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***Hellebuyck, Jets excited about Game 5 at home
Hellebuyck: "It's a best of three. I like our odds."***

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – A couple of hours after being named a finalist for the Vezina Trophy for a third consecutive season, Connor Hellebuyck stood in front of reporters and answered questions about the last two games of the Jets and Blues series in St. Louis.

Hellebuyck was pulled not once but twice at Enterprise Center allowing 11 goals in the two games, both wins by the Blues that evened the series at two games apiece.

"Yeah, you know, they played two good games. That being said we played two good games at home, too. At the end of the day, we're in a good spot," said Hellebuyck.

"It's a best of three. I like our odds, and we've got home ice advantage. That's where our mindset is going forward. That's all we can do."

The two-time Vezina Trophy winner has come under fire for his play in the last two contests that has turned this series into a best-of-three.

"You don't love giving up that many goals but we're 2-2 in the series," said Hellebuyck.

"That's all that matters. Win the next one. Am I going to be better? I am going to be better."

Hockey is a team game. Throughout this year's Stanley Cup Playoffs, fellow Vezina Trophy finalists Andrei Vasilevskiy (allowed six goals on 17 shots in Game 1 vs. Florida) and Darcy Kuemper (allowed five goals in Game's 1 and 3 vs. Edmonton) have had long nights. So Hellebuyck isn't alone.

"I believe in everyone in this room. They are incredible hockey players. We don't do what we do for 82 games and then all of a sudden lose it," said Hellebuyck.

"They're a good team over there. They got really hot, and it was crazy for us to think ever that this was going to be an easy series. And no one did think that."

Neal Pionk was asked about what it was like to watch Hellebuyck get pulled in back-to-back contests.

"The feeling is that we've got to do a better job in front of him. He's the best goalie in the world, but he can't stop what he can't see," said Pionk.

“So, like I said earlier, we've got to take their sticks out of the way and push them out of the way so he can see the puck.”

Every single Western Conference series is tied at two games, Edmonton won both games at home to pull even with Los Angeles; Vegas and Minnesota have split games in each other's building and same story for the Dallas – Colorado series. When a best-of-seven is tied 2-2, the winner of Game 5 holds an all-time series record of 233-62 (.790), including a 123-30 mark in the opening round of any postseason. With that in mind, the Jets understand the importance of holding serve on home ice but are not approaching Game 5 as a must-win.

“I think the way we're approaching this game is we want to get back to our style, our structure, our compete, our speed and the results will take care of itself. Realistically, you want to win the series, you probably want to win this one,” said Adam Lowry.

“But we don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves, in terms of thinking that you lose this one the series is over. It's two good teams going at it. We're approaching this as a very important game for us. But like I said we don't want to make the situation bigger than it is. It's a swing game in the series.”

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<https://www.nhl.com/news/winnipeg-goalie-hellebuyck-says-he-will-be-better-in-game-5-against-st-louis>

Hellebuyck says he'll 'be better' for Jets in Game 5 against Blues with series tied Vezina finalist has allowed total of 11 goals in past 2 games

By Tracey Myers

Connor Hellebuyck said he will be better when the Winnipeg Jets play the St. Louis Blues in Game 5 of the Western Conference First Round on Wednesday (9:30 p.m. ET; CBC, TVAS, SN, ESPN, FDSNMW).

Hellebuyck, who on Monday was named a finalist for the Vezina Trophy, which goes to the best goalie in the NHL, said he is looking ahead, not back, after allowing a total of 11 goals in Games 3 and 4, each St. Louis wins that evened the best-of-7 series. He was pulled in each game, the first time in his career he's been taken out of two consecutive postseason games.

“You don't love giving up that many goals but we're 2-2 in the series. That's all that matters,” Hellebuyck said. “Win the next one. Am I going to be better? I am going to be better.”

Hellebuyck, who won the Vezina last season and in 2019-20, said the two days off between Games 4 and 5 will allow him to fix his issues.

"I've studied goaltending extremely hard. I've probably studied the most out of anyone in this world, so I know what to do and how to get my best game," he said. "So that's what I'm looking forward to do. I've got two days here. Time to bring it in Game 5."

The 31-year-old is 2-2 with a 4.24 goals-against average and .817 save percentage in four starts this postseason. He's 20-29 with a 2.95 GAA, .906 save percentage and three shutouts in 49 career playoff starts.

It's a far cry from his regular season, when he went 47-12-3 in 63 games this season, leading the League in wins and shutouts (eight). He finished first in goals-against average (2.00) and second in save percentage (.925) among goalies who played at least 25 games.

Asked about his playoff numbers being a surprise, Hellebuyck said, "Honestly, it's a surprise in my world too."

"When I'm watching my game, there's a certain way I need it to look and want it to look. And it would be crazy to go that many regular-season games and then all of a sudden switch something up in the playoffs," he said. "You don't win 47 games and then come the playoffs, switch everything up. I know how it needs to look. I like a lot of things. I'm not going to go and make huge changes. That being said, I'm going to be better. That's my job, and that's the foot that I'm putting forward."

"I can't be giving up this many goals. We're a team in here, we're not pointing fingers at anyone. We're going to do this together. I keep saying it, we're in a good spot, 2-2 in the series."

This is the third straight postseason Hellebuyck's numbers haven't matched his regular-season success. Last season, he was 1-4 with a 5.23 GAA and .870 save percentage, and in 2022-23, he was also 1-4, with a 3.44 GAA and .886 save percentage. In each of those seasons he won 37 regular-season games and had GAAs of 2.39 and 2.49 and save percentages of .921 and .920, respectively.

"You've got to weather those ups and downs, and it's easy to say from the outside looking in that we're down right now," Hellebuyck said. "But I don't view it like that. Whatever happens, put it behind you and move on to the next one."

Everything gets tougher in the postseason. The mental side of the game looms larger, and Hellebuyck said one of the most important assets he can have this time of the year, "is being strong between the ears."

"You don't want to go into a game playing with fear," he said. "If you play with fear, that's when you start to actually make mistakes and want things back. We go out, we play our

game, and you continue to be better every single shift, every single game and every single day. That's my mindset moving forward, and I'm looking forward to that."

In some cases, Hellebuyck has dealt with screens, traffic and unfortunate bounces. In Game 4, Blues defenseman Justin Faulk's goal went off Jets defenseman Neal Pionk. Jets defenseman Josh Morrissey and Blues forward Oskar Sundqvist were screening him when Blues defenseman Tyler Tucker scored.

"The feeling is that we've got to do a better job in front of him," Pionk said. "He's the best goalie in the world, but he can't stop what he can't see. We've got to take their sticks out of the way and push them out of the way so he can see the puck."

Hellebuyck didn't see it that way.

"I believe in everyone in this room. They are incredible hockey players. We don't do what we do for 82 games and then all of a sudden lose it. They're a good team over there. They got really hot, and it was crazy for us to think ever that this was going to be an easy series and no one did think that," he said.

"In the position we are, it's on to the next one. This is fun playoff hockey. It doesn't matter if you lose 2-1 or 6-1. At the end of the day, it's a loss and you move on. Getting back to our game is what we want to do in here and that's our plan for 60 minutes."

<https://www.nhl.com/news/topic/playoffs/2025/series-e-news/st-louis-blues-in-winnipeg-for-game-5-of-nhl-playoffs-look-road-win>

Blues return to Winnipeg looking for elusive road win in Game 5 of Western 1st Round

Must get at least 1 away from St. Louis to eliminate Jets, advance in playoffs

By Tracey Myers

ST. LOUIS -- Jim Montgomery talked of the confidence the St. Louis Blues had coming back home early last week, despite being down 2-0 to the Winnipeg Jets in the Western Conference First Round.

"I think we held a majority of the lead both games in Winnipeg, so we felt we played well," Montgomery, the Blues coach, said after 5-1 win in Game 4 at Enterprise Center on Sunday that tied the best-of-7 series. "But we didn't feel we played to our identity for 60 minutes. So, it gave us confidence that we were able to play for 60 minutes, then we'd have success.

"It's a 2-out-of-3 [series] now. Both teams won on home ice. Now we have to go to Winnipeg and try to win one on the road."

The Blues will have to win at least once on the road to advance. They'll get their first chance in Game 5 at Canada Life Centre on Wednesday (9:30 p.m. ET; CBC, TVAS, SN, ESPN, FDSNMW). The series shifts back to Winnipeg after St. Louis won its two home games by a 12-3 margin.

It had everyone get involved in the offense, something that will need to continue in Winnipeg. Ten Blues have at least two points in the series. Three of their defensemen have three points; Cam Fowler leads St. Louis with eight (one goal, seven assists) in four games.

"That's what we try to do," Blues defenseman Justin Faulk said after scoring his first goal of the postseason Sunday. "We've got a lot of [defensemen] that can skate and play, shoot pucks, make passes, whatever, guys that have played in the League a long time. It's an emphasis of ours to make sure we're skating and doing our part to help out and create offense as much as we can."

They're also getting inside more, getting to the net and Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck, who was named a finalist for the Vezina Trophy on Monday after winning the award as the League's top goalie last season. St. Louis chased Hellebuyck in Games 3 and 4.

"I think it's just the mindset, the attitude to do it," Blues forward Jake Neighbours said. "It's hard, it's not easy and it's not a fun place to go, but it can be rewarding as we've seen the last couple of games."

"It's just as simple as that. It's just an attitude and a willingness to go there, get there and you know you're going to create space for others around you, create traffic for shots and things like that. So, it's just a very necessary part of the [offensive] zone that we've done a really good job on the last two."

Meanwhile, in recent years, once the Jets have lost a game in a Stanley Cup Playoff series, they haven't been able to reverse the trend. Last season, they defeated the Colorado Avalanche in Game 1 of the first round, then lost four in a row and were eliminated. The same happened in 2023 against the Vegas Golden Knights. In 2021, they were swept in the Stanley Cup Second Round by the Montreal Canadiens (due to realignment because of COVID-19, both were in the North Division).

But Winnipeg is confident it can get back control of the series.

"We have got two days," Jets center Mark Scheifele said. "We've had a lot of time between games. It's tough to get in the rhythm of things, but we've got two days and get back in front of our home fans and get excited for that."

Like Montgomery said, the Blues didn't win in Winnipeg, but they played well. The big difference was the Jets were better in the third period, when they outscored the Blues 4-0. They didn't have the same issue at home. When they had a lead in Games 3 and 4, they didn't pull back, didn't rest on the advantage. They kept pushing.

The Blues got exactly what they needed at home. Now to play that same game in Winnipeg.

"Obviously two good home games for our group. For our group now, it's a best-of-3, we've just got to hit the reset button," St. Louis defenseman Colton Parayko said.

"I think just take the positives. There are obviously some things we can work on always, look at what we can improve on, and continue to get better. They're going to come out hard at home. They're a really good team in general, so for us, we've just got to reset and make sure we're ready for Game 5."

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/how-jets-hellebuyck-responds-after-another-rough-start-will-define-series-vs-blues/>

"He can't stop what he can't see" Jets uphold team mentality as Hellebuyck questions intensify

By: Mike McIntyre

Connor Hellebuyck knew the question was coming.

And the Winnipeg Jets goaltender wasted absolutely no time Monday in posing it to himself as he stood in front of a media horde inside Canada Life Centre.

"Am I going to be better?" Hellebuyck asked rhetorically. "I am going to be better. I've studied goaltending extremely hard. I've probably studied the most out of anyone in this world, so I know what to do and how to get my best game. So that's what I'm looking forward to do. Time to bring it in Game 5."

It was vintage Hellebuyck, following up a rare public showing of self-reflection with a heavy dose of self-confidence that has become his calling card. Anyone hoping to see a broken, humbled hockey player was about to be disappointed.

"You don't love giving up that many goals, but we're 2-2 in the series. That's all that matters. Win the next one," he said of Wednesday's critical game with the Blues that will put the loser on the cusp of elimination.

"They played two good games. That being said we played two good games at home, too. At the end of the day we're in a good spot. It's a best of three. I like our odds and we've got home ice advantage. That's where our mindset is going forward. That's all we can do."

This best-of-seven has been a series of major momentum swings. The Jets won Games 1 (5-3) and 2 (2-1) in downtown Winnipeg before things really took a turn in St. Louis, with lopsided losses in Game 3 (7-2) and Game 4 (5-1). Hellebuyck was pulled in the third period of both outings inside Enterprise Center after being beaten 11 times on 43 shots.

"I thought the first two games, our goaltending was better than theirs, second two games, their goaltending was better than ours. It's plain and simple," Jets head coach Scott Arniel said following Monday's optional practice.

Hellebuyck's performances have once again revived an old narrative surrounding the Jets — that "playoff Hellebuyck" is often a completely different player than the stellar regular-season version.

For example, how does a guy with a league-leading, franchise-record 47 wins, a 2.00 goals-against average and .925 save percentage over 62 regular-season starts — all of which earned him another Vezina Trophy nomination on Monday — balloon to an eye-popping 4.24 goals-against average and .817 save percentage in four post-season games this spring?

"Honestly, it's a surprise in my world," admitted Hellebuyck, who insists he hasn't personally changed anything about his preparation or approach to his job.

"It would be crazy to go that many regular-season games and then all of a sudden switch something up in the playoffs. You don't win 47 games and then, come the playoffs, switch everything up. I know how it needs to look. I like a lot of things. I'm not going to go and make huge changes. That being said, I'm going to be better. That's my job, and that's the foot that I'm putting forward. I can't be giving up this many goals."

Hellebuyck led all NHL netminders in goals saved during the season, which is likely going to earn him plenty of Hart Trophy nominations considering voting was concluded before the playoffs. The 31-year-old, who is in the first year of his seven-year contract extension, is dead-last in the same category to start the playoffs.

"We don't do what we do for 82 games and then all of a sudden lose it," said Hellebuyck, who is now just 4-14 in his last 18 playoff games while giving up 69 combined goals and holding opponents to less than three goals on just three occasions.

"They're a good team over there. They got really hot, and it was crazy for us to think, ever, that this was going to be an easy series. And no one did think that. In the position we are, it's on to the next one. This is fun playoff hockey. It doesn't matter if you lose 2-1 or 6-1. At the end of the day it's a loss and you move on."

There's a case to be made that Winnipeg — which has been the stingiest defensive team in the league the last two years — has changed its style of play in front of

Hellebuyck. St. Louis did a terrific job in their own barn getting traffic in front of the Jets' net, scoring several times off screens and deflections.

"The feeling is that we've got to do a better job in front of him. He's the best goalie in the world, but he can't stop what he can't see," said defenceman Neal Pionk, who had one of those Blues shots bounce in off of him on Sunday afternoon. He preached a "back to basics" approach.

"We've got to take their sticks out of the way and push them out of the way so he can see the puck."

Hellebuyck was asked if he's getting enough help.

"We're a team in here, we're not pointing fingers at anyone," he replied. "We're going to do this together."

The effective adjustments made by the Blues would seem to mirror what the Colorado Avalanche were able to do so effectively last year in eliminating the Jets in five games, lighting Hellebuyck up for 24 goals in the process. The Vegas Golden Knights had similar success the year before in scoring 18 times in their five-game series victory.

"I think there's a blueprint of how teams want to play us," admitted Hellebuyck.

"That being said, it's not like we don't have an answer for it. I believe in that game. I've played in this league enough to know that game can work and that game can win. The worst thing we can do is to try and tinker and mess with what works for us. We just need to bring it for 60 minutes. Every single guy in this room puts a little bit more, plays a little bit better, and we're going to be just fine."

While backup goaltender Eric Comrie was mopping up in the final period of both games in Missouri, Hellebuyck was serenaded with chants of "We Want Connor" by Blues fans who were loving what they were seeing. He admitted the mental battle this time of year is as important as anything physical.

"Playoff time, that's one of the most important attributes you can have, is being strong between the ears," he said.

"You don't want to go into a game playing with fear. If you play with fear, that's when you start to actually make mistakes and want things back. We go out, we play our game and you continue to be better every single shift, every single game and every single day. That's my mindset moving forward, and I'm looking forward to that."

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/video/how-can-the-jets-reclaim-momentum-in-first-round-series-vs-blues/>

***Jets confident they can handle the moment
Regular-season adversity could pay off as series tightens***

By: Ken Wiebe

The Winnipeg Jets insist they are not seeing ghosts.

When the topic of “here they go again” was raised on Monday during a media availability inside the Matt Frost media centre, Jets head coach Scott Arniel showed a hint of frustration with the question before catching himself.

The ghosts of playoff past might be a subject the Jets’ fan base can’t help but think about, but Arniel had no interest in going down that road after his team dropped the past two games in this Central Division battle with the St. Louis Blues.

“I don’t give a — never mind,” said Arniel. “This is the Western Conference. Take a look at what’s going on around the league. Everyone is tied 2-2. How we got here? As a head coach, I’m not happy about how we got here, but we’re here.

“Game 5, we have to be the best team on the ice. I don’t care what’s happened in the past. One thing that this group has done a fantastic job all year long is we have to move on to the next game.”

There is no other choice that leads to success for the Jets, who won a pair of tight games to build a 2-0 series lead and were blown out in consecutive games to find themselves back to even at 2-2.

This series won’t be decided by the total number of goals, but for a team that has won the William Jennings Trophy in consecutive seasons for allowing the least number of goals over 82 games, giving up 12 during the past two is clearly not a recipe for sustained success.

The Jets had a mostly dominant first period on Sunday, but the inability to push the lead to 2-0 proved costly when the Blues scored with 22.7 seconds remaining in the frame.

Things turned in the second period and the Blues scored another late goal with 1:05 that proved to be a back-breaker.

Where does that leave the Jets?

On home ice in a best-of-three series needing to win two more games to advance to the second round of the Stanley Cup playoffs against either the Colorado Avalanche or Dallas Stars.

All season long the Jets have talked about how they would be judged by what transpires in Game 83 and beyond. And getting bounced for a third consecutive spring isn't an option the Jets want to think about.

This is why they spent the off-season focusing on getting that five-to-10 per cent better and bringing those results into the regular season, where the Jets reached new heights, many of them individually and collectively as a group by finishing first overall among the 32 teams.

Steps were taken, lessons were put into practice. Yet after all of the positives from the past 12 months, the Jets once again stand nose to nose with the playoff dragon they're trying to slay.

Since getting bounced by the Blues in the first round in 2019, the Jets have managed to come up with only one win following a loss in the post-season.

That came in Game 2 of the 2020 bubble playoffs, where the Jets defeated the Flames in that contest before dropping the next two to lose in four in the best-of-five play-in series.

Since that time, they were swept by the Montreal Canadiens in the second round in 2021 after sweeping the Edmonton Oilers.

In 2022, they won the series opener against the Vegas Golden Knights before getting eliminated in five games.

Last spring, the Jets once again won the series opener against the Colorado Avalanche before losing four in a row to be sent home early.

But Arniel and the players are right when they say it's a new season. The Jets spent much of this one showing they were better prepared to handle things when times get tough. However, they've reached the point where action is required.

"The way we're approaching this game is, we want to get back to our style, our structure, our compete, our speed and the results will take care of itself," said Jets captain Adam Lowry. "Realistically, you want to win the series, you probably want to win this one. But we don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves, in terms of thinking that you lose this one the series is over.

"It's two good teams going at it. We're approaching this as a very important game for us. We don't want to make the situation bigger than it is. It's a swing game in the series. We want to put ourselves in the best possible position to move on, and that starts with a good start, us playing on our toes, us playing fast and getting to our forecheck."

And all signs point to forward Gabe Vilardi returning to the lineup, and that should provide a lift for a group that is looking for some additional secondary scoring and one that needs to get the power play going.

Arniel was asked if Vilardi could handle top line minutes if he entered the lineup for the first time since suffering an upper-body injury against the Buffalo Sabres on Mar. 23.

“If he’s prepared and cleared to go, then it’s all-in,” said Arniel.

This isn’t to suggest that Vilardi entering the lineup will immediately fix everything that has been ailing the Jets during the past two games, but someone with his hands around the net and skillset is bound to help.

No matter who Vilardi is playing with — and you can expect him to see time with Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor — the Jets are looking for more from the middle-six forward group, as they’ve been limited to one empty-net goal from Lowry through four games.

Bumping Morgan Barron up onto that line led to some scoring chances and zone time, but the Jets can’t keep leaning on the fourth line to deliver the bulk of the secondary scoring. They’ve already got two goals in the series — one from David Gustafsson and another from Jaret Anderson-Dolan, who spent the bulk of the season in the American Hockey League with the Manitoba Moose.

This isn’t about one player saving the day, though — the Jets thrive when the collective group is going.

“We’re ready to play,” said Jets defenceman Neal Pionk. “Wish it was Wednesday today, but we’ll take a couple days off here. We’ve gone through this before. We went through a little stretch there in November and early December and bounced back from it, so we’re ready to go.”

The Jets sound prepared to handle the moment. Delivering in it is the next step toward changing the narrative, even if the Jets are doing their best to block out the outside noise.

“The biggest thing is we don’t need to reinvent the wheel, in terms of how we play,” said Lowry. “When we play a certain way, we’ve had success against the Blues, and when we get away from that, when we get out of our structure, we stop defending first, we make it easier to get to the net-front, and then you see games like that.

“All year long the strength of our team has been our team defence, our five-on-five play. It’s important when we look at the game (Sunday) and review the last couple of games we see the areas where we can certainly be a lot better in. And go out and execute. You have the game plan, now it’s important to go and put it into practice.”

Canadian Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/hockey/2025/04/28/jets-goalie-hellebuyck-expects-to-bounce-back-in-game-5-i-am-going-to-be-better>

Jets goalie Hellebuyck expects to bounce back in Game 5: 'I am going to be better'

By: Judy Owen, The Canadian Press

WINNIPEG – Connor Hellebuyck says there is no crack in his confidence after the Winnipeg Jets goalie was pulled during his team's last two playoff losses.

Hellebuyck, who was announced Monday as a finalist for the Vezina Trophy, told reporters his mindset is good heading into Wednesday's Game 5 at home against St. Louis.

The Blues tied the Western Conference best-of-seven opening-round series 2-2 after thumping the Jets 5-1 on Sunday and 7-2 last Thursday in St. Louis.

"You don't love giving up that many goals, but we're 2-2 in the series. That's all that matters. Win the next one," Hellebuyck said after he and most of his teammates didn't take part in Monday's optional skate.

"Am I going to be better? I am going to be better. I've studied goaltending extremely hard. I've probably studied the most out of anyone in this world, so I know what to do and how to get my best game. So that's what I'm looking forward to do."

Backup Eric Comrie replaced Hellebuyck in the third period of the past two losses and gave up one goal in last Thursday's match.

Hellebuyck is up for the NHL's top goalie award with Darcy Kuemper of the Los Angeles Kings and Andrei Vasilevskiy of the Tampa Bay Lightning.

The Commerce, Mich., product is the reigning Vezina Trophy winner and also claimed the honour in 2020. He was a finalist in 2018 and 2023.

Hellebuyck posted career bests in wins (47), shutouts (eight), goals-against average (2.00) and save percentage (.925) to help Winnipeg finish the regular season with the league's best record and gain home-ice advantage by capturing the Presidents' Trophy.

"It would be crazy to go that many regular-season games and then all of a sudden switch something up in the playoffs," Hellebuyck said.

"You don't win 47 games and then come the playoffs switch everything up. I know how it needs to look. I like a lot of things. I'm not going to go and make huge changes."

Hellebuyck has a .817 save percentage and 4.24 goals-against average in the series.

Winnipeg won the opening two games at home by scores of 5-3 and 2-1.

"I thought the first two games, our goaltending was better than theirs. Second two games, their goaltending was better than ours. It's plain and simple," Jets head coach Scott Arniel said.

"I think that's part of what a playoff series is all about. It's like our top players. Our top offensive players, they need to be better than the opposition's top offensive players. Our grinders, our meat-and-potato guys, they need to be better than their meat-and-potato guys.

"So this is a tale of two tapes. Game 1 and 2, I thought we owned those categories. But Games 3 and 4, they owned those categories."

Jets veteran defenceman Neal Pionk said the players have to give Hellebuyck more help, including blocking more shots.

"Go back to basics," Pionk said. "Get the stick, first. Try to push them out of the way, second. Let Helly see the puck. Couple bad bounces, but it is what it is, that's playoff hockey."

Hellebuyck won a second consecutive William M. Jennings Trophy as the goaltender (minimum of 25 games played) on the team allowing the fewest regular-season goals.

He said he's mentally prepared for what's ahead.

"I think playoff time, that's one of the most important attributes you can have, is being strong between the ears," Hellebuyck said. "You don't want to go into a game playing with fear. If you play with fear, that's when you start to actually make mistakes and want things back.

"We go out, we play our game and you continue to be better every single shift, every single game and every single day. That's my mindset moving forward, and I'm looking forward to that."

VILARDI SET TO GO

It looks like top-line winger Gabriel Vilardi could play Wednesday after missing Winnipeg's past 15 games with an undisclosed upper-body injury he suffered March 23.

Arniel said Vilardi was cleared to play Sunday. He skated in warm-up, but was given a bit more time.

"If he's prepared and cleared to go, then it's all-in," Arniel said.

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6318568/2025/04/29/nhl-jets-blues-playoffs-hellebuyck/>

The 6 Jets who need to step up the most against the Blues in Game 5

By Murat Ates

Winnipeg Jets head coach Scott Arniel made a public challenge to his top players after Game 4: Outplay the St. Louis Blues' top players.

It applied to stars like Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor, who are driving Winnipeg's offence but whose lapses helped St. Louis walk away with Game 4. It included Josh Morrissey, who has been outplayed by Cam Fowler and Colton Parayko. And it applied to goaltender Connor Hellebuyck, whose .817 save percentage, 15 goals against and back-to-back pulls have turned into the focal point of Winnipeg's struggles.

On Monday in Winnipeg, Arniel expanded the field.

"Our top offensive players, they've got to be better than the opposition's top offensive players. Our grinders, our meat-and-potato guys have got to be better than their meat-and-potato guys."

Arniel didn't name names. Neither did Hellebuyck, who told reporters, "We're a team in here, we're not pointing fingers at anyone."

But this is a series wherein the Jets are supposed to be the favourites with superior depth and top-end talent at all positions. Scheifele and Connor are supposed to be able to outduel Robert Thomas and Jordan Kyrou. Adam Lowry is supposed to be a better shutdown centre than Brayden Schenn. Hellebuyck is ... we'll let him speak for himself in a moment.

The point is, a lot of Jets need to be better than they were on the road in St. Louis.

And while Arniel and his players won't name names, we will. These are the Jets players who need to step up their game for Winnipeg to regain the series lead against the Blues on Wednesday night.

1. Connor Hellebuyck

Whether you believe in his playoff resume or not, Hellebuyck has been the story of this series — and not for the right reasons. Some of his misery has resulted from brilliant deflections or bad bounces off of his defencemen, but Hellebuyck is responsible for enough of his problems to earn the unwanted attention.

Hellebuyck was asked to evaluate his performance in Winnipeg on Monday.

“You don’t love giving up that many goals, but we’re 2-2 in the series. That’s all that matters. Win the next one. Am I going to be better? I am going to be better. I’ve studied goaltending extremely hard. I’ve probably studied the most out of anyone in this world, so I know what to do and how to get my best game. So that’s what I’m looking forward to (doing). I’ve got two days here. Time to bring it in Game 5.”

He was also asked about his surprisingly poor playoff results.

“Honestly, it’s a surprise in my world, too. When I’m watching my game, there’s a certain way I need it to look and want it to look,” Hellebuyck said. “And it would be crazy to go that many regular-season games and then all of a sudden switch something up in the playoffs. You don’t win 47 games and then come the playoffs (and) switch everything up.

“I know how it needs to look. I like a lot of things. I’m not going to go and make huge changes. That being said, I’m going to be better. That’s my job, and that’s the foot that I’m putting forward. I can’t be giving up this many goals.”

He’s right. He can’t. And he is the No. 1 player on the list of Jets who could make a huge difference for Winnipeg in this series. He doesn’t have to reinvent himself. He doesn’t have to put each game on his shoulders.

He has to stop more pucks.

2. Josh Morrissey

Morrissey is supposed to be the best defenceman in this series. Instead, he’s been on the ice for five Blues goals at even strength, tying Luke Schenn for the most on that front, and we’re still waiting for Morrissey’s moment. This is not the norm for a player known for quick retrievals, smooth transition play and dominant shifts in the offensive zone — and it’s costing him at both ends of the ice.

Fowler, Parayko and Justin Faulk have outscored the Jets’ top defenceman, while the Blues have 15 hits on him through four games.

As it turns out, all of Winnipeg’s defencemen are taking a pounding: Dylan Samberg is the only minutes-eater who has absorbed fewer than three hits a game so far. Credit the Blues’ forecheck. Criticize Hellebuyck’s puckhandling, with an eye on how Jordan Binnington keys breakouts at the other end of the ice. Either way, the bruises are adding up.

Morrissey’s placement on this list is a testament to the high expectations he’s created for himself. He is arguably the Jets’ second most important player (after Hellebuyck), and we’re still waiting for him to put his stamp on the series.

3. Adam Lowry

Lowry took responsibility on Monday for his ill-timed penalty, hauling down Tyler Tucker during Tucker's battle with Morgan Barron. The Blues didn't score on their power play — not officially, anyway — but Schenn scored soon after Lowry's penalty had ended. The Blues' goal took a combination of poor backtracking, a Samberg fall and Hellebuyck's one-handed paddle attempt. But the needless penalty kill sapped the Jets' second-period momentum all the same.

Lowry has two minor penalties, 14 penalty minutes and seven shots in the series, but his only point is an empty net goal. Lowry's line is supposed to be one of Winnipeg's biggest strengths: The heart of a middle-six forward group that can go head-to-head with any team in the league and win its minutes. His 56 percent share of on-ice shot attempts offers encouragement, but Lowry needs to find a better way to help.

4. Vladislav Namestnikov

When a good, two-way player is a poor finisher, it's easy to remember them for the scoring chances they don't convert. Namestnikov is such a player, making smart decisions in his zone and playing a tenacious brand of hockey in all three zones. Winnipeg's offence also has died on his stick far too often for a No. 2 centreman. He has only five shot attempts all series — three of which forced a save — and zero points in the playoffs. Extend his scoring drought to the regular season, and Namestnikov has only one goal and 12 assists in his last 33 games.

Namestnikov is versatile and hardworking, and the only way the Jets will go far in the playoffs is if he produces points alongside all of the effort. It's a good reminder of why Winnipeg tried so hard to acquire a No. 2 centre at the trade deadline.

5. Nino Niederreiter

Another veteran, another stat line that includes zero points. Niederreiter played parts of Game 1 like he was shot out of a cannon. He's good along the walls and makes hard plays that keep the puck in the offensive zone: Winnipeg has over 50 percent of the shots and expected goals with Niederreiter on the ice, just like Namestnikov, Lowry and other Jets forwards who have failed to produce thus far. Niederreiter is one of the best play-driving forwards in either team's middle-six, but 16 Blues have more points than he does this series.

6. Luke Schenn

Schenn is supposed to be the ideal third-pairing defenceman: calm, steady and so sheltered from top competition that the other team doesn't get a sniff while he's on the ice. Instead, he's looked slow, he's made giveaways that lead directly to goals against, and Winnipeg has been outscored 5-3 with him on the ice during five-on-five play. He was never meant to be an offensive defenceman, but Schenn also has stood out for a lack of incisive decision making at the offensive blue line, especially when the Jets are chasing the game.

Schenn is usually good at clearing the net front. His physicality is welcome on the boards and the PK. He's also unique on the roster in that he's a Stanley Cup champion

and a veteran of over 1,000 games. Despite those qualities, no one in any series has put his team short-handed more often than Schenn (5) has in Round 1.

Finally, some good news

The Jets are getting Gabriel Vilardi back for Game 5. He's going to play on the top line with Connor and Scheifele, and it's going to cause a positive ripple effect throughout the lineup.

I'm expecting Alex Iafallo to take Niederreiter's spot on the second line. This creates a slightly different look for Namestnikov and Cole Perfetti, and returns Niederreiter to the third line where he's had most of his success. These lines are much closer to Arniel's ideal than what we've seen for much of the series.

Nikolaj Ehlers will not return soon. Expect him toward the end of Round 2 or the start of Round 3 if the Jets make it that far.

If this lineup gets it done, glory. If they lose, the greatest season in franchise history ends in disappointment.

"We're in a good spot," Hellebuyck said. "It's a best of three. I like our odds, and we've got home ice advantage. That's where our mindset is going forward. That's all we can do."

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/video/why-no-goal-call-against-jets-stood-after-review/>

Have the two-day breaks in the NHL playoffs been a benefit to the Blues?

By Jeremy Rutherford

ST. LOUIS — When the schedule was released for the Western Conference playoff series between the St. Louis Blues and Winnipeg Jets, many had the same immediate reaction.

There were three two-day breaks between games.

After Game 2, there were two off days before Game 3; there were two off days before Game 4; and there are two off days before the teams take the ice for Game 5 on Wednesday at Canada Life Centre.

For comparison's sake, no other first-round series in this year's NHL playoffs has as many multi-day breaks.

Colorado-Dallas and Carolina-New Jersey each have two two-day breaks, but conversely, Edmonton-LA and Tampa Bay-Florida have none.

Before the puck was dropped on the St. Louis-Winnipeg series, Blues center Robert Thomas was asked for his thoughts on the schedule, and whether it could be an advantage for either of the teams.

"I've got to be honest, I have no idea," Thomas said. "I've never had a series schedule set up like this, so it's new to me. Maybe after, I'll figure out if it's advantageous or not. But I have no idea."

Two-day breaks in each playoff series

Jets-Blues

3

Hurricanes-Devils

2

Stars-Avalanche

2

Maple Leafs-Senators

1

Golden Knights-Wild

1

Capitals-Canadiens

1

Oilers-Kings

0

Lightning-Panthers

0

A week and a half later, the best-of-seven series is tied 2-2 and it's hard to say if the schedule has helped one side more than the other. But with the Blues climbing out of a 2-0 hole in Games 3 and 4, one could make the case they have benefited for a variety of reasons.

Lost momentum, the number of days in each city, practice time, rest for key injured players, and the style of play of both teams are all areas that could be considered in this series.

The original plan for the schedule was to play every other day, which would have meant Games 1 and 2 in Winnipeg on April 19 and 21 and Game 3 in St. Louis last Wednesday. But Enterprise Center in St. Louis had a Brooks & Dunn concert Friday and comedian Kat Williams Saturday, so the NHL pushed Game 3 to Thursday because Game 4 would have to be Sunday.

Therefore, an observation that Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel made before the series started suddenly materialized.

"If you do get up in a series, you'd like it to happen a lot quicker," he said.

After the Jets' 2-1 win over the Blues in Game 2, they had to wait nearly three full days to play Game 3 on Thursday. From the finish of Game 2 at 9:06 p.m. CT until the start of Game 3 at 8:52 p.m., nearly 72 hours passed.

"When you win a game, you want to go right back at it because you have that attitude and momentum," Blues coach Jim Montgomery said. "The more time between games, the more it dissipates."

Not only that, but the Jets, who won the Presidents' Trophy and are the higher seed in the playoffs, would be spending one more day in St. Louis (five) for Games 3-4 than the Blues spent in Winnipeg (four) for Games 1-2.

The Blues took advantage of that time back in town, too.

If the series were scheduled every other day, the Blues would've flown home Tuesday and played Wednesday, with Wednesday's brief morning the only allotted time to work on their game. Instead, after taking Tuesday off, they had a full team practice Wednesday and the morning skate Thursday before Game 3.

"We need to play faster, not only offensively, but defensively," Montgomery said.

The Blues' speed was noticeably better in Games 3-4, when they outscored the Jets 12-3 and their defense, which they focused on, contributed four goals and nine assists in the two games.

Meanwhile, Thomas, arguably the Blues' top forward, and top defenseman Colton Parayko were able to get extra rest for their injuries. The time off helps the Jets' banged-up bodies, too, but it hasn't allowed them to get top-line winger Gabe Vilardi back in the lineup until potentially Game 5.

Thomas has an undisclosed lower-body ailment and has sat out of a couple of practices, but no games. Parayko missed about six weeks at the end of the regular season after a knee scope. Neither appears to be 100 percent, but after back-to-back days off, Thomas erupted for four assists and Parayko had a power-play goal in a 7-2 win in Game 3. Thomas had a goal and Parayko two assists in a 5-1 win in Game 4.

The Blues' offense was coming in waves on Winnipeg goalie Connor Hellebuyck, who was pulled from Games 3 and 4 after giving up 11 goals on 43 shots. But instead of getting back in net the next day, or being back home in Winnipeg, the Jets netminder was limited to the team's local hotel and its surroundings.

"That's what's nice about the regular season," Blues center Radek Faksa said. "If you have a bad game, usually you play so many back-to-backs that you play the next day and it can change. It's nice when you win and you have two days between, but it's worse when you lose and you have two days between."

Faksa, for example, got some good sleep after Game 3 and spent the off day Friday relaxing at home.

"I've never experienced so many breaks between games in the playoffs," he said. "You have to take advantage of it, take the rest, because you're so fired up after games that you can't fall asleep, especially the late game. I went to sleep at 3 o'clock in the morning. The next day, you get moving, maybe go for a walk. That's what I did."

Blues rookie Jimmy Snuggerud was able to check out his new city.

"Nothing crazy, just went to some different restaurants, laid low and recovered," he said. "I watched the NHL playoffs a lot growing up and the physicality, it's a massive part of playoff games. Now that I'm actually in it, your body is beat up, and you're pushing through. The schedule is kind of different, but I know for a lot of guys having the two off days has been really nice."

Montgomery believes that is an advantage for the Blues to have the extra day off in St. Louis.

"I do think the extra time between games is favorable for the home team," Montgomery said. "We're at home and we have other things besides laying around in our hotel room, thinking about hockey. We have our families, we have country clubs that we may be a part of, or whatever the case may be. With the beautiful weather, you have options to get your mind away from the game. So I do think being at home with a two-day break is very favorable for the home team."

The Blues were then refreshed for Game 4 of what has been the league's heaviest-hitting series in the playoffs.

If they were to win this series, they had to be physical and they've been just that with the most hits per 60 minutes (44) of all 16 teams in the postseason. The Jets are fourth with 41.25/60.

"I think you don't mind the two days because you know the energy level for both teams is going to be sky high because you have a lot of time to recuperate and recover," Montgomery said. "I think that might be why we might have the heaviest hit (totals) by a lot in this series. You have a little more juice in the tank."

The Blues (176 hits) and Jets (165) have combined for 341 in the series, which was also No. 1 in the league going into Monday's games.

Total hits in each playoff series

Jets-Blues

341

Hurricanes-Devils

323

Maple Leafs-Senators
309
Oilers-Kings
299
Stars-Avalanche
295
Golden Knights-Wild
280
Capitals-Canadiens
271
Lightning-Panthers
246

There only appears to be a small correlation between the extra time off and more hits. Carolina-New Jersey has two two-day breaks and that series is second among the eight series with 323; also, Tampa-Florida has no two-day breaks and that series is last with 246 hits (in one fewer game). But then there's Toronto-Ottawa, which has one two-day break, and it is third with 309 hits.

Either way, as it pertains to St. Louis-Winnipeg, the physicality may be an advantage for the Blues.

In the regular season, when the Jets had two days off between games, they were an impressive 13-2-1 (.844 points percentage). The Blues, with two days between games, were 9-5-2 (.625 points percentage). But that's in the regular season when the opponent changes game to game and there's no carry-over effect that there is in the playoffs.

The Blues thrive on their checking game, as illustrated in the regular season. They were sixth in the NHL in hits/60 with 24.12, while the Jets were No. 18 in the league with 20.56. And after two days off, and just three games in the past 10 days, they'll look to get back to the style that's made them successful in the postseason.

"It is a unique situation, the way the schedule has lined up," Blues defenseman Cam Fowler said. "You just kind of roll with the punches and do your best to stay physically and mentally strong, having a few extra days in between games. It's a physical series, and both teams are invested in that, and that can definitely take a toll on you. It feels like there's a lot of time between games, so just making sure that you're staying on top of it, studying the film and watching other games, I think that all helps us stay mentally engaged in it as well."

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/friesen-jets-grasp-for-hope-in-stormy-playoff-sea>

FRIESEN: Jets grasp for hope in stormy playoff sea

By Paul Friesen

Yes it's a 2-2 series, with the Winnipeg Jets still gripping home-ice advantage against St. Louis, albeit with a finger or two slipping.

But after what's happened the last two years, can you blame a fan-base for thinking it's seen this movie before and screaming, Here we go again?

"I don't give a — never mind," Jets head coach Scott Arniel said on Monday. "As a head coach, I'm not happy about how we got here. But we're here."

You can't blame the coach for getting a little irritated at any reference to first-round playoff collapses against Colorado last season and Vegas the year before.

Arniel was part of those, as Rick Bowness's assistant. But he's worked hard to rebuild his team's self-esteem. Looking back serves no purpose to him.

It might even create doubt.

So the Jets are grabbing onto whatever they can, instead.

Never mind the two lopsided losses in St. Louis. Look instead at the rest of the NHL playoffs. See that? This is actually pretty normal.

"We're just like everybody else in the West," Arniel said. "We're all tied at two."

It's how they have to look at things. Agonizing over how they blew a 2-0 series lead doesn't accomplish a thing.

But man, did those 7-2 and 5-1 blowouts in St. Louis ever look similar to the way the Avalanche piled up the goals as last year's series went on.

"I don't care what's happened in the past," Arniel continued. "One thing this group has done a fantastic job all year long is move on to the next game. Be better. Our first 35 minutes (Sunday), we played a really good game. Our first period was really good. Way better than what we did in Game 3."

Sunday's disaster was the second period, when the Jets "unravelling" — a term used by players and the coach.

Unravelling for any 20-minute stretch in a playoff game is begging for trouble.

So is a goalie's save percentage of .817 and goals-against-average of more than four.

Ask Arniel about Connor Hellebuyck, though, and he tucks that mess inside its own tidy little box.

"The first two games, our goaltending was better than theirs," he said. "Second two games, their goaltending was better than ours. Plain and simple. That's part of what a playoff series is all about."

Never mind that Jordan Binnington has been good in all four games, while Hellebuyck couldn't even keep the Jets close in St. Louis.

"It's like our top players... they've got to be better than the opposition's top offensive players," Arniel said. "Our grinders, our meat-and-potato guys, have got to be better than their meat-and-potato guys. So this is a tale of two tapes. Games 1 and 2, we owned those categories. Games 3 and 4, they owned those categories."

It hasn't looked like equal ownership at all. But in a best-of-seven they ask how many, not how ugly.

Lessons learned are another potential life jacket in the stormy sea the Jets find themselves in.

Arniel has talked all season about building callouses for this very moment, when a wave of adversity crashes over you and knocks you overboard.

"We've gone through this before," Pionk said, and he wasn't referring to playoffs past. "We went through a little stretch there in November and early December and bounced back from it. So we're ready to go."

I'm not sure the idea of comparing a regular-season slump to this situation will float at all, but this team has no choice but to reach for it.

"It might not be the same magnitude," Pionk acknowledged. "But there's certainly little lessons in there. We'll find a way to play better on Wednesday."

What the last two games have done to the Jets' collective confidence is another question we'll have at least partly answered in Game 5.

This team has built a rock wall of belief in their game this season, but watching the Blues tidal wave pound up against it in back-to-back games has to cause some level of erosion.

"We don't need to reinvent the wheel, in terms of how we play," captain Adam Lowry said. "When we play a certain way, we've had success against the Blues. And when we get away from that, when we get out of our structure, we stop defending first, we make it easier to get to the net-front, then you see games like that."

And when you drop two in a row, games like Wednesday's carry enough weight to stagger the heftiest set of legs.

But calling it a must-win?

We didn't hear those two words on Monday, either.

"Realistically, (if) you want to win the series, you probably want to win this one," is as close as Lowry got. "But we don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves, in terms of thinking that you lose this one the series is over. It's two good teams going at it... a very important game for us.

"It's a swing game in the series."

Some fans feel like the series has already swung.

They'd love to be proven wrong.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/its-a-surprise-in-my-world-too-jets-hellebuyck-does-some-soul-searching>

'It's a surprise in my world, too': Jets' Hellebuyck does some soul-searching

By Paul Friesen

This time, Connor Hellebuyck didn't get his back up at the line of questioning.

The Winnipeg Jets goalie rarely allows much space for self-criticism, but on Monday he agreed he has to play better if the Jets want to take back control of their playoff series with St. Louis.

"You don't love giving up that many goals," Hellebuyck said. "I am going to be better. I've studied goaltending extremely hard. I've probably studied the most out of anyone in this world, so I know what to do and how to get my best game.

"So that's what I'm looking forward to do."

To nobody's surprise, Hellebuyck on Monday was named a finalist yet again for the Vezina Trophy as the NHL's top goalie.

But nobody in the media scrum was asking him about that. Not after he gave up a combined 11 goals in Game 3 and 4 losses in St. Louis that deadlocked the series at two games apiece.

This time the 31-year-old didn't rebuke anybody for putting a "negative spin" on questions, like he did during an interview going into the playoffs.

"Honestly, it's a surprise in my world, too," the two-time Vezina winner said. "When I'm watching my game, there's a certain way I need it to look and want it to look. And it would be crazy to go that many regular season games and then all of a sudden switch something up in the playoffs. You don't win 47 games and then come the playoffs switch everything up.

"That being said, I'm going to be better. I can't be giving up this many goals."

Much has been made of the traffic the Blues have created in front of Hellebuyck, leading to goals on deflections and through screens.

It's looked alarmingly like what Colorado did to the Jets in the first round last year.

"There's a blueprint of how teams want to play us," Hellebuyck said. "That being said, it's not like we don't have an answer for it. We're going to continue playing our game. I've played in this league enough to know that game can work and that game can win. The worst thing we can do is to try and tinker and mess with what works for us."

Another recipe for disaster would be teammates beginning to question each other. In that regard, the Jets appear solid.

"We're a team in here," Hellebuyck said. "We're not pointing fingers at anyone."

One Blues goal in Sunday's 5-1 St. Louis win went off Jets defenceman Neal Pionk.

Pionk's solution to the net-front chaos: "Go back to basics. Get the stick, first. Try to push them out of the way, second. Let Helly see the puck. He's the best goalie in the world, but he can't stop what he can't see."

That may explain some of the drastic change in Hellebuyck's numbers. But all of it?

His goals-against per game have more than doubled from the regular season, while his saves percentage has dipped by more than 10 percent.

The back-to-back shellings can test even the most confident goalie, a category in which Hellebuyck ranks right up there, too.

“Playoff time, that’s one of the most important attributes you can have, is being strong between the ears,” he said. “You don’t want to go into a game playing with fear. If you play with fear, that’s when you start to actually make mistakes and want things back.”

Hellebuyck insisted he’s having fun and that his team is in a great spot, with home-ice advantage in a series tied, 2-2.

“They’re a good team over there. They got really hot, and it was crazy for us to think ever that this was going to be an easy series. And no one did think that.

“Every single guy in this room puts a little bit more, plays a little bit better, and we’re going to be just fine.”

Game 5 is in Winnipeg, Wednesday.

<https://winnipegsun.com/sports/start-to-finish-jets-need-to-find-consistency-against-the-blues-in-game-5>

'Start to finish': Jets need to find consistency against the Blues in Game 5

By Gordon Anderson

Will the real Winnipeg Jets please stand up.

The Jets and St. Louis Blues are currently embroiled in a vicious and physical quarterfinal series, dominated by the home teams.

Kyle Connor scored the game winners in the opening two games in Winnipeg and the Blues chased Jets netminder Connor Hellebuyck from the net during both games in Missouri.

“I don’t think the Blues have seen our best this whole series, from start to finish,” Jets forward Adam Lowry said. “There have been spurts where we have played dominant for a period of two, but against a team like the Blues you have got to go start to finish. Both teams have played extremely well on home ice, and we are looking forward to getting back our style of play, dictating the pace and dictating the flow of the game and things like that.”

The captain wants to see more consistency with in-zone defending, specifically limiting the Blues offensive players and their haste to get net front for deflections, tip and screens.

Not to mention a Blues defensive core that filled up the scoresheet with points on a consistent basis in both wins. The d-core collective scored two goals and added four assists in Sunday’s 5-1 victory. The blueline brigade also scored twice and added four assists in the 7-2 win in Game 3.

"We want to get back to our style, our structure, our compete levels, our speed and the results will take care of themselves," Lowry said. "Realistically, you want to win the series, you probably want to win (Game 5), but we don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves in terms of thinking that (should we lose this one) the series is over."

Given the aforementioned lack of consistency in the d-zone alone, Lowry is not surprised the series is in a stalemate through four games.

But sometimes you've got to give credit to the opposition too.

"It's two good teams going at it," Lowry said. "We're approaching this as a very important game for us. We don't want to make the situation bigger than it is. It's a swing game in the series. We want to put ourselves in the best possible position to move on, and that starts with a good start, us playing on our toes, us playing fast and getting to our forecheck."

Jets netminder Hellebuyck didn't think the series would be without some pushback from their Central Division foe.

The Blues were the hottest team in the NHL after the 4 Nations event. They went 15-3-2 in their last 20 games, including a 12-game win streak that was snapped by the Jets on April 7.

"They're a good team over there," the netminder said. "They got hot, and it was crazy for us to think ever that this was going to be an easy series. In the position we are in it's on to the next one. This is fun, playoff hockey. It doesn't matter if you lose 2-1 or 6-1. At the end of the day, it's a loss and you move on. Getting back to our game is what we want to do in here and that's our plan for 60 minutes."

Game 5 is scheduled for Wednesday night at the downtown rink. Puck drop is 8:30.

"I'm really looking forward to the next one," Hellebuyck said. "It's on, it's playoff style hockey. It's fun. This is what's fun. You've got to weather those ups and downs, and it's easy to say from the outside looking in that we're down right now. But I don't view it like that. Whatever happens, put it behind you and move on to the next one."

<https://winnipegssun.com/sports/jets-vilardi-cleared-and-all-in-for-game-5-vs-blues>

Jets' Vilardi cleared and 'all-in' for Game 5 vs Blues

By Paul Friesen

It's the angel Gabriel to the rescue. Gabriel Vilardi, that is.

It appears the Winnipeg Jets will get their top-line winger back from the injured list for Wednesday's pivotal Game 5 of their first-round playoff series against St. Louis.

Head coach Scott Arniel on Monday said Vilardi is cleared to pick up where he left off the regular season: as the Jets' leading goal scorer on the power play and No. 3, overall, on a line with Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor.

"He's cleared to go," Arniel said. "If he's prepared and cleared to go, then it's all-in."

The coach said Vilardi was actually cleared for Sunday's Game 3 in St. Louis, too, but was given a few more days of skating to maximize his recovery and preparation for an entirely different level of hockey he last experienced.

Out since late March with an undisclosed injury, the 25-year-old missed his team's last 11 regular-season games and the first four playoff games.

His timing couldn't be much better, as the Jets have dropped two straight games, evening the series, while looking nothing like the NHL's best regular-season team in doing it.

"Great set of hands, great shot, works well with our forwards," defenceman Neal Pionk said of Vilardi. "So it would be a big addition."

The Jets are coming off 7-2 and 5-1 defeats in which their power play went 1-for-6. It's 2-for-12 (16.6 percent), overall, after going a league-leading 28.9 percent during the season.

The Blues have six power-play goals on 18 chances, one of several areas they've been better, particularly the last two games.

Vilardi led the Jets with 12 power-play goals this season, one more than Scheifele, despite his injury. He had 27 goals, 61 points, overall.

Game 5 goes at 8:30 p.m. on Wednesday.



"We're ready," Pionk said. "Wish it was Wednesday today."

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11153432/winnipeg-jets-tied-series-blues/>

ANALYSIS: Home game should provide answers in 2-2 Jets series

By Kelly Moore Global News

ANALYSIS: Home game should provide answers in 2-2 Jets series -   in full screen

The Jets and Blues series is going at least six games.

And St. Louis certainly has all the momentum going into Game Five on Wednesday Night at Canada Life Centre.

It's a movie Jets fans are all too familiar with. Try as they might, Winnipeg just can't find a way to win following a playoff loss.

Yesterday followed that script for the Jets for the 11th straight time, dating back to 2020 versus Calgary in the bubble in Edmonton.

Sunday afternoon in St. Louis began with a promising start. The Jets were able to get to their game right off the hop and eventually scored first.

But a dominant opening 19-and-a-half minutes ended with the Blues scoring with 22.7 seconds remaining in the opening period.

Eventually, St. Louis took over the game with three more unanswered goals in an eight-minute and eight-second span in the back half of the middle frame.

Any chance to make it interesting in the third was snuffed out with an early goal by Robert Thomas to make it 5-1, ending Connor Hellebuyck's day prematurely for the second time in as many games.

It's mind-boggling that Hellebuyck is having yet another nightmarish playoff. And by that, I mean a netminder who looks so in control and efficient in the regular season, compared to the "fish out of water" persona of the playoffs.

A 4.24 goals against average and .817 saves percentage is 15th among the 16 playoff starters.

It's not all Hellebuyck's fault. But Jordan Binnington has been far and away the better of the two netminders through the first four games collectively.

Can the Jets stem the tide on their home ice Wednesday Night? Can Hellebuyck and Winnipeg's other best players answer the bell? Can the Jets re-write the legacy of a good to great regular season team that can't duplicate that success in the playoffs?

Game Five is going to provide some answers.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/hellebuyck-vilardi-and-other-key-jets-notes-ahead-of-game-5~3123514>

Hellebuyck, Vilardi and other key Jets notes ahead of Game 5 (VIDEO)

TSN Jets reporter John Lu joins Gino Reda to share his thoughts on the struggles of Connor Hellebuyck, who has allowed 11 goals in the past two games and has been pulled in both. Lu also discusses the importance of the Jets taking Game 5 on home ice.

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/how-do-the-jets-slow-down-the-surging-blues~3123619>

How do the Jets slow down the surging Blues? (VIDEO)

The Jets had all the momentum prior to the series shifting to St. Louis but all of a sudden, the series is tied at two games apiece and Connor Hellebuyck has been chased in both defeats. TSN Hockey analyst Bruce Boudreau joins Gino Reda to discuss the home and away discrepancy in play with the Jets, how he would coach a team that is in this position and whether or not Hellebuyck is showing signs of fatigue.