

Winnipegjets.com

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-jets-extend-central-lead-to-10-points>

***Three things - Jets extend Central lead to 10 points
Scheifele, Connor and Vilardi combine for seven points in 4-1 victory***

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG - The Winnipeg Jets moved ten points up on the Dallas Stars in the race for first in the Central with an impressive 4-1 win at Canada Life Centre. Mark Scheifele (3A), Kyle Connor (2G, 1A) and Gabe Vilardi (1A) combined for seven points, Dylan Samberg and Morgan Barron scored the other goals for Winnipeg who is now 46-17-4. Connor Hellebuyck made 24 saves to help the Jets record their 25th home win of the season and tied the franchise record for fewest games to the mark in a single campaign (also 34 GP in 2017-18). Winnipeg will travel to Seattle to play the Kraken on Sunday.

EXCELLENT FIRST PERIOD

With a game of this magnitude, it was very important that the Jets got off to a good start and set the tone on home ice. Dallas had a couple of good chances in the opening frame including one off the stick of Jamie Benn, but the Jets carried the play for the majority of the period. Mark Scheifele had a primary assist on each of Winnipeg's first period goals starting with a nice play where he curled away from a defender and sent a perfect pass onto the stick of Dylan Samberg and the Jets defenceman took care of the rest.

Just over nine minutes later, Scheifele grabbed a loose puck in the corner and found Kyle Connor whose quick release beat Jake Oettinger short side for his 34th of the season. Scheifele recorded the 100th multi-point period of his career, tying Blake Wheeler for the most in franchise history. The goal for Connor turned out to be the game winner, the 59th of his career. He owns the fourth-most game winners among active U.S.-born players, behind Patrick Kane (81), Max Pacioretty (66) and Auston Matthews (62).

KC GETS TO 35 GOALS (AGAIN)

Winnipeg did a great job at forcing Dallas into turnovers in the Jets end of the ice all night. In the second period, the Stars turned the puck over and Scheifele sent the puck up to Connor at the Dallas blueline. Connor saw Josh Morrissey jumping into the rush and played give-and-go with Morrissey before finishing with his second of the night and 35th of the season.

GETTING THE JOB DONE

Thanks to Winnipeg Sports Talk's Michael Remis for this fun fact with some help from MoneyPuck.com. The Jets have increased their chances to 90.1% to win the Central Division with the win over Dallas on Friday.

Canadian Press

<https://www.chrisd.ca/2025/03/15/winnipeg-jets-dallas-stars-game-recap-win/>

'It Was a Big Game': Jets Widen Conference, Division Lead with 4-1 Win Over Stars

By Judy Owen, The Canadian Press

Jets' Scheifele battles before finding Connor for 34th goal of the season

Kyle Connor knew the Winnipeg Jets' game against the Dallas Stars on Friday would be a big test.

He and his teammates passed with flying colours.

Connor scored twice and added an assist in a 4-1 victory that gave Winnipeg (46-17-4) 96 points and widened its Western Conference and Central Division lead over the Stars to 10 points. Dallas (42-21-2) has two games in hand.

The team's leading scorer with 35 goals and 84 points downplayed the importance of the game, even though they're sitting in first place with a good gap between their challengers.

"We're never comfortable with it," Connor said. "We're pushing onto the next one. I think that's kind of been what's made us so successful this year.

"We're not resting, saying cruise control here. There's a lot of hockey left, 15 or so games. You want to build this thing so that you're peaking at the right time, so that's definitely going to be an objective of ours."

Dylan Samberg and Morgan Barron also scored, while Mark Scheifele contributed a trio of helpers in front of a sell-out crowd of 15,225 at Canada Life Centre.

Connor Hellebuyck made 24 saves, helping the Jets go ahead 2-1 in the clubs' four-game season series. The final meeting is April 10 in Dallas.

Mason Marchment scored for the Stars with 3:49 remaining in the third period. Jake Oettinger stopped 18 shots for Dallas.

Jets head coach Scott Arniel didn't soften the importance of the victory.

"It was a big game," he said. "The difference between us being up six points (if we lost) or now being up 10 points.

“They recognized that we had to be at our best against a really good hockey team that doesn’t give you a whole lot of ice or a whole lot of room to work. I thought we had a fantastic first period. It was real solid. We got out, got the lead and didn’t stop from there.”

Winnipeg, which also moved two points ahead of the idle Washington Capitals for top spot in the league, scored on two of its six shots in the first period. Dallas had nine.

Samberg recorded his fifth goal of the season when the defenceman’s shot went through traffic past Oettinger at 8:01. Connor made it 2-0 with a one-timer with 2:58 left in the frame.

Connor then reaped the reward of a passing play with Josh Morrissey to make it 3-0 at 6:43 of the second.

Barron tipped in a Dylan DeMelo shot at 7:26 of the third to stretch the lead to 4-0.

“I think it was exciting. It felt like it was getting towards the end of the year, it almost felt like a playoff game,” Barron said. “They’re kind of creeping up on us in the standings there.”

Marchment nixed the shutout with his 16th of the season with 3:49 left.

“We weren’t competitive enough,” Dallas head coach Pete DeBoer said. “I thought we made it too easy on their goaltender. They defended hard – we knew they defended hard, their numbers said that – and we just didn’t pay enough of a price to get inside and make it difficult for them.”

Connor acknowledged the challenges will continue.

“Every game now is going to be the next big game, right?” he said. “It’s going to keep getting bigger.

“So we were able to rise to the task today, and hopefully we learned some lessons and what that looks like and kind of our foundation of how we were able to come out on top and play such a good game tonight. And we take that on to the next one.”

The Jets head out on a three-game road trip starting Sunday against the Seattle Kraken.

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/dallas-stars-winnipeg-jets-game-recap-march-14>

***Connor scores twice, Jets defeat Stars
Scheifele has 3 assists, Hellebuyck makes 24 saves for Winnipeg***

By Darrin Bauming

WINNIPEG — Kyle Connor scored two goals and had an assist and Mark Scheifele had three assists, and the Winnipeg Jets won 4-1 against the Dallas Stars at Canada Life Centre on Friday.

“I thought we dictated the pace right from the hop,” Connor said. “Played with a lot of pace, played within our structure, defended first. You look at a couple of goals there that we scored, the first one they have possession in our zone for a little bit, we just kept it simple, trusted each other, made the turnover and then resulted off the rush scoring a goal. We stuck to our identity and were able to dictate the play there.”

Dylan Samberg and Morgan Barron also scored for the Jets (46-17-4), who have won four of five (4-1-0). Connor Hellebuyck made 24 saves.

“They’re a really good offensive team and their offensive numbers are real high,” Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel said of the Stars. “Analytically, they’re one of the top teams in the League as well. We shut down a lot of avenues. We did a lot of good things. We created our goals by defending first. Like I’ve talked about often, we played a 200-foot game of defense to make sure that they didn’t get room to work. It turned into offense for us and that’s what we’ve done all year long. We got up and got ahead of them and now, they’ve got to chase the game.”

Mason Marchment scored for the Stars (42-21-2), who had won five of their previous six (5-1-0). Jake Oettinger made 18 saves.

“We weren’t competitive enough,” Dallas coach Pete DeBoer said. “I thought we made it too easy on their goaltender. They defended hard — we knew they defended hard, their numbers said that — and we just didn’t pay enough of a price to get inside and make it difficult for them. I thought defensively we were OK. We didn’t give up a lot. I thought they were opportunistic on the chances they got, but we didn’t do nearly enough to create offense out there.”

Samberg made it 1-0 Jets at 8:01 of the first period. Scheifele cut back to delay a zone entry and saucered a backhand pass to Samberg, who entered the zone late and scored with a wrist shot from above the left circle.

“They recognized that we had to be at our best against a really good hockey team that doesn’t give you a whole lot of ice or a whole lot of room to work,” Arniel said. “I thought

we had a fantastic first period. It was real solid. We got out, got the lead and didn't stop from there."

Connor made it 2-0 at 17:02 when Scheifele took the puck out of the corner and made a quick pass to Connor to score with a one-timer from the face-off dot.

"We're learning about ourselves," DeBoer said. "We're learning about the best teams in the conference right now, what we have to do to compete. Some good lessons in the game tonight for us."

Connor's second pushed it to 3-0 at 6:43 of the second, scoring with a one-timer from the low slot after a give-and-go with Josh Morrissey on the rush.

"The way [Morrissey] was kind of set up, it would have been tough with back pressure coming on him to get a shot off," Connor said. "So I was just always ready to shoot if it was coming back, and he puts it between two, three guys there and their legs and it's right on my tape. So it was a heck of a pass."

Barron scored when he tipped Dylan DeMelo's point shot to make it 4-0 at 7:26 of the third.

"We talk about playing that defensive structure, staying on top of teams and really stymying their momentum," Barron said. "When we're playing our best, that's exactly what it is — the other teams aren't necessarily continuing that offensive flow that they get into. We are able to push back and break up those sections of the games and ultimately push that onto ourselves. When we are at our best, I do think that we see that out of the other team at times. That's just kind of a good indicator that we're playing a good brand of hockey."

Marchment cut it to 4-1 at 16:11. Evgenii Dadonov drove the net side, spun and fed it to the slot where Marchment scored with a shot that beat Hellebuyck along the ice.

"They break out really well, they support each other really well and I think that leads to offense," Marchment said. "I thought we did a pretty good job controlling the neutral zone for the most part... We did a good job limiting their chances. But at the same time [Jake Oettinger] made a couple of huge saves, too. (We've) just got to flush that one and get ready for the next one."

NOTES: Winnipeg recorded its 25th home win of the season and tied the franchise record for fewest games to the mark in a single campaign (also 34 games in 2017-18). They also extended their home point streak to eight games for the first time since a 10-game run from Dec. 2, 2023 to Jan. 11, 2024. ... The Jets are 36-0-1 this season when leading after two periods. ... Scheifele and Connor both assisted on the game-opening goal. Winnipeg owns a 189-45-18 record when both Scheifele and Connor record a point in a game. ... Scheifele's two assists in the first period gave him 100 multipoint periods, tying Blake Wheeler for the most in Jets/Thrashers history. ...

Scheifele recorded his 14th three-assist game to reach 40 for the season. It is his seventh 40-assist season, moving him to within one of tying Wheeler (8) for the most in franchise history. ... Connor recorded his 45th career multigoal game and moved within one of tying Ilya Kovalchuk (46) for the second most in franchise history. Scheifele (48) is first.

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11083133/hellebuyck-top-line-shine-as-winnipeg-jets-dump-dallas-4-1-to-bolster-division-lead/>

Hellebuyck, top line shine as Winnipeg Jets dump Dallas 4-1 to bolster division lead

By Christian Aumell & Russ Hobson Global News

The Dallas Stars may have made a lot of noise at the trade deadline, but there's a reason why they went out to get someone like Mikko Rantanen.

The Stars felt the need to raise their level to match the Winnipeg Jets, and if Friday night was any indication, they've still got some work to do.

The Jets' top line dominated, while Connor Hellebuyck was stellar in goal as Winnipeg knocked off the Stars 4-1 in front of a raucous crowd to stretch their lead atop the Central Division.

Kyle Connor and Mark Scheifele each had three points in the win. The Jets built up a three-goal lead through 40 minutes and held the Stars to just eight shots in the third as Winnipeg won for the fourth time in their last five contests in their biggest game of the season.

"Every game now is going to be the next big game," said Connor. "It's going to keep getting bigger. So, we were able to rise to the test today and hopefully we learn some lessons on what that looks like, and kinda our foundation of how we were able to come out on top, and play such a good game tonight."

The victory sees the Jets tighten their grip on the Central Division lead. They moved 10 points ahead of the second place Stars, but Dallas has two games in hand and they still have to play each other one more time.

"I think we kinda want to hit the ground running when playoffs start," said forward Morgan Barron. "I don't think anyone wants to creep in, not playing their best hockey. We're trying to put our foot down here, really secure that first place, and that's a big step for us."

Connor scored twice, while Barron and Dylan Samberg also found the net. The Jets were outshot in the both first two periods despite having all three goals.

“We had to be at our best against a really good hockey team that doesn’t give you a whole lot of ice,” said head coach Scott Arniel. “I thought we had a fantastic first period. It was real solid and got out and got the lead, and didn’t stop from there.”

The Jets got on the board first thanks to an unlikely source. Connor carried the puck into the Dallas end before sliding it across to Scheifele, who spun back and held the puck while waiting for Samberg to arrive in the zone. Scheifele hit the trailer and Samberg wired a shot past Jake Oettinger at the 8:01 mark for his fifth of the season and his eighth in 201 career NHL games.

Scheifele came oh-so-close to making it 2-0 with roughly six minutes to go in the first when he got the puck on a back-door feed and made a move to his backhand, beating Oettinger but he slid his shot off the post.

Winnipeg’s top line wasn’t done attacking, doubling the lead with 2:58 to go in the first. Gabriel Vilardi battled for the puck in the corner before it arrived on the stick of Scheifele, who sent a short pass to Connor that he whipped through an unsuspecting Oettinger for his 34th of the season.

Dallas wound up outshooting Winnipeg 9-6 in the first, but the Jets had the better quality opportunities.

The big game for the Jets’ big guns continued in the second when Connor tallied his second of the game to make it 3-0.

After Josh Morrissey forced a turnover in the Winnipeg end, Scheifele chipped the puck up the boards and Connor collected it just outside the Dallas blue line. Connor waited for Morrissey to enter the play and executed a perfect give-and-go before Connor wired the puck past Oettinger at the 6:43 mark of the second.

With 4:15 left in the middle frame, the first penalty of the contest was finally called as Colin Miller was sent to the box for interference, but the Stars couldn’t cash in as the score stayed 3-0 after 40 minutes.

Dallas outshot Winnipeg 8-4 in the second, but Hellebuyck kept the sheet clean.

The Jets added on at the 7:26 mark of the third when Morgan Barron tipped a Dylan DeMelo point shot past Oettinger to make it 4-0.

With the game well in hand, the only thing left to determine was whether Hellebuyck would pick up the shutout, and with 3:49 left in the game Mason Marchment broke the goose egg for Dallas.

Still, it was a great game for Hellebuyck, who outdueled his Team USA battymate by stopping 24 shots while Oettinger turned aside 18 in defeat.

Winnipeg will look to stretch their win streak to three games as they hit the road to face Seattle on Sunday evening. Pregame coverage on 680 CJOB begins at 6 p.m. with the puck dropping just after 8 p.m.

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/jets-pass-measuring-stick-test-against-stars-with-flying-colours/>

Jets pass measuring-stick test against Stars with flying colours

By Jacob Stoller

WINNIPEG — That was as close to a playoff-like atmosphere as you'll find in mid-March.

We heard a cohesive "Go Jets Go" chant before the anthems. A "Helly's backup" chant aimed at Jake Oettinger in the second period. And decibel-popping cheers after goals. Fans belted out "Sweet Caroline" and "Hey Baby" even when the songs weren't played during a TV timeout.

Friday's 4-1 win over the Dallas Stars wasn't just another game for the Winnipeg Jets and everyone spectating knew it.

"It was a big game," Jets head coach Scott Arniel said of the team's cushion on first place in the Central Division. "The difference between us being up six points or now being up 10 points."

According to Money puck.com, Winnipeg now has a 90.1 per cent chance of finishing first in the Central Division after beating the Stars. Had they lost in regulation, those odds would've dipped to 70.5 per cent.

This was a measuring stick game against a red-hot Stars team that had won eight of their previous 10 games, while also picking up Mikko Rantanen along the way. And the Jets passed this test with flying colours.

It started with their structured defensive style dictating the first 20 minutes of play, suffocating Dallas' offensive attack en route to generating a 2-0 lead.

"I thought we dictated the pace right from the hop," Jets forward Kyle Connor said. "Played with a lot of pace, played within our structure, defended first. You look at a couple of goals there that we scored, the first one they have possession in our zone for

a little bit, we just kept it simple, trusted each other, made the turnover and then (scored a goal off the rush)."

The Jets are the last team you want to be chasing, especially when they build up a 3-0 lead after 40 minutes. Winnipeg holds a 36-0-1 record when leading after the second period, and they're 29-3-3 when scoring the first goal of the game.

"They're a (well) structured team," Stars forward Mason Marchment said. "They play a really good team game, they break out well and come up together well and their D are always in the rush. So It can be hard to get on top of them sometimes."

It's downright annoying to play against.

Winnipeg held Dallas to 1.74 expected goals at five-on-five — a significant drop from their season average (2.20), the fifth-best mark in the league.

"We talk about playing that defensive structure, staying on top of teams and really stymying their momentum," Jets forward Morgan Barron said. "When we're playing our best, that's exactly what it is. The other teams aren't necessarily continuing that offensive flow that they get into."

They executed that perfectly against Dallas.

"Every opponent that you face has something maybe different that they throw at you, whether it's how they defend or how they attack you offensively," Arniel said. "We threw a game plan together, we did some things yesterday in practice to align with what we wanted to do today. The guys grasp it and then they go out and do it and they execute it. For me as a coach, you love to see that.

"We're trying to find avenues and areas that we can take advantage of, whether it's Dallas tonight or Seattle on Sunday. You're trying to find an avenue where you make them make a mistake. Our group has bought into how we go about our business. Whether it's defending and frustrating a team or if it's our offensive push that creates those scoring chances. The guys buy into it and they do it. Night in and night out."

While nobody outright said it, much of the hype heading into this game stemmed from curiosity about how Winnipeg would stack up against a revamped Stars team post-deadline.

Does a game like this alleviate the anxiety surrounding how much better Dallas — not to mention Colorado — got at the deadline?

Connor wasn't calling this a statement win by any means.

“The playoffs, it's such a different game. It's so different,” he said. “You look at our series versus Colorado in the regular season, I think we swept them last year and we lost 4-1 in the playoffs. Once you get to the playoffs, it's a completely different animal.”

As they have all year, the Jets aren't reading too much into regular-season success. Unless it's paired with a Stanley Cup, nobody will be celebrating a Presidents' Trophy.

That's not to say this group has approached the regular season with a “none of this matters” attitude. But 67 games into the season, a big part of their success is rooted in how they've humbled themselves throughout a season where they've sat first in the West virtually all year.

“We've been here — at least, well, I can speak to it for the three years I've been here at least — it kind of seems like we've been in different situations, but similar,” Barron said. “We're in a playoff spot heading down the stretch and you just learn that as soon as you start looking ahead, whether it's looking ahead to the playoffs or looking ahead to the game next week or looking ahead to your next shift, you kind of get lost there. I think it's been really good for us to stay in that present moment.”

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/video/can-jets-maintain-their-form-with-pionk-out-of-the-lineup/>

Can Jets maintain their form with Pionk out of the lineup? (VIDEO)

Elliotte Friedman joins the FAN Hockey Show to discuss the news that Winnipeg Jets defenceman Neal Pionk will be week-to-week with a lower body injury and how the Jets will fare without one of their top blueline contributors.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/sawyer-jets-pace-and-speed-was-too-much-for-the-stars%7E3098215>

Sawyer: Jets 'pace and speed' was too much for the Stars (VIDEO)

TSN's Dan Robertson and Kevin Sawyer break down the Jets' victory over the Stars, highlighting how solid defence translated into strong offence, the top line leading the way, and staying disciplined and out of the box.

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/they-proved-that-they-are-the-team-to-beat-corrado-on-jets-win-over-stars%7E3098216>

'They proved that they are the team to beat': Corrado on Jets win over Stars (VIDEO)

TSN Hockey analyst Frank Corrado joins SportsCentre to break down what the Jets proved with their win over the Stars and how confident they should be in their ability to take down Dallas in a seven-game series.

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6203717/2025/03/14/jets-neal-pionk-injury/>

Jets' Neal Pionk week to week with lower-body injury: How Winnipeg will cope with loss of defenseman

By Murat Ates

Winnipeg Jets defenseman Neal Pionk will miss time with a lower-body injury, coach Scott Arniel confirmed Friday. Pionk's injury puts immediate strain on the Jets' defense and their depth given the heavy minutes he plays at even strength and on both special teams.

Pionk appeared to twist his leg during a collision with Rangers forward Brennan Othmann in the third period of Tuesday's game. He left the game immediately, holding his foot off the ice, and sat on the Jets' bench in apparent pain without heading to the Jets' room. He later returned to the game, finishing with a season-low 16:18 seconds of ice time, compared to an average of over 22 minutes per game this season.

Arniel said Pionk had played through the injury for some time before Tuesday's incident with Othmann, but they're shutting him down now with the playoffs in mind. Pionk has played through all manner of pains before — including a broken foot — and tried to get through this injury too.

"We're going to need him for the long run here. As much as he wants to play, this is the right decision," Arniel said.

Without Pionk, the Jets will expand the roles of depth defensemen Colin Miller and Luke Schenn, who they acquired at the 2024 and 2025 trade deadlines.

Miller has played 48 games on the third pair this season but will take over for Pionk on the second unit on the team's power play. Tuesday was Schenn's first game for Winnipeg since being acquired from Pittsburgh last week; he started on the third pair but played shutdown minutes with the Rangers' goalie pulled at the end of the game.

What does this mean for the Jets' playoff run?

Winnipeg is in first place in the NHL and enters Friday's games with an eight-point lead on Dallas for first place in the Central Division. It looks like a commanding lead, but Dallas has control of its destiny, too: Not only do the Stars have two games in hand, but the teams play on Friday and again on April 10. Dallas can tie Winnipeg by winning their head-to-head matchups as well as their two games in hand.

The Jets' focus is on finishing in first place, thereby avoiding the Stars and Avalanche in the first round of a hotly contested Central Division. That's why Arniel declined to talk about keeping other Jets players out of game action.

"I'm not getting too far down the road here," Arniel said. "There's too much going on. We still have two big western trips to go here. We'll worry about that when we get around the end of the year, but the big picture is too big now."

Can Schenn and Miller handle their new jobs?

Schenn was always going to be an option for Arniel to use in key defensive moments. Schenn's size, strength and the quality of his defense-first approach make him an ideal shutdown defenseman. He'll play with Dylan Samberg — a younger, more mobile version of the same shutdown defenseman — on the Jets second pair. One imagines a heavy dose of shifts starting in the defensive zone and soaring shot-block totals; Schenn blocked five in 16 minutes of play during his Jets debut.

The risk is that Schenn and Samberg struggle to move the puck up ice. Schenn was good Tuesday, making several short passes that released pressure and helped Winnipeg get out of its zone. Samberg has had a lot of success in that regard this season, too. Both players may be underrated in terms of their puck movement but neither is elite.

Miller will play on the third pair with Haydn Fleury, while also taking over for Pionk on the Jets' second power-play unit.

The Fleury/Miller pairing has been outscored 6-1 at five-on-five in 116 minutes this season while controlling 57 percent of shot attempts and 56 percent of expected goals. In a bigger sample size, their goal numbers should improve in accordance with their control of the play. Winnipeg's coaches do a great job sheltering their third pairing; whereas Schenn just graduated to a steady dose of Mikko Rantanen, Wyatt Johnston and company, Miller will spend more of his night playing against bottom six competition.

Miller's shot is a rocket; it should be an asset on the second PP unit. He doesn't have as much subtlety to his offensive game as Pionk, though. Pionk can fire a hard one-timer, too, while also moving the puck well in the offensive zone and getting the puck to the net for deflections with a wide array of well-placed wrist shots that beat the first layer of defense.

Should we reconsider the Jets' trade deadline?

“We talked going into the deadline that depth was our No. 1 and whatever happened other than that would be a bonus,” Arniel said Friday. “If you have plans to play into June, you’re going to need your (full) roster. It’s been proven. Injuries happen. Situations happen. You have to go deep. It happened a little earlier than I hoped but, at the end of the day, I’m glad we have Luke for it.”

Without Schenn, the Jets could be in a situation where Miller gets promoted to the second pair and some combination of Fleury, Logan Stanley or Ville Heinola play on the third pairing. It doesn’t inspire confidence — particularly against the West’s top teams. With Schenn, you can see a way through the stretch run to Pionk’s return wherein the Jets maintain their top seed.

An alternative is also true: Had the Jets been able to pick up Rasmus Ristolainen or Jamie Oleksiak, they’d be even better insulated than they are now.

But Schenn has played up the lineup before, including two years ago alongside Morgan Rielly as the Toronto Maple Leafs finally got out of the first round. He’s shown himself to be capable of the job Winnipeg will ask of him now.

What they’re saying

Dylan Samberg, on playing without Pionk.

“It’s obviously unfortunate, but it is what it is. Schenner is a great guy and he’s already taught me a lot here. He’s got a lot of wisdom so I’m excited to play with him.”

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/03/14/jets-set-standard-against-stars>

Jets set standard against Stars

Playoff feel as full team effort leads to victory over Central Division rival

By: Mike McIntyre

It felt like a playoff game, given the quality of competition and the high hockey stakes. It sounded like a playoff game, with a sold-out crowd at Canada Life Centre in full-throated roar even before the puck was dropped.

By the time the final buzzer sounded Friday night, it sure looked like the type of game the Winnipeg Jets hope becomes their standard when the playoffs begin next month.

An impressive 4-1 victory over the Dallas Stars included all the ingredients they will need: Great goaltending, solid special teams, aggressive forechecking, attention to defensive detail, depth scoring, plenty of physicality and the best players leading the way.

"I thought we dictated the pace right from the hop," said Jets forward Kyle Connor, who led the way with two goals and an assist. "Played with a lot of pace, played within our structure, defended first."

Other highlights included Mark Scheifele with a hat trick of helpers and Connor Hellebuyck stopping 24 shots as the Jets improved to 46-17-4, which has them alone on top of the NHL standings with 15 regular-season games remaining.

Winnipeg now enjoys a double-digit cushion over second-place Dallas (42-21-2) in the Central Division and Western Conference. Although the Stars do have two games in hand that's a sizable gap to make up in such a short period of time.

"It was a big game," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel.

"The difference between us being up six points or now being up 10 points. They recognized that we had to be at our best against a really good hockey team that doesn't give you a whole lot of ice or a whole lot of room to work. I thought we had a fantastic first period. It was real solid. We got out, got the lead and didn't stop from there."

According to the MoneyPuck website, the Jets now have a 90.1 per cent chance capturing a first division title in Winnipeg hockey history (including both the 1.0 and 2.0 eras). Wouldn't that be something?

Let's break this one down further:

HELLY'S BACKUP

It all starts in net with these Jets, and Hellebuyck once again showed why he's the best goalie on the planet.

You wonder if he managed a smile or two under his mask as fans serenaded Dallas goaltender Jake Oettinger with multiple "Helly's Backup" chants at various points in the game — a cheeky reference, of course, to the Team USA roster at the 4 Nations Face-Off last month.

Hellebuyck came within three minutes and 49 seconds of besting his own franchise record for shutouts in a season, but was denied a seventh on the campaign when Mason Marchment beat him during a scramble late in the third period.

Hellebuyck now has a league-leading 39 wins in 51 starts and is on pace to shatter his franchise-best of 44 victories and perhaps challenge the NHL's all-time single-season mark of 48, held by Martin Brodeur and Braden Holtby.

He also lowered his goals-against-average to a ridiculous 1.97 while also boasting a save percentage of .927. Hellebuyck is a lock at this stage for a third Vezina Trophy, and he's certainly in the conversation for the Hart Trophy as league MVP.

“They’re a really good offensive team and their offensive numbers are real high. We shut down a lot of avenues,” Arniel said of Hellebuyck and the team’s play in front of him.

“We created our goals by defending first. We played a 200-foot game of defence to make sure that they didn’t get room to work. It turned into offence for us and that’s what we’ve done all year long. We got up and got ahead of them and now, they’ve got to chase the game.”

Oettinger, who is tied for second in the league with 30 wins, stopped 17 of 21 shots he faced.

THE BRUISE BROTHERS

Dylan Samberg found himself in the unusual situation of breaking in a new blue-line partner on Friday night, one who might enjoy blocking shots more than he does.

That would be recent trade addition Luke Schenn, who moved up to fill the spot normally occupied by Neal Pionk, who is out week-to-week with a lower-body injury.

Samberg jokingly referred to them as the “bruise brothers” during the morning skate, given their penchant for eating pucks, but he also showed he’s got some offensive flair as well when he jumped into the rush and buried a Scheifele pass 8:01 into the game to open the scoring.

The Jets were all over the Stars at that point with several quality chances, and Samberg’s fifth goal of the year tilted the ice in their favour even more and had fans in a frenzy.

“It was a Friday night in Winnipeg in the barn here. It was real electric, especially when we scored early,” said Arniel.

“It really got the crowd going. They’ve been good all year, they’ve been watching a real good hockey team play good hockey throughout the season. To have them behind us for that one, that’s a big boost.”

Samberg continues to evolve into a quiet star, playing 23:08 (second only to Josh Morrissey’s 23:28) and chipping in with three shots on goal, three blocked shots, two hits and two takeaways. Schenn also impressed in a bigger role, playing 19:57 with a game-high seven hits including a huge one that sent Stars forward Mikael Granlund flying.

Pionk is expected to return before the playoffs — the Jets decided to shut him down for a bit to allow a nagging ailment time to heal — the Samberg-Schenn pairing is off to a strong start.

TOP LINE SHINES

The top line of Scheifele, Connor and Gabe Vilardi showed that they can be big-game producers. Connor drew the secondary assist on Samberg's goal after a nice zone entry, then took it upon himself to score the next two to really break the game open.

Connor ripped home his 34th of the year at 17:02 of the first after some great board work by Vilardi before Scheifele sent the puck his way.

His 35th came at 6:43 of the second, this time off a perfect give-and-go with Josh Morrissey that Scheifele had started.

Those are the types of plays you need from your game-breakers, and the Jets got them in spades on this night with the top line being involved in the first three tallies.

"Every game now is going to be the next big game, right?" said Connor.

"It's going to keep getting bigger. So we were able to rise to the task today, and hopefully we learned some lessons and what that looks like and kind of our foundation of how we were able to come out on top and play such a good game tonight. And we take that on to the next one."

KEY PLAY

Connor's second goal of the game early in the middle frame put the Jets in full control.

THREE STARS:

1. Jets Kyle Connor: 2G, 1A
2. Jets Mark Scheifele: 3A
3. Jets D Dylan Samberg: 1G

EXTRA, EXTRA

This was Winnipeg's ninth capacity crowd of the year (15,225) through 34 home dates.

The Jets killed off the only penalty they took and technically went 0-for-1 on the power play, although it came with just 1:18 left in the third period.

Winnipeg's healthy scratches were defencemen Logan Stanley and Ville Heinola and forwards David Gustafsson and Rasmus Kupari.

Dallas was without three key injured players in defenceman Miro Heiskanen and forwards Roope Hintz and Tyler Seguin. Of those, only Hintz is expected back before the playoffs begin.

The Jets now hit the road for three games starting Sunday evening in Seattle.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/03/14/scheifele-the-perfect-guy-to-do-it>

Scheifele 'the perfect guy to do it'
Hawerchuk's son wholeheartedly endorses Mark Scheifele's pursuit of goalscoring record

By: Mike McIntyre and Ken Wiebe

At some point soon, perhaps as early as this time next year, Mark Scheifele will stand alone when it comes to scoring goals as a member of the Winnipeg Jets.

The first draft pick of the 2.0 era entered play Friday night with 332, which is No. 1 when it comes to franchise history but No. 2 when it comes to the true record recognized around here.

"I'm chasing Dale," Scheifele said after he recently jumped ahead of Atlanta Thrashers forward Ilya Kovalchuk.

That would be his former mentor and junior coach, the late, great Dale Hawerchuk who lit the lamp 379 times as a member of the 1.0 Jets before he was traded to the Buffalo Sabres in 1990.

Now just 47 goals away, Scheifele has one very prominent fan rooting for him.

"It couldn't happen to a better guy," Eric Hawerchuk told the Free Press on Friday.

"He is the perfect Jet. Obviously the first pick of the new era, coached by my dad. They had a great relationship together, and Mark always speaks really highly of (Dale), which is very cool. My Dad would be pretty proud of him, to see the career he's had here and what he's done for the city."

Eric, who was born in Winnipeg and now lives with his wife and child in Arizona where he is a professional golfer, was back in town this week to get an up-close look at Scheifele and the Jets.

"It's very exciting that he's going to do it," he said. "He works so hard for it. I had a great visit with him (on Thursday) and it's very cool to see."

Former Jets coach Paul Maurice once predicted they'd build a statue of Scheifele outside Canada Life Centre at some point — and that was before the star centre signed his seven-year contract extension that will likely make him a Jet for life.

It's notable that the only statue ever commissioned by True North is of "Ducky," which his son always pays a visit to before attending the downtown rink as he did Friday night for a marquee matchup against the Dallas Stars.

Perhaps the monument to Hawerchuk, who died of stomach cancer in August 2020, might one day have some familiar company?

Looking at the present, Eric would love to see a Stanley Cup parade in a place that has meant so much to his family. This year's team, which had a sizzling record of 45-17-4 prior to Friday's game, has certainly raised expectations and hope.

"I don't think anybody wants to play Winnipeg right now," he said. "They're loaded on defence, you got Helle (Connor Hellebuyck) back there, the first line is so good, the power play is fantastic."

While some might have wanted Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff to take a bigger swing at the trade deadline, Eric said the additions of Brandon Tanev and Luke Schenn hit the right notes.

"It's kind of like, what isn't broke, don't fix it," he said. "You're playing with fire there if you go too crazy."

Dale's legacy lives on in many ways, including through the #HawerchukStrong campaign. The charity organization, of which Eric is a prominent part, has partnered this year with Camp Firefly for a Jets "game-day experience" which sends children who are dealing with grief the chance to see the local club in a unique way.

Eric said there is also talk about starting a charity golf tournament this coming summer, with plans still to be finalized.

Around the glass

Speaking of Kovalchuk, the 41-year-old officially announced his retirement Friday.

He played his 926th and final NHL game in 2020 before heading back home to Russia to finish up in the KHL. The first-overall pick from 2001, who had 876 career points, skated in 20 games with Moscow Spartak last year but wasn't with an organization this year.

There's no question things can get a little intense in the heat of the battle, such was the case on Tuesday night when the Jets hosted the New York Rangers.

J.T. Miller appeared to give Nikolaj Ehlers a bit of a jab with his stick — referees called it interference — and that had Ehlers incensed. He delivered a forceful slash to Miller's midsection which had the veteran forward in some pain. Ehlers was given a minor penalty and definitely got his two minutes' worth.

Turns out the incident led to some regrets, with Ehlers admitting Friday he reached out to Miller to apologize.

“I wasn’t too proud of myself for that one,” he confessed.

“It wasn’t meant to be that violent, if you want to put it that way. So yes, absolutely you want to stick up for yourself, you want to stick up for a teammate, that’s how it goes in the playoffs. But you can do it in different ways than what I did, and that’s something I want to work on.”

Attend a Columbus Blue Jackets game and you better be prepared.

The club shoots off a cannon every time it scores which can catch fans and even players and coaches by surprise. Columbus has, quite literally, been making plenty of noise this year as it fights for an Eastern Conference playoff spot and sits seventh overall in goals with 3.28 per game.

Before facing the Blue Jackets on Thursday, Vegas Golden Knights head coach Bruce Cassidy said “I don’t want to hear that damn cannon all night.”

Turns out that wasn’t a problem — the visitors were the only ones who had a blast as they skated away with a 4-0 victory. No doubt Cassidy and company enjoyed the sound of silence.

What the heck has gotten into Fabian Wagner?

The 20-year-old Swedish forward, who was selected by the Jets in the sixth round of the 2022 draft, has gone from ice cold to scorching hot when it comes to offence.

Consider this: Since hearing his name called by Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff, Wagner appeared in 84 combined games in the Swedish men’s league and scored a grand total of one goal. He opted to leave his club team and head overseas to join the Manitoba Moose earlier this year, where he failed to score a goal in his first 31 games.

However, Wagner has now scored in four consecutive American Hockey League outings, with five goals in that span. Suddenly, he can’t be stopped. It just goes to show how confidence can be such a big weapon for an athlete, and right now Wagner is clearly feeling it.

Best wishes to Carter Bear, the 18-year-old from West St. Paul who is considered one of the top prospects in the upcoming NHL draft.

He suffered a scary injury last week — reported to be a lacerated Achilles that required surgery — while playing for the Everett Silvertips in the Western Hockey League. His team posted a message on social media Wednesday thanking medical staff from the Portland Winterhawks and Veterans Memorial Coliseum for their “quick response and support.”

Bear had 82 points (40G, 42A) in 56 games which leads his team and had him tied for 13th in league scoring. The 6'0, 177-pound forward was recently ranked as the No. 11 prospect among North American skaters by NHL Central Scouting, with most projections having him being selected at some point in the first round.

Hopefully this setback is just a temporary one for Bear and he can return stronger than ever.

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipegsun.com/sports/jets-cruise-to-win-over-stars-put-stranglehold-on-first-place-in-central-division>

Jets cruise to win over Stars, put stranglehold on first place in Central Division

By Paul Friesen

Friday's night's game between the Winnipeg Jets and Dallas Stars had all the ingredients of a late-season classic, a division rivalry with playoff implications in front of a sellout crowd.

Turned out there was one thing missing: Competition.

The Jets had their way with Dallas from the first few shifts on, cruising to a 4-1 decision to put a stranglehold on first place in the Central Division.

"I thought we dictated the pace right from the hop," winger Kyle Connor said, after scoring twice. "Played with a lot of pace, played within our structure, defended first."

His coach agreed.

"They recognized we had to be at our best against a really good hockey team that doesn't give you a whole lot of ice or a whole lot of room to work," Scott Arniel said. "We had a fantastic first period. It was real solid. We got out, got the lead and didn't stop from there."

The opposing coach didn't like what he saw from his team.

"We weren't competitive enough," Pete DeBoer said. "We made it too easy on their goaltender. We just didn't pay enough of a price to get inside and make it difficult for them."

Dylan Samberg and Morgan Barron scored the other goals as the Jets increased their lead over Dallas to 10 points with 15 games remaining. The Stars have 17.

“We’re never comfortable with it,” Connor said. “We’re pushing on to the next one. That’s been what’s made us so successful this year. We’re not resting, saying cruise control here. There’s a lot of hockey left, 15 or so games. You want to build this thing so that you’re peaking at the right time, so that’s definitely going to be an objective of ours.”

Winnipeg jumped back into first place, overall, with a 46-17-4 mark, while the Stars fell to 42-21-2.

“It almost felt like a playoff game,” Barron said. “This is a big push. We want to hit the ground running when the playoffs start. I don’t think anyone wants to creep in. We’re trying to put our foot down here and really secure that first place.”

The Jets had some sparkling early chances, Adam Lowry in close, Brandon Tanev on a breakaway.

It was a defenceman that produced the first goal, though, Samberg beating Jake Oettinger with a wrist shot for his fifth of the season. Mark Scheifele provided the setup — the first of three assists — Gabe Vilardi the screen.

Scheifele nearly got one of his own later in the first, but his backhand went off the post.

No. 55 settled for another assist before the period was up, digging the puck out of the corner and setting up Connor for his 34th. Vilardi had a hand in it again, refusing to lose a puck battle along the boards.

Shots on goal after one period were a deceiving 9-6 in favour of Dallas.

Some seven minutes into the second, Connor and Josh Morrissey played give-and-go, the sniper had his second of the night and Oettinger was greeted with chants of “Helle’s backup” from a crowd reminding him that Connor Hellebuyck was the puck-stopping boss for Team USA at the recent 4 Nations tournament.

Winnipeg’s 3-0 lead through 40 minutes came on just 10 shots.

When the Stars flubbed the chances they got early in the third, Barron turned it into a rout, tipping Dylan DeMelo’s point shot for his sixth of the season.

Spoiling Hellebuyck’s bid for a career-high seventh shutout of the season was Mason Marchment with less than four minutes to go.

Final shots were 25-22, Dallas.

Up next for the Jets is a road trip through Seattle, Vancouver and Edmonton, starting at the home of the Kraken on Sunday.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/temper-temper-jets-ehlers-not-proud-of-retaliatory-whack-on-rangers-miller>

Temper, temper: Jets' Ehlers not proud of retaliatory whack on Rangers' Miller

By Paul Friesen

At the time, Nik Ehlers lost his temper. Getting a stick from J.T. Miller behind the play in Tuesday's game against the New York Rangers is what made the Winnipeg Jets winger lose his cool.

So he upped the ante and delivered an even more vicious two-hander right back, leaving Miller in considerable pain and sending both to the penalty box.

Yes, Ehlers wants to stick up for himself. But retaliation like that isn't his style. So he apologized, it turns out.

"I've already talked to him," Ehlers said on Friday. "I wasn't too happy, too proud of myself for that one. It wasn't meant to be that violent, if you want to put it that way. So yes, absolutely you want to stick up for yourself, you want to stick up for a teammate. That's how it goes in the playoffs.

"But you can do it in different ways than what I did. And that's something I want to work on."

Among regulars in the Jets lineup, Ehlers is the least-penalized player this season, with 10 minutes going into Friday night's game against Dallas.

Already on the power play when Miller took his cheap shot, the Jets could have had a two-man advantage had Ehlers not retaliated. They went on to win, 2-1.

As for opposing players apologizing to each other, Ehlers says it happens "more than you think."

The 29-year-old expected as intense a game, if not more intense, against division-rival Dallas on Friday night.

"Games against Dallas in my 10 years here have always been really fun to be a part of," Ehlers said. "It's going to be a challenge that we're ready for. This is going to be as close to a playoff-style game as you can get with 16 games to go."

The Jets want to use those games to get even stingier than they have been, perfecting a game that's built for the postseason, where the last two years they've failed to get out of the first round.

“You’re never going to put together a perfect game,” Ehlers acknowledged. “But you want to get as close to that as possible. You don’t want to give anything up easy. You want to make them work for it. At times we’ve been able to do that.

“That’s something that we can still do a little better.”

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/jets-dodge-one-bullet-stung-by-another-pionk-to-miss-several-games>

Jets dodge one bullet, stung by another: Pionk to miss several games

By Paul Friesen

Winnipeg Jets head coach Scott Arniel delivered some good news and some bad news on Friday morning.

Can Jets maintain their form with Pionk out of the lineup?

Article content

The good: Winger Nik Ehlers was good to go for a critical evening matchup with the Dallas Stars.

The bad: Defenceman Neal Pionk would miss not only Friday night’s game, but several more with an injury he’s been dealing with for a while.

“That’s why it took a little while here to figure out what we were dealing with,” Arniel said, describing Pionk’s status as week-to-week. “He’s played with it, I’ll say that. Tried to get through it. Now after getting a final diagnosis yesterday, we know. We do need him for the long run. So as much as he wants to play, this is the right decision.”

Both Pionk and Ehlers had missed the last two practices, raising questions about their status.

On the bright side, this is exactly why the Jets acquired Luke Schenn at the trade deadline: For depth on the blue line.

“Whatever happened after that would be a bonus,” Arniel said. “If you have plans to play into June you’re going to need your roster. It’s proven. It happened a little earlier than I’d hoped, but we’re glad we have Luke for it.”

Schenn will step right into Pionk’s spot on the second pair, alongside Dylan Samberg.

Taking Schenn’s spot on the third pair is Colin Miller. Miller will also take Pionk’s place on the point on the second power-play unit.

That leaves Logan Stanley and Ville Heinola as the healthy scratches, at least for one game.

“It’ll be obviously different,” Samberg said of playing with Schenn. “Obviously unfortunate, but it is what it is. And Schenner is a great guy and he’s already taught me a lot here. He’s got a lot of wisdom so I’m excited to play with him.

“He’s obviously got that shut-down style to him, and it’s part of my game as well.”

Friday’s game has significant implications in the Central Division playoff race.

The Jets can get a stranglehold on first place with a win, as they lead by eight points, albeit having played two more games.

A Winnipeg loss would keep Dallas right where they’ve been throughout the Jets’ sparking regular season: Within striking distance.

“We both play an awful lot alike,” Arniel said. “They have people out, the next guys are stepping up for them and they’re not missing a beat. And that’s how they’ve rolled all year long. Even though we’ve had success and done some good things, winning lots of games, you just keep looking in your rearview mirror and somebody keeps sitting there.

“And that’s the Dallas Stars.”

Dallasstars.com

<https://www.nhl.com/stars/news/heika-s-take-dallas-stars-get-strong-wake-up-call-in-lopsided-loss-to-winnipeg-jets-031525>

Heika’s Take: Stars get strong wake-up call in lopsided loss to Jets

By Mike Heika

Some tests can be affirming. Other tests can be wake-up calls.

The Stars heard a pretty strong ringing in Winnipeg on Friday night. Given an opportunity to make up ground on the division-leading Jets at Canada Life Centre, Dallas took a 4-1 loss and fell further behind in the race to possibly improve its seed in the playoffs.

Instead, the Stars (42-21-2, 86 points) are now 10 points back of the Jets (46-17-4, 96 points) with 17 games to go. While the Stars have two games in hand, they really could have used a win in this head-to-head – both for the mathematics of the standings, and also for the psychological boost.

"They're the team to beat right now," said defenseman Cody Ceci. "We fought hard lately to make up some ground, and it's just unfortunate the way it went. It's frustrating to do that."

The Stars struggled to create strong scoring chances, and then the Jets took advantage of some nice transition plays. Winnipeg sent the puck up ice eight minutes into the first period and Mark Scheifele fed a trailing Dylan Samberg for a nice shot that beat Jake Oettinger from distance. The all-important first goal brought energy into the building and fueled some more strong play from the Jets.

"They're a good structured team," said forward Mason Marchment, who scored the Stars' only goal. "They break out well, they come up together well and their D are always in the rush. It can be hard to get on top of them, but they only had 10 shots or 11 shots in the first two periods. It's hard to say that we really played bad, but at the same time we've got to do a little more to get on the inside and create a little more."

The second transition came later in the first period as Winnipeg once again capitalized on a Stars turnover, and Kyle Connor cashed in on the other end with a wicked shot that beat Oettinger inside the post.

While the Stars have bounced back from 2-0 deficits before, this one felt different.

"If you're going to be stubborn and turn the puck over all night, it makes anybody's transition game look pretty good," Stars coach Pete DeBoer said. "Listen, they've got some skilled guys, and if you're going to make poor decisions with the puck, then they're going to look good."

DeBoer said the Stars' bigger problem was their lack of creativity and puck possession to make the Jets defend. Instead, Dallas fell prey to a strong Winnipeg team game that sucked the energy out of its attack and protected goalie Connor Hellebuyck.

"We weren't competitive enough," DeBoer said. "I thought we made it too easy on their goaltender. They defended hard, but we knew they defended hard, their numbers said that. We just didn't pay enough of a price to get inside and make it difficult for them. I thought defensively, we were okay, we didn't give up a lot, I thought they were opportunistic in the chances they got, but we didn't do near enough to create offense out there."

Dallas finished with a 25-22 advantage in shots on goal, but Winnipeg had the better scoring chances. Hellebuyck moves to 39-9-3 and is a heavy favorite to win the Vezina Trophy this season. Oettinger allowed four goals on 22 shots and has now given up nine goals in his past two starts against top teams in the West. He sits at 30-15-2 on the season, but is 3-3-0 in his past six starts.

Winnipeg went up 4-0 in the third period on a goal by Morgan Barron before Marchment struck back with his 16th goal of the season to make the final 4-1.

“They frustrated us and clogged it up,” said Ceci. “It was tough to get through there. They clogged it up better than we did.”

The Stars and Oettinger get the chance to redeem themselves pretty quickly as they play at Colorado on Sunday afternoon. Dallas is three points ahead of the Avalanche with two games in hand for second place in the Central Division. With the loss to the Jets, it looks more likely that Dallas will face Colorado in the First Round of the playoffs. Sunday’s game will be for seeding purposes, but also to send a message.

“We’ve just got to flush that one and get ready for the next one,” Marchment said. “It’s just as big a game as the next one. You have to let this one fuel you and put it behind you.”

Because that’s what good teams do.

“We’re learning about ourselves, we’re learning about the best teams in the conference and what we have to do to compete,” DeBoer said. “There are some good lessons in the game for us.”