

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/03/17/a-possible-playoff-preview>

A possible playoff preview Jets, Canucks a potential first-round match up

By: Mike McIntyre

VANCOUVER — You have to go all the way back to the spring of 1993 to find the last time the Winnipeg Jets and Vancouver Canucks faced each other in the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Might there be a rematch 32 years in the making starting next month? Absolutely, at least if the NHL's regular season ended today. The Jets are sitting at 98 points to lead both the Central Division and Western Conference while the Canucks are at 73 points and clinging to the second and final wildcard spot.

All of which should add some extra intrigue as the Canadian clubs square off at Rogers Arena on Tuesday night.

"They're a hungry, desperate team," Jets assistant coach Davis Payne said following his team's 45-minute on-ice workout at the downtown rink.

"Like we've done all year, we've got to focus on that next game. You're going to get different situations as this year starts to wind down, teams that are still fighting in it, teams that are fighting for it, which Vancouver is very much one of those teams. So there's a hunger and an intensity that we've got to make sure we recognize and match."

The St. Louis Blues are tied with Vancouver (but have played one extra game), while the Calgary Flames are just two points behind but also have two games in hand. Utah, which beat Vancouver 3-1 here on Sunday night, is also two points back with the same number of games played.

That's a four-team race for one spot.

"I don't really think you're thinking about playoff matchups. It's just sort of the next game on the schedule. It doesn't matter who we play, we want to continue to bring our best and continue to build our own game," said Jets defenceman Luke Schenn.

He's expecting a battle from a team he was a member of in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 seasons.

"Obviously they've had their fair share of adversity this year," said Schenn.

He alluded to No. 1 goaltender Thatcher Demko's ongoing injury issues, Quinn Hughes also spending time sidelined and the Elias Pettersson and J.T. Miller drama which resulted in the latter being traded to the New York Rangers for Filip Chytil, who is now sidelined as well with an injury.

Winnipeg has won three straight games and now enjoys an 11-point cushion over the Dallas Stars in the race for the No. 1 seed. Vancouver could be extra ornery on Tuesday, given that they were thumped 6-1 by the Jets back on Jan. 14 at Canada Life Centre. The two teams will meet again one more time in Winnipeg on March 30.

Then, perhaps, a best-of-seven starting in mid-April? Stay tuned. By the way, Vancouver won that Smythe Division semi-final series 4-2, ending Winnipeg's season for a second straight year (it was by a 4-3 series result in 1992, the only other time they've faced each other in the postseason).

No doubt Kyle Connor is looking forward to facing the Canucks. The last time he did, he had a natural hat trick before the contest was even 14 minutes old.

The 17th-overall pick from 2015 will play in his 600th career game on Tuesday.

Connor, 28, is once again heating up, with three goals in his last two games to jump ahead of linemate Mark Scheifele for the team lead at 36. Only Edmonton Oilers centre Leon Draisaitl (49) and Toronto Maple Leafs winger William Nylander (37) have more this season heading into Monday night games around the league.

Connor is now up to 85 points, which trails only Nathan MacKinnon (103), Draisaitl (101), Nikita Kucherov (93) and Connor McDavid (86) in the overall scoring race. Connor's career high is 93, set in the 2021-22 season, and with 14 games remaining is on pace to eclipse Marian Hossa's 100 points in 2006-07 and set a new franchise record.

Connor's latest goal, a breakaway beauty in Seattle on Sunday night, was helped by a rather unlikely source. Fourth-line centre Morgan Barron sprung him with a perfect backhanded bank pass off the boards in the middle of a Jets line change.

"I just knew from my previous look that he was somewhere out there. So I just fired it in his general vicinity. He was able to keep his speed and do the rest. Just get the puck in his hands," is how Barron explained it on Monday.

What makes it even more impressive is that he'd just painfully blocked a shot in his own end a few seconds earlier, one that tore a fingernail off and left him bloodied.

"The adrenaline was going in the middle of the shift," said Barron, who had the damaged digit taped up as he spoke with the Free Press.

All in a day's work, right?

"It's kind of the time of the year where all those plays seem to be a little bit bigger and elevated," said Barron.

"We've got it from up and down the lineup, which has been good to see. There's been some huge shot blocks lately. I think that's just kind of been part of our identity."

Barron now has points in two straight games (he scored in Friday's 4-1 win over Dallas) and is enjoying his transition from the wing to the middle, where he'd spent some time in college and the American Hockey League and briefly in his NHL career. His new-look line with Brandon Tanev and Alex Iafallo has been effective.

"I think Tanny and Al have made it easy on me to kind of get used to it. Playing with those guys who are being predictable, it kind of makes my life a lot easier in there," he said.

"We talk about it a lot on the bench. When the game kind of feels like we're playing in our own end a bit too much, we talk about being able to tilt that ice and be the line that's kind of been able to spark a little bit, create some momentum for our team and ultimately be able to push the game back into the other end of the rink."

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/03/17/the-kids-are-alright-3>

The kids are all right

Self-proclaimed 'old man' Schenn impressed by youngster linemates

By: Mike McIntyre

VANCOUVER — Kids these days. They grow up so fast, don't they?

Luke Schenn, the self-proclaimed "old man" on the Winnipeg Jets, was holding court at his locker room stall inside Rogers Arena on Monday afternoon when the subject of new teammates Dylan Samberg and Cole Perfetti came up.

Turns out the 35-year-old grizzled veteran of 1,107 combined NHL regular-season and playoff games, and counting — who has seen just about everything imaginable over his 17-year pro career — has had his eyes opened in a major way since coming over in a trade from the Pittsburgh Penguins on March 7.

Let's start with Samberg, who has spent the two games paired with Schenn on the blue-line and potted the overtime winner on Sunday night in Seattle as the Jets kicked off a three-game road trip by improving to an NHL best 47-17-4.

"I knew him a little bit. I feel like most guys in the league kind of had the book on him. But he's surprised me. In the best way," Schenn told the Free Press. "I knew he was

good, but he's better than I thought. He's got a huge ceiling and he's going to be a huge part of things here."

Talk quickly turned to Perfetti, who set up his good friend and former roommate for the dramatic dagger and now has 17 points (7G, 10A) in his past 19 games.

"He's another guy that has really stood out to me," said Schenn. "I've played against him now for a few years. He's just getting better. Obviously more opportunities, he's producing more. With that comes more confidence. He's a younger guy but a huge piece of what's going on here."

Schenn's words should carry plenty of weight considering his own pedigree. Drafted fifth-overall by the Toronto Maple Leafs in 2008, he's gone on a wild roller-coaster from can't miss prospect who burst on to the scene to struggling depth defenceman who had to rebuild his career in the minors to valuable journeyman that teams like the Jets trade for.

"You want to talk about a straight line, my own career is anything but. I've always said you have to continue to evolve, in all aspects of your game. (Samberg and Perfetti) would be prime examples of that," said Schenn.

It took some time, but we are currently seeing the best versions of two players who are rapidly joining the conversation as members of Winnipeg's all-important "core."

Connor Hellebuyck, Mark Scheifele, Josh Morrissey, Adam Lowry, Kyle Connor and Nikolaj Ehlers are all homegrown drafted and developed success stories who have become stars. Samberg (43rd-overall in 2017) and Perfetti (10th-overall in 2020) would appear to be well on their way to joining them.

"Little Jimmy and Big Jimmy," began teammate Morgan Barron, a reference to tandem nicknames bestowed upon Perfetti (Little) and Samberg (Big).

"It was very cool to see them out there in overtime together. They've both had unbelievable years. I kind of feel like I came into the NHL and the organization at the same time as they did, like we all made the team at the same time. It's been really cool to see them take that next step, to take their games to the next level."

What a difference a year can make. This time last season, Samberg was playing on the third-pairing while Perfetti was struggling to even get in the lineup as a perpetual healthy scratch down the stretch and into the playoffs.

"I think both guys have really sort of grasped on to an identity for a player. And I think that's always an important piece," Jets assistant coach Davis Payne said Monday. "Once you have that, you can add layers to it and build upon it, but it's really important to have that as a foundation. And I think both guys, certainly in my short time, have discovered that and can build off of that going forward."

Samberg is arguably Winnipeg's second-best defenceman behind Morrissey and, aside from Hellebuyck, might just be the team's MVP this year. The Jets are 36-8-2 in the 46 games he's played this year (.804 points percentage) compared to just 11-9-2 (.545) in the 21 games he missed with a broken foot and one outing for personal family reasons.

After scoring just three goals in his first 156 NHL games, Samberg now has six in 46 this year — including tallies in back-to-back games. He had a career-high 18 points in 78 games last year and already has 17 in 32 fewer contests this year.

"Just a big strong guy, he can skate well, he's got a good stick, he passes the puck well and you see the offence coming out a little bit too for him. He's only getting better, too. It's been a pleasure to kind of get to know him a little bit and see how good he is," said Schenn.

Perfetti's surge is equally impressive. In addition to setting a new career high in points (42 so far), he looks faster and stronger in recent weeks. Confidence is a heck of a drug.

"I knew what he was like to play against, a dangerous guy, but he reads the game real well, competes hard, plays on both sides of the puck," said Schenn.

Perhaps the only people enjoying Samberg and Perfetti's growth more than teammates, coaches and fans are their agents. Samberg is a pending restricted free agent this summer and getting his name on a long-term extension should be among general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff's top priorities. He's in for a massive raise from his current US\$1.4 million salary.

"What wins in this league is playing really solid defensively," said Schenn, who might be in line for a small commission on the side given his glowing reference.

"You need guys that are good skaters and can close plays off the rush. You need guys that are strong in the corners and not making it easy on other team's forwards and are strong in front of the net. When you've got a guy like that who's able to play that way and then contribute offensively, those are the guys that you build around."

Perfetti will be an RFA following next season and his value is also going up with every impressive performance. He's currently making US\$3.25 million after signing a two-year bridge deal last fall.

"There's no secret, sometimes guys don't necessarily want to come to Winnipeg," said Barron. "But I think when players get drafted and in a lot of cases get traded here, guys like myself, Nino (Niederreiter), Vladdy (Namestnikov), guys get here, they want to buy in and play on a winning team and play in a great group. Between the locker room and the success we have on the ice, it makes it a really desirable place to play."

“(With Samberg and Perfetti), it’s cool to see how it’s all evolved.”

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipegsun.com/sports/it-is-a-little-strange-eric-comrie-in-concussion-protocol>

'It is a little strange': Eric Comrie in concussion protocol

By Gordon Anderson

Eric Comrie left the game against Seattle on Sunday evening under duress.

The Winnipeg Jets goalie was removed from the game at 3:45 of the first period due to concussion protocol.

“We have no control over that, and I understand what they are doing, just trying to keep safety in the league,” Comrie told reporters. “They do a great job of making sure we have a safe playing field out there, (while) keeping everybody healthy. It is a big topic with the concussions and head injuries.”

Jets' Connor nearing 600 games is testament to his constant growth

The Jets improved their road record to 22-12-0 after a 3-2 extra session victory over the Kraken. Dylan Samberg scored the winner in overtime. Cole Perfetti and Kyle Conner scored in regulation for the locals.

Seattle forward Matt Beniers slid headfirst into Comrie, propelling the netminder into the back of the net with force, while he was fishing for the puck near his legs.

The veteran netminder shook off the initial collision and hung in there until medical eyes in the sky removed him in favour of Connor Hellebuyck.

“It is a little strange when you come off for concussion protocol because you have got to go through, you have to take all your gear off and you have to answer a bunch of questions,” Comrie said. “I didn’t do so good in the answering of questions because I was more focused on the game and (the questions) draw your focus off the game. It is a whole production. And it is hard to get back into the game after that.”

Comrie made 14 saves to even his record at 8-8-1. Comrie has won four of his last five games.

“It’s hard. It really is. Your second guy, our No. 1 is going in cold,” head coach Scott Arniel said. “We’re always worried about that. And then you’re hoping that Coms is OK, but we felt he was, he was saying it right from when he was going off the ice. But it’s the rule. It’s what’s in there. I don’t really like it very much but, at the end of the day, you have to live by it.”

Hellebuyck is used to wins, but he gets a save in this case, as he stopped five of six shots in 10:10 of action.

600 CLUB

Kyle Connor will play 600th NHL game, when the Jets butt heads with the Vancouver Canucks on Tuesday at Rogers Arena. Puck drop is 9 p.m.

As a young player with 208 games in the national league, there is plenty to learn, says Jets forward Cole Perfetti.

Sharpshooter advice is always welcome.

"There are things that not many people can do what he does, hard to replicate," Perfetti said about Connor. "I am just trying to find the way he goes to the net. He can score in many different ways. He is one of the league's best goal scorers. It is fun to sit back and learn from him."

Assistant coach Davis Payne also acknowledged the accomplishment.

"It is an impressive milestone," Payne said. "Coaching against him from afar, you recognize what a dangerous threat he is offensively. For me, coming in this year, and seeing him play, he had brought an all-around game that has been impressive. Without the puck, defensively, he is still evolving as a complete player."

Payne was in St. Louis, Buffalo, Los Angeles and Ottawa, before landing with the Jets for the 2024-25 season.

The American forward has 279 goals and 291 helpers.

No doubt Connor is proud of his accomplishments, but he's got the team on the mind.

"I knew it was coming up and to think of the people who have helped me along the way," Connor said. "It is a long journey, and you always like to reflect on the milestones. But, at the end of the day, it is a big match against Vancouver, and I am focusing on that."

Up next

Heading into league action on Monday night, the Canucks (31-25-11) are looking for a bounce back after a 2-1 loss the Utah club on Sunday night, Vancouver is 5-5-0 in its last 10 and 14-13-7 at home.

The Van City crew is fighting with the Calgary Flames and the Blues for the second wildcard position in the Western Conference.

In the only meeting this season, the locals beat the Canucks 6-1 on Jan. 14. That night, Connor notched a natural hatty in the first period. Hellebuyck stopped 23 of 24 shots for the win.

"There is a hunger and intensity that we have to recognize and match," Payne said about the Canucks. "They are a hungry and desperate team, but we are trying to establish our level of play each and every game, and (against Vancouver) it is no different."

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/video/domino-s-that-s-hockey-cheveldayoff-discusses-hellebuyck-s-game-management%7E3099414>

Domino's That's Hockey: Cheveldayoff discusses Hellebuyck's game management (VIDEO)

Jets GM Kevin Cheveldayoff joins Domino's That's Hockey to speak about goalie Connor Hellebuyck's game management as the team heads towards the playoffs. Cheveldayoff also shares his thoughts on goaltender interference, the importance of finishing first in the Central Division and more.

Canadian Press

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/these-guys-fit-our-group-schenn-tanev-forging-roles-with-winnipeg-jets-1.2272721>

'These guys fit our group': Schenn, Tanev forging roles with Jets

By The Canadian Press

VANCOUVER - Luke Schenn has grown used to change over more than 15 years as an NHL defenceman.

Getting traded twice at the trade deadline, though, was something new.

The veteran blue liner was dealt from the Nashville Predators to the Pittsburgh Penguins to the league-leading Winnipeg Jets over the course of two days earlier this month.

"Whirlwind's an understatement," Schenn said Monday after the Jets practised in Vancouver.

Winnipeg (47-14-4) has hovered around the top of the NHL standings all season, but wanted to add toughness and post-season experience ahead of a playoff run.

"Hockey wise, the transition's been smooth," said Schenn, who won back-to-back Stanley Cups with the Tampa Bay Lightning.

"Everyone's been super welcoming. When you come to a team like this that's kind of had the year they've had, you just want to fit in and contribute however you can."

The Jets also picked up Tanev from the Seattle Kraken at the deadline in exchange for a second-round pick in the 2027 draft.

The move marked the left-winger's return to the club where he started his NHL career as an undrafted free agent back in 2016.

"It's obviously a whirlwind at this time of the year, during the trade deadline, and you never know what's to come," Tanev said.

"But for me to come back to a place I know very well — I started my career here, spent some great years, made some friends, a lot of good teammates that are still here that I'm very good friends with — it makes things in the transition a lot easier for me to come back in this locker room."

Tanev joined a line with Morgan Baron and Alex Iafallo, and quickly found success. They have contributed three goals and two assists over Winnipeg's last five games.

"I think we've kept things simple, we've communicated, we understand where we need to be and what we need to do on a shift-by-shift basis," Tanev said. "So I think that's just the mindset going in every shift, understanding what we need to do, what we need to bring the team and go out there and, ultimately, have some fun."

Both Tanev and Schenn add depth, tenacity and experience to Winnipeg's lineup, said winger Kyle Connor.

"They've been around the league quite a bit, they've been in some playoff situations and obviously their leadership adds to our locker room, which is awesome," he said.

"You see the way Schenner plays, blocking shots, hitting guys and just making hard plays — he's the type of player that you can just see he's going to excel in the playoffs. And same with Tanev. So I think we brought in two guys that, once the tough times come and the big moments come, I think their games are going to shine."

The Jets have been a force all season, and topped the league in points (98), wins (47) and goal differential (plus-81) heading into Monday night's action.

The team has struggled in the playoffs in recent years, however, and hasn't made it out of the first round since the 2020-21 campaign.

Ahead of this year's trade deadline, the Jets' coaching staff had long conversations about what, precisely, the roster needed, said assistant coach David Payne.

"You can add lots of pieces, but we were very careful about making sure that pieces fit," he said. "And I think that can sometimes get a little bit overlooked, as opposed to what the name might say on the marquee."

The Jets found what they were looking for in Schenn and Tanev.

"These guys fit our group," Payne said. "And we really like what we have moving forward."

Daily Faceoff

<https://www.dailyfaceoff.com/news/why-winnipeg-jets-scott-arniel-deserves-more-love-in-the-jack-adams-award-race>

Why Jets' Scott Arniel deserves more love in the Jack Adams race

By Ben Steiner

Replacing one of the best coaches of all time isn't easy, but Winnipeg Jets rookie head coach Scott Arniel has lived up to the task.

After spending time as an assistant on Rick Bowness' Jets bench, Arniel took over the big job for his second NHL head coaching role in 2024-25 and has led the team to the top of the NHL standings on 98 points with 14 games remaining.

As the regular season enters its final stretch, is the 62-year-old the favorite to win the Jack Adams Award, or could it go to another standout coach like the Washington Capitals' Spencer Carbery?

On Monday's episode of Daily Faceoff LIVE, Colby Cohen and Tyler Yaremchuk discuss the Jack Adams Trophy odds, and why Arniel might deserve the nod.

Yaremchuk: I want to talk about the Jack Adams. Right now, at Bet365, Spencer Carbery is the runaway favorite, and it's not even close...But let me ask you, does he deserve to be this much of a runaway favorite, or are there some other names that you want to give some love to?

Cohen: The Arniel move was a little bit criticized. I think people felt like it was just sort of an easy way out to promote from within and not spend a ton of money, but I just look at the details in the way that the Winnipeg Jets are playing.

I watch the way that they go back on pucks better than any other year. I watch not just the defenseman who goes back on the puck with his partner. I watch how the wingers get back into their spots. I watch how when they execute their forecheck properly, how they come back and get above the puck, and the back pressure that they put.

I just looked at the fact that, yes, Winnipeg has been really good in the regular season before, but they haven't had the crazy slide that we've seen them have in previous years, and I just think their game is more detailed. I think it's more suitable for the playoffs.

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/nhl-playoff-push-round-1-matchups-we-want-to-see/>

NHL Playoff Push: Round 1 matchups we want to see

By Emily Sadler

We are officially one month away from the conclusion of the 2024-25 NHL regular season, and as the stretch run of the campaign is laid out before us we're seeing the playoff picture shift every night.

This weekend brought a few possible first-round matchup previews between rivals in the Atlantic and Central divisions, too. The Senators topped Toronto to keep Ottawa's remarkable win streak alive — and add to the Maple Leafs' pile of March losses — on Saturday, while on Sunday, the Dallas Stars visited the Colorado Avalanche in a game that not only brought the well-traveled Mikko Rantanen to his old stomping grounds but showed us a glimpse of the high-octane matchup we could see go down in the Central Division next month.

From now until the end of the season, all the wins and losses and momentum swings will be under a brighter spotlight as we get a clearer sense of which matchups we're most likely to see in Round 1. But what about the matchups we most want to see?

That's what we're looking at in this edition of the Playoff Push, which is all about putting a word in with the Hockey Gods and highlighting the first-round series we'd love to see if the stars align.

Below is the current Eastern Conference standings as of March 17.

Jets vs. Canucks

If the playoffs started today, we'd be bracing for an interesting clash between the Jets and Canucks. Not since the early 1990s have these teams met in the post-season (Vancouver took both division semi-final series in 1992 and 1993). That's not exactly a recent rivalry, but this all-Canadian matchup would certainly be intriguing.

Everything has gone right this season for the Jets, who sit atop the NHL, thanks to a deep lineup and MVP-calibre netminder Connor Hellebuyck. Few things have gone right for the Canucks, meanwhile, as locker room turmoil and piled-up injuries have halted any signs of momentum. And yet, the team with legitimate playoff expectations going into the season finds itself within the window despite those struggles.

We're about to get a taste of what this playoff matchup could look like as the Jets visit Vancouver Tuesday night as the Canucks near must-win mode if they're to fend off the Blues, Flames, and Utah hot on their tail. (The Jets and Canucks are set to play again March 30.)