and things like that. So when you give a good team like that opportunities they're gonna get them."

*NOTES:* The Jets are 30-0-1 this season when leading entering the third period. ... Hellebuyck's 176th career home win tied Mike Richter for the fifth most by an American goaltender. ... Connor, who will represent the United States at the 4 Nations Face-Off, had his 19th multipoint game of the season. He leads Winnipeg with 69 points (30 goals, 39 assists) in 56 games. ... Holmstrom's goal was the Islanders' fastest from the start of a game this season. ... Entering the game, Sorokin was 9-1-0 in his previous 10 with a 1.66 goals-against average, a .942 save percentage and two shutouts, having allowed just 15 goals over that span.

## **Canadian Press**

<https://www.chrisd.ca/2025/02/08/winnipeg-jets-new-york-islanders-game-story/>

### ***Gabriel Vilardi Leads as Jets Fend Off Islanders 4-3 for Eighth-Straight Win***

By Jim Bender, The Canadian Press

With less than a third of the current season left, Gabriel Vilardi is already enjoying his best campaign ever as an NHLer.

Vilardi scored two goals to lead the Winnipeg Jets to a 4-3 triumph over the New York Islanders on Friday. His second goal was a career-best 24th with 26 games still to come.

Vilardi, who was acquired from the Los Angeles Kings in a multi-player deal before the 2023-24 season, had already posted the most points of his career earlier this season and now has 51.

"It feels good," Vilardi said. "Just being able to stay healthy, I think that is a big reason why I am able to achieve that right now.

"Playing with such good players and the success we've had as a team is obviously worth a look at as well."

Vilardi has played most of the year on a line with Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor. They assisted on both of Vilardi's goals against the Islanders.

"He's healthy," said Jets coach Scott Arniel. "That's the biggest thing. The single biggest thing for me is staying healthy and still playing hard and doing all the things.

"That line is extremely dangerous because he's one-third of that mix, an important part of that mix, and the biggest things is him being able to play all the games so far."

But the Jets would not have won without goalie Connor Hellebuyck, who was outstanding as Winnipeg hung on to a 4-3 third-period lead. That included stopping eight dangerous shots during an Islanders power play that started at the 13:11 mark of the final frame.

"It's just the usual from him," Vilardi said. "He's incredible, always on top of his game. He's so consistent that it's really incredible to watch as his teammate on the ice and on the bench."

Hellebuyck made 32 saves to post his 34th win, the best in the NHL.

Islanders coach Patrick Roy also gave Hellebuyck credit.

“We had our chances and he made some good saves,” he said. “Sometimes, the puck bounces your way, sometimes it does not, and tonight, it did not.”

It was Winnipeg’s eighth straight victory heading into the break for the 4 Nations Face-Off.

“It feels good,” Vilardi said. “We keep piling up wins and obviously, trying to finish high getting into playoffs when we get into playoffs.”

Cole Perfetti, who set up Nikolaj Ehlers for one of the four goals, was looking forward to the break.

“It feels good going into the break on a high note,” he said. “It’s going to be a lot more fun, I think, when we’re playing like this. So, the break is well-needed and well-deserved for us.”

Arniel was also pleased.

“It’s a great way to go out,” he said. “We finished on a real great note against a desperate Islanders team. Found a way to get ourselves another two points.”

Alex Lafallo scored the other Winnipeg goal to extend his points streak to four games. With a helper on the Ehlers goal, Vladislav Namestnikov also extended his own scoring streak to four games.

Kyle Palmieri, Marc Gatcomb and Simon Holmstrom scored for the Islanders, who are in a wild-card race.

*NOTES:* The Jets are now 30-0-1 when leading after two periods ... Islanders Bo Horvat, who had scored 10 points in his last 10 games, was held pointless ... New York goalie Ilya Sorokin had his seven-game winning streak snapped ... The Isles played without Mathew Barzal (lower body) who was just placed on the IR ... Hellebuyck and Connor (US) and Josh Morrissey (Canada) played their last games before heading to the 4 Nations Face-Off.

## **Sportsnet.ca**

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/jets-getting-contributions-from-everybody-amid-eight-game-winning-streak/>

### ***Jets get contributions from everybody to tie franchise-record winning streak***

By Jacob Stoller

WINNIPEG — Everyone used to view these Winnipeg Jets as Connor Hellebuyck and Co.

Maybe there was some truth to it.

Hellebuyck was the only thing keeping this team relevant in the years following the 2018 Western Conference Final run, where a once-promising Cup contender veered into mushy middle territory.

That's not the case anymore, though. That's not a slight on the best goaltender on the planet, who is making a legitimate case to win the Hart Trophy. It's just that he's far from the only reason why Winnipeg is the NHL's best team.

They've got the best power play in the league. Two players in Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor who have gone from stars to superstars. A bonafide No. 1 defenceman in Josh Morrissey. An exceptional wave of secondary players in Nikolaj Ehlers, Gabriel Vilardi, Dylan Samberg and Neal Pionk.

But above all, the driving force behind the Jets becoming a legitimate Stanley Cup contender — versus a team that could maybe win a round or two — is the collective growth of this group.

"You need extremely strong goaltending to win in this league. We obviously know what we have there. But the biggest thing is how much contribution we get from everybody," Scott Arniel said after Friday's 4-3 win over the New York Islanders. "We had a ton of injuries to our defence. We had people step up. Our depth, look at what's happening right now with (Adam Lowry) and (Morgan Barron) out. A lot of guys have stepped up. That's the stuff that I see. That's why we're more of a team than maybe some people think we are."

What Arniel sees is palpable to anyone who follows this team closely.

Coming into the year, this team wanted to be held to a higher standard. They wanted to be coached like a team striving to form Stanley Cup habits, not just put together a solid regular season. And every single time they've faced adversity, they've responded with authority.

When the Toronto Maple Leafs ended Winnipeg's eight-game win streak in late October — in a game that was more lopsided than the 6-4 final score indicates — the Jets went on to rack up another seven-game win streak. When the Florida Panthers blanked them 5-0 in November, they responded with a convincing 6-3 win over the defending Stanley Cup champions the following game. And their current eight-game win streak comes on the heels of that "embarrassing" 5-2 loss to Utah two weeks ago.

What you're seeing now is a group of players — the majority of which have remained largely intact over the last three years (and beyond) — learning from their past mistakes.

In the past, a tough loss would often cause a snowball effect.

"I think when something doesn't go our way, it's not the end of the world," Cole Perfetti said. "We get down in a game, or we lose a game, or whatever. A play doesn't go our way, our call doesn't go away. We're not, you know, getting on each other, getting on the refs, and kind of having that negative energy. We're staying positive, and we're not letting the past shifts affect our next ones."

And they're not resting on their laurels, either.

"Now the big push comes," Arniel said. "The last 26 are going to be the stuff that prepares us for Game 83."

*Hey Macarena*

Vilardi is in line for a fat payday this summer.

The 25-year-old — whose two goals on Friday helped him reach a career-high season total (24) — is on pace for 35 goals and 75 points.

“That line is extremely dangerous because he's one-third of that mix,” Arniel said.

Vilardi, an expiring RFA with arbitration rights after this season, can become a UFA after the 2026-27 season. The knee-jerk reaction is to say, “Lock him up long-term,” and while surely the Jets would like to keep him in the fold, the rising cap complicates things.

We all know that Connor is going to secure the bag this summer and that’s the kind of deal you have to make, no matter how uncomfortable the dollar figure makes you feel.

But what about Vilardi? Say he wanted to sign long-term, would the Jets be comfortable hovering around the \$8 million mark on a six-plus year extension? Some of you may be screaming “YES” because the cap is rising (when the salary cap hits \$113.5 million, an \$8 million AAV will equate to seven per cent of the salary cap, or \$6.2 million in today’s cap climate).

Keep in mind, as we saw with the Mikko Rantanen trade, just because teams can spend more in the years to come doesn’t mean they’ll all be comfortable paying a premium on their third, fourth and fifth scoring threats.

AFP Analytics projects him to earn a \$6.3 million AAV on a four-year deal. That term seems a bit strange — given that it’s a weird middle ground between a bridge and a long-term deal — but it’s undoubtedly better than him signing a two-year deal and walking for nothing in a few years.

## **Global Winnipeg**

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11010325/jets-top-islanders-4-3-for-eighth-straight-win-heading-into-break/>

### ***Winnipeg Jets top Islanders 4-3 for 8th straight win heading into break***

By Tyson Rewucki & Russ Hobson Global News

The Winnipeg Jets will keep that winning feeling for at least two more weeks.

The Jets just barely hung on to beat the New York Islanders 4-3 on Friday at the Canada Life Centre as they enter a two-week break with a franchise record-tying eight-game win streak.

The Jets put some past struggles against the Islanders behind them after going 1-8 in their last 9 games against the Isles.

After a slow start, the Jets exploded for three goals in the second period as Gabriel Vilardi notched a pair to continue their winning ways with their next game not for another 14 days.

“The way the first period started, I wasn’t sure if some guys had already taken off,” joked head coach Scott Arniel. “It’s a great way to go out. We finished on a real good note and against a desperate Islanders team. Found a way to get ourselves another two points.

The Islanders had won eight of their last nine games and the victory propels the Jets back on top of the NHL's overall standings.

"It feels good going into the break on a high note," said forward Cole Perfetti. "It's going to be a lot more fun I think for everyone when we're playing like this. The break is well needed and well deserved from us, so I think we're excited for it, but we really like the way we're playing right now."

With one assist Perfetti extended his point streak to five games. Nikolaj Ehlers and Alex Lafallo also scored in the win.

Vilardi scored his 23rd and 24th goals of the season for a new career high.

"It feels good," he said. "I think just being able to stay healthy, I think that's the big reason why I've been able to achieve that right now and playing with such good players and the success we've had as a team obviously correlates with me having success as well."

Connor Hellebuyck made 32 saves, including a few big ones late in the game for his 34th win of the season.

The top line for the Jets started the game and they had two great chances early on. Vilardi received a pass from Mark Scheifele, but Islanders goalie Ilya Sorokin flashed the leather to keep it scoreless.

Shortly after that, the Jets had another odd-man rush led by Mark Scheifele, who found Dylan Samberg trailing. Samberg would whiff on the shot attempt leading to an Islanders odd man rush with Jean-Gabriel Pageau and Simon Holmstrom. Holmstrom was looking for Pageau on the backdoor, but the pass ended up taking a bounce and going through Hellebuyck's legs to give the Islanders a 1-0 lead early.

It wouldn't take the Jets long to respond. After some sustained pressure from the Islanders, Lafallo took the puck from his own blue line all the way into the Islanders zone and cut towards the net beating Sorokin with a cheeky finish against the grain for his eighth goal of the season, tying the game up at one.

The pace of play would steady after the two teams traded early goals until a little over 12 minutes into the period. Mason Appleton had the puck behind the net and tried to put it along the boards, however an unfortunate bounce off Neal Pionk's skate ricocheted right to Marc Gatcomb, who made a move to the backhand and slid one past Hellebuyck to make it 2-1.

That score would stand as the two teams headed into the first intermission.

The second period would start and only two minutes into the period Bo Horvat would get in the way of Vlad Namestnikov resulting in a two-minute minor for interference. Vilardi would get a chance in front, but outside of that the Jets were unable to muster much towards the goal.

Shortly after the powerplay had expired, Kyle Connor brought the puck through center ice and sent a missile of a seam pass to Vilardi, who buried the shot low glove-side for his 23rd goal of the season and knotted the game up at two.



With a little over five minutes to play in the second, Perfetti was parked in the spot that Wayne Gretzky made famous, and made a Gretzky-esque pass to Ehlers who deposited it into the net to give the Jets a 3-2 lead.

The Jets would continue to control play through the second and added a late goal to cap off a terrific second period. The Jets top line went back to work, whipping the puck around the offensive zone before Scheifele sent a return feed to Vilardi in the slot, where Vilardi would rip one bar down for his second of the night, to make it 4-2 for Winnipeg.

The second period would end shortly after Vilardi's goal. While the shots were even after one, the Jets really got the puck towards the net in the second, winning the shot battle 12-7.

Just over 11 minutes into the third, Alexander Romanov would fire a shot from the blue line causing chaos in front of Hellebuyck. The Jets defence would fail to tie up Kyle Palmieri as he would grab the loose change and find the back of the net for his 15th of the season making it 4-3 Jets.

With just under seven minutes remaining, Dylan Demelo would trip Kyle Maclean and put the Islanders back on the power play for the 3rd time of the period. The Jets had held the Islanders to few chances on the power play but this penalty kill was different. Hellebuyck had his best sequence of the night making five huge saves to kill the penalty and preserve the lead for Winnipeg.

The Jets will head to St. Louis on February 22nd to face the Blues in their first game back from their two-week break for the 4 Nations Face-Off.

### **Winnipeg Free Press**

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/02/07/jets-put-red-hot-isles-on-ice>

#### ***Jets put red-hot Isles on Ice***

#### ***Winnipeg heads into break on heater after eighth consecutive win***

By: Mike McIntyre

The Winnipeg Jets are heading into an extended hockey hiatus on a high.

A 4-3 victory over the visiting New York Islanders Friday night was the team's eighth consecutive triumph — matching a franchise record they already tied earlier this season — and puts them alone on top of the NHL standings with a remarkable 39-14-3 record.

This game had a bit of a “last day of school” feeling to it, considering the Jets will now have a 15-day pause in the schedule due to the 4 Nations Face-Off. Give everyone team an A-plus for effort and execution despite the fact the Jets found themselves in a 1-0 hole 65 seconds into the game.

“The way the first period started, I wasn't sure if some guys had already taken off,” head coach Scott Arniel joked. “No, you know what, it's a great way to go out. We finished on a really good note against a desperate Islanders team and found a way to get ourselves another two points.”

The Islanders came to town just as hot as the Jets, having gone 8-1-0 in their last nine outings. As well, goaltender Ilya Sorokin had been doing his best impression of a brick wall, surrendering seven goals in his last seven starts.

New York also had an 8-1 advantage over Winnipeg in their last nine meetings dating back to 2018, so this outcome was akin to slaying a dragon for the home team.

“(The break) is going to be a lot more fun when we’re playing like this,” said forward Cole Perfetti. “We really like the way we’re playing right now, and we’re a really good team when we play like that. So it’s a lot of fun.”

### *WELCOME TO THE GABER-HOOD*

The price tag on Gabe Vilardi’s next contract continues to go up. That’s a very good problem for Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff.

The 25-year-old winger, who was the key return in the Pierre-Luc Dubois trade and is a pending restricted free agent, scored twice to set a new career high in goals with 24. He also eclipsed the 50-point mark for the first time (he’s now up to 51), and the sky seems to be the limit for his potential.

“It feels good. Just being able to stay healthy, I think that is a big reason why I am able to achieve that right now,” said Vilardi. “And playing with such good players and the success we’ve had as a team is obviously worth looking at as well.”

Vilardi has found magic on the top line with Kyle Connor (two assists) and Mark Scheifele (two assists) while also boosting the top power-play unit in the league (which went 0-for-2 in this one despite several good chances).

Vilardi’s first on the night came early in the second period to erase a 2-1 deficit the Jets faced through 20 minutes and was the result of an outstanding Connor pass. His second came late in the middle frame to extend Winnipeg’s lead to 4-2 at the time, once again following some outstanding puck movement in the offensive zone.

### *ARE YOU KIDDING ME, COLE*

The look on Nikolaj Ehlers’ face said it all. He couldn’t believe the no-look, behind-the-back pass from linemate Perfetti that resulted in Ehlers essentially having an empty net to shoot at late in the second period which came in between the Vilardi tallies and put the Jets ahead for the first time.

It was an incredible play by Perfetti, who now has points in five games in a row and nine points (4G, 5A) in his last seven outings.

“I made a quick glance and saw Nikky coming. Those are a little bit of a hoper I guess, sometimes they work, sometimes they don’t. Glad it worked. He was in a great spot,” said Perfetti.

Just as the top line of Connor-Scheifele-Vilardi is cooking, so, too, is the trio of Perfetti, Ehlers and Vlad Namestnikov, who had the other helper on the play.

Winnipeg reaches a new level of danger when both top offensive lines are going at the same time, as has been the case lately.

### *POWERED BY A.I.*

Alex Iafallo is not the biggest player on the ice at 6-feet and 200 pounds, but he sure looked like power forward when he got Winnipeg on the board early in the first period to tie the game 1-1.

The 31-year-old, who is a pending unrestricted free agent, turned on the jets as he skated down the right side, dropped his shoulder to cut to the net and beat Sorokin just under the crossbar.

Iafallo, who also came over in the trade for Dubois (along with Rasmus Kupari and a draft pick that turned into defence prospect Alfons Freij), is now up to eight goals this year. Brad Lambert, playing in his sixth career NHL game, recorded his first assist of the year (and second of his career) on the play.

You can give backup goalie Eric Comrie an unofficial assist on the play. Just a few seconds earlier, he handed Iafallo a new stick from his spot on the bench after Iafallo had donated his over to defenceman Neal Pionk after his broke in the defensive zone.

Scheifele came into the night still needing one goal to pass Ilya Kovalchuk and become the all-time franchise leader in that department. The milestone will have to wait at least one more game.

We also learned Friday that Scheifele is on standby as a potential injury replacement for Team Canada. It will be interesting to see if Scheifele gets a last-minute call considering Sidney Crosby and Anthony Cirelli are both currently nursing ailments. A decision must be made by Monday at the latest, with the tournament starting next Wednesday.

"I think he should be on the team," Arniel said prior to puck drop. "If it works out for him, that'd be great. That'd be great experience for him. All those guys going to play in that, it's like playing playoff hockey in February. And you love those guys to get into that, be around those type of players. Those are all good experiences. We'll see where it ends up."

### *KEY PLAY*

Vilardi's second goal of the night at 18:18 of the second period capped off a dominant frame for Winnipeg (they turned a 2-1 deficit into a 4-2 lead), set a new career high for the Jets winger and proved to be the game-winner after Kyle Palmieri scored with just under nine minutes left in regulation to bring the visitors within a goal.

### *EXTRA, EXTRA*

A crowd of 14,685 took in the game, which is 540 short of a sellout but above season average of 14,138 through the first 29 home dates.

There was slight booing of the Star-Spangled Banner prior to puck drop, although it wasn't as loud or as sustained as it was during Tuesday's game against the Carolina Hurricanes.

The Jets went three-for-three on the penalty kill, with all of them coming in the final frame. Hellebuyck was a huge reason why, making eight of his 32 saves in one wild two-minute frenzy that came during the last Islanders power play late in the third. (New York outshot Winnipeg 19-6 in the third).

“It’s just the usual from him. He’s incredible, always on top of his game,” said Vilardi. “He’s so consistent that it’s really incredible to watch as his teammate on the ice and on the bench. It’s pretty cool to watch day in and day out.”

The Jets will now be off until practices resume on Feb. 19. They’ll return to game action on Feb. 22 in St. Louis.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/02/07/trade-deadline-chevys-time-to-shine>

***Trade deadline Chevy’s time to shine  
Jets GM has delicate task of improving team without upsetting chemistry***

By: Ken Wiebe and Mike McIntyre

It is a delicate situation in which Kevin Cheveldayoff finds himself.

The general manager of the Winnipeg Jets recognizes with the NHL trade deadline just under one month away, his team is in position where making a move — or several — to help augment the roster absolutely looks like the right thing to do.

Since the Jets are entering the break for the 4 Nations Face-Off as the top team in the Western Conference and one of the best teams in the entire league, Cheveldayoff has the luxury of being fussy when it comes to the additions he might consider — or ultimately make.

He must also weigh the risks of what bringing in a player might do to the chemistry this team has built through 56 games.

Jets head coach Scott Arniel is in his third season with the organization, so he’s familiar with how Cheveldayoff does business.

What are those conversations like now that he’s the bench boss?

“You’re always looking at the market. Chevy is always talking to the other GMs, names are flying around all the time,” said Arniel.

“For us we like our hockey team, but if there’s somebody there that can make us a little bit better or a little bit deeper — our plan is to play a long time, play into June. You look at all the teams that have gone that way, they’ve had to go deep with their roster because of injuries and different things.

“So if there’s somebody that makes sense for our group, certainly we’ll talk about it. But that’s just Chevy doing his due diligence and seeing what’s available.”

It’s the time of year when the media is trying to connect the dots.

When a team has two scouts on the list at a certain game, could that mean discussions are in the works with one or both of the teams on the ice? Are they looking for a depth piece, a prospect or could Cheveldayoff be taking a swing for a home run.

When Cheveldayoff held his state-of-the-union address in Denver last month, he bristled at the use of “being all-in” and you can understand where he’s coming from.

The term definitely falls under the realm of being open to interpretation and GMs such as Cheveldayoff prefer to deal in absolutes.

The bigger issue is the definition means one thing to a fan base and can be another to the GM, who has one eye on the present and the other on the future.

Having a vision is essential, but the ability to adapt on the fly is critical when it comes to navigating the potholes on the road as the Jets and the other 31 teams approach March 7.

“We’re not sitting here going, ‘Oh, we’ve got to fill this hole, this hole and this hole.’ We’ve got a really good hockey team,” said Arniel. “But knowing Chevy, like I mentioned, if we can help with our depth or even whatever the scenario might end up being, if it makes us a better hockey club to give us a chance to win the Cup, that’s what we’re after.”

Finding the right fit is what every GM is looking for. Sometimes it works out, other times it doesn’t.

There are plenty of instances over the years when an under-the-radar deal is the one that has the biggest impact and the higher profile player just can’t seem to find his way with a new group.

Jets right-winger Mason Appleton was asked for his opinion Friday after the morning skate.

“You can say this is the best team in the league and I feel we’re in a really good spot. Or you could say that, you know, you try to add here or there,” said Appleton, who was reacquired by the Jets from the Seattle Kraken in March of 2022 and speaks from experience.

“It’s obviously not up to me, I’m not the GM, but our team is in a really good spot and this is the group that was pre-deadline last year for the most part and at this same time we found ourselves in first place as well. So I think we’ve got a really good team in this room. We’ll see where Chevy goes.”

The hockey world is watching and waiting for the answer.

Cheveldayoff has made a habit of keeping his cards close to the vest since he was named GM of the Jets back in 2011, so it’s worthwhile to take a look at the past when trying to predict what he do.

One thing we know is when the Jets are in the buyer category, they’ve taken the necessary swings to try and improve the hockey club.

So it stands to reason the Jets are going to do the same thing this time around, whether that means making a pre-emptive strike like Cheveldayoff did last season when he acquired Sean Monahan — or waiting until closer to the deadline as he did in 2018 when Paul Stastny proved to be the perfect addition.

Although Arniel is correct in his assessment the Jets don’t have many distinguishable holes to fill, there are areas on the roster that can be improved, most notably with the defence.

Nobody is doubting the depth, but if a team wants to win the 16 playoff games required to secure the Stanley Cup, the third pairing could still use a boost.

As for the forwards, the recent loss of captain Adam Lowry opened the door for Rasmus Kupari and David Gustafsson to enhance their roles and Vladislav Namestnikov has elevated his game in recent days as well.

That doesn't preclude the Jets beating the bushes for another second-line centre, which has been the most prevalent trade piece acquired over the years.

While the Jets often look for players with term in their bigger deals, when it comes to the deadline, Cheveldayoff hasn't been shy about making a move for a rental.

All to say that while a player with some term would be appealing in the right circumstance, the Jets won't shy away from the rental market either.

Having the ability to be both picky and choosy means Cheveldayoff won't make a panic buy in this complicated game of musical chairs.

Exercising the patient approach means some of his desired targets could be off the board, but it also means the Jets can accrue some additional cap space to take a bigger swing.

It also means a player or two might hit the market who aren't expected to be there — which is exactly how Stastny became available in 2018.

These are some of the complex factors to be sorted through as the Jets prepare for what could be the most important reset in franchise history.

### *Around the glass*

The 4 Nations Face-Off should be a tremendous event. While understanding that it's merely the appetizer to the 2026 Olympics in Milan, it's been way too long since NHL players have been involved in a best-on-best international event.

"Just for the whole league in general, it's something that we've needed for a long time," said Jets blue-liner Dylan DeMelo. "It's going to be great for our sport."

Tough to argue with that logic.

### *Predictions*

*Wiebe:* Never mind the goaltending issues that many pundits are predicting Team Canada to have.

There's plenty of high-end talent up front and on the back end and you can expect this group to be committed to playing the defensive structure that's required to win the event.

While I'm not underestimating either Sweden or Finland, who have strong rosters, fans in North America are about to get what they want with a Canada vs United States final.

The Jets players that will be involved — goalie Connor Hellebuyck, left-winger Kyle Connor and D-man Josh Morrissey — should all play prominent roles.

I see overtime being required and Canada finding a way to get the job done in a hard-fought battle.

*McIntyre*: At the risk of coming across as a traitor, I've got the American club standing tall at the end by virtue of a thrilling victory over Canada in the final (no overtime required).

I think goaltending is going to be key in a short tournament such as this, and I've got a lot more confidence in Hellebuyck (and his two underlings) than any of the three Canadian netminders.

It's a borderline crime that Washington's Logan Thompson isn't on the team, as he would be the clear-cut No. 1 in my opinion. Regardless of how it plays out, it should be a terrific event.

## **Winnipeg Sun**

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/jets-hit-break-on-eight-game-roll-with-win-over-isles>

### ***Jets hit break on eight-game roll with win over Isles***

By Paul Friesen

The Winnipeg Jets will be able to kick up their heels, crack open a beer and savour the taste of an eight-game winning streak when they hit warmer climes for a 12-day break from hockey this weekend.

Gabe Vilardi set a career high with his 23rd and 24th goals of the season as the Jets downed the New York Islanders, 4-3, on Friday night.

"The way the first period started, I wasn't sure if some guys had already taken off," head coach Scott Arniel cracked, referring to the early chances his team gave up. "It's a great way to go out. We finished on a real great note against a desperate Islanders team. Found a way to get ourselves another two points."

A crowd of 14,685 watched their team match the length of its team-record, season-opening streak against an injury-depleted New York team that had somehow come into Winnipeg 8-1 in their last nine.

"It feels good," Vilardi said. "We keep piling up wins... trying to finish high getting into the playoffs."

Connor Hellebuyck faced 35 shots, 19 of them in the third period, as the Jets saw their two-goal lead cut in half but hung on for just their second win against the Islanders in the past 10 meetings.

While the two-time Vezina Trophy winner came up big, Arniel says his team is much more than a brick wall wearing pads and a mask.

"We're a pretty well-rounded team and that's part of what our group can be pretty excited about," Arniel said. "On different nights, different people step up. You need extremely strong goaltending to win in this league. We obviously know what we have there. But the biggest thing is how much contribution we get from everybody."

“We’re more of a team than maybe some people think we are.”

Winnipeg improves to 39-14-3, their 81 points topping the NHL, while Hellebuyck improves to 34-7-2.

A wild first minute and change produced a chance for Vilardi at one end and a three-on-one the other way, New York’s Simon Holmstrom’s half-pass fooling Hellebuyck for the first goal 65 seconds in.

A sparkling solo effort tied it for the Jets barely three minutes later, and it didn’t come from someone you’d expect.

Alex Iafallo went from his own zone down the right wing, shook Islanders centre Bo Horvat off him like an unwanted layer of clothing and went upstairs on Ilya Sorokin.

“Don’t underrate his hands,” Vilardi said of Iafallo, who notched his eighth of the year.

Less than eight minutes after that, some sloppiness by the Jets in their own zone handed the visitors a gift: Mason Appleton’s attempt to rim the puck from behind his net glanced off Neal Pionk’s skate and to the front.

Marc Gatcomb couldn’t believe his luck and had the third goal of his 11-game NHL career.

“We just didn’t have everybody on board,” Arniel said that opening 20 minutes. “We weren’t quite engaged. Gave up four odd-man rushes, something that we don’t usually do.”

The Jets tied it less than five minutes into the second, Vilardi converting an impressive, cross-ice Kyle Connor pass for his 23rd of the season.

Winnipeg grabbed its first lead of the night late in the second, when Cole Perfetti’s sneaky pass from behind the net set up Nik Ehlers for his 17th.

“That was a little bit of a hopper,” Perfetti said of the blind pass. “Sometimes they work and sometimes they don’t. I’m glad it worked.”

Vilardi had another word for the play.

“That was nasty,” he said. “He’s constantly making great plays like that. He’s playing so well for us lately and that line has been doing really good.”

Vilardi, set up in the slot by Scheifele, tacked another one on to his career-high even later in the second and it was 4-2, Jets, going into the third.

“To reach a career high in goals and we’re at Game 56, it’s impressive. And, he’s healthy,” Arniel said of his first-line winger, knocking on the lectern he stood behind for good luck. “That’s the biggest thing.”

Vilardi didn’t argue.



“That is a big reason why I am able to achieve that right now,” the 25-year-old said. “And playing with such good players and the success we’ve had as a team is obviously worth looking at as well.”

Leading 4-2 midway through the third, the Jets gave up a goal to Kyle Palmeiri on a scramble, tightening their collars a little. But Hellebuyck shut the door as the Isles poured it on during an eight-shot power play, sealing Winnipeg’s league-leading 39th win.

The Jets don’t play again until Feb. 22 in St. Louis. They’ll return to Winnipeg for three days of practice before that.

“It feels good going into the break on a high note,” Perfetti said. “It’s going to be a lot more fun for everyone, when we’re playing like this.”

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/well-see-where-chevy-goes-jets-expect-team-that-can-ride-into-june>

### ***‘We’ll see where Chevy goes’: Jets expect a lineup that can ride into June***

By Paul Friesen

It doesn’t sound like Winnipeg Jets players will spend anxious hours of their 4 Nations break anticipating what their GM will do as the trade deadline creeps closer.

The way they look at it, a team in the mix for first place overall doesn’t have gaping holes to fill.

“It’s obviously not up to me,” forward Mason Appleton was saying, Friday. “But our team is in a really good spot. And this is the group that was pre-deadline last year, for the most part, and at this same time we found ourselves in first place as well. So we’ve got a really good team in this room.

“Like I said, I’m not the GM. But we’ll see where Chevy goes.”

When the Jets play their first game after the tournament break, they’ll be less than two weeks from the March 7 deadline.

They’ll also be parked at or near the top of the standings: they were riding a seven-game win streak and tied with Washington for a league-best 79 points going into Friday night’s game against the Islanders.

Head coach Scott Arniel, though, knows the last 26 games will have a different feel, with desperate teams scratching and clawing for playoff spots or higher seeds.

The “big hockey,” he called it.

“That’s the next test for us,” Arniel said.

Making sure they’re built to weather it, plus what comes after, is GM Kevin Cheveldayoff’s job.

“Our plan is to play a long time, play into June,” the coach said. “You look at all the teams that have gone that way, they’ve had to go deep with their roster because of injuries and different

things. We're not sitting here going, 'Oh, we've got to fill this hole, this hole and this hole.' We've got a really good hockey team.

"If we can help with our depth, if it makes us a better hockey club to give us a chance to win the Cup, that's what we're after."

The Jets' 10-2 run over their previous dozen games rivals the 15-1 mark they started the season with.

"This time of year it almost feels like wins mean a little more," Appleton said. "And as you keep going they mean more and more. To put a streak like this together at this point of the year is very impressive."

To do it without injured captain Adam Lowry – he's missed the entire seven-game win streak – adds some heft, too.

"It tells you a lot about the depth of this team," Appleton said. "Obviously Adam is the spine, the backbone of this team. He's going to be great to have back. But at the same time we've done a really good job of managing without him."

Time will tell, but the return of No. 17 might be the most significant addition this team makes before March. 7.

## **TSN.ca**

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/02/04/smattering-of-boos-from-jets-fans-during-u-s-anthem>

### ***Jets Ice Chips: Will Cheveldayoff make any tweaks ahead of trade deadline? (VIDEO)***

The Jets head into their final game before Four Nations Face-Off on a seven-game winning streak despite missing their captain Adam Lowry. If there's one thing the Jets have proven in the absence of their heart and soul leader, it's that their depth has been one of their strengths. TSN's John Lu has more on what GM Kevin Cheveldayoff could be thinking as he assesses his club's needs before the trade deadline.

<https://www.tsn.ca/video/domino-s-that-s-hockey-why-aren-t-odds-makers-loving-the-jets~3076297>

### ***Domino's That's Hockey: Why aren't oddsmakers loving the Jets? (VIDEO)***

The Jets currently have a 10-point lead in their division and a seven-point edge in the Western Conference, and yet, FanDuel has five teams ahead of them in their Stanley Cup odds. Why does Winnipeg continue to be overlooked? TSN Director of Scouting Craig Button examines this and if the team should consider dialing back Connor Hellebuyck's workload.

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/what-does-vilardi-bring-to-jets~3076283>

***What does Vilardi bring to Jets? (VIDEO)***

TSN Hockey analyst Bruce Boudreau joined SportsCentre to share his thoughts on what he saw from the Jets in the second period, in which they score three unanswered goals against the Islanders, and what Gabriel Vilardi brings to the Jets, as he set a new career-high in goals with a pair in the contest.