

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-special-teams-lead-jets-to-win>

***Three things - Special teams lead Jets to win
Namestnikov and Vilardi score for the Jets who beat Rangers 2-1***

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG - The Winnipeg Jets returned to their winning ways with a 2-1 victory over the New York Rangers at Canada Life Centre. Vladislav Namestnikov and Gabe Vilardi scored for the Jets who are now 45-17-4 and move eight points up on Dallas for first in the Central, the Stars have two games in hand. Connor Hellebuyck made 21 saves; the Jets will host Dallas on Friday.

NAMESTNIKOV LINE GETS IT STARTED

The Jets second line has been creating a lot of chances as of late but have not seen that translate into the red light turning on. That changed in the first period when Cole Perfetti slid a perfect backhand pass to Vladislav Namestnikov who was standing in the Rangers crease and finished off the play with his 11th. Perfetti ended the night with two assists and now has a career high for points in a season.

"I think tonight it's great to see Vladdy score. We were talking about earlier. Just got to get to the net. And that's exactly what happened," said Perfetti.

"So, he goes to the net, and we find a goal. And hopefully, that's the start of, we start seeing the puck go in the net a little bit more for us."

SPECIAL TEAMS COME UP BIG

With the score tied at one in the second period, Winnipeg went to work on the power play when Matt Rempe was whistled for goaltender interference at 3:11. The Jets capitalized, Cole Perfetti slid a pass to a wide-open Gabe Vilardi who hammered home his 27th of the season for the eventual game winning goal.

The penalty kill stepped up in the third period with the Jets hanging onto a one goal lead. Dylan DeMelo went to the penalty box and the Jets held the Rangers to just two shots on goal with that man advantage and helped seal the win.

SCHENN TIME

Luke Schenn made his Jets debut on the right side of the third defence pairing with Haydn Fleury. Schenn played in the 1,058th game of his career logging over 16 minutes of ice time and added five hits and five blocks.

"Yeah, it's a lot more fun to play with him then against him," said Perfetti.

"Couple really big hits, couple really big blocks, I think, and he's just always making the smart, simple play, and he's a rock back there. So, it's, again, a lot more fun to play with him."

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/new-york-rangers-winnipeg-jets-game-recap-march-11>

Vilardi, Namestnikov lift Jets past Rangers Perfetti has 2 assists for Winnipeg; New York loses 4th in row

By Darrin Bauming

WINNIPEG -- Gabriel Vilardi and Vladislav Namestnikov scored for the Winnipeg Jets, who hung on for a 2-1 win against the New York Rangers at Canada Life Centre on Tuesday.

"That was a hard-fought game," Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel said. "We knew how desperate the Rangers were going to be. We certainly saw that. That was, at times, a little bit of a track meet going both ways. Both specialty teams had to step up and it was a good game. Good goaltending. Came out the right side of it."

Cole Perfetti had two assists, and Connor Hellebuyck made 21 saves for the Jets (45-17-4), who had lost four of their previous six (2-3-1).

"It was a tight game, really tight," Perfetti said. "They're a good team and there wasn't really much either way, and some good goaltending, and physical. It felt pretty physical and fast. That's what most of those games are going to be like now coming down the stretch, so it's a good one to prepare us."

Mika Zibanejad scored for the Rangers (31-28-6), who have lost four straight (0-2-2). Igor Shesterkin made 22 saves.

"I think we played more solid, but a lot of special teams in the second and 5-on-5 kind of gets a little choppy, so it's hard to kind of get into a rhythm," Zibanejad said. "We were battling. It's something that we talked about before the game. I think we did more of that, but it's obviously hard to assess a game like that when you lose, but we'll take tomorrow off and we'll see what we have to do more of."

Namestnikov gave the Jets a 1-0 lead at 5:18 of the first period. Namestnikov got a piece of Perfetti's centering pass before the puck deflected in off the arm of Rangers forward Sam Carrick.

"I mean, there's no consolation at this point in the season, right?" New York coach Peter Laviolette said. "We need wins, we need points. So, it's frustrating, for sure. The guys did play hard tonight. Just couldn't get it to swing our way."

Zibanejad scored on the power play to tie it 1-1 at 11:00. J.T. Miller found him in the slot for a quick shot that beat Hellebuyck's glove into the top corner.

"I thought we were getting a lot of pucks towards the net," Zibanejad said. "Like I said, the second period there's not much 5-on-5, but I think the way they (the Jets) defend they found a lot of pucks in front of the net. I think they get a lot of blocks. I still think we can do a better job."

The Rangers and Jets combined for six penalties in the second period. New York was 1-for-3 on the power play. Winnipeg finished 1-for-4.

"There are still some areas for us (to improve on the penalty kill), some of the clears and things," Arniel said. "Not getting clears when we have that opportunity, that's a big thing if you can get it down there, get a change and get some fresh bodies out there. But, you know what, the guys are really kind of zoning in and recognizing how important our penalty kill is, just like our power play. On any given night, one of them may save you or win you a hockey game. That one (penalty kill) late in the game was pretty big."

Vilardi put the Jets up 2-1 with a power-play goal at 5:06 of the second, scoring from the slot after Perfetti set him up with a backhand pass from the right side of the net.

"Special teams has been a huge part of this all year," Perfetti said. "Again the power play scores a big goal for us and our PK shuts it down when we need them to. That's been a big story of our team and our success. Just trying to get better, both units. And the penalty kill just trying to keep getting better and better and working together and it's coming together nicely."

Dylan DeMelo appeared to make it 3-1 at 3:06 of the third, but the Rangers challenged for goaltender interference, and the call was reversed after a video review.

“[The Jets] are as advertised,” said defenseman Luke Schenn, who made his debut for Winnipeg. “Obviously, playing (against) them this year, it’s not by mistake that they’re in this position in the standings. The biggest thing I noticed is how much structure there is and how much detail there is on the defensive zone. Guys are in position and defending first. At the end of the day, that’s what wins in this League. They have skill, know when it’s time to take over and obviously, a great power play and goaltending. Like I said, it was pretty impressive to be a part of a group who plays the right way like this.”

NOTES: Zibanejad scored his 106th power-play goal, tying Brian Leetch for the fourth-most in franchise history. ... Vilardi’s goal was his 27th of the season but his first in nine games. ... Schenn had a game-highs in both hits (five) and blocked shots (five) in 16:02 of ice time. He was traded to Winnipeg by the Pittsburgh Penguins on Friday. ... Winnipeg defenseman Haydn Fleury played in his 300th NHL game. ... Jets defenseman Dylan Samberg played in his 200th NHL game.

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/rugged-luke-schenn-might-have-arrived-at-the-right-time-for-playoff-bound-jets/>

Rugged Luke Schenn might have arrived at the right time for playoff-bound Jets

By Jacob Stoller

WINNIPEG — A lot of fans shrugged their shoulders when Luke Schenn arrived.

It was hardly a sexy addition, especially compared to what Dallas and Colorado did at the deadline. The 35-year-old wasn’t the top pairing right-handed defenceman many hoped GM Kevin Cheveldayoff would land. And, at first glance, a second- and fourth-round pick seemed a bit rich for a third-pairing defenceman.

But those inside the Winnipeg Jets dressing room saw it differently.

Having gone toe-to-toe with him over his last two years in Nashville, adding Schenn was viewed as nothing short of a home run.

“Yeah, it's a lot more fun to play with him than against him,” Jets forward Cole Perfetti said.

To some, the “hard to play against” depiction is just another hockey buzzword — similar to “pucks in deep” or “full 60 minutes.” But if you roll your eyes at the value placed on being hard to play against, look no further than Exhibit A: Tuesday’s 3-1 win over the New York Rangers.

Schenn finished the tight-checking game with five hits, five blocked shots and one takeaway in 16:01 of ice time. The six-foot-two defenceman lived up to his reputation of protecting the guts of the ice — looking like a linebacker in a sled drill as he pushed Matt Rempe out of the crease after a whistle late in the second period. He earned ovations from the home crowd after his thunderous hit on Arthur Kaliyev in the second period and his block on Carson Soucy’s point shot late in the third period.

“That’s sort of my identity, and it always has been,” Schenn said. “If I’m not doing that, then I’m not playing to the best of my abilities.”

Josh Morrissey called Schenn the “human eraser” when awarding the player of the game jacket to him post-game.

“In the third period there, he rocked a couple guys and in the last 10 minutes, he had three or four blocks, or whatever it was,” Perfetti said. “He’s almost playing goalie, like he took up so much space and you can’t get it past him.”

Come playoff time, you need those types of players.

Dating back to last year’s first-round series against Colorado — where there was more traffic in front of Connor Hellebuyck than Route 90 during rush hour — the Jets have been in dire need of someone like Schenn.

“There’s a lot of guys that go the long way to get to the net when he’s out there,” Jets coach Scott Arniel said.

And while Schenn might be on the back nine of his career, the Jets’ well-structured, defence-first system is a perfect environment to get the most out of the high-IQ rearguard.

“If it’s a free-wheeling game, that’s what puts me in one a little bit,” Schenn said. “The more details, the more structure, the better.”

You can't overlook his intangibles, either.

Schenn isn't just well-travelled throughout his 1,058-game career — having played for 10 different teams — he's also shown an ability to quickly step into a leadership role when joining a team midseason.

Look no further than his pit stop with the Leafs in 2022-23.

At the time, Toronto hadn't advanced past the first round since 2003-04. The Maple Leafs were coming off six consecutive first-round exits. Pressure was mounting. When Schenn found out that his teammates would often eat at the team hotel on the road during the playoffs, he spearheaded an initiative to break that trend. He organized team dinners, booking private rooms, hand-picking menus and carefully cultivating an atmosphere that could help take the edge off his highly anxious group.

“(At the team dinners,) we have it set up where we have another (NHL playoff) game on TV in the background, and guys are just enjoying each other's company for two to three hours rather than being in a hotel and basically consciously thinking about the task at hand the next day,” Schenn told the Toronto Star at the time. “I think that's important. But it's also important to build relationships with guys.”

The Leafs advanced to the second round that year.

Coming off consecutive first-round exits and years of disappointment since the 2017-18 conference finals run, Winnipeg is in a similar boat to that Toronto team. It needs to get the monkey off its back. And for Schenn, there's urgency too.

“I really expect an exuberance from him,” Cheveldayoff told reporters after the deadline. “Because when you get a little longer in the career, you know that you don't have as many of those years left. So I think that urgency, that desire, he'll be able to talk to the guys and say, ‘You know what, guys, buckle down, because it's damn well worth it.’”

Schenn is exactly the type of role player the Jets need to break through.

Canadian Press

<https://www.chrisd.ca/2025/03/12/winnipeg-jets-new-york-rangers-game-story-win/>

Jets Impressed with Schenn's Debut on Blue Line in 2-1 Win Over Rangers

By Carter Brooks, The Canadian Press

The Winnipeg Jets have won three of their past four games and have their sights focused on a division title. The latest step toward claiming home-ice advantage came by way of a 2-1 win over the visiting New York Rangers on Tuesday.

Gabriel Vilardi scored the winner on a power play, Cole Perfetti chipped in with two assists, while Connor Hellebuyck made 21 saves for his league-leading 38th victory of the season.

The win moved Winnipeg to a staggering 45-17-4 on the year, good for 94 points — eight clear of the idle Dallas Stars, whom the Jets host on Friday.

“That was a hard-fought game,” head coach Scott Arniel said post-game. “We knew how desperate the Rangers were going to be, we certainly saw that. That was, at times, a little bit of a track meet going both ways.

“Both specialty teams had to step up and it was a good game. Good goaltending. Came out the right side of it.”

Tuesday's test marked the debut of trade deadline acquisition defenceman Luke Schenn and the home debut of returnee Brandon Tanev, who played parts of four seasons with the Jets to begin his NHL career.

Schenn finished with five hits, five shot blocks, a shot on goal and one takeaway in just over 16 minutes of ice time.

“It's a lot more fun to play with him than against him, I'll tell you that,” laughed Perfetti, who set a new career high with 40 points on the season. “He had a couple of really big hits, a couple of really big blocks. And he's just always making the smart, simple play.

“He's a rock back there. Again, a lot more fun to play with. He's a heck of a player. A big guy out there and he's not fun to play against. It's great to have him.”

Schenn's new coach looked favourably on his debut as well.

"A big one," Arniel said of his immediate impact. "(He) ran into some people. Couple big shot blocks. Keeps the game simple ... like we talked about yesterday. Makes a good first pass. Recognizes what's ahead of him. I'm sure there were lots of nerves coming in here. First game, against a team like the Rangers, that was a real good first showing."

For a 35-year-old veteran on the 11th stop of his lengthy NHL journey, a good first impression goes a long way. Schenn skated with Haydn Fleury on the team's third defensive pair — a grouping that worked well in its first showing.

"At the end of the day, I just try to do whatever it takes to win," Schenn said. "Obviously, that's sort of my identity, and it always has been. If I'm not doing that, then I'm not playing to the best of my abilities."

"That's what gets me to the game and at the end of the day, I'll do whatever I can to win. Like I said, whether the fans appreciate it or not, I'm trying to help the Jets win games."

With 44 goals and 203 total points in 1,058 career games, Schenn is not one to dazzle offensively. His structure and defensive prowess are his bread and butter. He brought his A-game on Tuesday to a team in need of a solid, shutdown third pair defender.

And on his new team? Schenn was thoroughly impressed with what he saw.

"They're as advertised," he said. "Obviously, playing them this year, it's not by mistake that they're in this position in the standings. The biggest thing I noticed is how much structure there is and how much detail there is in the defensive zone. Guys are in position and defending first."

"At the end of the day, that's what wins in this league. They have skill, know when it's time to take over and obviously, a great power play and goaltending. Like I said, it was pretty impressive to be a part of a group that plays the right way like this."

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11077552/winnipeg-jets-edge-rangers-2-1-for-45th-win-of-the-season/>

Winnipeg Jets edge Rangers 2-1 for 45th win of the season

By Christian Aumell & Russ Hobson Global News

After some mixed results on a four-game road swing, a return home proved to be just what the doctor ordered for the Winnipeg Jets.

It wasn't always pretty, but the Jets got the job done Tuesday night against the Rangers, edging New York 2-1.

The Jets are now unbeaten in regulation on home ice in seven straight games (6-0-1) going all the way back to mid-January. The Jets became the first team in the NHL to 45 wins and they did it in just their 66th game, which is the fastest the Jets have reached that mark in franchise history.

Gabriel Vilardi broke a one-one tie five minutes into the second period to wrap up the scoring and give the Jets the lead for good.

"There wasn't really much either way," said Jets forward Cole Perfetti. "Some good goaltending and physical. It felt it was pretty physical and fast and so that's what most of those games are going to be like coming down the stretch. So, it was a good one to prepare us."

Perfetti was one of the best players on the ice and had a pair of primary assists in the victory. Vladislav Namestnikov notched the other marker for the Jets to end a nine-game point drought, while Mika Zibanejad replied with the Rangers' lone goal in the loss.

Luke Schenn made his Jets' debut after last week's trade deadline deal. He skated on their third pairing alongside Haydn Fleury and also saw time on the penalty kill.

"It's been about six days since I skated," Schenn said. "It was nice to get the first one out of the way there."

“Just obviously trying to help the Jets win games. And it was a great crowd tonight. Obviously, the building had a great energy in it. Fans were on their feet at times in the third period especially. And it’s exciting to play in front of a passionate fan base like this.”

Schenn had five hits and five blocked shots in 16:02 of ice time.

“He ran into some people, couple big shot blocks, keeps the game simple,” said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. “He makes a good first pass, recognizes what’s ahead of him. I’m sure there was lots of nerves coming in here, first game against a team like the Rangers – that was a real good first showing.”

With his 39th and 40th point of the season, Perfetti set a new career-high for points, topping the 38 he had a year ago.

“That’s pretty cool,” he said. “I think that obviously it’s not all about points. Want to focus my goals this year, has just been focusing on my play and the points will come.”

Fleury appeared in his 300th career game as Logan Stanley and Colin Miller both came out of the lineup.

The game got off to a clunky start with seven whistles in the first 3:27, so it was fitting that an odd goal opened the scoring.

Nikolaj Ehlers carried the puck across the Rangers’ blue line before dropping it to Perfetti. He made a nice move, drawing Igor Shesterkin out of position before sending a pass to the front of the net that Namestnikov got a piece of before it ricocheted off the body of Sam Carrick and into the open net at the 5:18 mark of the first.

The tally snapped a 12-game goalless drought for Namestnikov and ended an eight-game run without a point.

New York drew level with exactly nine minutes to go in the first as the Rangers cashed in on the power play.

Artemi Panarin sent a cross-ice pass to J.T. Miller that Miller mishandled but the puck bounced off his stick right to Zibanejad in the slot and he roofed it past Connor Hellebuyck to tie the game.

Penalties were the story of the second period as Winnipeg’s top-ranked power play was able to restore their lead.

Matt Rempe started the parade to the penalty box at the 3:11 mark and less than a minute later, Ehlers and Miller were assessed offsetting minors which moved Perfetti up to the top PP unit.

After the Jets got set up in the New York end, Josh Morrissey sent the puck low to Perfetti who nearly lost the handle on it before he slid a backhand pass to Vilardi in the slot. With Shesterkin overcommitted to Perfetti after the near stumble, Vilardi had a yawning cage to score into for his 27th goal of the season.

The Rangers had a chance to equalize on the power play thanks to a Brandon Tanev penalty but were unsuccessful. As were the Jets after Miller picked up a cross-checking penalty just shy of the midway point of the period.

Each team had other chances to score with Namestnikov and Adam Lowry being stonewalled on breakaways by Shesterkin, while the Rangers rang one off the iron, their second of the game from a dangerous area of the ice.

The Jets' fourth power play of the game began with 1:43 to go in the second when Brennan Othmann was called for high-sticking but it was perhaps Winnipeg's worst power play of the night as the game stayed 2-1 heading into the third period.

Just over three minutes into the third, Dylan DeMelo blasted a one-timer past Shesterkin to make it 3-1 but the Rangers challenged the play, believing that Morgan Barron interfered with Shesterkin in the crease. The control room agreed with the Rangers and took the goal off the board, much to the chagrin of the Winnipeg fans.

Less than three minutes later, DeMelo went to the box for high-sticking but his teammates got the kill to keep it a one-goal game.

Shesterkin went to the bench for an extra attacker with just over two minutes left and New York had a couple of good looks before the Jets were able to run out the clock.

Hellebuyck made 21 saves to earn his 38th victory of the season.

The Jets will return to action Friday when the Dallas Stars visit for a massive Central division tilt.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11078003/analysis-winnipeg-jets-central-division-dallas-stars/>

ANALYSIS: Playoff feel already here as Jets take on Stars in Central Division heavyweight matchup

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

There is less than 20 per cent of the NHL season remaining for the Winnipeg Jets, and while they lead the league in overall wins, they haven't secured a post-season berth just yet.

In order to get there, they'll likely require an additional four or five victories over their remaining 16 games and probably at least double that amount if they want to retain the top spot in the Central Division.

And while the playoffs are still six weeks away, the level of importance of each game Winnipeg plays has become discernable, as the stakes grow greater and the team's expectations increase with each two points.

It's a feeling that was certainly present Tuesday night in downtown Winnipeg as the Jets were earning a hard-fought, one-goal, 15-round prize fight over the New York Rangers. What that win also produced was a lens into what the shuffle toward game 83 – and beyond – is going to look like henceforth.

That brings us to Friday night, when the Dallas Stars come to town – a team eight points back of the Jets for first in the division and with two games in hand.

Without hyperbole, it will be unquestionably the most consequential game for both teams this season.

A win by the Jets increases their lead to 10 points. A loss drops it to six and the games in hand that the Stars possess become even more valuable in the race to secure the regular-season Central Division banner.

Now, there is nothing must-win about Friday's game between the Jets and Stars. We're merely pointing out that it could very well influence a divisional winner, making it certainly the most important game of the season for both teams.

And with less than 20 per cent of the season left to play, Friday's victor won't secure a post-season berth with a win, but we're 80 per cent sure Friday's game will feel like the playoffs have already arrived.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/schenn-stands-tall-in-jets-debut%7E3093110>

Schenn stands tall in Jets' debut (VIDEO)

In his Winnipeg debut, Luke Schenn blocked five shots, and delivered five hits. TSN's Dan Robertson and Kevin Sawyer have more on the impact Schenn had, and how important it was to get depth scoring in a tight game against the Rangers.

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/was-it-a-mistake-for-winnipeg-not-to-load-up-at-deadline%7E3074576>

Was it a mistake for Winnipeg not to load up at deadline? (VIDEO)

While division rivals from Colorado and Dallas were loading up before the NHL trade deadline, Winnipeg added some depth pieces. Was it a mistake not to add a big name? TSN Hockey analyst Martin Biron shares his thoughts on that, and explains how important it will be for the team's depth to step forward and support like they did in the Jets' win over the Rangers.

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/03/11/iafallo-wants-to-stay-in-river-city>

Iafallo wants to stay in River City

Pending free agent would like to sign extension with Jets

By: Ken Wiebe

Alex Iafallo understands what unrestricted free agency could mean for him.

At the same time, what Iafallo learned from his first dalliance with the collectively bargained right is that once you find a place where you're happy, there's no need to go elsewhere.

Or in this case, open up the bidding process to the 31 other teams in the NHL.

Now, it's important to remember lafallo hasn't put pen to paper on a contract extension with the Winnipeg Jets, but the versatile winger made it clear he'd like to stick around beyond this summer Tuesday before his team faced the New York Rangers.

lafallo's camp was in touch with the Jets during the break for the 4 Nations Face-Off and the two sides continue to work on a deal that would extend his time with the organization that acquired him in the blockbuster deal with the Los Angeles Kings in the summer of 2023.

"They're trying to figure something out, which is good," said lafallo. "Obviously not thinking about it too much. I'd like to stay, so we're just going to go from there."

The Jets already got one of their pending UFAs signed last month, as Vladislav Namestnikov inked a two-year deal with an AAV of US\$3 million, which represented a raise of US\$1 million per season.

Not only are lafallo (31) and Namestnikov (32) similar in age, their ability to jump up and down the lineup and play an effective game is another parallel.

While Namestnikov was a first-round pick (27th overall) of the Tampa Bay Lightning in the 2011 NHL Draft, lafallo went undrafted and was a UFA when the Kings and other teams came calling for his services after his fourth season with the University of Minnesota-Duluth Bulldogs.

That experience is something lafallo has kept on his mind when weighing the options for the future.

Although nothing is final until a deal is signed, lafallo made it clear that he'd prefer not to have this drag on until July 1 if possible.

"I'm just going to play my game and see what happens. That's kind of how I've always done it," said lafallo, who was acquired along with fellow forwards Gabe Vilardi and Rasmus Kupari and a second-round draft pick in 2024 that became defenceman Alfons Freij for Pierre-Luc Dubois.

"I was never really drafted, so you never know. Trust the process is what I'm sticking with. Keep working hard. Live in the present. That's how I've always been."

The present looks pretty good for lafallo, who became the 10th member of the Jets (and ninth forward) to hit double digits in goals on Sunday when he scored a six-on-five marker in the 4-2 loss to the Carolina Hurricanes.

It's the seventh consecutive season lafallo, whose career high is 17, reached 10 goals. The only time he didn't hit that total was when he had nine goals and 25 points in 75 games during his rookie campaign in 2017-18.

lafallo was up to 22 points in 65 games going into Tuesday's game, but his value to the Jets has stretched far beyond his statistics since his arrival.

He's mostly been used on the fourth line this season, but when injuries hit, lafallo has consistently shown an ability to perform well when his ice time is increased and he moves his way up the depth chart.

Last season, lafallo had an extended look on the top line after the early-season injury to Vilardi.

Earlier this season, lafallo found himself skating alongside captain Adam Lowry and Nikolaj Ehlers for a game that included the assignment of trying to contain Colorado Avalanche superstar and reigning Hart Trophy winner Nathan MacKinnon.

It's not like these challenges are foreign to lafallo, since he spent a good chunk of time with the Kings on a checking line with Azne Kopitar.

The other part of the equation is he's an effective penalty killer and is on the Jets' second power-play unit that has contributed plenty of offence on the road to becoming the most efficient team in the NHL with the man advantage.

That's why he's averaging more than 12 1/2 minutes per game this season.

"It's awesome to see what he's doing. Proud of him, and definitely knew he had that in him," said Manitoba Moose captain Dominic Toninato, whose time with lafallo as a teammate goes back to their time with the Fargo Force of the USHL and continued at the University of Minnesota-Duluth and eventually, the Jets.

"He brings it all. He can move up and down the lineup, he can play on the power play, PK, and be out there for empty nets on both sides. The guy is an incredible player."

lafallo brings a lunch-pail attitude to the rink on a daily basis. He's willing to go to the hard areas and make the unheralded plays that are essential to winning.

"He does all of those little things really well," said Jets assistant coach Marty Johnston. "He does it each and every day and he doesn't look for any sort of glory in it. He just goes about his business. He's a real glue player for us and he's really important."

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/03/11/prime-time-perfetti>

Prime-time Perfetti

Patience pays off as forward sets up both goals in victory over Rangers

By: Mike McIntyre

It was around this time last season Cole Perfetti saw his job slipping away, the result of a couple big trade deadline additions that left him on the outside looking in as a perpetual healthy scratch heading down the stretch and into the playoffs.

Now? The 23-year-old is a key driver on the NHL's No. 1 club, finding various ways to contribute and showing why a little faith in a young player can go a long way.

The latest example came Tuesday night when Perfetti took on the role of primary playmaker and helped the Winnipeg Jets down the New York Rangers 2-1 at Canada Life Centre.

Perfetti set up linemate Vlad Namestnikov for the opening goal early in the first period, then fed Gabe Vilardi for what proved to be the game-winner in the middle frame on the power play.

Add it all up and he set a new career-high, hitting 40 points for the first time.

"That's pretty cool. (But) my goal this year has just been focusing on my play and the points will come," said Perfetti.

The Jets improved to 45-17-4 and increased their Central Division lead over Dallas to eight points, although the Stars do own two games in hand. New York fell to 31-28-6 and remain just outside the final Eastern Conference playoff picture.

Let's break this one down further:

OPTIMAL LINEUP, OPTIMAL RESULT: This was the first time all year Jets coach Scott Arniel had every player available, with no injuries to report and the additions of defenceman Luke Schenn (making his Jets debut) and forward Brandon Tanev last Friday.

In that sense, you figure this was Arniel's optimal lineup, and perhaps exactly what we might see when the playoffs begin in mid-April. The Jets were pleased with how it looked, facing a desperate opponent in what turned into a physical, tight-checking affair.

"That was a hard fought game. We knew how desperate the Rangers were going to be, we certainly saw that," said Arniel.

"That was, at times, a little bit of a track meet going both ways. Both specialty teams had to step up and it was a good game. Good goaltending. Came out the right side of it."

Schenn certainly made an impact, with five blocks and five hits which led all players.

"At the end of the day, I just try to do whatever it takes to win. Obviously, that's sort of my identity, and it always has been," said Schenn.

"If I'm not doing that, then I'm not playing to the best of my abilities. It was a great crowd tonight. The building had a lot of great energy in it, the fans were on their feet at times in the third period especially, it's exciting to play in front of a passionate fan base like this."

Skating beside Haydn Fleury — who rendered Logan Stanley a healthy scratch for the first time all year — the two-time Stanley Cup champion was calm, cool and collected during his 16:02 of ice time.

"That's obviously our base and that's what the buy-in has been for us the last few years. He sees (it)," Arniel said of Schenn. "He was in our division. I know that for him, it makes it easier with that structure, having that kind of defence-first mentality. It makes it an easier game for him. That's what he does well."

Tanev also had a good night, registering three hits and showing why he's a fan favourite by repeatedly mixing it up with New York players. He did take a minor penalty, getting too close to Rangers goaltender Igor Shesterkin and bowling him over, but that's the type of hard-nosed play the Jets have been looking for.

Stanley joined fellow defencemen Colin Miller and Ville Heinola and forwards Rasmus Kupari and David Gustafsson as the other healthy scratches.

There's now plenty of internal competition for jobs — Perfetti can certainly relate — which should keep everyone on their toes going forward.

ASK AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE: It was following the morning skate Namestnikov, speaking with media, showed a bit of frustration with how many good chances he and his linemates had created in recent games only to come up empty-handed.

"We need to kind of get through that little slump and start putting pucks in the net," he said.

Mission accomplished, as Namestnikov snapped a 12-game scoring drought — and an eight-game pointless stretch — by deflecting Perfetti's pass attempt for his 11th of the year. Ehlers made a terrific play to get the puck to Perfetti as Winnipeg's second line got the scoring started.

There was some concern about Namestnikov's availability after he took a hard shot to the head from Carolina forward Jordan Staal in Sunday's 4-2 loss and was pulled from the game by concussion spotters. Fortunately, there was no lasting damage and Winnipeg's second-line centre — a position they tried and failed to upgrade at the deadline — didn't miss a beat.

"It's a hockey game. Things happen. That's the way they tried to respond," Namestnikov said of becoming Public Enemy No. 1 after he laid out Hurricanes star Sebastian Aho earlier in the game. "I've got no problem with that. Play hard and sometimes checks like that happen. Just play through it."

POWER PLAY STRIKES AGAIN: It's not just how many power play goals you can score — something the Jets have done plenty this year — but also when you can find the back of the net.

You can mark Vilardi's tally — his 27th of the year to give him 60 points for the first time in his career — as exactly that.

Perfetti normally isn't on the top unit, but had taken the place of Ehlers after he and J.T. Miller got involved in a fracas early in the power play, which came after big Matt Rempe had been called for goaltender interference against Connor Hellebuyck.

His feed to Vilardi was a bit of a flub.

"I was going to take it to the net and then realized that Gabe, I think, was pretty open and tried to catch myself, and mishandled it in a good way to I guess fake everyone out," he said.

"It was a little bit of a panic. I wanted to take it to the net and mishandled it and it worked out well."

CLOSE CALLS: The Jets had several chances to increase the lead, including breakaways by Namestnikov and captain Adam Lowry in the second period and a goal by Dylan DeMelo early in the third period that was overturned following a challenge by the Rangers.

Officials determined Morgan Barron, who had gone into the blue paint on his own, didn't allow Shesterkin to fully make an attempt to stop DeMelo's shot.

That made for some dicey moments down the stretch, but the Jets held strong to their defensive structure, got some key blocks and clears and, of course, the usual exceptional goaltending from Hellebuyck who won for a league-leading 38th time in his league-leading 50th start.

"Well, they're as advertised," Schenn said of his new team.

"Obviously, playing them this year, it's not by mistake that they're in this position in the standings. The biggest thing I noticed is how much structure there is and how much detail there is on the defensive zone. Guys are in position and defending first. At the end of the day, that's what wins in this league."

KEY PLAY: Vilardi's power play goal was the game-winner.

THREE STARS:

1. Jets LW Cole Perfetti: 2 assists
2. Jets C Vlad Namestnikov: 1 goal
3. Jets G Connor Hellebuyck: 21 saves

EXTRA EXTRA: The Jets went 1-for-4 on the power play and killed two of the three penalties they took, with Mika Zibanejad's first-period strike the only blemish.

A crowd of 14,278 took in the game, which is slightly above the season average of 14,154. To put that in perspective, last year's average was 13,490, while they were at 14,045 during the 2022-23 campaign.

The Jets paid tribute during the game to legendary Rangers broadcaster Sam Rosen, who is retiring after the season. Winnipeg also honoured local female athletes Sara and Kate Manness, Skylar Park, and Leanne Taylor as part of their Celebrating Women In Sport night.

Dylan Samberg (200 games) and Fleury (300 games) both hit personal milestones.

The Jets will practise on Wednesday and Thursday to get ready for a huge showdown on Friday night with Dallas.

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipegsun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/jets-win-nasty-tilt-with-rangers-mar-12-2025>

Jets win nasty tilt with Rangers, rival Stars up next

By Paul Friesen

Winnipeg Jets fans on Tuesday got their first look at the trade-bolstered team built for a long playoff run — and liked what they saw.

Playing a desperate New York Rangers team fighting for a playoff spot in the Eastern Conference, the Jets exchanged hacks, whacks and hits on their way to an entertaining and intense 2-1 victory before a crowd of 14,278.

Vlad Namestnikov and Gabe Vilardi scored the goals, Cole Perfetti assisting on both, while Connor Hellebuyck picked up his 38th win in goal, the shot count favouring his team, 24-22.

New York's desperation was clear, as Rangers players finished checks, hunted down loose pucks and gave the Jets very little easy ice.

"It was a tight game, really tight," is how Perfetti described it. "And physical. It felt pretty physical and fast. That's what most of those games are going to be like now coming down the stretch, so it's a good one to prepare us."

“A hard-fought game,” Jets coach Scott Arniel added. “At times a little bit of a track meet going both ways. Both specialty teams had to step up... good goaltending. Came out the right side of it.”

It was nasty at times, too, Winnipeg’s Nik Ehlers and J.T. Miller exchanging slashes that put both in the penalty box and left Miller in considerable pain.

It was the first Jets game for newly acquired defenceman Luke Schenn, the second for forward Brandon Tanev. Both drew cheers from the crowd and their teammates for some feisty play.

“A lot more fun to play with him than against him, I’ll tell you that,” Perfetti said. “He had a couple of really big hits, a couple of really big blocks. And he’s just always making the smart, simple play. He’s a rock back there.”

Schenn led all players with five hits and five blocked shots.

“He rocked a couple guys and in the last 10 minutes had three or four blocks,” Perfetti continued. “He’s almost playing goalie, he took up so much space and you can’t get it past him. That’s amazing.”

Arniel: “I’m sure there was lots of nerves coming in here. First game, against a team like the Rangers, that was a real good first showing.”

The 35-year-old Schenn, traded twice last week, acknowledged this one was a challenge.

“It’s just been a crazy week,” he said. “Then on top of that, it’s been about six days since I skated. So that was a little bit nerve-wracking. I skated here a little bit (Monday), but it was almost like having a double 4 Nations break with the time off. It was nice to get the first one out of the way. I appreciate everyone welcoming me in here.”

The intensity should continue in Winnipeg’s next game, as they will host the Dallas Stars on Friday in a game between teams vying for top spot in the Central Division.

The win puts the Jets eight points up on Dallas, but the Stars have two games in hand and the teams square off a second time next month.

Schenn sounded impressed but not surprised by his new team.

“They’re as advertised,” he said. “It’s not by mistake that they’re in this position in the standings. The biggest thing I noticed is how much structure there is and how much detail there is on the defensive zone. Guys are in position and defending first. At the end of the day, that’s what wins in this league.

“I’m lost without details. If it’s a free-wheeling game, that’s what puts me in (trouble) a little bit. The more details, the more structure, the better.”

Winnipeg improves to 45-17-4, 24-5-4 at home.

The Rangers dropped their fourth straight, two of them in overtime, and fall to 31-28-6.

“There’s no consolation at this point in the season,” head coach Peter Laviolette said. “We need wins, we need points, so it’s frustrating, for sure. The guys did play hard. Just couldn’t get it to swing our way.”

Namestnikov ended a 12-game drought with a bit of a fluke, a Perfetti pass bouncing off a stick, maybe off a Rangers body, too, and behind Igor Shesterkin early in the first period.

He’ll take it, showing his relief in his celebration.

The point gave Perfetti a career-high 39 on the year.

The Rangers tied it on a power play barely five minutes later, Mike Zibanejad beating Hellebuyck from the slot with Nino Niederreiter in the box for roughing.

Before the first period was up, Hellebuyck had stopped Chris Kreider on a breakaway and the Jets had squandered a power play of their own, recording just one shot on goal.

The power play redeemed itself the next time out, cashing in on a questionable goalie-interference call against New York’s Matt Rempe.

This time Perfetti set up Vilardi for his 27th goal of the year, giving the Jets a 2-1 lead.

Namestnikov had a breakaway chance to extend the lead, but Shesterkin won that showdown and another one with Adam Lowry later in the second.

On an equally glorious chance, Mark Scheifele whiffed on his shot attempt and the Jets took a precarious, one-goal lead into the third, even after the benefit of another power play that spilled into the final 20 minutes.

Dylan DeMelo, set up in the high slot by Niederreiter, appeared to give the Jets a two-goal lead some three minutes into the third.

But the Rangers challenged for goalie interference — Morgan Barron was causing trouble in the crease — and it was disallowed.

The Winnipeg power play went 1-for-4, New York's 1-for-3, including a chance in the third.

"The power play scores a big goal for us and our PK shuts it down when we need them to," Perfetti said. "That's been a big story of our team and our success."

New York Post

<https://nypost.com/2025/03/11/sports/rangers-outclassed-by-nhl-leading-jets-for-fourth-straight-loss/>

Rangers outclassed late by NHL-leading Jets for fourth straight loss as playoff race tightens

By Mollie Walker

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — The losses have piled up for the Rangers once again.

Falling 2-1 to the NHL-leading Jets on Tuesday night at Canada Life Centre, the Blueshirts have dropped four in a row for the third time this season and the first time since Dec. 22-30.

One more loss and they will tie their season-high five-game losing skid from Nov. 21-29.

"It sucks, I mean, we're in a playoff fight right now," Will Borgen said. "We're battling for every point. When you don't get the outcome you want, it sucks. But I think that's part of a long season, too. You're going to go through these droughts, but we got to string along some wins if we want to make playoffs."

This was a scoreboard-watching night for the Rangers, who only squeezed two overtime loser points out of their last four contests.

The Blue Jackets, who are two points ahead and await the Rangers at the end of the week, lost to the Devils, who managed to stay in third place in the Metropolitan Division despite the Senators winning, as well.

Boston beat the Panthers to tie the Rangers (game in hand) at 68 points in the Eastern Conference wild-card race.

The Canadiens joined the tie for two points out of the second spot when they beat the Canucks, 4-2, on Tuesday night.

It was just another night when the Rangers didn't do their playoff hopes any favors.

For an example on how to close out games, the Rangers need look no further than the team at the other end of the ice Tuesday night.

The Jets limited the Rangers to just five shots on goal and two high-danger chances through the final 20 minutes of regulation, per Natural Stat Trick.

Winnipeg goalie Connor Hellebuyck was also stellar, stopping 21 of the 22 shots he faced and standing tall when the Rangers pulled Igor Shesterkin for the six-on-five advantage.

"We were pushing, especially in the last 20 minutes, but came up short," Braden Schneider said. "I thought we had a lot of good chances. I thought we had a really good effort, just couldn't come up with any."

Coming off a dismal defensive effort against Columbus, the Rangers were more encouraged by their performance Tuesday night against one of the most dominant teams this season.

The Jets slipped right around and behind the Rangers on their first goal of the game, which was just another example of how fragile their defensive structure has been lately.

Shesterkin slid all the way out to contest Cole Perfetti, who dished to former Blueshirt Vladislav Namestnikov for a wide-open shot.

Shesterkin had to make 10 saves in the opening 20 minutes alone on the way to 22 on the night.

Earning a power play after Nino Niederreiter ripped K'Andre Miller's helmet off, the Rangers scored just their second goal with the man-advantage in the past eight games.

J.T. Miller fed Mika Zibanejad for his fifth power-play goal of the season, which also counted as his 106th with the Rangers and tied Brian Leetch for the fourth-most power-play goals in franchise history.

Despite outshooting the home team 8-6 through the second period, the Rangers fell behind by a goal.

Winnipeg capitalized on one of their three power-play opportunities in the middle frame, with Perfetti connecting with Gabriel Vilardi in tight for the 2-1 lead.

They nearly made it a 3-1 game on a Dylan DeMelo one-timer from the high slot early in the third period, but the Rangers successfully challenged for goaltender interference.

The equalizer, however, never came for the Blueshirts.

"There's no consolation in that at this point of the season," head coach Peter Laviolette said of the improved effort. "We need wins, we need points. It's frustrating, for sure. Our guys did play hard tonight, couldn't get it to swing our way."