

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/04/22/hofer-antics-irk-arniel>

Hofer antics irk Arniel

Unbothered Jets take two-game lead on the road

By: Mike McIntyre and Ken Wiebe

It appears the National Hockey League may not have enjoyed the on-ice standoff between St. Louis Blues backup goaltender Joel Hofer and Winnipeg Jets forward Mark Scheifele as much as the fans inside Canada Life Centre did Monday night.

“I think the league is going to have something to say about this,” Jets head coach Scott Arniel said Tuesday.

Scheifele has made a habit of always being the last player off the ice — for either team — following the pre-game warmup. But Hofer, who hails from Winnipeg, has tried to throw a wrench in that by staying on long after his teammates had left before Game 2.

Hofer also began firing a barrage of pucks towards Winnipeg’s net, where Scheifele was still doing some last-minute work. A similar situation occurred prior to Game 1 on Saturday. The crowd reacted with a chorus of boos, then an eruption of cheers when Hofer finally gave up and left the ice.

“I’m sure we’re going to hear about it,” said Arniel.

“Obviously it has to do with when that clock (winds down). It affects when the Zamboni is coming out on the ice. That’s the stuff the league does not want. We’ll just let them handle it and we’ll move from there.”

If this is an attempt to throw Scheifele off his game, it’s clearly not working. He leads all players with five points (2G, 3A) through two games.

Injury updates

What colour sweater will Gabe Vilardi be sporting on Wednesday? Arniel suggested that will be a tell as to whether the injured forward could potentially be an option to make his return for Game 3 on Thursday night.

“Maybe. Maybe. See what colour the jersey. You coming?” he joked with reporters.

We’ll be there.

Vilardi has now missed 13 games with an upper-body issue but has been moving well on the ice in recent days while sporting a yellow non-contact sweater. The next step is

getting him cleared for contact, which would mean donning one of the usual white or blue.

As for Nikolaj Ehlers, he has not yet resumed skating after re-aggravating a lower-body injury on Apr. 12 in Chicago when he ran into a linesman and went down in a heap, just two games after returning from an issue that involved two painful shot blocks.

Arniel couldn't say if he might travel with the team to St. Louis, but he remains week-to-week.

Forward Rasmus Kupari is once again cleared by the club after being in concussion protocol, while depth defenceman Ville Heinola was back on the ice for Tuesday's optional skate. He's been dealing with an undisclosed minor issue in recent days.

Sibling rivalry

Jets defenceman Luke Schenn might not be communicating with his younger brother Brayden the way he would normally when the two aren't facing one another in the Stanley Cup playoffs, but he wasn't sure about the "Luke is better" chants that broke out in each of the first two games of the series.

"I don't buy it," said Schenn.

"Actually, I was laughing because in Game 1 I was trying to figure out what the heck they were saying. But as they were chanting it, the puck goes off my foot and we get scored on, so it was a bit of karma."

Luke was referencing the unlucky bounce that led to Oskar Sundqvist's goal that made it 2-2 late in the first period of the series opener.

Older brother Luke and the Jets have a 2-0 series lead in this best-of-seven battle and given the physical nature of the two players, it seemed like only a matter of time before the two ran into each other and that happened on multiple occasions in the first period on Monday.

Brayden is up to 14 hits so far, while Luke has recorded 12. Both players lead their respective teams in that department.

Back to the original question about the accuracy of the chant?

"I don't know. Brayden has had a heck of a career, too, and he's been around a long time and won himself, too," said Luke, who won two Stanley Cups with the Tampa Bay Lightning.

"I think Jets fans would appreciate having him on this side, too. I appreciate the support from our fans, for sure. At the end of the day, I'm sure my parents are sitting in the crowd and they don't even know what to think."

Tough start for the zebras

It's been said that the playoffs are a war of attrition. That apparently goes for the officials, too.

Linesman Andrew Smith was forced out of Monday's Jets vs. Blues game after a rough fall during the third period. There was a brief delay while referee Chris Schlenker — who was in the building as a stand-by official — got his gear and took Smith's spot.

The same thing happened on Sunday night in the opening game of the Vegas Golden Knights and Minnesota Wild series.

Linesman Bryan Pancich was accidentally run over by forward Brett Howden, a Winnipeg product who was trying to make a play on a puck. The extra man in stripes, Frederick L'Ecuyer, came off the bench to replace him.

Although Schlenker and L'Ecuyer are referees by trade, they had to take on the duties of a linesman and could only whistle things down such as offsides and icings, not penalties.

They also deferred to the one remaining linesman to handle puck-dropping duties, since that's normally not in their job description.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/04/22/a-coaching-connection>

A coaching connection

Mutual admiration for Arniel, Montgomery dates back to Manitoba Moose days

By: Ken Wiebe

Jim Montgomery was going through a tidal wave of emotions.

He had been told he'd been traded by the Philadelphia Phantoms to the Manitoba Moose for future considerations.

Not only was Montgomery on the move back in the fall of 1999, the diminutive and creative centre was changing leagues after being acquired by the Moose, who were then an independently run team in the International Hockey League.

After processing the information and travelling to meet his new team, Montgomery was called into the coach's office for a quick meeting to get up to speed on the systems and style the Moose like to play.

The assistant coach running that meeting was none other than Scott Arniel.

“I remember how easy he was to learn from,” said Montgomery, now the head coach of the St. Louis Blues, who trail Arniel’s Winnipeg Jets 2-0 in the best-of-seven series that resumes Thursday in Missouri.

“I remember when I got to the Moose at the time, I had a five-minute chalkboard with him before my first game, because I flew in that day, and I just remember how simple he made it and how quickly I felt I could adjust to the way the Moose were playing compared to the team I came from because of his teachings.”

When the story is relayed to Arniel on Tuesday afternoon during his media session, he immediately shows his sense of humour.

“Yeah, (Montgomery) wouldn’t listen to me at all,” Arniel began. “What a terrible player. I hated coaching him. No, I’m just kidding.”

When Arniel got serious, he sang the praises of both the player and the individual.

Montgomery finished fourth in team scoring that season with the Moose, while adding 111 penalty minutes to go with his 18 goals and 46 points.

So there’s obviously a fiery side to Montgomery as well.

“Monty was obviously a big player in the east. (He) added a real good skill set to our team and experience,” said Arniel. “I do remember back (in) those days, he was real open to how we did our business and how we played.”

It’s often been said that hockey can be an extremely small world. That Montgomery is now matching wits with Arniel in this Central Division battle seems fitting. Both head coaches are known for their sharp hockey minds and ability to communicate.

They also know the value of second chances, though the circumstances are vastly different for them.

Arniel waited patiently after things didn’t go well in that first spin with the Columbus Blue Jackets, with a pink slip coming after just a season-and-a-half.

The rebranding for Arniel came in many forms, including time as an associate coach with the New York Rangers, head coach of the Chicago Wolves of the American Hockey League and as an assistant coach under Todd Reirden and Peter Laviolette with the Washington Capitals.

Those experiences helped Arniel land back with the Jets as an associate coach under Rick Bowness after he was a finalist for the head coaching job in the summer of 2022.

When Montgomery’s playing days were over he worked his way up the coaching ranks, starting out as an assistant in the NCAA before building his resumé in the United States

Hockey League, eventually landing the job with the University of Denver Pioneers program.

That's where his stock rose to the point where he was hired by the Dallas Stars.

“(At) Denver, you saw the success he was having, you knew that he was going to be one of those guys that was moving on up pretty soon,” said Arniel. “He certainly had built his resumé.”

In his first season, Montgomery helped the Stars reach Game 7 of the second-round series with the Blues, losing a heartbreaker in double overtime when Pat Maroon supplied the clinching goal.

Just 31 games into his second season, Montgomery was fired for “unprofessional conduct inconsistent with the core values and beliefs of the Dallas Stars.”

Montgomery, who was replaced by Bowness at the time, has since shared his thoughts on how addiction was at the root of how things unravelled for him.

However, Montgomery worked hard to get his life back in order and returned to the NHL as an assistant coach with the Blues on Craig Berube's staff in the summer of 2020.

After two years with the Blues, Montgomery was hired as bench boss of the Boston Bruins, where his second chance was upon him.

This past November, Montgomery was abruptly fired by the Bruins (despite a .715 winning percentage), but hired by the Blues and was given a five-year contract days later.

Arniel and Montgomery stayed in touch over the years and traded ideas on topics like the penalty kill.

In an interesting twist of fate, the two men were seated at the same table at the Bruce Oake Foundation dinner in Winnipeg last fall — where Montgomery was part of a fireside chat where he shared insights on recovery and the importance of having a strong support network in place.

Montgomery was still the head coach of the Bruins at the time, so the two coaches swapped stories and ideas, knowing the only way they could meet up in the playoffs would be in the Stanley Cup final.

“I don't think my wife (Lia) liked it that we talked hockey the whole dinner. But it was good,” said Arniel. “He was in Boston, so we were trading back secrets. I guess I should have held onto a couple of those, because I wasn't expecting him to be in St. Louis.”

Arniel was kidding once again, but the mutual admiration both men share for one another is obvious.

“We’re good friends, and respect each other a lot. Well, I know I respect him a lot. I can’t speak for him,” said Montgomery. “But I know how bright of a hockey mind he is.”

Montgomery was among the many people to reach out to Arniel after he was hired by the Jets to take over from Bowness last May.

“I told him how much better he’s going to be because of it. The first experience, you grow a lot,” said Montgomery. “And the second time you get a crack at it, like he has shown this year, you’re significantly better. You know exactly how you want everything to run.

“And then when you invest the time he did coaching with so many different coaches and really good coaches in the league, and learning from now, it just makes you better, and that’s why you see the results this year.”

As the series shifts to Enterprise Center, both Arniel and Montgomery will be looking for any edge possible in the matchup game.

While the Jets are trying to take a 3-0 stranglehold, the Blues are looking to get on the board and narrow the deficit in the series to 2-1.

The chess match portion of the program is only in the budding stages.

“That’s what it’s all about in this game. There’s going to be situations where we’re going to be trying to get our matchups and might happen on icings, it might happen on D-zone draws, O-zone draws, where you can try to do your things,” said Arniel.

“But (Montgomery) has a game plan, so do we. This is where I go back to our depth and where I go back to trusting in our four lines, trust in our D. You’re going to get caught against their elite players at times, and you know what to do. You’ve done it before. It may not be the matchup that we had in Games 1 and 2, but it’s your responsibility to make sure you do your job.”

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/04/22/confidence-in-our-style-of-play>

***‘Confidence in our style of play’
Jets not concerned about days off between upcoming games***

By: Mike McIntyre

Scott Arniel stood at the podium on Tuesday afternoon and finally had a chance to briefly catch his breath.

The Winnipeg Jets head coach was asked to reflect on a whirlwind 48-hour span that saw his club grab a 2-0 lead in its best-of-seven series against the St. Louis Blues — and maybe exorcise a few recent playoff demons in the process.

“Nerve-wracking. Exciting. Honestly, standing on that bench it seems like it’s gone up 20 miles an hour faster than what it was in the regular season,” replied Arniel. “Man, it’s intense.”

It hasn’t been for the faint of heart with plenty of momentum swings, clutch goals, timely saves and an eye-popping 148 combined hits so far. This has been heavy, hair-on-fire hockey.

It’s no wonder both teams essentially took Tuesday off. Only Winnipeg’s healthy scratches hit the ice for an optional skate at Canada Life Centre, while St. Louis flew home and stayed away from the rink entirely. There’s plenty of rest and recovery to be done, and the NHL’s schedule-makers are about to provide an assist.

There’s a two-day gap before Game 3 on Thursday in Missouri, and then another one leading up to Game 4 on Sunday. Should the Blues win at least one of those, Game 5 would also involve an extended hiatus and not occur until next Wednesday back in Winnipeg.

Is that too much down time — two games over an eight-day span — for a Jets team that wants to try and keep the momentum they’ve built going?

“If we’re planning on playing a while, I don’t mind,” Arniel said of his group, which finished first-overall in the regular-season standings.

“Both teams are trying to get back to healthy. I mean, in a sense, just ready to play another game. Because it’s heavy and it’s fast, and there’s a lot of energy being spent. So I’m okay. It is what it is. It gives a lot of our top players an extra day to kind of get set again.”

The Jets will hold a full team skate on Wednesday before getting on the charter.

There’s an old adage surrounding the Stanley Cup playoffs that you’re never really in trouble until you lose a game on home ice. No doubt the Blues will be hoping that’s the case after falling 5-3 on Saturday night in downtown Winnipeg, then 2-1 on Monday night.

However, the cold hard facts suggest the Jets have put themselves in prime position. Historically, NHL teams that take the first two games in a series have gone on to win 87.7 per cent of the time.

This is just the third time in franchise history the Jets got off to a 2-0 start. The first was in 2018 in the first-round against the Minnesota Wild, with Winnipeg taking that series in five games. The second was in 2021 in the first-round against the Edmonton Oilers, with the Jets sweeping their North Division rivals during the shortened COVID campaign.

On the flip-side, Winnipeg fell into an 0-2 hole in the second-round of the 2021 playoffs against the Montreal Canadiens and never recovered, losing the next two as well to end their season.

If we're talking Jets 1.0 history, Winnipeg won its only series where they grabbed a 2-0 lead in 1987 against the Calgary Flames, eventually taking that in six games. They lost all four series where they dropped the first two — in 1996 (in six games) and in 1988 (five games) against the Detroit Red Wings, and in 1987 (four games) and 1985 (four games) against the Oilers.

Although the odds are very much in their favour, the Jets won't be taking anything for granted.

"Yeah, it's a second win, but we're not resting here. We've got a long ways to go," Jets forward Kyle Connor said Monday night after scoring the game-winner in the third period for a second straight game.

One trend so far is how effective the Jets have been at really putting the squeeze on St. Louis as the game progresses. Consider this: The Blues have 19 total shots and three goals in the first periods so far. They have 13 shots and one goal in the second periods. And they have seven shots and no goals in the third.

"Just staying to the script. Not getting outside of ourselves. Just staying in the moment," defenceman Dylan DeMelo said of how they've managed to do that.

"And just confidence in our abilities and our mindset. Confidence in our style of play, and not beating ourselves. Just keep doing what we're doing. The message has been great each period: just keep doing what we're doing on the ice."

The Jets have been the league's stingiest team now for two straight seasons in terms of goals against, so leaning on that identity in playoffs is pivotal. Defence ultimately wins championships, right?

"We know we are capable, we know our game and we know our style and it comes out from being patient," said forward Cole Perfetti, who had the primary assist on Connor's winner Monday.

"We are going to play our game defensively, that has always been our motto: defence first. We will get our offence from our defence. It really frustrates other teams and we can capitalize from there."

It also helps to have a shutdown centre like captain Adam Lowry, who has gone toe-to-toe with Blues captain Brayden Schenn in terms of line matchups. While Schenn has been a physical force, he has yet to find the scoresheet. Lowry potted an empty-netter Saturday to seal that victory.

“Both Low and Schenn have been bulls. They’ve been absolute bulls. They’re running into each other and they’re running into everybody else on the ice,” said Arniel.

There’s also the continued growth of shutdown defenceman Dylan Samberg, who has killed countless St. Louis chances in his own zone with perfect positioning and an active stick. Samberg’s value to the Jets continues to be shown in many ways.

“There’s some real skill coming at him. He does a great job,” said Arniel, who also credited the work of Samberg’s partner Neal Pionk and the top pairing of DeMelo and Josh Morrissey for their work so far. Combined that with the third-pairing of Schenn and Logan Stanley bringing a huge physical presence and it’s been a recipe for success, so far.

“It’s far from over,” said Schenn, who has won two Stanley Cups with the Tampa Bay Lightning.

“Two games, we’re going to enjoy this one tonight, but St. Louis is an extremely tough building to play in too. It’s going to be a great atmosphere and we’re going to have to prepare for the next one.”

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/nhl-to-address-pre-game-mind-games-jets-arniel>

NHL to address pre-game mind games: Jets' Arniel

By Paul Friesen

Winnipeg Jets coach Scott Arniel expects the NHL to wade into the pre-game psychological showdown between one of his star players and the backup goalie of the St. Louis Blues.

Jets forward Mark Scheifele likes to be the last player on the ice for the pre-game warmup, but Blues goalie Joel Hofer challenged him before Game 2 of their playoff series on Monday.

Hofer stayed on the ice long after the rest of his team had left, shooting pucks from his end down at the other, where Scheifele was doing the same, hoping to wait him out.

“I think the league is going to have something to say about this,” Arniel said on Tuesday. “I’m sure we’re going to hear about it. It affects when the Zamboni is coming out on the ice. That’s the stuff the league does not want.”

Pre-game shenanigans like this have a long history in the NHL, even sparking the occasional fight, with other players joining in from their dressing rooms.

Those days are long gone, but it seems the mind games aren’t.

Hofer is from Winnipeg and has a contingent of fans in the building every night, although he drew boos from the pro-Jets crowd for his antics on Monday.

The 24-year-old’s pre-game activities are likely to be the most involved he’ll be, with star Jordan Binnington the St. Louis starter.

The first two games were marked by a hit count that’s far above a typical regular-season game and a couple of melees near the end of Game 1. No actual fights, though.

“The animosity is already there,” Arniel said.

Game 3 isn’t until Thursday in St. Louis.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/jets-stanley-turning-lightning-into-thunder-against-blues>

Jets' Stanley turning lightning into thunder against Blues

By Paul Friesen

He’s been a lightning rod for criticism, with fans questioning his place in the lineup whenever he suits up.

Winnipeg Jets defenceman Logan Stanley is drawing nothing but cheers, though, after his thundering performance in Game 2 against the St. Louis Blues on Monday.

Stanley delivered a momentum-changing hit on Blues star Jordan Kyrou in the first period, sending Kyrou to the bench and fans to their feet.

Teammates say it got them up, too.

“That was a great hit and he’s been a guy that’s not scared of the moment,” fellow defenceman Dylan DeMelo said. “He goes after guys and uses that size well. But he’s done a great job with the puck, too, making plays. Has been real solid for us.”

When Stanley does make mistakes, they can be glaring. At 6-foot-7, most everything he does stands out.

He dressed for a career-high 63 games this season, his fifth with the Jets, and was head coach Scott Arniel's choice over Haydn Fleury to start the playoffs.

His performance the first two games isn't likely to change that.

Stanley's 231 pounds is paired with 6-foot-2, 225-pound Luke Schenn, making for an intimidating presence on the Winnipeg blue line. They've combined for 16 hits through two games, the Jets winning both.

"We want people to go the long way around to get to the net-front," Arniel said. "And if they're going in the corners to get pucks, we want to make sure they know it's not going to be an easy ride."

It hasn't been an easy one for Stanley since the Jets drafted him in the first round nine years ago. Even this season he's been in and out of the lineup, at times.

"It hasn't been an upwards trajectory for him," DeMelo said. "As he's had some injuries and some tough bounces, and he's really had to grind for it. Nothing was necessarily given to him, and he has worked really hard at his craft. And each year you can see he is getting more comfortable."

Schenn says he's seen Stanley get better even since Schenn joined the team at the trade deadline.

"He's done a great job not chasing hits, but taking the hits when they're there, and being heavy and using his size to his advantage down low and in front of the net," Schenn said. "He's moving the puck pretty efficiently, as well. I've been in similar situations earlier on in my career, where there's adversity and you're trying to find yourself a little bit and gain a little bit of confidence and trust. He's doing a great job right now and is a huge part of things. You obviously can't teach size like that.

"When you put it all together, it can be really effective."

At 26, Stanley said going into Monday's game that he can learn plenty from someone like Schenn.

"Definitely someone I've looked up to," he said. "If I can take some stuff away and... if that's me in 10 years, I'd be very, very happy. A great guy to look up to. He's been a great teammate."

Like Schenn, Stanley won't dazzle with offence. But DeMelo calls that an underrated part of his game, pointing to his shot from the point.

There's no harder worker on the team, either, DeMelo added.

“I am sure it is not easy growing into that body through those teenaged years and into his 20’s,” he said. “To see him have a moment where he was able to make a big impact on the game, we are proud of him. We know he is capable of that and we are confident his best hockey is still coming.”

The Jets and Blues play Game 3 in St. Louis on Thursday, the Jets leading the first-round series 2-0.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/playoff-clash-a-full-circle-moment-for-jets-arniel-blues-montgomery>

Playoff clash a full-circle moment for Jets' Arniel, Blues' Montgomery

By Paul Friesen

They crossed paths as player and coach in Winnipeg some 25 years ago, Jim Montgomery a 30-year-old journeyman centre, Scott Arniel fresh into the coaching ranks as an assistant.

“I remember how easy he was to learn from,” Montgomery was saying this week, recalling his one year with the Manitoba Moose.

“He wouldn’t listen to me at all,” Arniel joked. “What a terrible player. I hated coaching him.”

He’s loving coaching against him, though.

In another example of a full-circle moment in the small world of hockey, Arniel and Montgomery found themselves back in Winnipeg over the Easter weekend, this time matching wits as opposing head coaches in the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Arniel’s Jets have the edge, winning the first two games. But the coaching edge goes to Montgomery and the Blues on home ice for Games 3 and 4.

“It’s why you love playoff hockey,” Montgomery said on Monday. “We’re good friends, and respect each other a lot. Well, I know I respect him a lot. I can’t speak for him. But I know how bright of a hockey mind he is. I know there’s going to be adjustments and wrinkles by both of us.”

The 55-year-old Blues coach had just been out in the rink and seen Arniel from a distance, the two exchanging waves.

That’s about all they’ll exchange during the series, unlike the way they’ve talked in-depth over the years.

It all began with a chalkboard session the day Montgomery joined the Moose of the International Hockey League in 1999.

It was game day, so Arniel provided a crash course on how he and head coach Randy Carlyle ran the team.

“I had a five-minute chalkboard with him before my first game, because I flew in that day,” Montgomery recalled. “And I just remember how simple he made it and how quickly I felt I could adjust to the way the Moose were playing, compared to the team I came from.”

Arniel, seven years Montgomery’s senior, remembers a player who was an open book.

Montgomery closed the book on his Moose career after one season, going on to play for six more pro teams, making it 14 over his 12-year career.

While he played just 122 games in the NHL, he’s already been the head coach for 277. Arniel is at 205.

“We’ve always had great open discussions,” Arniel said.

Most recently, they shared a table at a fundraising dinner in Winnipeg back in September, Montgomery still with the Boston Bruins, Arniel getting ready for his first season in charge of the Jets.

“I don’t think my wife liked it that we talked hockey the whole dinner,” Arniel said. “He was in Boston, so we were trading secrets. I guess I should have held onto a couple of those, because I wasn’t expecting him to be in St. Louis.”

Fired by the Bruins in November, Montgomery took over the Blues five days later. This marks his third shot at an NHL head job.

It’s Arniel’s second chance, his first ending miserably in Columbus 13 seasons ago.

“I told him how much better he’s going to be because of it,” Montgomery said. “The first experience, you grow a lot. And the second time you get a crack at it, like he has shown this year, you’re significantly better. You know exactly how you want everything to run.

“And then when you invest the time he did, coaching with so many different coaches and really good coaches in the league, and learning... you see the result this year.”

They both know about regular-season results.

Arniel’s Jets are coming off a 56-victory, Presidents’ Trophy-winning season as the NHL’s top team, the same trophy Montgomery’s Bruins won with a record 65 wins just two years ago.

A playoff crash-and-burn immediately turned those Boston warm-and-fuzzies into the hot seat, and when the Bruins struggled to start the year, he was done.

Landing in St. Louis, he promptly turned the 9-12-1 Blues around.

“As he’s always done, he seems to bring out the best in his teams,” Arniel said.

What neither has done is enjoy any significant success in the playoffs.

In three post-seasons, one with Dallas, two with Boston, Montgomery has won a combined two rounds.

Arniel is working on his first post-season as a head man, a somewhat dizzying challenge even with 14 seasons as an NHL assistant under his belt.

“Nerve-wracking,” is how Arniel described it. “Standing on that bench, it seems like it’s gone up 20 miles-an-hour faster than what it was in the regular season. I know I’ve been behind the bench for playoff games, but man, it’s intense.”

What that means for a coach: the chess game of line-matching is played at break-neck speed, too.

“Whether that’s me keeping track of who is coming over the other boards, the pace, what we’re doing with the puck, are we doing the right things defending? You’ve got a million things going,” Arniel said. “It’s been exciting. Really exciting for me.”

A quarter of a century after they first talked X’s and O’s, it’s hard to say who’s the mentor today.

“A little bit of both,” Arniel said.

Perhaps this series will decide that, too.

Canadian Press

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11144517/big-hits-piling-up-as-winnipeg-jets-st-louis-blues-brace-for-game-3/>

Big hits piling up as Winnipeg Jets, St. Louis Blues brace for Game 3

By Judy Owen The Canadian Press

A combined 148 hits through two playoff games is one reason the Winnipeg Jets and St. Louis Blues could benefit from an extra day off before Thursday’s Game 3 in St. Louis.

Winnipeg leads the NHL best-of-seven Western Conference series 2-0. Only the club's backup goalies and non-playing skaters took part in Tuesday's optional skate. The Blues took the day off in Missouri.

Jets head coach Scott Arniel was asked if he'd prefer a shorter turnaround to build on the team's momentum, but said he's more focused on the bigger picture and extra rest.

"If we're planning on playing a while, I don't mind," he said. "Because it is, it's heavy and it's fast, and there's a lot of energy being spent. So I'm OK, it is what it is. Both teams are going through it. It gives a lot of our top players an extra day to kind of get set again."

It's not the only two-day break in the series. After Thursday night's game, Game 4 is set for Sunday at noon local time. If a fifth tilt is needed, it's scheduled for next Wednesday, with the start time still to be announced.

The eighth-seeded Blues began the hit fest right off the hop in last Saturday's opening match, which the Jets won 5-3.

The Blues dished out five hits during their first shift and finished with 53. The Jets delivered 33.

Winnipeg had the 33-29 hit edge in Monday's 2-1 victory, including a crushing check into the boards by six-foot-seven defenceman Logan Stanley on Blues forward Jordan Kyrou with the score 0-0 in the first period.

"It was a big moment," Jets defenceman Dylan DeMelo said after the game of Stanley's hit. "He read the play well and finished strong.

"It was a big hit ... We got up on the bench, crowd got into it. Anytime you get a chance to lay a hit on their top-end guys, their skill guys, we want to make it hard on them."

Warm-up concerns

During Monday's warm-up, St. Louis backup goalie Joel Hofer and Winnipeg star centre Mark Scheifele were the last players on the ice for their teams.

Scheifele has a tradition of always being the last player off as the warm-up clock winds down. Hofer stuck around long on Monday and shot pucks toward Winnipeg's net, where Scheifele was skating around and doing the same. Some pucks came close to him as his back was toward Hofer.

Fans started booing the Winnipeg-born netminder, and Scheifele looked down the ice at one point and made a gesture with his arm as though telling him to get off. The warm-up clock had run down. Hofer finally left, and Scheifele then went down the tunnel.

Arniel was asked Tuesday if he was concerned about what happened, and maybe the potential of Scheifele being tripped up by a puck.

“I think the league is going to have something to say about this. I’m sure we’re going to hear about it,” Arniel said.

“It has to do with when that clock (winding down). It affects when the Zamboni is coming out on the ice. That’s the stuff the league does not want. We’ll just let them handle it, and we’ll move on from there.”

Scheifele shining

Scheifele, the team’s first draft pick for the Jets 2.0 version (seventh overall in 2011), leads the series — and the league — in playoff scoring with two goals and three assists before Tuesday’s games.

He became the Jets/Atlanta Thrashers franchise’s all-time playoff points leader in Saturday’s win and now has 43.

With a goal and two assists in Game 1, followed by a goal and an assist on Monday, Scheifele became the first player in franchise history to record multi-point games in each of his first two outings to start a post-season.

The Kitchener, Ont., product finished the regular season with a career-high 87 points in 82 games.

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11145084/analysis-mark-scheifele-winnipeg-jets-playoffs/>

ANALYSIS: Jets’ Scheifele raises the bar once again in 1st-round series

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

The 2018 Winnipeg Jets playoff run is remembered fondly within our city — a high-water mark for the franchise and also the bar by which everything post facto for the team is measured.

And while the lore of that magical spring is now seven long years ago, there are still eight players from that team hoping to achieve at least the same — but assuredly more — in Winnipeg’s current entry in the Stanley Cup playoffs.

And of those, one player stands out among the rest for what he did in 2018 and is trying to do again in 2025. After two first-round victories over the St. Louis Blues that have Jets halfway home to playoff advancement, it would be difficult to name a better Jets all-around player thus far than Mark Scheifele.

In both wins, Scheifele has been the bell cow for Winnipeg, leading the team in points and authoring two third-period surges by the Jets to grab a firm grip on the series as it now shifts to Missouri for Game 3 Thursday night.

But it's really more than just the points.

What the 32-year-old is providing this veteran Jets group right now is a complete package of skill, physicality, leadership and desire – all key ingredients in post-season advancement.

His 200-foot game, board and corner work along with a kamikaze drive to the middle of the ice and onward to the Blues net have been virtually unstoppable.

It's an overt exhibit that has him front and centre as the best player in the series so far, a similar display to 2018, when he led the Jets with 14 goals in 17 playoff games – including an NHL record 11 on the road.

Yes, 2018 will always be fondly remembered in this city for that exciting Jets playoff run, and Scheifele's key part in it, but with the way he's playing right now, you get the feeling the team's number one centre is looking — seven years later — to raise the bar again.

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/scott-arniel-proving-he-was-the-right-guy-to-lead-winnipeg-jets-as-coach>

Arniel proving 'he was the right guy' to lead Jets as coach Has Winnipeg off to 2-0 start in Western 1st round after winning Presidents' Trophy

By Tracey Myers

WINNIPEG -- Scott Arniel stood at the lectern 2 ½ hours prior to Game 1 of the Stanley Cup Playoff opener. The 62-year-old had reached this point before in this city, five times as a player with the original Winnipeg Jets from 1981-86, and twice more as an associate coach with the current franchise from 2022-24.

But now, in his first NHL postseason game as Jets coach, he was taking it in as much as he could before puck drop.

"Where we are now so far, it's been very rewarding, obviously," " he said Saturday.

"Pretty nervous going into training camp and the season. You just don't know how things will play out. I just can't say enough about what the players have done throughout the year to make it that much easier for me and our staff. It's been a lot of great things."

How things played out for the Jets was pretty darn well. They were strong out of the gate, had few slumps during the season and won the Western Conference and the Presidents' Trophy, which is awarded annually to the team with the most points during the regular season.

Now, Arniel and the Jets are looking for Stanley Cup Playoff success and are off to a great start, with a 2-0 lead in the Western Conference First Round against the St. Louis Blues.

After a 2-1 victory in Game 2 on Monday, Arniel joined former Washington Capitals coach Todd Reirden (2019 Eastern Conference First Round) as the second coach in the past 10 years to win his first two career playoff games.

Game 3 is at Enterprise Center on Thursday (9:30 p.m., ET; FDSNMW, ESPN2, SN, TVAS, CBC).

"He's been great this year," Jets defenseman Dylan Samberg said. "We were all very comfortable with him, you know, and especially the D-men. He was (on) penalty kill last year, so there was comfortability for all of us, and he's been awesome. He's obviously led us to where we are today. So, yeah, he's been doing a really good job as a coach."

It was a fairly seamless transition for the Jets and Arniel, who was named Winnipeg coach May 24, 18 days after Rick Bowness retired following two seasons on the job.

"If you go back to the day I was hired, both management and I were adamant that we hire Scott to do this, to take over when I was ready to retire," Bowness said. "So, he was the right guy and we knew he was the right guy at that point, and so I'm not one bit surprised."

Arniel filled in as coach twice last season, when Bowness missed 11 games from Oct. 23-Nov. 22 after his wife, Judy, had a seizure, and four games from March 19-24 when Bowness was away because of a medical procedure.

"I'm thrilled for Scott and his staff and the team that they're having such a great year, and for 'Chevy' (general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff) and the fans," Bowness said. "I mean, it couldn't be better. I'm so happy for everyone involved, the organization, the fans. It's fantastic."

This was Arniel's first opportunity as a head coach in nearly 13 years, when he held that position for the Columbus Blue Jackets from 2010-12. He also has been an assistant/associate coach with the Buffalo Sabres (2002-06), New York Rangers (2013-18) and Washington Capitals (2018-22).

Arniel said in May that he wasn't sure he'd get another chance at being a head coach after Columbus. Blues coach Jim Montgomery said he told Arniel "how much better he's going to be" because of that Columbus experience.

“The first experience you grow a lot and the second time (when) you get a crack at it, like he’s shown this year, you’re significantly better,” said Montgomery, who played for Manitoba of the American Hockey League in 1999-2000, when Arniel was an assistant.

“You know exactly how you want everything to run and then when you invest the time he did, coaching with so many different coaches in the League and really learning from them, it just makes you better and that’s why you see the result this year.”

Montgomery got his own second chance on July 1, 2022, when he was named the Boston Bruins coach after being fired by the Dallas Stars on Dec. 10, 2019. He then got a third chance when the Blues hired him Nov. 24, 2024, five days after being fired by the Bruins.

When Arniel was named Jets coach, he called it a “full circle” moment. He was selected in the second round (No. 22) of the 1981 NHL Draft by the original Jets, who played in Winnipeg from 1979-96 before they relocated and became the Phoenix Coyotes. A forward, Arniel had 338 points (149 goals, 189 assists) in 730 NHL games with the Jets, Sabres and Bruins, and six points (three goals, three assists) in 34 playoff games.

“He was a pretty steady up-and-down wing,” said former NHL coach and forward Paul MacLean, who played with Arniel in Winnipeg from 1981-86. “There wasn’t a lot of flash to his game. He was a strong skater, strong on pucks.

“At the NHL level, his finishing wasn’t maybe like in junior. He’s not the only guy you’d say that about either, but he was a very solid, all-around player with a real intensity to play the game and play well and succeed.”

Arniel first got into coaching with Houston of the International Hockey League, when he was a player/assistant coach in 1995-96. Alongside him in the same role was former NHL coach Dave Tippett.

“He was always a good teammate,” said Tippett, now a senior adviser with the Seattle Kraken. “He had a good pulse on players, and good pulse of chemistry in the room and stuff. We were both pretty green at the tactic part of it. We were just kind of getting into that. You have a certain idea of what the tactics are when you’re a player but then when you turn into a coach, there’s a whole other scope you have to go into.

“Both of us were just learning that end of it, and it’s not an easy situation because you’re a player and a coach on a team. It’s very unique. I always look back and say it was probably a good learning lesson for me as a transition from player to coach, because for a whole year you’re in that dressing room as a player but then you have ideas as a coach, also. You have to kind of tread softly in there and see how it goes.”

After three years as an assistant in Manitoba, Arniel got his first NHL assistant job with coach Lindy Ruff and the Sabres from 2002-06. He became an AHL coach for the first time with Manitoba from 2006-10 before going to Columbus in 2010.

Arniel's time in Columbus may not have worked out, but he was still in demand in NHL. He was an associate coach for Alain Vigneault from 2013-18 with the Rangers, who he helped lead to the 2014 Stanley Cup Final and the Eastern Conference Final the following season.

"The success he's having in the short time (in Winnipeg) has come from all the work that he's put in since he stopped playing and began coaching," MacLean said. "Whether that's with the Manitoba Moose, his experience with the Columbus Blue Jackets as a coach in the NHL for the first time.

"All along the way he's learned about himself in different ways. The biggest thing you learn is the different ways to do things and the different types of personalities of the different coaches he's worked for and worked with. He got that and it turned him into what he is now."

What Arniel learned benefited others.

On June 29, 2018, Reirden was named coach of the defending Stanley Cup champion Capitals, replacing Barry Trotz, who resigned 11 days earlier. Reirden was a first-time NHL coach, so he wanted someone with experience on his staff. Enter Arniel, who Reirden said helped him plenty during their time in Washington from 2018-20.

"I thought that just in terms of his everyday preparation, when going through a full season, I thought in situations where he had maybe hoped or wished he'd done something different, he would share those experiences with me," said Reirden, who was an assistant with the Pittsburgh Penguins from 2020-22 and associate coach with them from 2022-24. "He'd say, 'This was something I wish I had done different,' and it kept me from doing it. I thought that was really important."

It has been quite the journey for Arniel to get his second chance at coaching in the League. The Jets are once again in the postseason hunt, and his work helped get them here.

"Yeah, it's an unbelievable opportunity that I've been handed," Arniel said. "Obviously, the players helping me get here this year, just the way they've played throughout the season. For me, really, I'm going to try to stay out of the way as much as possible and let those guys go out and do what they do best."

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6299904/2025/04/23/dylan-samberg-winnipeg-jets-nhl-playoffs/>

How Dylan Samberg became the rising star of the Winnipeg Jets' blue line

By Murat Ates

In April 2019, Kevin Cheveldayoff and Mark Chipman flew to Duluth, Minn., to pitch Dylan Samberg on the merits of signing his entry-level contract with the Winnipeg Jets.

Samberg, then 20, had just become a back-to-back NCAA national champion with the University of Minnesota Duluth. He was one of the best defencemen in the United States at killing rush attacks and played for Team USA at consecutive World Junior tournaments. There was a fast-growing perception that Samberg was ready for professional hockey — that Winnipeg had hit a home run with its 2017 second-round pick.

So Cheveldayoff and Chipman flew to Duluth. Samberg's parents, Mike and Patty, suggested they meet at the Hermantown Outback Steakhouse because it was two miles from the Duluth airport. They wanted to make things convenient for their guests.

During a steak dinner, Cheveldayoff and Chipman made their pitch. They were pleased with Samberg's progress and believed he could take the next steps in his career if he turned pro. The Manitoba Moose would be glad to have him, and there was an NHL opportunity, too, if Samberg earned it.

Samberg and his parents thought it over. The NHL was a lifelong dream — and he was willing to work for it in the AHL if he had to — but there was one problem.

"I wanted to go back for another opportunity at a national championship," Samberg says. "I didn't feel like I was quite ready to pursue pro hockey yet."

In 2019, Jets fans panicked: Could Samberg reject Winnipeg, play out his college career and leave as a free agent?

He did not. Six years later, as Winnipeg faces the St. Louis Blues in the playoffs for the first time since the steakhouse discussion, Samberg is a key player for the Jets, and the 2025 rematch has been his coming-out party.

Samberg has played more five-on-five minutes than any skater in the series. Include special teams, and he's tied with Josh Morrissey for the minutes lead. He's been Winnipeg's top defenceman at breaking up the rush, excelling in heavy usage against the Blues' star players.

Through two games against the Blues, Samberg is playing big minutes against Robert Thomas and Jordan Kyrou and winning them. According to data tracked by Garret Hohl, no defenceman has shut down more Blues zone entry attempts than Samberg this series.

“The thing we love about him the most is that he defends above our blue line so much because he’s such a good skater,” Jets coach Scott Arniel said Tuesday. “He’s running into Thomas, Kyrrou, he’s running into (Pavel) Buchnevich. There’s some real skill coming at him. He does a great job with his stick, but that’s kind of what we’ve been getting from him all year long.”

Samberg is part throwback workhorse, part modern-day shutdown defenceman. He has great feet and an excellent stick, as modern shutdown stars do. There are ways in which his game is a great comparison for Hurricanes star Jaccob Slavin. But there are parts of him that are as old school as the 1999 Neon he drove as a teenager. He led all Jets with 120 shot blocks this season, despite missing 22 games with a broken foot, and wins his net-front battles consistently.

His outdoorsy Minnesotan upbringing puts him at the heart of Winnipeg’s ice-fishing crew, along with Connor Hellebuyck, Alex Lafallo and Kyle Connor. He listens to country music like Jelly Roll, Chris Stapleton and Morgan Wallen. Samberg once hiked a mile through the snow on a broken foot to go hunting with his dad, while wearing his boot’s felt liner instead of the boot itself due to the swelling.

When the 2024-25 season began, Samberg told *The Athletic* he was ready for the next step in his career. He spoke to the increase in quality of competition bumping from a third pair, which can be sheltered, to the top four, where defencemen play against the other team’s best lines nightly.

He also worked with Arniel on a particular area of his game he wanted to develop.

“Even when you make a good play in the defensive zone, it’s not over yet. You’ve got to make that next play,” Samberg said. “Get it out over the blue line. Get it to one of your forwards. I’m going to work toward that consistency as well.”

His defence partner, Neal Pionk, always has a few thoughts on Samberg’s progress.

“For Dylan, I’ve seen it,” Pionk said. “I’ve watched him since he was a squirt hockey player — since he was little, if you’d believe it. He’s a freak athlete. Some people don’t know that about him. People know about his golf game, but any game we play, whatever it is he picks up, he’s usually the best at.”

Every player wants to be more consistent. Few have a clear route toward training for it. Samberg’s obsession with golf — more specifically, the way he thinks about golf — is an advantage here.

“You watch Tiger Woods or Phil Mickelson, they always work on those 3-to-5-foot putts,” Samberg explained. “They go to one spot. They make 10 3-footers. Move back. Make 10 more putts. If they miss, they have to start all over again. It can be the same thing in hockey. When you’re working on picking the puck off the wall on rims, you can make

sure you're getting it on every single rep, not just four out of five. I try to have that same work ethic."

In other words, there is a difference between practicing a skill until you can get it right and practicing it until you can't get it wrong.

Samberg's self-assessment and goal-setting have contributed to his success playing against elite competition. The speed of playoff hockey puts an extra emphasis on transition, which is harder to see in a series as well-defended as Winnipeg versus St. Louis, but every Samberg stick-check that ends a Blues rush means one less shift in the Jets' defensive zone.

It also means one more opportunity to go on the attack, and Winnipeg has outshot the Blues 16-8 with Samberg on the ice. That's the best rate among all Jets defencemen in the playoffs.

Who could have seen this coming? (Mitch Brown saw it coming at The Athletic years ago.) Each of his clips details a skill that can be seen in Dimitri Filipovic's highlight video above: Samberg's gap closure, the angles he chooses and the proactive way he shuts down plays early.

Samberg didn't go on to win his third straight national championship despite being the No. 1 defender in the NCAA. The COVID-19 pandemic derailed the 2020 Frozen Four. It was a painful outcome, but beyond Samberg's control. He doesn't regret the decision he made at that Outback Steakhouse six years ago.

It does leave him with unfinished business, though. He won back-to-back high school championships before back-to-back NCAA championships at UMD — his dad says he was born with a horseshoe in his behind — but no championships since that time.

When Samberg's playoffs end, he will receive a new pitch from Cheveldayoff and Chipman, and he'll have a new decision to make. Will the 26-year-old defenceman, who could become an unrestricted free agent as soon as July 1, 2026, commit to Winnipeg on a long-term deal?

A one-two punch of Josh Morrissey and Samberg on left defence would be a formidable start to a defence corps. Winnipeg's all-Hermantown pairing of Samberg and Pionk has shown it can beat top competition.

It makes sense if Samberg files for arbitration and then seeks a longer-term deal before his hearing. He's at home in an ice-fishing shack, in a tree stand, on a penalty kill and in Winnipeg. He shares an agent, a hometown and a lake with his defence partner.

The mystery isn't about Samberg's commitment to Winnipeg or his bond with his teammates. His wife, Dr. Destiny Samberg, has begun her dental practice at a clinic on Roblin Ave.

And his mom and dad can drive to watch him play — as they did for Game 1 against St. Louis — and dine at the local steakhouse of their choice.

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6296674/2025/04/23/blues-jimmy-snuggerud-rookie-nhl-playoffs/>

Has Jimmy Snuggerud exceeded Blues' expectations? Even Dad didn't know he'd fit this well

By Jeremy Rutherford

ST. LOUIS — Jimmy Snuggerud was skating up the ice and closing the distance between him and the goaltender. The puck hit the back of the net, and the goalie was steaming.

It was during a recent St. Louis Blues practice, and the netminder was Jordan Binnington.

As the 20-year-old Snuggerud relayed the story to his father, Dave Snuggerud, Binnington summoned the rookie right winger, who joined the Blues from the University of Minnesota earlier this month, for another shot.

“It sounds like Binnington is super competitive,” Dave Snuggerud said. “He goes, ‘Snuggerud, get back out here! You’re doing this again.’ Well, of course, Jimmy doesn’t score on him, and Binnington tells him, ‘I’ve got you figured out now.’”

“That culture Jimmy’s in right now is humbling. It’s really cool to see because that’s what ‘team’ is all about.”

Dave is more than a proud dad. In 1987, he was drafted by the Buffalo Sabres and played 265 games in the NHL with the Sabres, San Jose Sharks and Philadelphia Flyers. He had 30 goals and 84 points before wrapping up with the Flyers in 1993.

But while Dad had a pro career and a personal connection to the Blues’ first-round pick in 2022, he was just like a fan when wondering if his son could step into a team trying to get into the playoffs and contribute in the postseason.

“Would Jimmy be ready?” Dave said. “That would all up be up to the coaches and what they see. With (Blues coach Jim Montgomery), he’s been given the opportunity. If we put him in front of (former Flyers coach John) Tortorella, I don’t know if this would be the same result. So I didn’t know if Jimmy was ready or not because it all depended on the coaching style.”

The result for Snuggerud has been two goals and five points in nine games with the Blues, including his first Stanley Cup playoff goal in Game 2 of the team’s first-round

series against the Winnipeg Jets on Monday. It came against goalie Connor Hellebuyck, who might win the league MVP this season, and it was the Blues' only goal in a 2-1 loss to the Jets, who lead the best-of-seven series 2-0 going into Game 3 Thursday.

"Snuggerud, ever since he got here, since his first practice, his first game, he just gets better and better," Montgomery said. "He's looked like he belongs in the league, and he's never done anything to show that he doesn't belong in the league."

In Game 1 on Saturday, with Winnipeg hosting its "Whiteout" at Canada Life Centre, Snuggerud played on the Blues' second line with Brayden Schenn and Jordan Kyrou. He wasn't overwhelmed by the crowd or the top-six assignment, finishing with 16:31 of ice time, one shot on goal, a takeaway and a blocked shot.

"The whiteout is something in the NHL that's kind of a staple," Snuggerud said. "I mean, from the time we stepped on for warmups, the crowd was there. The national championship is the closest thing to it (in college), but I wouldn't say it's close. It's something I've never seen before. The first 10-minute push, it's insane."

Dave and Ann Snuggerud made the seven-hour drive from Minnesota to Winnipeg to watch in person.

"I don't know how Jimmy had the ability to block that out, which I would think is impossible, but for him, it was just about winning or losing that game," Dave said. "That's all he was talking about."

Dad said his son has always had a calm confidence about himself.

"It's not arrogance," he said. "It's the opposite — humbleness and humility — where he does such a good job of living in the present moment. I know he's very appreciative, but yet he's not satisfied. It's like, 'I want to keep pushing.' He's taken on that type of attitude at an exceptionally young age, and it's a pretty cool trait to have."

In Game 2 on Monday, Snuggerud was switched to the Blues' top line with Robert Thomas and Pavel Buchnevich because Montgomery said he was looking for more offense. He played 20:01, and in addition to his goal, he directed seven shots at the net, tying Zack Bolduc for the most attempts in the game.

Snuggerud was involved in Winnipeg's first goal. He was attempting to backcheck on a drive by the Jets' Mark Scheifele when the puck went off his skate and into the net.

"It's an unfortunate bounce, but it happens," he said.

Snuggerud shook that off, however, and tied the score 1-1 on the power play with two seconds left in the first period.

"I kind of realized the clock and tried to get it off as quick as possible," he said.

A month ago, some fans wondered if it made sense to shoehorn Snuggerud into a lineup that was rolling, and in Game 2, he was the only one who provided any offense.

Among all forwards, Snuggerud has logged the third-most ice time in all situations (36:32) and the fourth-most at five-on-five (27:42) so far in the series. In all situations, he's been on the ice for two goals for and two goals against, and the scoring chances are 18-11 in the Blues' favor when he's skating.

"He's coming out of college hockey, and he's definitely not out of place," Schenn said. "He's skilled, smart, a pretty mature game for only playing (nine) games. You have to learn when you come into this league, there's a lot of adjustments from playing 30-40 games (in college) to 82 games plus playoffs. He asks a lot of questions, he wants to learn, and that's great when you have a young guy who wants to ask everyone around the room different questions, whatever's on his mind."

Growing up, Dave never had to force his opinion on his son.

"He always asked, 'What do you think?' and what's even more impressive is that he listens," Dave said. "I remember saying one time, 'You're on the power play and you're on the goal line; it's OK to try to go short-side on the goalie.' Sure enough, next game, he goes short-side, and I'm like, 'I didn't think you really listened to me.' But you'd tell him that, he'd process it, and then he'd go out and do it."

Late in the Blues' regular season, Snuggerud called home, too, and asked: "What do you think?"

"My response was, 'Be great defensively because your skills are good enough offensively,'" Dave said. "That's what eventually got me in a full-time position in the league, was being great defensively. He has great ability with his quick stick to be good defensively to take pucks away."

"But what also goes through my mind is, 'Oh my gosh, top six, you've got to put points up.' This team has so much history, you're starry-eyed and you're feeling good about yourself, but you have to produce. He gets it; you have to go out there and be good."

Snuggerud has produced, and when he does, his teammates are quick to credit him. Like April 5, when he set up Buchnevich with a backhanded pass in front of the net for a goal that gave the Blues a 3-0 lead in a 5-4 victory over the Colorado Avalanche.

After scoring, Buchnevich pointed straight at Snuggerud.

"And Neighbours did it, too, when he gave the puck to him for a goal," Dave said. "The look in Neighbours' eyes at Jim, all that tells me is like, 'He's in an environment where these guys care about each other.' He said to me, 'It's all over the locker room, Dad. These guys are rooting for each other.'"

Snuggerud couldn't have scripted a better start to his career.

"You always try to envision good things in your mind," he said. "It's something I've dreamt about for a while, being here and doing this. Being able to possibly clinch a playoff spot and now playing in the Stanley Cup playoffs, it's kind of a moment that you have to step back to take in. These are important games for the franchise itself and the guys in this locker room. It's flying by, and I'm just trying to enjoy every single moment."

"He's brought a great element to our group," Schenn said, "and we're happy he's a Blue."

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/jets-notebook-connor-hellebuyck-changing-games-with-key-saves/>

Jets Notebook: Connor Hellebuyck changing games with key saves

By Jacob Stoller

WINNIPEG — Disregard his .897 save percentage through these first two playoff games — Connor Hellebuyck is hardly underperforming.

The netminder showered with "M—V—P" chants in the regular season has come up clutch in the Winnipeg Jets' first-round series against the St. Louis Blues.

In a tight series like this, judging a goaltender solely by save percentage is misleading. Hellebuyck faced only 39 shots through two games, and for a goaltender that feeds off a higher shot volume to get into a better rhythm, that's difficult.

But he's made some game-changing saves.

Hellebuyck made pivotal stops early in Game 2, denying several high-danger chances from the Blues to keep the game goal-less early in the first period.

"He kind of settled us into the game there," Kyle Connor said after the Jets took a 2-0 lead in the series on Monday.

Late in the second period of Game 1, as the Jets trailed 3-2, Hellebuyck stonewalled Jordan Kyrou on a breakaway that very well could have sealed the game for the Blues. He'd gone nearly eight minutes without a shot before that.

"There's been a lot of situations where he hasn't gotten a lot of work and then all of the sudden, there's a 10-bell one that comes right down the pipe and he has to be ready for it. That's Helly," Jets coach Scott Arniel said after Tuesday's optional skate.

“He has to be focused and dialled in all the time. There might be nights where he gets bombarded and he has to stand on his head multiple times.”

Over Hellebuyck’s last two playoff series — where he posted a 2-8 record and an .878 save percentage — he seldom looked in control. That hasn’t been the case over these last two games. While not flashy, the presumptive Vezina winner is delivering his trademark ‘big and boring’ style, which elevated him into Hart Trophy discussions.

And when he does that, these Jets are hard to beat.

Samberg settled in

Dylan Samberg struggled to find his rhythm in Game 1.

“He was one of the guys that was extremely nervous, and he was one of those guys that it took a while to get settled in,” Arniel said.

Game 2 was a different story.

That's when the Samberg that shined all year long emerged, doing what he does best — at both ends of the ice — when it mattered most. He killed several of the Blues’ zone entries at the blue line, cleared the net front and moved the puck efficiently while shouldering tough deployment.

“The thing we love about him the most is that he defends above our blue line so much because he's such a good skater,” Arniel said. “And he's running into (Robert Thomas), Kyrrou, he's running into (Pavel Buchnevich). There’s some real skill coming at him.”

Samberg’s performance was the driver behind him and Neal Pionk — the Jets' second pair — allowing the fewest scoring chances (two) of any of Winnipeg’s pairs, all while logging a team-high 24:30 on the ice.

This may just be the most encouraging — or rather, relieving — development of Game 2. Samberg at his A-game shores up a Jets top four that won’t be getting preferred matchups over the next two games, when the Blues will have last change.

Vilardi, Ehlers injury timeline

Arniel didn’t have concrete answers when asked about Gabriel Vilardi and Nikolaj Ehlers.

Could we see Vilardi in Game 3?

“Maybe,” Arniel said. “Maybe see what colour the jersey is tomorrow.”

Will Ehlers join the team in St. Louis?

“Give me that one tomorrow,” Arniel said. “It’s an off day, so I don’t know yet.”

Here’s what we do know.

Vilardi has been out week-to-week with an upper body injury since getting injured against the Buffalo Sabres on March 23rd. He joined the Jets for an optional skate on Sunday, sporting a yellow no-contact jersey. Even if he sheds the yellow on Wednesday, there’s no guarantees he’s in the lineup for Game 3.

Ehlers has been out week-to-week since re-aggravating a right foot injury against the Chicago Blackhawks on April 12. He’s yet to skate with the Jets.

Don’t hold your breath on Ehlers returning in this series.

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/video/how-jets-cohesiveness-is-leading-to-early-playoff-success/>

How Jets’ cohesiveness is leading to early playoff success (VIDEO)

Sean Reynolds joins Kyper and Bourne to discuss how the rest of the NHL is realizing the Winnipeg Jets are more than just their Vezina-winning goaltender, Connor Hellebuyck.

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/video/why-scheifele-is-everything-jets-need-in-a-top-playoff-performer/>

Why Scheifele is everything Jets need in a top playoff performer (VIDEO)

Sean Reynolds joins Kyper and Bourne to discuss Winnipeg Jets’ Mark Scheifele and how he’s shown over the years that he is a top playoff performer and has been the catalyst for the Jets’ offensive production.

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/video/why-jets-attention-to-detail-could-give-them-the-edge-over-the-blues/>

Why Jets’ attention to detail could give them the edge over the Blues

Sean Reynolds joins Kyper and Bourne to discuss the Winnipeg Jets’ attention to small details and why it could be what gives them an edge over the St. Louis Blues in the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/what-makes-the-winnipeg-jets-so-dominant~3119724>

What makes the Winnipeg Jets so dominant? (VIDEO)

The Jets head to St. Louis holding a 2-0 series lead as the team has picked up where they left off in the regular season. TSN Hockey analyst Cheryl Pounder joins Domino's That's Hockey to examine what makes Winnipeg so difficult to play against and whether she has seen enough of the team to declare them one of the clear favourites to win the Stanley Cup.

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/the-talking-point-are-the-jets-proving-they-re-a-different-playoff-team~3119204>

The Talking Point: Are the Jets proving they're a different playoff team? (VIDEO)

The Jets are heading to St. Louis with a 2-0 series lead. While most of the statistics between the two teams are even, Winnipeg has been able to pull ahead of St. Louis. Is this version of the Jets built different? TSN's Cheryl Pounder shares her thoughts.