

## **Winnipeg Free Press**

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/03/22/road-warriors-return>

### ***Road warriors return***

### ***Jets start four-game home stand with Sabres on Sunday***

By: Mike McIntyre

Welcome home, strangers.

The Winnipeg Jets have only played four games at Canada Life Centre over the past 43 days, with 10 other contests taking place in enemy territory in addition to a 15-day hockey hiatus for the 4 Nations Face-Off.

They'll finally get the chance to unpack their suitcases and make themselves comfortable as they get set for four straight dates at the downtown rink starting Sunday afternoon with a visit from the Buffalo Sabres. A win would officially clinch a playoff spot for the Jets.

"It's great to be home again," forward Cole Perfetti said following Saturday's practice.

"Obviously, played lots on the road lately, so it's nice to be at home and great to play in front of our fans. Four really big games, and every game matters so much now coming down the stretch. We know the task at hand, and we just have to take care of business."

The Jets are 48-18-4 with 12 regular-season games remaining, including seven in their own backyard.

They have an eight-point lead over Dallas for the top spot in both the Central Division and the Western Conference. The Stars have one game in hand.

"We haven't done anything yet. We haven't clinched anything yet," said coach Scott Arniel, who has been deliberate about his attempts to not let his group get too far ahead of itself at any point this season.

"We've still got a race going in the Central. They recognize that the two points (Sunday) is a very big two points, and then we'll move on to the next one after that. At the end of the day, being home is always great but you've got to take advantage of it as well."

Buffalo will be playing for a second straight day after a Saturday matinee in Minnesota. Winnipeg is 7-0-0 so far this year when hosting a team that is on a back-to-back.

"It really doesn't matter who the opposition is and how they play. It's really about what we need to do," said Arniel.

“That first period is big. Us coming off a three-game road trip on the West Coast, we’ve got four at home here. We have to take care of our business. It’s what I’m going to say to the group tomorrow, let’s focus here on us being really good early on and give them a reason not to want to play.”

Eric Comrie is expected to get his 18th start in goal. Defenceman Luke Schenn will be in the lineup despite missing Saturday’s skate. He travelled back to Nashville on Friday to spend a couple days with his wife and three young children after being traded from the Predators to the Pittsburgh Penguins to the Jets in a 48-hour span earlier this month.

“It’s been whirlwind for him. He hasn’t got off that merry-go-round, it’s been just spinning for him,” said Arniel.

“I just wanted to make sure he has that time with his family. We are late in the year, we’ve all been playing a lot of hockey. For him to miss today’s practice, I don’t think it’s a big deal to jump back into it tomorrow.”

Schenn has been playing an increased role on a second-pair with Dylan Samberg, taking the place of the injured Neal Pionk who will miss a fifth straight game on Sunday and remains week-to-week.

“I think that meant a lot to him,” Samberg said of the Jets telling Schenn to take a quick personal time-out. “It is tough for his kids who are in school to just get up and leave like that, but I think it was very important for him to go home and see his family. This organization is great with that for any family-related reasons.”

Winnipeg went 2-1-0 on a three-game road trip this past week which was book-ended by overtime victories in Seattle and Edmonton, along with a lopsided loss to Vancouver in between.

The Jets spent a good chunk of Saturday’s on-ice workout focusing on the struggling power play, which has gone just 1-for-16 over the past six games. It remains No. 1 in the league at 30.0 per cent but has been trending in the wrong direction for several weeks now.

“There’s been some games here where we’ve had some great chances and great looks and great power plays. It’s just the puck hasn’t gone in, and I think on a consistent basis, we could be a little bit more of that attack mindset,” said Perfetti.

“Teams obviously realize we’re the best power play and that they’re going to have to do something different, throw different looks at us. And every team is bringing their A-game. That’s what happens when you’re at the top and we’re seeing it first-hand. Now it’s on us to adapt and change and we’re going to see different looks in the playoffs and stuff like that.”

Arniel said one of the keys is getting more shots on net, both with the extra man and during five-on-five. The Jets have averaged about 28 shots a game this season, but only around 25 over the past 10 games (including only 20 against the Oilers on Thursday).

"You're certainly seeing desperate teams. We're seeing teams that are still in the playoff hunt that aren't allowing you to get shots through," said Arniel.

"The other side is, every team, they know what we're doing offensively and our numbers. It's what happens in the playoffs. It means you have to work at that to make sure you work to get inside, to get pucks, to get chances, to get second opportunities. I just think there's been a real big focus on opposition, we've noticed it, taking away our rush game."

Buffalo may already be well into next-year territory as the last-place team in the Eastern Conference but you won't find the Jets taking them lightly.

"We are at the top of the league and everyone that comes in is going to give us their best game," said Samberg. "We have been dealing with that all year and we just have to prepare the same way. Any team that is coming in, they are going to give us their best and we have to give them our best."

After facing the Sabres, the Jets will entertain Alex Ovechkin and the Washington Capitals on Tuesday, followed by the New Jersey Devils on Friday and the Canucks next Sunday afternoon. Winnipeg is 25-5-4 at home this year.

"I think everyone wants to be at the top of the standings when it's all said and done, that's obviously a goal of ours," Perfetti said of the Jets, who have never won a division title in either the 1.0 or 2.0 era.

"But we're not looking at that as our outcome. I think we're just taking it game by game. Each game is worth two points, and every two points is massive. So we're just trying to focus on the next game, the next day. And if, at the end of the year, we're at the top of the standings that's a feather in the cap, but I think we're working for something that is bigger."

## **The Hockey News**

<https://thehockeynews.com/news/latest-news/will-the-jets-finally-flip-the-script-in-the-2025-post-season>

### ***Will The Jets Finally Flip The Script In The 2025 Post-Season?***

By Adam Proteau

The Winnipeg Jets have been one of the most impressive NHL teams in the 2024-25 regular season. Currently, they're the Western Conference's best team – and the second-best team in the league – with a record of 48-18-4. But there's a nagging element to the Jets – and that's their sub-par Stanley Cup playoff performances in recent memory. Since 2018-19, Winnipeg has won exactly one playoff round, and they have yet to win a single second-round series game in that span.

It should be clear, then, that there are skeptics with legitimate cause for concern that the Jets will be able to change that in the upcoming playoffs. Winnipeg is probably going to get a showdown against the second and final wild-card team in Round One, but they haven't been perfect against any of their likely first-round opponents.

For instance: the Jets are 2-1-0 against St. Louis this season, with one of their two wins coming in a shootout. Winnipeg is 1-1-0 against the Vancouver Canucks this year, 2-1-0 against the Calgary Flames and Winnipeg is 2-1-0 against Utah. Clearly, the Jets have been a mortal group, and that could spell doom for them in the opening round.

But here's the bigger problem with Winnipeg's playoff aspirations this spring – in the second round, they're almost certainly going to be pitted against the mighty Dallas Stars or Colorado Avalanche. The Jets are 2-1-0 against Dallas this season, and they're 3-1-0 against the Avalanche – although one of those wins against the Avs was a 1-0 shutout on Nov. 7, and another win against Colorado came in a 3-2 overtime win.

But forget about the Jets' regular-season record against Central Division teams. Instead, just bear in mind the fact that both Dallas and Colorado have made major roster improvements since their early-season games against Winnipeg. If the playoff series against the Stars or Avalanche began right now, do you think the Jets would be a heavy favorite to win it? Or any kind of favorite, for that matter? No, we're betting Winnipeg would be an underdog against Dallas or Colorado. And that's because their performance in the post-season with their same core of talent simply hasn't been up to snuff.

This isn't to say the Jets absolutely aren't going to shake off the demons of the past and figure out a way to go on a deep playoff run. Winnipeg GM Kevin Cheveldayoff doubled down on his roster last summer, and at this year's NHL trade deadline, he added only a bottom-six forward in Brandon Tanev and a third-pairing defenseman in Luke Schenn. And we agreed with Cheveldayoff's minor tinkering; the Jets have been so dominant that they didn't need drastic changes to the lineup.

Still, that nagging element is going to be there with Winnipeg until they show they're a different group than the disappointing team that was flushed out with ease in recent years. Remember, in the past two post-seasons, the Jets couldn't even put up an admirable fight in the first round, winning just one game against Vegas two years ago, and winning only a single game last year against Colorado. Winnipeg's defeats were quick and painful, and we're still unsure whether anything is going to be different in that regard this time around.

Being an excellent regular-season team has its benefits. The Jets are going to have home-ice advantage as long as they're alive in the Western Conference playoffs. And Winnipeg's 25–5–4 home record will be something to draw on as the Jets try to get at least as far as the Western Conference final. Nevertheless, Winnipeg could once again falter early on in this year's playoffs. And if they do, Cheveldayoff will no longer have any reason to keep coming back with the same core year after year. And massive changes will be in order if they let down their fans yet again.

It's the Western Conference final or bust for this Jets team. They're either going to make people forget about their sub-par past or underscore it as they fizzle out and the biggest fears of their fan base and management become reality.

### **Winnipeg Sun**

<https://winnipegsun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/s-s-winnipeg-jets-samberg-and-schenn-simply-successful>

### ***S.S. Winnipeg Jets: Samberg and Schenn simply successful***

By Gordon Anderson

Jets defenceman Luke Schenn isn't an easy player to play against, but he is an easy player to play with.

"I feel we have been comfortable right off the start," Jets rearguard Dylan Samberg said about his pairing with Schenn. "He is an easy player to play with, a big presence out there. He is calm with the puck and good defensively. I feel that we work well together, and I am excited to see where it goes."

The Jets host the Buffalo Sabres at the downtown rink in Sunday matinee action. Puck drop is 2 p.m.

In his first game against the New York Rangers on March 11, Schenn played on the third pair with Haydn Fleury. However, after Neal Pionk was scratched prior to the March 14 game against the Dallas Stars, Schenn was bumped into the second pairing with Samberg.

Samberg and Schenn have been an item ever since. The club is 3-1-0 in that span, their most recent win a 4-3 overtime triumph against the Edmonton Oilers.

"They are big heavy guys," head coach Scott Arniel said about the dynamic duo after practice on Saturday morning. "They're both good at keeping people away from the net-front, both guys love to block shots, and they do a good job as penalty killers. Together as a unit, I thought they have been working well on their breakouts, supportive of each other."

The head coach is comfortable with Samberg holding the starring role with random characters from the casting couch. But the pairing certainly has Arniel's blessing.

"I think that's one thing that Sammy has shown us, his maturity, being a young player the last couple of years, now all of a sudden getting that role in the top four, playing with another partner," Arniel said. "He's taken charge, whether it's playing with Luke, or prior to that, playing with other partners, he's done a real job of making sure he plays his game well and guys have been good."

Pionk is starting to slowly ramp up his activity. The #4 in Jets colours is still listed as week-to-week with a lower-body injury. The 29-year-old resident of Omaha has nine goals and 28 assists in 66 games this season.

*Oh, so close*

Entering league action on Saturday, the Jets had a chance to become the first Western Conference team to clinch a playoff spot. The locals needed the Blues to lose against the Blackhawks—in either regulation or overtime — and needed the Vancouver Canucks to lose to the Rangers.

The Canucks lost, but the Blues won. Maybe next time. Let's see what Sunday brings.

Even though that scenario didn't pan out to its full potential, Arniel was asked what the scenario will be in the coming days when the Jets do make the postseason on their own merit.

The goals of finishing first in both the conference and the league are well within reach.

"Winning the Central Division (is the first goal)," Arniel said. "First, it was eliminating eight teams in the West, then it's winning the Central. After that, we'll talk shop."

Currently, the Jets (48-18-4) own an eight-point lead over the Stars (44-21-4) with a dozen games remaining in the regular season. The two combatants will hook up in Dallas for the final time this season on April 10.

Cole Perfetti has a similar read on the situation.

"Oh, I mean, obviously I think everyone wants to be at the top of the standings when it's all said and done, that's obviously a goal of ours, is to be the best team possible," the Jets forward said. "But we're not looking at that as our outcome. We're just trying to focus on the next game, the next day. And if at the end of the year we're at the top of the standings that's a feather in the cap, but I think we're working for something that is bigger."

*Stumbling Sabres*

Buffalo (27-35-8) lost 4-1 to the Minnesota Wild on Saturday afternoon. The Sabres are last in the Eastern Conference and 29th in the league standings. They are 3-6-1 in their last 10. The last time the Sabres made the postseason was in 2011.

"We know where they are in the standings," Arniel said. "But that one area for us, as a group, we've had it all year long where we've got teams coming in on back to backs from other places. It really doesn't matter who the opposition is and how they play. It's really about what we need to do."

Arniel is hoping the three-game road trip through the Mountain and Pacific time zones doesn't render his club a step behind early on.

"That first period on Sunday is big," Arniel said. "Us coming off a three-game road trip on the west coast, we've got four at home here. We have to take care of our business. It's what I'm going to say to the group tomorrow, let's focus here on us being good early on and give them a reason not to want to play."

### **Sportsnet.ca**

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/video/which-players-traded-at-deadline-have-stood-out-most-with-new-teams/>

### ***Which players traded at deadline have stood out most with new teams? (VIDEO)***

Mike Kelly joins the Hockey Central panel to discuss new faces in new places after the NHL trade deadline, including Brandon Tanev's return to Winnipeg, Jake Walman landing in Edmonton, and Dylan Cozens lighting it up in Ottawa.

### **TSN.ca**

<https://www.tsn.ca/video/gill-i-m-a-winnipeg-jets-fan-right-now~3102645>

### ***Gill: 'I'm a Winnipeg Jets fan right now' (VIDEO)***

Bryan Hayes, Jeff O'Neill and Jamie McLennan are joined by Nashville Predators Hockey analyst and former NHLer Hal Gill to discuss who he sees as the top contender in the Western Conference to advance to the Stanley Cup Final.