

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/04/20/this-is-a-different-animal-history-wont-let-jets-get-comfortable-despite-early-lead>

‘This is a different animal’: History won’t let Jets get comfortable with early lead

By: Mike McIntyre

The good news for the Winnipeg Jets? They’re up 1-0 in their best-of-seven series against the St. Louis by virtue of Saturday’s dramatic 5-3 comeback victory.

The bad news? They’ve been in this exact same position before over the past two springs. And despite drawing first blood against both the Vegas Golden Knights and Colorado Avalanche, what happened next is still a bit of an open wound around the club.

“I don’t talk about that, the last two playoff years, because this is a different animal, a different year,” Jets coach Scott Arniel said following Sunday’s optional team skate at Hockey For All Centre.

No, you don’t need to remind Arniel — an assistant coach to Rick Bowness both of those years — that Winnipeg proceeded to drop the next four straight games each time. A playoff series is all about adjustments, it’s clear the Jets weren’t able to effectively counter what their opponents threw at them while straying from their own identity.

“You can’t get to this time of year and all of a sudden decide you’re gonna play a different way,” Arniel explained.

That recent hockey history has helped form the “calluses” Arniel has often referred to during the 82-game regular season that ended with the Jets on top of the NHL standings. So is this group better prepared to handle the inevitable changes that the Blues will no doubt make starting with Monday’s Game 2 at Canada Life Centre?

“Those are all the things that we’ve been talking about, harping about for the 82 games, that when we got to this point, that we need to play that way, and we’ll have success when doing it,” said Arniel.

“That’s all part of that growth that we did over the course of the year to get us here, so that when we see something that they’re doing that we can make our adjustments and we’ll make it on the fly. That’s where our group is real good, recognizing how we need them to kind of play and make our adjustments and do those things that’ll help us have success.”

Arniel points to Game 1 as a perfect example. The Jets looked nervous and tentative in the opening period, then took over the game in the final 40 minutes. It was the Blues who ultimately couldn't find the in-game answers and got away from what they do well.

"(Monday) will have a whole different look to it. I'm hoping that we have a better first period, that we don't come out of the game like we did," said Arniel. "We've done a real good job this year of focusing on what's coming next, and that next game (Monday) is what we're zooming in on."

Blues coach Jim Montgomery told reporters Sunday he expects his team to be "significantly better" with both their energy and their execution, especially with so many young, inexperienced players in his lineup.

"We have 20- and 21-year-olds. I don't think Winnipeg has that in their lineup. The exponential growth that they can have from game to game is really valuable to us," he said.

"Besides that, our team is pretty veteran. We've got five guys that have won Cups. So, we've got to balance that experience with the youth and we've got to become the regular-season team we were in the last 26 games. We need to have that intent and purpose and the confidence starting (Monday)."

Don't expect any lineup changes from the Jets. Sunday's optional practice involved just a handful of regulars, although injured forward Gabe Vilardi participated in a yellow non-contact jersey for the first time as he works his way back from an upper-body injury that has cost him the past 12 games. He'd been skating the past several days on his own.

"It's awesome, it's great that he's around," said Arniel. "When I see that other jersey change colour then we'll start talking about him."

Following Monday's game, there are only two playoff contests scheduled over the next eight days. That could work to the benefit of Vilardi and even Nikolaj Ehlers, who hasn't resumed skating yet as he deals with a lower-body injury that has cost him the past three games.

Two areas the Jets will be looking to clean up are the penalty kill and faceoffs. Winnipeg surrendered two power play goals to the Blues and won just 26 of 61 draws — although one of them led directly to Kyle Connor's game-winning goal with just 96 seconds left in regulation.

"Penalty kill, we got over-aggressive, actually. We talked about how we kill, but we got a little bit too aggressive and we kind of left some openings," said Arniel.

Jets defenceman Dylan Samberg said Sunday he loved the sense of calm he felt despite falling behind by a goal on two different occasions (1-0, and then 3-2).

“We didn’t really have any panic, and we’re comfortable. We’ve had games like that this year that we’ve ended up winning, even if it came down to the last minute, last 30 seconds,” said Samberg.

Managing those emotions within the game is critical, especially for teams that are planning long playoff runs. It’s not always going to be sunshine and rainbows.

Speaking of emotions, it didn’t take long for the bad blood to develop, especially at the tail end of the contest once Adam Lowry’s empty-netter had sealed the deal. Two post-whistle scrums in the final minute led to 10-minute misconducts behind handed out to 10 different players, five from each team.

“It was just a playoff game. That’s always going to happen. Nothing was really said, just good playoff fun,” said forward Alex Iafallo, who got the comeback going when he tied the game with just over 10 minutes left in the third period.

Iafallo’s night officially ended with 19 seconds left to play as he was one of the skaters sent to the showers early as he drew the ire of several Blues forwards.

“That’s how it’s supposed to be. Obviously St. Louis definitely is a rival but the first game is always wild like that and it’s always fun to play in,” he said. “Every game’s going to be like that from here on out.”

Another element the Jets don’t expect to change — the benefit of home-ice advantage, which they were able to weaponize in this game. Winnipeg had dropped four of five playoff games at Canada Life Centre over the past two years, and they lost all three contests in their own backyard during a 2019 first-round defeat to the Blues.

“The crowd was amazing. The whole Whiteout was awesome,” said Iafallo. “It’s pretty fun to score those goals and just celebrate with the team and just look around at all the towels was pretty special.”

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/04/20/its-something-you-dream-of-as-a-kid-anderson-dolan-making-most-of-opportunity-with-jets>

“It’s something you dream of as a kid’: Anderson-Dolan making most of opportunity with Jets

By: Mike McIntyre

It was a true “pinch me” moment for Jaret Anderson-Dolan.

The 25-year-old Winnipeg Jets forward, who was toiling in the American Hockey League just a few weeks ago, scored the biggest goal of his young career on Saturday night to send Canada Life Centre into a full-blown frenzy.

"It's something you dream of as a kid scoring a playoff goal," Anderson-Dolan told the Free Press on Sunday.

"And especially in an environment like that, in the Whiteout. I remember growing up watching Whiteouts. It's obviously a crazy environment. Our crowd and fans are so good and so supportive. It's definitely a cool moment scoring that goal and I kind of just blacked out after it went in, honestly."

Thing is, the Calgary product wasn't initially sure the goal was even his. Defenceman Luke Schenn's shot was obviously deflected, but linemate Morgan Barron was first given credit. It was later changed to Anderson-Dolan's tally when replays showed it hit Barron, then him, on the way past St. Louis goaltender Jordan Binnington.

"I don't think either of us really cared. I didn't find out until they announced it in the second period there after intermission," said Anderson-Dolan, who had just four previous games of NHL playoff experience which all came in 2022-23 with the Los Angeles Kings. He didn't record a point.

"Obviously very special. This time of year you want to do anything to contribute to a win. Scoring goals is obviously part of that, no matter if it's a double deflection or not. It still counts the same. I thought that was a big goal for our team."

It sure was, giving the Jets their first lead of the series with just under five minutes to play in the first period. Although the Blues would quickly answer back and then grab the lead back early in the middle frame, Winnipeg rallied with a trio of third-period goals to grab a huge 5-3 victory.

The fact Anderson-Dolan was in the Game 1 lineup, let alone scoring, is rather unexpected. He broke his foot in the final pre-season game last fall, then was sent to the Manitoba Moose once he recovered nearly two months later. He remained in the minors until late last month when injuries created an opportunity.

Anderson-Dolan, who signed a two-year free agent deal last summer and had 19 points (7G, 12A) in 51 games with the Moose, made his Jets debut on Apr. 3 in Vegas. He'd play six more regular season games, recording a total of one assist.

With forwards Gabe Vilardi (upper-body), Nikolaj Ehlers (lower-body) and Rasmus Kupari (concussion) all unable to start the playoffs, Anderson-Dolan's spot in the lineup remained secure.

"Honestly, it changes quick," he admitted.

"It's been kind of a weird year. Just being down with the Moose, I tried to stay ready. I feel very lucky to have the opportunity I have. You dream of playing in the playoffs, every kid playing hockey dreams of scoring and even just playing. I definitely feel very fortunate."

Anderson-Dolan, a second-round draft pick of the Kings in 2017 who has 15 career NHL goals in 134 regular-season games, finished his first playoff game with the Jets with one goal on two shots over 12 shifts that lasted 7:07. He also had one of his team's 33 hits.

Kupari was a full participant at Sunday's skate, but it's hard to imagine coach Scott Arniel taking Anderson-Dolan out at this point. He's been very effective on the fourth line with Morgan Barron and David Gustafsson, including getting some key shifts down the stretch in Saturday's game even when it was tied late in the third period.

"(We) put responsibility on those guys' shoulders, and really it's — I know the other team has some top-end players, but I'm confident that whoever's out on the ice will take care of their job," said Arniel.

"Do the job against those guys, and whether that's our fourth line or our top line that's what you expect this time of year, and it's what we've done kind of all year. So those guys are good and I need them to be good again (Monday)."

However, if Vilardi and/or Ehlers are able to return, Anderson-Dolan and/or Gustafsson would likely be the ones to come out barring any other injuries. Vilardi joined his teammates at Sunday's optional skate in a yellow non-contact jersey and is getting closer, while Ehlers has yet to resume skating and would seem unlikely for this series.

Anderson-Dolan is simply focusing on what he can control, which is making the most of every chance that comes his way.

"It's just not getting too high or not getting too low," he said.

"That's one thing I've learned throughout my career, is things can change quickly. Everybody down there is just trying to stay ready, either in a call-up or be ready when their time comes. Definitely proud of that aspect, of being ready and able to step in and have an impact."

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/04/20/fans-well-behaved-after-winnipeg-jets-first-post-season-whiteout-street-party>

***Fans 'well-behaved' after Jets' first post-season whiteout street party
Despite raucous crowd, police report no major incidents***

By: Scott Billeck

City police leaned on the old saying 'no news is good news' following the season's first Winnipeg Jets whiteout street party.

Roughly 5,000 fans packed Donald Street next to Canada Life Centre and spilled into True North Square Saturday evening to watch the Jets open their playoff series against the St. Louis Blues with a 5–3 win, taking a 1–0 best-of-seven series lead.

Despite the raucous crowd, police reported no major incidents as of Sunday. A full breakdown of Game 1's festivities won't be available until Tuesday, following Game 2.

"Overall, this was a positive community event, thanks to a well-behaved crowd," said WPS Insp. Shaun Veldman. "No issues or concerns, including tickets."

Officers maintained a strong presence at the party, donning white, Jets-friendly ball caps featuring the Winnipeg Police Service crest—fitting for the season.

"Our members are excited to be a part of these events and they are always eager to get an opportunity to wear the white hats," Veldman said. "The hats are great for connecting with the community and allows our members to be part of a legendary Winnipeg playoff tradition."

"Our members are looking forward to many more like Game 1."

The playoff buzz wasn't confined to the official whiteout party — it rippled through downtown, packing bars and patios well into the night.

The Keg Steakhouse and Bar at 115 Garry Street opened at 2:30 p.m., 90 minutes earlier than they normally do on a Saturday.

"We were very busy from 2:30 to 4 p.m.," said general manager Kevin MacKinnon. "It was great and everyone was wearing white. They headed off to their respective parties or to the game. Afterwards, we were extremely busy as well. It was a great night for us."

MacKinnon said the smaller size of the parties has made things more manageable.

"When they started in 2018, it was a little bit out of control, just the size of those parties," he said. "But since then, it's been good for business downtown here."

North on Garry at the Local Public Eatery, bar manager Dakota said the crowd rolled in early and didn't let up until closing time at 1 a.m.

"It was great, it was a really good night," he said. "It was just like the arena in here — a sea of white."

Game days already bring in solid business, Dakota noted, but playoff nights? "They're amplified by two times," he said.

Canadian Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/hockey/2025/04/20/winnipeg-jets-looking-to-erase-their-last-two-playoff-disappointments>

Winnipeg Jets looking to erase their last two playoff disappointments

By: Judy Owen, The Canadian Press

WINNIPEG – Head coach Scott Arniel keeps the Winnipeg Jets' Game 2 playoff struggles in the past, but fans hold memories that still sting.

The Jets host the St. Louis Blues on Monday night up 1-0 in their best-of-seven, opening-round NHL playoff series. A victory would overcome a recent curse of sorts.

Winnipeg began with a win in its past two playoff series, but lost the next four games to be eliminated from the postseason.

"I don't talk about that, the last two playoff years because this is a different animal, a different year," Arniel said after Winnipeg's optional skate Sunday. "But we have talked about all season long the next game ...

"We've done a real good job this year of focusing on what's coming next, and that next game (Monday) is what we're zooming in on."

Fans will likely be holding their breaths inside and outside Canada Life Centre.

Last year against the Colorado Avalanche, the Jets won the first game at home 7-6, then lost the next four by scores of 5-2, 6-2, 5-1 and 6-3.

The season before, it was a 5-1 opening victory in Vegas against the Golden Knights, followed by losses of 5-2, 5-4, 4-2 and 4-1.

The Western Conference champions had to fight for a 5-3 comeback victory against the Blues on Saturday night.

The game was tied 2-2 after the first period before St. Louis went ahead 1:13 into the second on Jordan Kyrour's goal.

Alex Iafallo tied it at 9:18 of the third before Kyle Connor made it 4-3 with 1:36 remaining. Captain Adam Lowry sealed the 5-3 win with an empty-net goal and 53 seconds left on the clock.

Veteran defenceman Dylan Samberg is hoping that determined effort carries over into Monday's game.

“Just focus on ourselves, focus on that first period and try and get off to a good start,” Samberg said.

The Jets racked up plenty of wins this season en route to claiming their first Presidents’ Trophy for having the league’s best regular-season record (56-22-4).

“It’s a big comeback win,” Iafallo said of the opening victory. “Our resiliency, we talked about it all year, but we have to clean that slate off and be ready for (Monday).”

Steps forward

Top-line winger Gabriel Vilardi joined his Jets teammates for the optional skate, although he was wearing a yellow non-contact jersey. Vilardi began skating on his own last week as he recovers from an upper-body injury suffered March 23. He’s missed the past 12 games and is still listed day-to-day with no timeline for his return to action.

“(When) I see that jersey change colour, then we will start talking about it,” Arniel said.

Forward Rasmus Kapari (concussion) was back on the ice in a regular jersey.

“He has missed some hockey, missed some ice and he’s missed some practices,” Arniel said. “So we need to get him up and running here, get him some conditioning.”

Kapari only played one game in the middle of Winnipeg’s final 20 regular-season games because of lingering symptoms.

Jets winger Nikolaj Ehlers remains week-to-week with an lower-body injury.

Late celebration

Forward Jaret Anderson-Dolan recorded his first goal in five career playoff games Saturday, but the Calgary product didn’t get to feel the full effect of the milestone.

He and Jets forward Morgan Barron had the puck deflect off both of their sticks, but Barron was initially credited for the goal that gave Winnipeg a first-period 2-1 lead with five minutes left in the frame.

It was announced as Anderson-Dolan’s goal after the intermission.

“The fans got a double celebration there. They got their money’s worth,” said Anderson-Dolan, who got into four playoff games with the Kings in 2022-23. “Yeah, it’s a pretty funny moment.”

The forward played 51 games with the AHL’s Manitoba Moose this season, but suited up in seven regular-season games with the Jets. He joined the Kings in 2018-19 and appeared in one game with the Nashville Predators last season.

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/jets-ready-for-another-blues-hit-parade-in-game-2>

Jets ready for another Blues hit parade in Game 2

By Paul Friesen

And the hits just kept on coming. But will they in Game 2?

The underdog St. Louis Blues bombarded the Winnipeg Jets with checks on Saturday.

Leading the charge was captain Brayden Schenn, which didn't surprise his brother one bit.

"That's Brayden every playoffs," Luke, the Jets defenceman, said on Sunday. "When I'm not playing against him, I really look forward to watching him play in the playoffs. There's not a lot of forwards that play that game anymore."

Schenn has watched his younger brother get his nose dirty as far back as triple-A midget hockey, with the Brandon Wheat Kings as a junior, even with Team Canada at the World Juniors.

The bigger the game, the bigger the hits.

Schenn also wasn't surprised the entire Blues team took his brother's lead.

The heavy going seemed to catch some of his Jets teammates off guard, though.

Winnipeg had trouble with it early, hemmed in their own zone for the first few shifts.

"We knew they were going to be physical," forward Jaret Anderson-Dolan said. "They even raised the level of what we thought. They came out flying in that first 10 and took the momentum. But like this group does, (we) just stayed even-keel and tried to ride out the wave."

They did that, getting better as the game went on and throwing a good number of hits of their own.

The final count, though, was 53 for the Blues, 33 for the Jets.

Compare that to the last regular-season game, in which Winnipeg registered 13 hits against Anaheim.

Welcome to the Stanley Cup playoffs.

“Especially the first couple games of a series, it’s always like that,” Schenn said. “Whether you talk about it or not, it’s almost expected. I remember watching as a kid, especially the first round, it’s the best time of year... guys are playing so physical and trying to set that tone. Especially the first period.

“But throughout the course of the game if there’s an opportunity to get a lick on a guy, over the course of the series those add up. That’s just playoff hockey.”

It’s also Schenn hockey.

Luke and Alex Iafallo led the Jets with five hits each, while Brayden topped St. Louis with nine.

“This time of the year, teams are always bringing it and putting their bodies on the line,” Jets defenceman Dylan Samberg said. “So we have to make sure we step up and do the same thing.”

The question is, can a team keep that up for an entire series?

“I think you could keep it up,” Schenn said. “It could go either way. Depending which way the game goes. I can’t speak for everyone, but I absolutely love it.”

<https://winnipegssun.com/sports/just-get-to-the-net-jets-winger-alex-iafallo-is-a-bricklayer>

'Just get to the net:' Jets winger Alex Iafallo is a 'bricklayer'

By Gordon Anderson

No doubt, Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor are the creative tradesmen on the Winnipeg Jets top line.

What trade would linemate Alex Iafallo fancy when comparing himself to the two artisans he currently works with?

“Bricklayer,” Iafallo said. “I like that. Just get to the net.”

Iafallo’s game-tying goal at 9:18 of the third period is an example of understanding the role to a ‘T.’

“I was just trying to get it to the net, honestly,” Iafallo said.

Mission accomplished as the Eden, N.Y. native, in true blue-collar style, pitchforked a rebound under the pads of Blues netminder Jordan Binnington. Scheifele was the creative on the play, skating behind the net and dishing the puck to the crease near the left post, exactly where the rugged winger needed to be.

“I’m just trying to read off them, stay in front, make a little chaos, just pick up rebounds when they get it to the net,” lafallo said. “They do a great job of supporting, communicating and making plays like that, so I just read off them.”

lafallo joined the top line when Gabe Vilardi went down with an upper-body injury on March 23 against Buffalo. Vilardi has not played since. The 27-year-old tallied 61 points for the Jets. Vilardi also led the team in regular-season power-play goals with a dozen.

The #9 in Jets colours scored twice and added three assists in nine regular-season games with Scheifele and Connor.

lafallo finished the regular season with 15 goals and 14 assists. The Jets signed the 31-year-old to a three-year contract extension with an average annual value of \$US 3.6 million on April 16.

Speaking of Vilardi, he was wearing a yellow practice jersey as the Jets held an optional skate on Sunday morning.

“It is awesome and great that he is around. Until I see that jersey change colour then we will start talking about it,” Arniel said.

Vilardi was carving turns in both directions, not really exerting himself too much. Nonetheless, lafallo was happy to see his possible replacement on the top line up and at 'em.

“It is great to see him out there, laughing and working hard,” lafallo said. “It’s going to be big to have him back.”

There is no definitive timeline for Vilardi’s return.

<https://winnipegsun.com/sports/a-different-animal-jets-not-looking-back-at-playoffs-past>

'A different animal': Jets not looking back at playoffs past

By Paul Friesen

There was no obvious sign of an elephant in the Winnipeg Jets dressing room after their series-opening win over the St. Louis Blues on Saturday night.

No visible tracks on the carpet in their room at the practice rink just outside the Perimeter Highway on Sunday, either.

Leave it to the media to bring up the wrinkled skin and foul smell from the last two playoff seasons.

The reminder: Game 1 victories for this team – against Colorado last year, Vegas the year before that – have been about as useful as tusks on a rhinoceros.

“I don’t talk about that, the last two playoff years,” head coach Scott Arniel said.

“Because this is a different animal, a different year. But we have talked about all season long, the next game. We’ve done a real good job this year of focusing on what’s coming next.

“And that next game is what we’re zooming in on.”

Game 2 on Monday takes on added meaning, though, when you dare look back. Not only has this team not built on series-opening wins, it’s crumbled, losing the next one and the three after that.

What was encouraging about Saturday’s win was how the Jets shook off a pair of deficits and found the lock-down game that’s been their bread and butter in the third period.

It took a while to get there, but at least they did. Unlike last year, when they gave up five or six goals to the Avalanche in every game.

Of course, these Blues aren’t last year’s Avs, who were the highest-scoring team in the NHL. St. Louis still scored three times in the first 21 minutes or so of Game 1, perhaps causing some to wonder if this was going to be another post-season relapse.

“We didn’t really have any panic,” defenceman Dylan Samberg said. “We’re comfortable. We’ve had games like that this year that we’ve ended up winning, even if it came down to the last minute, last 30 seconds. So there was no panic in the room.”

Forward Alex Lafallo put it another way.

“Our resilience,” he said. “We talked about it all year.”

Nothing tests resilience quite like a playoff loss, though.

Players have said losing one at this time of year can make you feel like it’s all over, while a win leaves you thinking you’ve got one hand on the Stanley Cup.

Levelling out those emotions is what the Jets feel they’re better at.

There’s also been lots of talk of the last two years creating the scars needed to make it through this time of year.

Under that thicker skin, the thinking goes, is a new ridge of determination in veterans like Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor.

Their line produced the tying and winning goals in the third period of Game 1.

It's the first period the Jets have to focus on, though.

They looked overwhelmed by the moment for a good portion of Saturday's opening 20 minutes, got better in the second and took over the third.

"A lot of it will come down to how good of a start we have," Samberg acknowledged. "Trying to get that early lead and hang onto it."

Fellow defenceman Luke Schenn agreed.

"There's a different set of anxiousness and nerves and excitement and butterflies," Schenn said of playoff openers. "That's all a good thing. Guys end up settling in and got better as we went. But there's no question, you've got to focus on the start."

Coming out slow is playing with fire.

Playing with fire can lead to a Game 2 flame-out.

A Game 2 flame-out can lead to, well, you know the rest.

"(Monday) is going to be huge for us," Lafallo said. "Get a good start, good first few shifts, get some physical hits on... the boys are ready to rock."

<https://winnipegson.com/sports/i-blacked-out-anderson-dolan-nets-first-nhl-playoff-goal-in-jets-win-over-the-blues>

'I blacked out': Anderson-Dolan nets first NHL playoff goal in Jets win over the Blues

By Gordon Anderson

Jaret Anderson-Dolan announced his presence into the postseason with a tip-drill special.

The Jets fourth-line winger scored his first goal of the season, helping the Jets to a 5-3 triumph over the St. Louis Blues on Saturday evening at the downtown rink.

The Calgary native skated right to left through the slot and was in the right spot to redirect a Luke Schenn point shot from middle ice, the puck changing direction slightly and zipping by Jordan Binnington and into the left-hand side of the net at 15:02, giving the home team a 2-1 lead at the time.

"It's something you dreamed of as a kid, scoring a playoff goal," Anderson-Dolan said. "And especially in an environment like that, in the whiteout. I remember growing up

watching whiteouts. It's obviously a crazy environment. Our crowd and fans are so good and so supportive. I blacked out after it went in."

But #28 wasn't the only one celebrating with the requisite amount of zest as Morgan Barron behaved like he also tipped the puck into the net. Barron was cruising at a lower altitude, heading for the crease at the same time the shot was heading in his direction.

Barron was originally credited with the goal. During the first intermission the goal was officially changed to Anderson-Dolan.

A modern-day whodunit moment, no doubt, resolved to the satisfaction of both players and the club.

"This time of year, you want to do anything to contribute to a win," Anderson-Dolan said. "Scoring goals is obviously part of that, no matter if it's a double deflection or not. It still counts the same. I thought that was a big goal for our team."

But man. What a bummer. The 5-foot-11 right winger didn't get much of a chance to singularly celebrate his first ever NHL playoff goal with his 15,225 'teammates' in the building.

"I don't think either of us really cared," he said. "As long as it's a goal, they all count the same."

Hitting the rewind button for a moment, circumstances have drastically changed over the course of the last month for the 25-year-old. The ex-Los Angeles King and Nashville Predator was in the lineup on March 21 when the Manitoba Moose lost 4-2 to the Abbotsford Canucks at the downtown rink.

He played 52 games for the Jets' AHL affiliate and skated in seven regular-season games with the Jets.

And exactly one month later, and a slew of injuries to the Jets forward lineup notwithstanding, it's more than likely Anderson-Dolan will be reunited with Barron and David Gustafsson for Game 2 of the series on Monday evening at 6:30 p.m. Head coach Scott Arniel has zero issues using all the men available to him on the bench.

"I'm confident that whoever's out on the ice will take care of their job, do the job against those guys, and whether that's our fourth line or our top line, that's what you expect this time of year, and it's what we've done all year," Arniel said. "So those guys are good, and I need them to be good again on Monday for Game 2."

Anderson-Dolan skated for 7:07 of even-strength action. In total, he received six shifts in the first period, and three in both the second and third periods.

"I feel very lucky to have the opportunity," Anderson-Dolan added. "You dream of playing in the playoffs, every kid playing hockey dreams of scoring and even just playing. I feel very fortunate."

<https://winnipegsun.com/sports/first-winnipeg-whiteout-thrilling-for-jets-schenn-dad-not-so-sure>

First Winnipeg whiteout thrilling for Jets' Schenn, dad not so sure

By Paul Friesen

Not long after the dust had settled from Game 1 of the Jets-St. Louis series, Winnipeg defenceman Luke Schenn called his dad to chat.

Luke Schenn reacts to first ever playoff matchup vs. brother Brayden

Schenn's team had just grabbed the playoff opener in dramatic fashion over his brother Brayden's Blues.

Both their parents had made the trip from Saskatoon to Winnipeg to watch their sons square off in a Stanley Cup playoff series for the first time, so Luke was wondering how dad was doing.

"He was down talking to Brayden," Luke said, Sunday. "And then he came over and talked to me. He's torn right now. He told me after the game he's not sure if he's supposed to cheer or not cheer. He's not sure whether to react, be happy or not. It's pretty hard on him."

Schenn's wife and two kids were in the crowd for Game 1, too, dressed in white and waving their towels for the home team. Loyalty tilts to a father over an uncle, of course.

They'll all be back in the building for Game 2 on Monday.

It was Schenn's first experience with the famous Winnipeg whiteout, as the Jets only traded for him last month.

"It exceeded expectations," the 35-year-old said. "I've seen it on TV, and until you're in the building and part of it, it's like nothing you'll ever see. It's special the way the fan base and the city rallies around the team here. It's not just the game, but it's a full-on event. As a player you really feed off of it."

But that's only when he isn't focused on the game.

Schenn noticed the deafening noise and the visuals from the stands during player introductions, for instance, and after goals. But during his shifts, it's all business.

"For whatever reason when I'm into the game I don't even know what's going on," he said. "I'm pretty calm in the midst of all of it. I don't take as much in as maybe I should or could, I suppose. But that's not because I don't appreciate it.

"It's because I play the game."

His team played it just well enough to pull out a narrow, 5-3 victory, coming back from a pair of one-goal deficits to win on Kyle Connor's goal with 1:36 to go.

The family went home on a high.

"Everyone absolutely loved it," he said.

Well, almost everyone. At least one was only half-loving it.

"I've got two of my own boys," Schenn said. "And I couldn't imagine thinking of that situation down the road."

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/dreger-expects-physicality-to-ramp-up-in-game-2-between-blues-and-jets%7E3119012>

Dreger expects physicality to ramp up in Game 2 between Blues and Jets (VIDEO)

TSN Hockey Insider Darren Dreger joins John Lu to explain what we can expect to see in Game 2 between the Blues and Jets, discuss the brotherly battle between Luke and Brayden Schenn, and share how forward Gabriel Vilardi took a step in the right direction towards his return from injury.

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/st-louis-blues-prepare-for-game-2-against-jets-after-valuable-experience>

Blues prepare for Game 2 against Jets after 'valuable experience' St. Louis positive it can learn from letting lead slip away in 3rd period of series opener

By Tracey Myers

WINNIPEG -- The St. Louis Blues want to make sure they don't repeat the same mistakes in Game 2 of the Western Conference First Round at Canada Life Centre on Monday (7:30 p.m. ET; CBC, TVAS2, ESPN2, FDSNMW).

"You're up 3-2 with 10 minutes left in the third (period) and we didn't prevail, so we've got to grow and learn from that," Blues coach Jim Montgomery said Sunday on the morning after a 5-3 loss in the best-of-7 series opener.

St. Louis played its style of hockey through the first two periods Saturday. The Blues were forechecking, playing well on special teams and held a one-goal lead with 20 minutes remaining.

But Alex Lafallo tied it midway through the third period before Kyle Connor gave Winnipeg a 4-3 lead with 1:36 left. Adam Lowry sealed it with an empty-net goal.

The Blues were outshot 9-2 in the third.

"I think a lot of guys got some valuable experience in their first NHL playoff game," Montgomery said. "They'll be significantly better, and I still think we have a lot of guys that have experience that maybe weren't at the top of their game yesterday for us and they'll be better."

Jake Neighbours was one who got that experience in his Stanley Cup Playoffs debut. The forward got his first career postseason point, a secondary assist on Jordan Kyrou's power-play goal at 1:13 of the second period, logged 16:02 of ice time and was in the mix when the game got snarly late.

As for wresting momentum away from the Jets once they get it, something the Blues were unable to do in the third Saturday, Neighbours said there are things they can do better in Game 2.

"I think just trying to get the puck down in their end and sustain it," Neighbours said. "Yesterday in the third period, they did take over the game."

"The biggest thing I noticed from us is we weren't getting to our forecheck, stalling pucks and creating [offensive]-zone time. When you're dumping a lot of pucks in and they're retrieving them, breaking out easy, they're playing with it on their stick and that gives them confidence, gets them feeling good. Trying to get in the [offensive] zone, create some sustained offense, doing that will slow their momentum down a little bit."

Montgomery said he liked the Blues' top line of left with Neighbours, center Robert Thomas and right wing Pavel Buchnevich offensively, but said they have to be "a little sharper and a little quicker" defensively.

That said, he wasn't blaming them for Connor's goal.

"The fourth goal, to me, sometimes the other team makes a high-end play, and that's a high-end play made by two high-end players; that's going to happen. It's like the only way to stop Michael Jordan is to let Dean Smith coach him," Montgomery said of the former NBA great and his college coach at the University of North Carolina.

“You’re not going to stop him besides that. He’s going to get his looks, and we’re going to get our looks.”

The Blues recognize what they did well in Game 1. Their power play was 2-for-3. They were physical, especially early; St. Louis was credited with 32 hits in the first period. It held Winnipeg’s power play, ranked No. 1 in the regular season (28.9 percent) to one goal on four opportunities.

“There’s a lot to take away,” Blues defenseman Cam Fowler said. “It’s always fun coming in, playing in an environment like that. The energy was great, and it was a competitive hockey game: physical, everything you’d expect from playoff hockey.

“We were right there the whole time, and they capitalized on a couple of opportunities in the third period, and that’s the difference in the game. Our guys fought hard and have to make sure we prepare and be ready for the next one.”

The pressure of being down 1-0 in the series probably won’t bother the Blues; they were eight points out of a playoff spot heading into the 4 Nations Face-Off on Feb. 12 and an NHL-best 19-4-3 after the tournament.

But there’s no disputing they let a good opportunity slip away Saturday and they don’t want that to happen again.

“There are certain tactical things we can look at that can help us for the next game and just understanding that in order to have success in the playoffs, you have to sustain that momentum for 60 minutes, especially when you’re on the road and you’re playing against a really good team in a difficult environment,” Fowler said.

“I was proud of our guys. I thought we fought hard and it’s something we can learn from and build off of and know that we were right there in a competitive hockey game. Next time we’re in that situation, hopefully we can get the job done.”

<https://www.nhl.com/news/topic/playoffs/2025/series-e-news/st-louis-blues-winnipeg-jets-game-2-preview-april-21>

***Blues at Jets, Western Conference 1st Round Game 2 preview
Winnipeg looks to start quicker; St. Louis not panicking despite blowing late lead***

By Tracey Myers

WINNIPEG -- A great finish gave the Winnipeg Jets the start they needed in the Western Conference First Round, a 5-3 win against the St. Louis Blues in Game 1 on Saturday.

However, Game 2s have been a problem for the Jets in recent postseasons, a trend they're looking to reverse. Game 2 of this best-of-7 series will be at Canada Life Centre on Monday (7:30 p.m. ET; CBC, TVAS2, ESPN2, FDSNMW).

The Jets won Game 1 in their previous two first-round series, against the Colorado Avalanche last year and the Vegas Golden Knights in 2023. They then lost the following four in each series and were eliminated in five games.

So, did the Jets talk about those past two Game 2s?

"I don't talk about that, the last two playoff years, because this is a different animal, a different year. But we have talked about all season long (is) the next game," Jets coach Scott Arniel said Sunday.

"(We) did some homework today, did some postgame review, looked at some video. Have some things we'll throw in to tomorrow's meeting but then push last night aside. It's done, it's over, it was its own game. Tomorrow will have a whole different look to it. I'm hoping that we have a better first period, that we don't come out of the game like we did. We've done a real good job this year of focusing on what's coming next, and that next game tomorrow is what we're zooming in on."

The Blues got off to a great start in Game 1 but the finish wasn't there, as they allowed three third-period goals after entering the frame up 3-2.

"Our first two periods were great. When we look at that as a positive, it's something to build from," Blues forward Jake Neighbours said. "If we come out in the third and play better, we're probably coming out with a different result. It's just the first game of the series, and we all learned a little bit from Game 1 and we'll move forward and focus on Game 2."

Here is a breakdown of Game 2:

Blues: St. Louis would like to do a better job against the Jets' top line of left wing Kyle Connor, center Mark Scheifele and right wing Alex Lafallo. They were all big factors in the third period (Lafallo had the game-tying goal, Connor the winning goal and Scheifele had the primary assist on each). The Blues thought they kept the trio in check off the rush, but the Jets' top line can do damage in a number of ways. St. Louis will have a chance to even the series if it can keep them in check on Monday.

Jets: Winnipeg wants a better start than it had in Game 1. It had the traditional whiteout from its fans, and the crowd was buzzing, but the Jets weren't showing the swagger of a team that won the Presidents' Trophy as the team with the best record in the NHL this season. As Arniel said: "I just thought we were a little bit sloppy, hesitant at times. We didn't execute very well." There's pressure on a Canadian team in the playoffs, especially at home. The Jets felt it early in Game 1 but want to shake it off quickly in Game 2.

Number to know: Five. Number of times the Jets have won a playoff game after overcoming a deficit in the third period. The last time prior to Saturday was Game 4 of the 2021 Western Conference First Round against the Edmonton Oilers (4-3 in tripe overtime).

What to look for: Will the Blues play spoiler in Game 2? Can they keep capitalizing on their power play, as they did in Game 1 (2-for-3)?

What they are saying

"I don't think it's anything different than when your child doesn't do their homework and they don't hand in their book report on time. It's like preparation, right? You have to go through it and understand the lack of preparation needed mentally to think about everything. Everyone is excited to play, and after the excitement is over, it comes down to controlling your emotions and staying in the moment. That's something new for everybody when you go through it." -- Blues coach Jim Montgomery on young players adjusting to playoff hockey

"I feel like we didn't really have any panic yesterday, and we're comfortable. We've had games like that this year that we've ended up winning, even if it came down to the last minute, last 30 seconds. So, there was no panic in the room. We were comfortable and came off to a great start in the third and held us to a win." -- Jets defenseman Dylan Samberg

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6294610/2025/04/21/jets-alex-iafallo-nhl-playoffs-stanley-cup-blues/>

Winnipeg Jets unsung Game 1 hero Alex Iafallo is used to doing things the hard way

By Murat Ates

It was a cold winter's day when Alex Iafallo's unique call for help appeared in the Winnipeg Jets player group chat.

"Does anybody have a chainsaw?" he asked.

At first, no one knew what Iafallo wanted the chainsaw for. He's a known outdoor adventurer and camping enthusiast, but it was the middle of winter. He also lives in an apartment building: Iafallo isn't in charge of his own landscaping.

One teammate, speaking anonymously for a Jets player poll, tried to explain things.

"I would say Alex Iafallo (is the best at playing outside) and it's really not that close," he said. "He was asking me for a chainsaw earlier in the year to go cut out some ice, and I

said, 'Dude, just get an ice auger.' He said, 'No, no, no. I want to do it old-school.' I guess chainsaws are old-school, but the guy is out there building igloos and stuff."

lafallo is a unique character, soft-spoken in a scrum but playful and lighthearted with his teammates. In Los Angeles, where lafallo regularly played on the top line with Anze Kopitar, he once sent a single roll of toilet paper to a teammate's house — via drone — back in 2020. In Winnipeg, where lafallo scored the goal that tied Game 1 by driving the net and burying Mark Scheifele's rebound, he's known for his hard work on the ice and his appreciation of Manitoba's outdoors.

lafallo denied the igloo theory behind his chainsaw request, but the actual reason is just as wild.

"I wanted to jump into the river, like for a cold tub," lafallo told The Athletic in a recent interview.

In Winnipeg? In winter?

"Yeah. In the Red," lafallo said. "A stupid idea, but ... I couldn't find the chainsaw."

This is the story of how an undrafted collegiate player with a unique sense of adventure became a clutch scorer for Winnipeg, stepping up from the fourth line to the first when Gabriel Vilardi was hurt. The more you speak with lafallo, the less surprising it is that he wins his on-ice battles on a nightly basis or scored the goal that he did in Game 1. He's used to getting things done the hard way.

He tends to insist upon it.

Julianna lafallo is a physical therapist, a retired NWHL hockey player and Alex lafallo's little sister. She described her family's upbringing as "outdoorsy," but said her brother took that to the extreme. While the average lafallo summer vacation meant hiking, camping and visiting national parks throughout the United States, Julianna said Alex is unique even among their family.

"That (chainsaw request) sounds just like him," she said. "He is always trying to do things the old way rather than taking the easy way out."

What does this mean, exactly?

Last summer, lafallo wanted to get a fishing boat to add to his offseason adventures. Though he was three years into a contract that paid an annual average value of \$4 million, he found a boat he liked on Facebook Marketplace and fixed it up himself. Julianna remembers that when they were teenagers, Alex and his friends did mechanical work on his family's four-wheelers and dirt bikes for pleasure. Fixing things is more satisfying to lafallo than taking the easy route, she said.

More recently, lafallo's road trips have become a particular point of legend among his Jets teammates.

lafallo doesn't fly to or from Winnipeg to start the season. He drives, regardless of the distance. When the Jets acquired him, lafallo was camping in a California mountain range and wasn't near his phone. A week went by between the blockbuster trade news and lafallo's first interview because lafallo was off the grid.

"He was camping for a week," said the teammate who first proposed the igloo theory. "That's why he didn't hear about it. Just put his phone away, like 'See ya!'"

All of lafallo's offseason pursuits seem to involve hard work, consistency and a little bit of madness. It is perhaps unsurprising that he is the sort of hockey player who fights to get to the hard areas of the ice.

"I just like doing things the wild way," lafallo told The Athletic. "I just like camping, cruising around and finding good mountains and trails."

Contrast lafallo's understated phrasing with the depiction given by teammate Morgan Barron. lafallo and Barron played together for most of the season, prior to lafallo's promotion to the top line due to Vilardi's injury. Barron said he admires lafallo for his "unwavering approach" at the rink, whether he gets 10 minutes or 20 on any given night.

Barron laughs when he thinks about the difference in their offseason drive home.

"I think we have a similar length of drive, except I always try to find a few nice hotels to stay in," Barron said. "Al just pops up his tent on the back of his truck and stays wherever he can find on the side of the road. You can draw that parallel to the way he works on the ice."

Winnipeg didn't love its start to Game 1. The St. Louis Blues' forecheck was effective, limiting Jets breakouts and disrupting Winnipeg's rhythm.

Arniel said on Sunday that the game turned in Winnipeg's favour in the second and third periods when the Jets started executing five-man breakouts.

"That first period, we weren't crisp. We ... looked nervous. We didn't execute as well as we usually do and it had a lot to do (with) our breakouts," Arniel said. "But I thought we did a better job in the second period and in the third of our five-man breakouts, us supporting, coming back, playing fast. Those are all things that when we're on our game, we're doing well. It also leads you to play in their end of the rink a lot more."

There is no better example of this than Scheifele's support for Dylan Samberg and Neal Pionk in the build-up to lafallo's tying goal. Adjustments for Winnipeg against the Blues on Monday could come in the form of breakout tweaks. If the Jets can find rush offence,

they'll take it, but their goal is to be better prepared to do things the hard way from the opening faceoff.

Doing things the hard way is lafallo's calling card. On Sunday, lafallo was asked by one reporter: If Scheifele and Kyle Connor are the artists on that line, what trade would lafallo use to describe himself? Before lafallo had the chance to answer, someone suggested "brick layer."

"Brick layer," lafallo said, repeating the word. "Yeah, I like that. Just get to the net."

He's starting to sound more like the sort of person who would ask his teammates for a chainsaw in the middle of winter, no?

The length of lafallo's top line run is unclear. Vilardi skated at Sunday's optional practice, wearing a non-contact jersey, but his return does not appear to be imminent. I'd expect a slow progression out of the non-contact jersey and into heavier practices before a return — perhaps late in the Blues series or in time for Round 2. Nikolaj Ehlers isn't skating yet; he remains out week to week, while Rasmus Kupari has been cleared from concussion protocol but needs time to get back up to speed. The Jets' depth is getting tested, perhaps to its limit, but depth is a unique strength of the Jets roster.

"Because of that flexibility we have, you don't necessarily see him on the top line without injuries, but he's a player who is capable and then some of doing that," Barron said. "I think people don't often appreciate how great a player he is. He played on the first line in L.A. and scored some huge playoff goals along the way."

lafallo has already scored a huge playoff goal in Round 1. It's hard to believe he wasn't drafted, despite playing four years at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, including time spent with future NHL players like Pionk and Dominic Toninato. Now lafallo is fresh off signing a three-year contract extension and is playing first-line minutes on a Presidents' Trophy-winning team with Stanley Cup aspirations.

If it is meant to last, a playoff run also takes a dogged approach: players willing to do the right things over and over again until they get rewarded. Fixing four-wheelers and camping in remote mountains might not seem like playoff training, but there are parallels. lafallo's life, on and off the ice, is about hard work — not in a single moment but over extended periods. Barron sees a link between lafallo's approach off the ice and his tenacity on it; lafallo says he's just trying to give the Jets the best version of himself.

"I just stay mentally prepared. I'm ready to go in different scenarios," lafallo said. "Everyone wants to contribute the right way. You've got to do your job and give everything to the team. Playoffs is a step up. It's go time."

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6294124/2025/04/21/blues-nhl-playoffs-jets-expectations/?onboarded=true>

Blues balancing playoff expectations with valuable experience for first-timers

By Jeremy Rutherford

WINNIPEG — A few days before his first Stanley Cup playoff game, St. Louis Blues forward Jake Neighbours was asked about the future benefits of getting this opportunity.

Neighbours is 23 years old and has played 211 regular-season games in the NHL, and if the Blues hadn't made a second-half surge to sneak into the playoffs, he would've had to wait until at least his fourth full year in the league to play in the postseason. Thus, a first-round series against the Winnipeg Jets was widely viewed as a welcome chance, regardless of the result against the team that won the Presidents' Trophy with 116 points.

But that's not how the Blues left winger was looking at it going into Game 1 on Saturday.

"I'm sure there's a lot of learning experiences that come out of playoffs, but we're not really going in with a mindset that we're just young guys trying to learn," Neighbours said. "We're going in trying to win. We believe that we have an opportunity to beat Winnipeg and advance to the second round, and that's our focus. The experience and things, you can look back on that after it's all said and done and take whatever you want from it. But at this point in time, I'm focused on winning."

The morning after the Blues' 5-3 loss to the Jets, who will take a 1-0 lead into Game 2 of the best-of-seven series Monday night, Neighbours had a new understanding of playoff hockey. He took a two-minute slashing penalty that led to a power-play goal, and then, after the Jets capped their third-period comeback with an empty net goal, he was part of a melee that led to a 10-minute game misconduct.

"You have a decent idea about what to expect, but when you get in the moment, there are a lot of emotions," Neighbours said. "The crowd is loud and the game's being played at such a high rate and so physical. I think just throughout the course of the game, staying calm, staying present and continuing to focus on the task at hand was the biggest thing I learned."

The Blues still think they can win against Winnipeg, and, weirdly, they can gain a little confidence from the Game 1 loss. They scored three goals on 17 shots against Jets goalie and league MVP candidate Connor Hellebuyck, they had a lead in the third period, and they feel like they know what they did wrong. Their play with the puck in their defensive zone, especially on their breakouts, wasn't nearly as clean as it's been in the past couple of months.

“Overall, I liked our game for the majority of it,” Blues coach Jim Montgomery said. “I loved the way we started the game. We played with a lot of intent and purpose. As the game went on, I thought the Jets started to establish their game plan a little bit better than us, and that’s where we have to be able to maintain our energy and our execution level for 60 minutes.

“You’re up 3-2 with 10 minutes left in the third, and we didn’t prevail, so we’ve got to grow and learn from that.”

St. Louis proved that it can play with Winnipeg, but the Jets rightly lead the series 1-0 because the Blues melted in the third period.

That’s an accurate assessment, but what the Blues have to realize in the wake of the loss is that they’re going up against a hardened opponent. Yes, there are five Stanley Cup champions still on St. Louis’ roster, but the Jets are playing to erase the memories and criticism of back-to-back first-round losses the past two seasons — 4-1 to the Vegas Golden Knights in 2022-23 and 4-1 to the Colorado Avalanche in 2023-24. In both series, they claimed Game 1 and then suffered four consecutive losses.

“We have 20- and 22-year-olds,” Montgomery said, referring to Jimmy Snuggerud and Zack Bolduc. “I don’t think Winnipeg has that in their lineup. Even a guy like Neighbours, he’s 23 (and) going through it for the first time. The exponential growth that they can have from game to game is really valuable to us. Besides that, our team is pretty veteran. So, we’ve got to balance that experience with the youth and we’ve got to become the regular-season team we were in the last 26 games.”

This is no more important than when dealing with Winnipeg’s veteran top line of Kyle Connor, Mark Scheifele and Alex Iafallo. In Game 1, they each had a goal (Scheifele’s came on the power play) and combined for seven points. Scheifele had two assists, including the setup on Connor’s game-winning goal with 1:36 left in regulation, which came on Connor’s 11th shot attempt of the game.

For the most part, Jets coach Scott Arniel put Scheifele’s line out against Robert Thomas’ line with Neighbours and Pavel Buchnevich. According to Natural Stat Trick, those units were on the ice against each other at five-on-five for 9:33, and the scoring chances were similar (6-5 Blues). However, they did give up the score-tying goal to Iafallo.

“The third goal really bothers me because that’s our team defense not executing,” Montgomery said. “I liked Thomas’ line offensively. I think defensively we’ve got to be a little sharper and a little quicker.”

On Connor’s goal, the Blues had their second line of Snuggerud, Brayden Schenn and Jordan Kyrou on the ice. On both the Iafallo and Connor goals, they had their top defensive pair of Colton Parayko and Cam Fowler on the ice.

When Fowler was asked Sunday if he could sense the determination of the Jets' top line, he wouldn't budge much.

"We're all determined this time of year, and we've all had our fair share of failures and triumphs, too," Fowler said. "So give them credit. They made some great plays, but in a motivational way, I think we're all at the same level."

Winnipeg, though, showed in Game 1 that it can play at another level.

And it's not just the Blues' youngest players that need to be better for the team to compete in this series.

"Listen, a lot of them made a lot of real good plays, too," Montgomery said. "I think you've just got to let them learn. I don't think it's anything different than when your child doesn't do their homework and they don't hand in their book report on time. It's like preparation, right?"

"(But) I still think we have a lot of guys that have experience that maybe weren't at the top of their game for us, and they'll be better. This is a (Jets) team that's had incredible success because of their details and their habits, and we're going to have to fight through those details and habits to get our chances."

As Neighbours said, the Blues aren't here for the experience. They're here to win.

"A lot of young guys, including myself, who have never played in the playoffs, getting one game under our belts is going to make us more comfortable," he said. "That's only going to give more confidence, feel better about ourselves and grow. If we come out in the third period and play better, we're probably coming out with a different result. (But) it's just the first game of the series and we all learned a little bit. We'll move forward and focus on Game 2."

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6293255/2025/04/20/blues-jets-game-1-nhl-playoffs/>

After Blues' Game 1 loss, better game management and controlled emotions are a must

By Jeremy Rutherford

WINNIPEG — If the St. Louis Blues were to upset the Winnipeg Jets in the Western Conference playoffs, the wild-card Blues would have to create some doubt within the top-seeded Jets in Game 1 Saturday.

Get a lead, get some momentum, and most importantly, get to goalie Connor Hellebuyck.

They did that. They led 1-0 and 3-2. They had 24 hits after the first period and 46 hits after two periods, and while a lot of hits means that you're not playing with the puck, as former coach Ken Hitchcock used to remind everyone, the Blues were more than ready to meet the challenge physically against the Jets.

The doubt was being created, the stories about Hellebuyck's postseason resume were being crafted, and even Winnipeg's whiteout crowd of 15,226 at Canada Life Centre didn't seem all that loud.

But then, in the one area the Blues have been so proficient in over the past couple of months, which is how they made the playoffs and were in Winnipeg, let them down in a 5-3 loss to the Jets.

"I didn't think we managed the game very well in the third period," Blues coach Jim Montgomery said.

How so?

"Penalties. Puck management. A little bit of our emotions," Montgomery said.

St. Louis proved that it can play with Winnipeg, but the Jets rightly lead the best-of-seven series 1-0 because the Blues melted in the third period and stars Kyle Connor and Mark Scheifele made the high-end play that mattered the most — a goal by Connor for a 4-3 lead with 1:36 left in regulation. The Jets tacked on an empty-netter.

"I mean, at the end of the day, you don't worry about, 'You didn't win the game,'" Blues captain Brayden Schenn said. "It's going to be a long series, it's a tough series, and you don't dwell on losses. You have to turn the page right away, stay in the moment and be ready for another game, and come here for the split."

Game 2 is Monday at 6:30 p.m. at Canada Life Center.

The Blues might want to move on, but if they want to leave with a split, they'll have to be better prepared to break the puck out of their zone than they were Saturday. They finished with just 17 shots on goal, including just two in the third period, because they couldn't get to their offense.

"I've got to look the film over," Montgomery said. "Right now, I wouldn't have a real educated answer for you. I mean, both teams were forechecking. It's the playoffs, you're going to forecheck hard. I didn't think our puck management and decision-making was quick enough. Our habits weren't very good tonight. Defensively, we weren't very good tonight."

So what happened?

“We weren’t good enough on the lines,” Blues forward Oskar Sundqvist said. “They play really tight all over the ice, their D are coming down the walls on our wingers. So I think we just need to be stronger on the walls and getting pucks out.”

One of the Blues’ biggest advantages in their own zone is the ability of goaltender Jordan Binnington to play the puck and put it on the sticks of his teammates. Almost like clockwork, he gathers it behind his net, and within a few seconds, the team is out of the zone.

Not Saturday.

“It’s just communication,” Binnington said. “Yeah, just communication, get to your spots and trust each other, and we’ll be all right.”

The breakouts weren’t the Blues’ only issue. A pair of players making their Stanley Cup playoff debuts, Jake Neighbours and Zack Bolduc, each took emotional, unnecessary penalties.

In the first period, with the Blues leading 1-0 on Robert Thomas’ power-play goal, Neighbours slashed Winnipeg’s Alex Iafallo, and Scheifele scored on the ensuing power play to tie the score.

Then, early in the third period, with the Blues ahead 3-2, and 38 seconds left on a power play, Bolduc cross-checked Iafallo on the way to the bench with the clock stopped. The two had been battling back and forth during the previous shift.

After the Blues and Winnipeg played a brief four-on-four, the Jets had more than a minute of power-play time. They didn’t score, but Montgomery felt that that sequence zapped his team a bit.

“We can’t take that penalty in the playoffs,” he said. “It took us from a situation where I thought we were a little bit in control, and then we weren’t.”

Schenn attributed that to playoff inexperience.

“You know, first game,” he said. “We know better than that — they know better than that — and at the end of the day, you’ve just got to be a little bit in control of your emotions a little bit more.”

Sundqvist, who’s been in many such situations in his career, had a solution.

“Sometimes you just have to laugh at it instead of doing something,” he said.

Shortly after that sequence, Winnipeg started to get its act together offensively and Iafallo scored for a 3-3 tie midway through the third period.

"I thought we did a real good job of starting to sustain some O-zone time," Jets captain Adam Lowry said. "That was a heck of a play by (Scheifele) and (Lafallo) going to the dirty area to get us back in the game, and the building erupted. I feel like we seized that momentum, and then what a fourth goal."

The fourth goal was Connor's.

On the lead-up to that one, Binnington had the puck behind the Blues' net and his pass to defenseman Cam Fowler didn't connect, keeping the puck in the zone. They had another chance to clear, but Schenn's backhanded pass sailed to the other end for an icing. Schenn lost the ensuing faceoff, and Scheifele found Connor for the one-timer.

"Yeah, Scheifele came around the top, and it was tough to find where it was through the traffic there," Binnington said. "He's good at finding those holes and he got a good shot off. It is what it is, and it's the life of a goaltender — you've got to regroup and focus on the next one."

The Blues had other chances in the game, most notably a breakaway by Jordan Kyrou late in the second period, that could've given them a 4-2 lead. But Hellebuyck, after giving up a couple of goals early, stoned the Blues' leading scorer.

"With the way we played in the third, I don't know if two would've been enough," Montgomery said.

So now the Blues will take Sunday off before returning for Game 2 on Monday.

Even though there was a lot that went wrong, especially late, they were looking at the positive.

"I feel like we played a hard game," Binnington said. "There's a lot of good things to take away from this game, for sure. It was a crazy atmosphere out there, and it could be intimidating at first, but we weathered the storm and came out playing well. Maybe it wasn't our best game and we were right in there. We've got a lot of belief in this room, and it's time to reset and focus."

The Blues put some doubt in Winnipeg on Saturday, but then they gave the Jets reason to be confident again.

"If we want to make it a series, we're going to have to get better," Montgomery said. "We're going to have to control our emotions better. We're going to have to manage the puck better. We're going to have to win more battles."


"It's a little bit of execution and it's a little bit of getting used to the Stanley Cup playoffs. We've got a fairly young team out there, a lot of guys playing in their first game in the Stanley Cup playoffs. So that's why I know we will get better from it."

Global Winnipeg

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ANALYSIS: Jets hope to prove this year's playoffs are different

By Kelly Moore Global News

ANALYSIS: Jets hope to prove this year's playoffs are different -  image in full screen

It's only one game, but the Winnipeg Jets provided some compelling evidence Saturday night that they are a different team than the one that had lost 12 of their previous 14 playoff games.

Throughout the regular season, whether it was head coach Scott Arniel — or pretty much any player who was part of that series sweep versus Montreal in 2021 or the five-game setbacks to Vegas and Colorado more recently — the singular message was that the 82-game schedule provided the opportunity to prepare for the adversity of the playoffs.

And to that end, perhaps the strongest argument they made in the come-from-behind victory over St. Louis on Saturday was looking every bit the same as the team that won the President's Trophy.

Even if the fans were anxious with Winnipeg spending just over half of Game 1 in the trail position, the players were not. Or at least they did not display even the slightest hint of that, methodically taking over the game from about the 30-minute mark on.

But the Jets can — and almost certainly will need to — be better Monday night.

Whether that's a calmer and composed start, slowing down an all-of-a-sudden red-hot St. Louis power play, or reducing the Blues' dominance at the faceoff dot, Winnipeg has to move the needle forward.

The franchise is 3-7 all-time in Game 2s, not having won in the second game of a series since Paul Stastny's overtime goal versus Edmonton in an empty Rogers Place four years ago.

Arniel says it's not a topic worth having a conversation about with his players, and he's absolutely right. Because in the playoffs, the next game becomes the most important one.

And it wouldn't it be something for the Jets to hold serve on home court and get over that Game 2 hump Monday night?