

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/04/14/the-whos-who-of-whos-next>

The who's who of who's next Blues, Wild or Flames could be Jets first round opponent

By: Ken Wiebe

The regular-season banners have been secured and are on order.

With one game left in the regular season on Wednesday against the Anaheim Ducks, the Winnipeg Jets have one more dress rehearsal before the curtain rises on the 2025 Stanley Cup playoffs.

After securing top spot in the Central Division and Western Conference races and claiming the Presidents' Trophy, the only thing left to determine is who the Jets are going to face in the opening round.

Heading into Tuesday's action, there are still three possibilities on the horizon for the No. 1 seed to face: the St. Louis Blues, the Minnesota Wild or the Calgary Flames.

All three of those teams are playing Tuesday and depending on how things shake down, it will either be clear as day — or, it could go down to Thursday's final day of regular-season action.

As it currently stands, the Jets would face the Blues in a rematch of the memorable 2019 opening-round series since St. Louis is in the second wild card position in the Western Conference with 94 points and one game remaining.

The Wild have 95 points with one game remaining and hold the first tiebreaker over both the Blues and Flames, so they're in the best position right now.

In recent conversations, Jets head coach Scott Arniel and several players made it clear that there isn't a preferred matchup and they will take things as they come.

Even if there was a preferred matchup, the Jets wouldn't be providing that sort of bulletin-board fodder anyway.

But is there a team the Jets might match up better with?

That's certainly up for debate, so let's dig a little deeper into the details of how things have gone through the regular season and what challenges each group might present:

St. Louis Blues

Record: 43-30-8, 94 points, 31 RW, 39 ROW

What's left: Tuesday at home vs Utah HC

Leading scorers: Robert Thomas (21 G, 79 P, 69 GP), Jordan Kyrrou (34 G, 68 P, 81 GP), Dylan Holloway (26 G, 63 P, 77 GP), Pavel Buchnevich (19 G, 54 P, 75 GP), Brayden Schenn (17 G, 48 P, 81 GP)

Season series vs Jets: Jets won the series 3-1, Blues 1-2-1

Oct. 22 at St. Louis: Jets 3, Blues 2

Dec. 3 at Winnipeg: Blues 4, Jets 1

Feb. 22 at St. Louis: Jets 4, Blues 3 (SO)

Apr. 7 at Winnipeg: Jets 3, Blues 1

Playoff history: One meeting in 2019 in the first round, with the Blues defeating the Jets in the best-of-seven series 4-2.

The skinny: The Blues have been a different team since former Manitoba Moose forward Jim Montgomery took over as head coach from Drew Bannister on Nov. 24, posting a record of 34-18-5 (.636 winning percentage).

They've been even better since returning from the break for the 4 Nations Face-Off — including a 12-game winning streak they rattled off before the Jets beat them in the final meeting of the regular season last Monday.

The Blues are in the midst of a three-game losing skid (0-2-1) but are back to playing to the identity that helped them capture the Stanley Cup in 2019 — despite the fact they have only five players remaining from that roster.

Defenceman Colton Parayko returned from injury on the weekend, but the Blues figure to be missing Dylan Holloway when the playoffs begin. Among the juicy storylines in a series between the Jets and Blues would be the Schenn brothers, Luke and Brayden, going up against one another in the playoffs for the first time.

A goalie battle between Connor Hellebuyck and Jordan Binnington is also intriguing. The Blues would be back in the playoffs for the first time in three seasons, but they've won only one round since winning their first Stanley Cup in franchise history in 2019.

Minnesota Wild

Record: 44-30-7, 95 points, 33 RW, 41 ROW

What's left: Tuesday at home vs Anaheim Ducks

Leading scorers: Matt Boldy (26 G, 71 P, 81 P), Marco Rossi (24 G, 60 P, 81 GP), Kirill Kaprizov (25 G, 56 P, 40 GP), Mats Zuccarello (19 G, 52 P, 68 GP), Frederick Gaudreau (18 G, 37 P, 81 GP)

Season series vs Jets: Jets won the series 3-0, Wild 0-2-1

Oct. 13 at Winnipeg: Jets 2, Wild 1 (OT)

Nov. 25 at St. Paul: Jets 4, Wild 1

Dec. 21 at Winnipeg: Jets 5, Wild 0

Playoff history: One meeting in 2018 in the first round, with the Jets defeating the Wild in the best-of-seven series 4-1.

The skinny: There aren't many teams that have dealt with as many injuries as the Wild have this season, but they just got Kirill Kaprizov and two-way centre Joel Eriksson Ek back in the lineup last week. Kaprizov was playing at a Hart Trophy level before he was sidelined.

It's tough to glean much from the season series since all of the games were played before the Christmas break arrived. What we know about the Wild is that they play hard under head coach John Hynes, and they can be difficult to play against.

The Wild roster includes former Jets defencemen Zach Bogosian and Declan Chisholm.

Wild goalie Filip Gustavsson has regained the form that made him an all-star, while centre Marco Rossi took another important step in his development this season.

They've got playoff experience with Mats Zuccarello, and the defence corps — which is anchored by Brock Faber — figures to get a boost from 2024 first-rounder Zeev Buium, who signed his entry-level deal after concluding his college career with the University of Denver Pioneers.

The Wild haven't advanced past the first round of the Stanley Cup playoffs since 2015 (when they lost in the second round), and their post-season record since 2000 is 34-62.

Calgary Flames

Record: 39-27-7, 92 points, 30 RW, 35 ROW

What's left: Tuesday at home vs Vegas Golden Knights, Thursday on the road vs Los Angeles Kings

Leading scorers: Nazem Kadri (32 G, 63 P, 80 GP), Jonathan Huberdeau (28 G, 61 P, 80 GP), MacKenzie Weegar (8 G, 46 P, 79 GP), Matt Coronato (24 G, 44 P, 75 GP), Blake Coleman (15 G, 38 P, 80 GP)

Season series vs Jets: Jets won the series 2-1, Flames 1-2

Oct. 26 at Calgary: Jets 5, Flames 3
Jan. 18 at Winnipeg: Flames 3, Jets 1
Jan. 26 at Winnipeg: Jets 5, Flames 2

Playoff history: Met once in the qualifying round of the 2020 bubble playoffs during the pandemic, with the Flames defeating the Jets in the best-of-five series 3-1.

The skinny: Flames head coach Ryan Huska has done a fantastic job to get the buy-in that was required to keep his team in the race this late in the season when most observers had them pencilled in as a lottery team.

The path for the Flames looks like the most difficult, with little margin for error, but the Golden Knights have already sewn up top spot in the Pacific and the Kings already know they're set for a third consecutive date with the Edmonton Oilers.

Rookie goalie Dustin Wolf has grabbed the No. 1 job and forced his way into the Calder Trophy discussion.

Centre Nazem Kadri, who helped the Colorado Avalanche capture the Stanley Cup in 2022, is having an outstanding campaign to lead the offensive attack for a team that doesn't score a lot.

The Flames are 30th among 32 teams in goals scored, but 15th in goals against. Jonathan Huberdeau is enjoying a bounce-back season with 28 goals — after combining for 27 in his two prior seasons after coming over in a trade with the Florida Panthers.

The Flames' defence corps includes MacKenzie Weegar and Rasmus Andersson, both of whom supply offence to go with strong puck-moving ability and size.

Since beating the Jets in the qualifying round, the Flames have won just one series — when they outlasted the Dallas Stars in an exciting seven-game series.

There is some allure in this series for folks who remember the days of the Smythe Division, even if the Jamie Macoun cross-check on Dale Hawerchuk remains a sore spot for many.

Canadian Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/hockey/2025/04/15/winnipeg-jets-head-coach-scott-arniel-making-most-of-second-chance-in-nhl-spotlight>

Winnipeg Jets head coach Scott Arniel making most of second chance in NHL spotlight

By: Joshua Clipperton, The Canadian Press

Scott Arniel was head coach of the Columbus Blue Jackets just over 19 months.

It didn't go well.

A winning percentage of .439 across those 123 games, including a disastrous 11-25-5 start to the 2011-12 season before getting fired, left him bitterly disappointed — both at the opportunity lost and how he had gone about his business.

"I certainly wasn't happy with the job I attempted to do," Arniel said. "If I was ever going to get a second chance, I wanted to make sure I was ready."

He reflected, studied and prepared for another NHL shot that was far from assured. More than a decade later — much longer than he hoped — the coach from Kingston, Ont., has grabbed onto an opportunity that finally arrived.

Arniel was promoted by the Winnipeg Jets from associate to head coach in May following the retirement of Rick Bowness.

The club not only hasn't missed a beat, it's taken a massive step forward with the playoffs looming.

Winnipeg secured the franchise's first-ever Presidents' Trophy with the league's best record at 55-22-4 and one game remaining on the regular-season schedule.

The transition to Arniel has been seamless after he filled in for Bowness during a pair of health-related absences the previous two seasons. Familiarity and established lines of communication have paid off since he was introduced as the Jets' bench boss.

"It wasn't like I came in fresh," Arniel said. "It helped an awful lot."

He also wasn't about to make wholesale changes.

Led by two-time Vezina Trophy-winning goaltender Connor Hellebuyck, the team's identity under Bowness stressed defensive buy-in from top players and not relying on their star netminder to make 40 saves a night.

"Our play without the puck has been outstanding," said Arniel, a former forward drafted by the original Jets in 1981. "There were some things on the offensive side we wanted to improve."

It turns out there was plenty of room to grow for a group that finished with 110 points last season only to be bounced in the first round of the playoffs for the second consecutive spring.

Winnipeg's power play sat first in the league at 29.4 per cent heading into Tuesday's action after finishing 22nd in 2023-24, while the overall offence for an organization that hasn't won a playoff round in a full NHL campaign since making the 2018 Western Conference final jumped from 15th to a tie for fourth.

The Jets haven't fallen off defensively — they've actually improved — and once again occupy top spot with the fewest goals allowed at 2.33 per game compared to 2.41 last season.

Arniel is a big reason why.

"You never know how a team's going to respond," Winnipeg captain Adam Lowry said of coaching changes. "He's intense, but he's real fair."

"Tweaked some things," added centre Mark Schiefefe. "Also just pushed us to try to reach our full potential."

Former NHL head coach Alain Vigneault, who has known Arniel since their junior days and hired him as his associate with the New York Rangers from 2013 through 2018, isn't surprised by the success.

"Getting a first opportunity in the NHL is not easy," Vigneault said. "Getting a second one a lot of times is a lot harder. But when you do get it, and you're like Scott on a quest for knowledge, I just knew he was going to do a great job."

Hellebuyck said Bowness and Arniel, who's in the running for the Jack Adams Award as coach of the year, have similar core principles.

"Bones really put his thumbprint on us," said this season's league leader in wins, save percentage, goals-against average and shutouts. "Arnie comes in and keeps pushing the same things, adds a few details and doesn't let us off the hook."

Moving from a supporting role to the top job can, however, present challenges. The relationship between player and coach changes when the latter shifts to the big chair.

Arniel, who led the American Hockey League's Manitoba Moose from 2006 through 2010, made a point of travelling to meet Lowry, Schiefefe and defenceman Josh Morrissey in Calgary over the summer. He detailed the impending system shifts and wanted to know of any concerns among Winnipeg's locker-room leaders.

"There can be a disconnect," Lowry said. "Arnie found that happy medium. He asks and makes demands of us because we know he respects us, we respect him."

Arniel spent one more season in the AHL after the axe fell in Columbus before joining the Rangers. He was then an assistant with the Washington Capitals from 2018 to 2022 before landing on Winnipeg's bench.

The 62-year-old interviewed for a number of head coach openings, including with the Jets when Bowness got the gig in July 2022.

Lowry believes Arniel used the time spent waiting wisely.

“Didn’t change his identity, but you learn,” said the centre. “He’s fair with the demands and he lumps himself right in there. That resonates with players when coaches have accountability.

“Couldn’t have been a better fit.”

It’s also one Arniel wasn’t sure would materialize after an ugly opening act that ended more than 13 years ago with the Blue Jackets.

“It doesn’t even have to be in sports,” he said. “But you’re always looking for a second chance.”

Arniel is making the most out of his.

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipegsun.com/sports/probably-the-right-play-samberg-blocked-shot-causes-consternation>

'Probably the right play': Samberg blocked shot causes consternation

By Gordon Anderson

You don’t have to agree with the call, but it was the correct one.

Dylan Samberg left the game on Sunday just past the midpoint of the second period when he blocked a Connor McDavid blast with the inside of his left knee.

“I think it’s probably the right play, unfortunately, to let it go,” Jets d-man Dylan DeMelo said. “When you’ve got a guy with a broken stick, and it turns into a five-on-four you just hold on and hope for the best. But, then to give up a goal where they walked it out of mid-air, it’s just a tough one the way it turned out.”

As DeMelo mentioned, the Oilers played keep away with the puck and managed to squeeze an even-strength goal behind Eric Comrie.

After the goal was scored, the crowd heartily booed the referees for allowing play to continue while their wounded rearguard was basically stapled to the ice in obvious distress.

As the crowd continued to echo its displeasure, Mark Scheifele was inside the centre circle discussing the incident with referee Chris Schlenker.

But the league rule book is crystal clear about the circumstance that befell the Jets on that play. The officials made the right call.

“When a player is injured so that he cannot continue play or go to his bench, the play shall not be stopped until the injured player’s team has secured control of the puck,” Rule 8.1 of the NHL rulebook said. “In the case where it is obvious that a player has sustained a serious injury, the referee and/or linesperson may stop the play immediately.”

<https://winnipegson.com/sports/its-not-the-trophy-were-after-jets-win-presidents-trophy-but-focused-on-postseason-success>

‘It’s not the trophy we’re after’: Jets win Presidents’ Trophy but focused on postseason success

By Gordon Anderson

The Jets have had a banner regular season thus far, but there was no celebrating the success.

Winnipeg added to its haul of in-season accolades, winning the Presidents’ Trophy following a 4-1 loss to the Oilers on Sunday evening.

“At the end of the day, it’s not the trophy we’re after,” head coach Scott Arniel said.

“We want to be the first Canadian team since 1993 to win the Cup,” Dylan DeMelo added. “That’s what we’re here for.”

Winnipeg received help from the out-of-town scoreboard when the Columbus Blue Jackets defeated the Washington Capitals 4-1 on Sunday night, thereby cementing the Jets grip on the trophy with 114 points.

But Arniel did allow for a small measure of success and fulfillment to creep into his post-game words.

“The guys should be proud of it,” he said. “Just what we’ve gone through this year, and to be right in the thick of things all year long, as one of the best in the league, it’s a heck of an accomplishment. We’re proud of it. If and when we get to the Stanley Cup Finals, we get home-ice advantage as well. There is something to it.”

The hockey club also won its first ever Central Division and Western Conference banners following a 5-4 victory over the Blackhawks on Saturday evening.

Along the way to league supremacy, the Jets set franchise records for the most regular season wins with 55 and most road wins with 26. Several players set personal records along the way. Mark Scheifele became the 2.0 Jets all-time leading goal scorer when he eclipsed Ilya Kovalchuk's 328 goals on Feb. 24 in San Jose.

The locals had three lengthy win streaks to punctuate their success. They won eight straight to kick off the season, tasted victory eagerly in winning 15 of their first 16 games and ripped off an 11-game win streak that spanned from Jan. 22 to Feb. 26. Their longest losing streak was four games.

"It's been a fantastic year, it really has," DeMelo said. "We've done a lot of good things and been really consistent. Everybody has really bought into what we're doing here. Like I said, we've got our sights set on higher things. At the end of the day, it's great. It's great for the organization, it's great for the city."

The last team to win both the league crown and the Stanley Cup was the 2012-13 Chicago Blackhawks.

The last Canadian franchise to win the Presidents' Trophy was the 2012 Vancouver Canucks, who achieved the feat with 111 points. The Canucks lost their opening round series in five games to the eventual Cup winner L.A. Kings.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/the-talking-point-ranking-jets-possible-playoff-matchups~3113570>

The Talking Point: Ranking Jets' possible playoff matchups (VIDEO)

The Jets have clinched the top spot in the NHL, but still aren't certain as to who they will face in the first round of the playoffs. Who would be the most favourable opponent? TSN Hockey analyst Martin Biron breaks down who would be the best matchup for Winnipeg in the first round.

Sportsnet FAN 590

<https://illegalcurve.com/sportsnet-590-the-fan-hockey-show-winnipeg-jets-get-the-presidents-trophy-a-conversation-with-gm-kevin-cheveldayoff/>

The GM in Winnipeg joined the show for a chat about his hockey club (AUDIO)

Matt Marchese and Mike Futa open The FAN Hockey Show with Winnipeg Jets GM Kevin Cheveldayoff to talk about the Jets earning the President's Trophy, what it means for the team, how they will sustain their dominance in the playoffs, and Connor Hellebuyck's probable Hart Trophy case.