

## **Winnipeg Free Press**

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/03/05/status-quo-wont-cut-it-for-jets>

### ***Status quo won't cut it for Jets Adding reinforcements a must with trade deadline looming***

By: Ken Wiebe

PHILADELPHIA — Never mind the supposed sticker shock that some folks who follow the NHL — and others who work in it — might be feeling, Kevin Cheveldayoff has been around long enough to know that prices are always high at this time of year.

When you consider the Tampa Bay Lightning gave up a pair of first-round picks, plus a second rounder, to acquire a pair of middle-six forwards from the Seattle Kraken, you can understand why it's taking the Winnipeg Jets a little longer to fill some of their wants and needs prior to Friday's trade deadline.

Jets head coach Scott Arniel said after the morning skate on Tuesday that Cheveldayoff "has got a pretty good read on where we're at" and that has nothing to do with this recent three-game winless streak (0-2-1) his team will attempt to stop Thursday against the Philadelphia Flyers.

This isn't about recency bias, overcompensating or overreacting.

If the Jets want to go on a magic carpet ride during the 2025 Stanley Cup playoffs, the roster needs to be upgraded.

That's not to suggest a bunch of changes are required or they have to land the biggest name on the market.

The status quo, as impressive as the Jets have been to land in first place in the NHL with 20 games to go, isn't going to be enough.

#### ***Size and scoring needed***

Never mind the three losses, this has more to do with shoring up the areas that could use improvement.

The Jets are one of the highest scoring teams in the NHL, but they could still use a bit more size and scoring — as evidenced by being held to two goals or fewer in four of the past five games (including mustering just a single goal in two of those during the same span).

While Arniel was 100 per cent accurate when he said after Tuesday's 3-2 loss all teams go through this sort of dry spell over the course of an 82-game season, having another weapon in the middle-six forward group would make the Jets even more dangerous.

The second-line centre position has mostly been in flux since 2018 — with the exception of time when P-L Dubois patrolled the middle with the Jets — and filling this spot remains a priority.

Vladislav Namestnikov has handled the responsibility well, but you can't argue the Jets wouldn't be a bigger threat to go deep if someone such as Brock Nelson of the Islanders were added before the deadline passes.

Nelson's all-around game was on display Tuesday and even if he hadn't generated a goal and added an assist on the power play, his ability to do the little things and make the people around him better make him one of the top targets of any contending team looking to bolster things down the middle.

At minimum, it's going to take a first-rounder and a high-end prospect to entice Islanders GM Lou Lamoriello to consider moving Nelson if he can't get him signed to an extension.

Nelson got emotional in his post-game interview with Shannon Hogan on the MSG broadcast Tuesday and observers had to wonder if the product of Warroad, Minn., might have played his final game for the team that chose him 30th overall in the 2010 NHL Draft.

How high-end a prospect would it take?

That's where things get interesting.

Although the Jets don't want to empty the cupboards, this spring could represent the best opportunity for the organization to take a run at the Stanley Cup, so being open to just about anybody not named Elias Salomonsson or Brayden Yager has to at least warrant consideration.

That's not to suggest the Jets want to part with Brad Lambert, Colby Barlow or some of the other guys who have taken strides this season — since those types of players need to help extend the competitive window by eventually making the team on entry-level contracts.

However, we often talk about the cost of doing business and that's why it's essential for a draft, develop and retain organization like the Jets to strike that balance and give a little more than they might have wanted to enhance their chances of winning an additional series — or several.

Although an update on the status of forward Rasmus Kupari, who left Tuesday's game with a head injury, won't be available until at least Thursday, if he's out for any period of time, the Jets might also consider a depth piece up front.

That became even more important after Nikita Chibrikov suffered a season-ending injury and energetic winger Parker Ford was recently injured with the Manitoba Moose of the American Hockey League as well, with Moose coach Mark Morrisson listing his timeline in the six-to-eight week range.

The absence of Dylan Samberg — who missed Tuesday's game for family reasons but is expected to suit up on Thursday — merely reinforced the need to add another blue-liner.

More specifically, someone like Rasmus Ristolainen, Luke Schenn or Mario Ferraro who would help the third pairing but be able to move higher onto the depth chart if certain circumstances arose.

Another name to keep an eye on is Carson Soucy of the Vancouver Canucks.

### *Bigger swing*

Things haven't gone as smoothly as expected this season for Soucy, but the Jets are familiar with him from his time with the Minnesota Wild and the Seattle Kraken.

He can be a physical force and his integration would be eased by the fact he was teammates with Neal Pionk and Alex Lafallo in college as a member of the University of Minnesota-Duluth Bulldogs.

Soucy is a left-handed shot but has been used on both sides this season and has one more season left after this one with a cap hit of US\$3.25 million (though his salary is only US\$2.5 million during the final year of the deal).

Acquiring someone such as Soucy could leave enough space to take a bigger swing for someone like Nelson, who is an alternate captain with the Islanders, suited up for Team USA at the 4 Nations Face-Off and has 78 Stanley Cup playoff games on his resume, including a pair of trips to the Eastern Conference final.

Whether it's these names or others who end up being the primary targets, Cheveldayoff recognizes that his team has done what is required to reward it by bolstering the roster before Friday.

### **Winnipeg Sun**

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/jets-adam-lowry-provides-latest-example-of-senseless-fight-after-clean-hit>

#### ***Jets' Adam Lowry provides latest example of senseless fight after clean hit***

By Paul Friesen

The Winnipeg Jets got the day off on Wednesday. This sportswriter did not.

Being left too much idle time at the keyboard is a dangerous thing. You never know what's going to come out of those fingertips.

Let's call this The Captain's Log: Anatomy Of A Fight.

After the Jets loss to the Islanders in New York on Tuesday, Adam Lowry went into some detail on the motivation behind his first-period scrap with Islanders captain Anders Lee.

You don't usually hear what goes through the minds of players when they feel the need to drop the gloves, but this one was interesting.

To me it was one of those fights that didn't make sense.

The Jets had dominated the first half of the first period. And while it's true the Islanders took over in the second half of it, it was still scoreless.

With five minutes to go in the period, New York defenceman Alexander Romanov delivered a perfectly clean check on an unsuspecting Mason Appleton. It appeared Romanov actually held off a little because of Appleton's vulnerable position, putting a shoulder into the Jets winger in a textbook example of how to deliver a body check.

If you have to answer for that kind of hit, then something's wrong.

Yet, Lowry believed somebody had to. After the whistle, he went looking for a willing participant.

"I went into the scrum," he said, post-game. "I know Romanov isn't going to fight, and I wouldn't expect him to. Just asked if anyone wants to answer the bell."

Because he thought the hit crossed the line?

Not really.

"I don't love the hit," Lowry began. Then he corrected himself.

"There's nothing wrong with the hit, either. It's a clean, hard hit. But you want to stand up for your teammates."

Make that make sense.

Lowry also said he wanted to set the tone early. But he acknowledged the Jets were having a good first period.

You can understand how some players may want to get their team fired up if they're getting their butts whupped. We've seen fights turn momentum in games.

This wasn't that.

So what was it? Retribution — for a clean hit?

It even sounded like Lowry would have been just fine if nobody had taken his challenge.

"I've got a ton of respect for Anders Lee and the way he plays and the way he leads over there," the Jets captain said. "He certainly didn't have to answer that."

When the fists had stopped flying, Lowry getting the better of it, he let the Isles captain know he appreciated it, with a helmet tap.

"I know there's hatred when you're fighting," he said. "It's hit or be hit. But at the end of the day you want everyone to skate away and be OK. I just said thanks for accepting it. Like I said, I've got a ton of respect for what he does, how he plays the game, how he carries himself."

"I really appreciate that he accepted that one."

The kicker in all this: Lowry's intentions backfired.

The Islanders are the ones who took over the game, scoring less than two minutes later and adding another early in the second on their way to a 3-2 win.

The narrative for this Jets loss has revolved mostly around an offence that has dried up the last three games, with some defensive breakdowns causing trouble at the other end.

But what about the fight?

After it, the Jets didn't manage another shot on goal in that first period.

Eavesdropping in the Islanders dressing room, it sounded like it was a key moment for a team that had come out of the gate demoralized from a blowout loss to the rival Rangers the night before.

Their captain may have lost the fight, but simply taking on Lowry's challenge won the day.

"A guy stepping up like that against another tough guy, that really set the tone for us," Manitoba's Ryan Pulock, the Isles defenceman who scored in the third period, told reporters. "That was a big spark that we needed."

The man who scored right after the fight agreed.

"That's our leader, stepping up in that big moment," Kyle Palmieri said. "Got us going."

A scoreless game. A clean hit. A fight that sparked the opponent. Even Lowry admitted that.

"Unfortunately, the period went the other way after that," he said.

So, live and learn, then?

"Looking back," the captain concluded. "I'd do the same thing."

### **The Athletic**

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/jets-trade-deadline-preview-pressure-on-cheveldayoff-to-wheel-and-deal/>

#### ***Jets Trade Deadline Preview: Pressure on Cheveldayoff to wheel and deal***

By Jacob Stoller

WINNIPEG — Winnipeg Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff is approaching the most consequential trade deadline of his 14-year tenure.

The NHL's second-longest serving GM faces pressure from above and below.

Another first-round exit would be devastating for both ownership and the players.

True North Sports and Entertainment needs a long playoff run.

Despite sitting atop the standings all year, Winnipeg is only averaging 14,154 fans per game — 1071 short of selling out the NHL's smallest arena — and remains thousands of season ticket holders short of their intended 13,000 mark.

Failing to reach the second round for a third straight year could have serious implications on the organization's ability to replenish its season-ticket base. And with the salary cap about to rise, every bit of revenue counts for the NHL's smallest market.

The players need a long playoff run.

Winnipeg's core has been through the wringer over the last two years, where strong regular seasons were followed by swift postseason exits. Most of their core pieces have remained since the 2018 Western Conference Finals run, and the disappointing years thereafter. In spite of that, Cheveldayoff was able to sell Mark Scheifele and Connor Hellebuyck on the prospect of Winnipeg being a perennial contender when he inked them to identical eight-year extensions.

The same conversation will surely be had with Kyle Connor, who is eligible to sign an extension on July 1. And if the Jets have any chance at re-signing Nikolaj Ehlers at the 11th hour, they'll need to convince him, too, that this team is a legitimate contender.

"We trust Chevy," Connor told reporters on Monday. "And he's going to do the best job he can to make this team a Stanley Cup champion."

That pressure on Cheveldayoff — from both ownership and his players — aligns with what might be this team's best shot to win a Stanley Cup. They've got a boatload of cap space and a Hart-calibre goalie highlighting a core group of players who are playing the best hockey of their career.

That's why it would be downright shocking if Cheveldayoff isn't wheeling and dealing from now until Friday.

Projected deadline day cap space: \$12,403,389, according to PuckPedia.

Contracts: 41/50

Cap space committed to 2024-25: \$84,473,691 (committed to 25 players)

### *NEEDS*

Second-line centre. Two defencemen. And a faceoff specialist.

An upgrade below Mark Scheifele on the depth chart is Winnipeg's most pressing need upfront.

Vladislav Namestnikov has been fine between Nikolaj Ehlers and Cole Perfetti, but the Jets need an upgrade for the same reasons they acquired Sean Monahan last year. Size and scoring prowess down the middle are coveted come playoff time.

On the back end, there are a couple of players miscast in their roles.

Dylan DeMelo has always complemented Morrissey well, but he doesn't profile as a top-pairing, right-handed defenceman on a cup contender. The Jets need someone that possesses similar attributes to DeMelo — solid defensive instincts and stickwork — but with a bit more size. Not to take away from the Jets' blue line this year, but they're one of the league's smallest, and we saw how they struggled to clear net-front traffic against Colorado. Winnipeg could also benefit from adding a seasoned left-shot defenceman to round out their third pair. They need an insurance policy in the event of Morrissey or Dylan Samberg getting banged up. Right now, Logan Stanley is the next man up.

And the cherry on top would be faceoff help. Not only do the Jets rank 24th in faceoff win percentage, but they're also 28th in penalty kill draws (42 per cent).

## POTENTIAL TARGETS

*Brock Nelson, C, New York Islanders:* The price for Nelson, an expiring UFA, will be high — given the scarcity of high-impact rentals — but he checks off every box for Winnipeg. With 20 goals in 61 games, Nelson is on pace for 27 goals — a slight dip from the past three years, where he registered 34, 36 and 37-goal seasons — but keep in mind, the Isles are one of the NHL's worst offensive teams. Nelson's ability to generate net-front offense and leverage his six-foot-four frame to extend plays are exactly what the Jets need on their second line. Plus, he's a trusted penalty killer who is also winning a career-high 52.8 per cent of his faceoffs this year.

*Josh Norris, C, Ottawa Senators:* This would be the type of home run swing that, if all goes well, could end the Jets' annual search for a second-line centre. Since inking an eight-year, \$63.6 million contract following a 35-goal campaign in 2021-22, Norris has been derailed by injuries and has recorded just 37 goals and 64 points in his last 110 games. Norris has been treading upward this season, scoring 19 goals through his first 52 games — putting him on pace for 27 goals. The 25-year-old is a reliable, two-way center who competes on the forecheck and possesses a high-end shot.

*Rasmus Ristolainen, D, Philadelphia Flyers:* Under John Tortorella, the 30-year-old has evolved into a second-pairing defenceman who can be trusted on the penalty kill. Ristolainen is physical, can kill plays and is quite mobile for a six-foot-four defender. Players like that are a hot commodity this time of year, especially when they have two years remaining on their contract (\$5.1 million). Several league sources told Sportsnet.ca that the Jets have long been intrigued by Ristolainen, dating back to his days with the Buffalo Sabres. Flyers GM Danny Briere is also reportedly in no rush to trade Ristolainen — it will take an enticing package to pry him out of Philly.

*Carson Soucy, D, Vancouver Canucks:* Soucy makes sense for a lot of reasons. The six-foot-5 defender can play on both the left and right side — he could slot in either alongside Morrissey or replace Stanley — and he's an excellent defender, with a knack for disrupting opposing team's zone entries. Soucy is one of several players struggling in Vancouver this year and his role has become redundant since Marcus Pettersson arrived. Soucy possesses a heavy shot — he scored 10 goals with Seattle in 2021-22 — and he's got 38 games of playoff experience under his belt.

*Jean-Gabriel Pageau, C, New York Islanders:* Pageau fits the bill for what the Jets need to round out their bottom-six. A highly dependable faceoff ace, Pageau has won 59.6 percent of his draws this year. He also sports a 61 percent faceoff win percentage on the penalty kill and plays a hard, north-south game. The 32-year-old carries a \$5 million AAV through next season and while there's a value to his cost certainty, Cheveldayoff may need some salary retention to justify acquiring such an expensive fourth-line centre. The thought of Pageau and Alex Iafallo on the Jets' fourth line is tempting — that'd be a matchup nightmare for opponents. He's got 86 games of playoff experience, too.

## ASSETS TO TRADE

*2025 first-round pick:* I'd be shocked if the Jets still have this pick when the deadline passes. Given that it's going to be a late pick, in a weaker draft, it's basically a high second-round pick.

*2026 first-round pick:* The 2026 draft is supposedly much stronger than this year's, but assuming the Jets are confident they'll be near the top of the standings next year, they shouldn't balk at moving this pick if the right deal comes around.

*Elias Salomonsson, D, Manitoba Moose (AHL):* Salomonsson is essentially untouchable within the Jets' prospect pool. That said, if an opportunity to acquire a cost-controlled, high-impact player asset, Cheveldayoff shouldn't entirely rule out moving him. The 20-year-old Swede is having an excellent first year pro with the Moose, logging north of 20 minutes per night and playing on both the power play and penalty kill. Salomonsson is a two-way defenceman who utilizes his six-foot-two frame to play with a bit of a bite. The 2022 second-round pick is raw — he'll likely need another year in the AHL after this season — but he has all the tools to be a solid top-four defenceman.

*Brayden Yager, C, Lethbridge Hurricanes (WHL):* Yager has been an encouraging addition to the Jets' prospect pool since coming over in the Rutger McGroarty trade. The 2023 first-round pick has recorded 74 points in 48 WHL games this year, all the while displaying a strong two-way game. Contrary to the player he was traded for, the Saskatoon native is excited by the opportunity to play for Winnipeg — which could make Cheveldayoff hesitant to move him, even for a strong return.

*Brad Lambert, F, Manitoba Moose (AHL):* Lambert's pedestrian stat line this year — 25 points in 43 AHL games — is largely a byproduct of Manitoba's struggles. The 21-year-old, one year removed from recording 55 points in 64 games and being named an AHL All-Star, possesses game-changing skating ability and a quick release on his wrist shot. If Ehlers walks this summer, Lambert, stylistically, seems like a natural top-six replacement. That said, don't rule out Lambert being moved if it nets the Jets a cost-controlled top-six piece.

*Colby Barlow, LW, Oshawa Generals (OHL):* Barlow had a disappointing training camp showing this past fall and he hasn't dominated the OHL the way you'd expect him to. That said, the 2023 first-round pick still possesses a game-breaking shot, and while his game is still raw — he needs to improve his play off the puck — several NHL teams are still intrigued by his upside.

*Kieron Walton, C, Sudbury Wolves (OHL):* Walton, a 2024 sixth-round pick, is Winnipeg's fastest rising prospect. The six-foot-six centre has been a human highlight reel with Sudbury, recording 34 goals and 82 points in 56 games. His toolbox is a rarity — players that big usually don't have that good of a feel for the puck.

*Kevin He, Niagara IceDogs (OHL):* He, a fourth-round pick, was another mid-round gem from the 2024 draft. After a strong training camp showing, the 18-year-old has gone on to record 31 goals and 68 points in 54 games. The six-foot winger has an intriguing skillset, highlighted by a high-end motor and a nose for the net.

#### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:**

Could we see the Jets add draft picks or prospects? Given that the Jets are expected to be aggressive yet again — after trading a first, second and fourth for Sean Monahan, Tyler Toffoli and Colin Miller last year — Winnipeg will soon have a pretty barren cupboard.

If the Jets have some extra cap space after making their additions, they'd be wise to act as a third-party broker for cap-strapped teams and retain salary in exchange for picks or prospects. It's a tactic we've seen several organizations — contenders, bubble teams and basement-dwellers — utilize recently. On Tuesday, New Jersey retained 25 percent of Trent Frederic's salary in exchange for the signing rights of a prospect, Shane Lachance.

For Winnipeg to continue running its franchise the way they have — by building through the draft and making shrewd trades — they'll need to add more ammo.



**TSN.ca**

<https://www.tsn.ca/video/scheifele-eyeing-hawerchuk-s-jets-goal-record%7E3092976>

***Scheifele eyeing Hawerchuk's Jets goal record (VIDEO)***

Bryan Hayes, Jeff O'Neill and Jamie McLennan are joined by Winnipeg Jets forward Mark Scheifele to discuss their season so far, Scott Arniel's impact on the team, the play of Connor Hellebuyck and Kyle Connor, the team's plan prior to the deadline, passing Ilya Kovalchuk for the franchise record in goals, what he eats for a pregame meal and more.

<https://www.tsn.ca/radio/toronto-1050/scheifele-on-the-jets-notable-season-his-approach-on-offense-and-becoming-the-franchise-goals-leader-1.2265858>

***Scheifele on the Jets' notable season, his approach on offense and becoming the franchise goals leader (AUDIO)***

Winnipeg Jets Forward Mark Scheifele joined OverDrive to discuss his impressive season with the Jets, the team's strength across the roster, Connor Hellebuyck's incredible season, becoming the franchise goal leader with the Jets, the gameday approach, representing the Colts and more.