

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-utah-hockey-club-slow-down-jets>

Family matters

Schenn brothers go head-to-head as Jets set take on Blues

By: Ken Wiebe

SALT LAKE CITY — Jeff Schenn has a simple goal when the standard question of who he cheers for when his two sons meet in NHL action is asked of him.

“He says he wants to see overtime and then it’s up to us. That’s his line,” Winnipeg Jets defenceman Luke Schenn told the Free Press in a one-on-one interview on the weekend. “It’s always fun and it’s always exciting for our family. We’re both getting older and have been around a long time and we definitely don’t take these opportunities for granted.”

The latest opportunity for Schenn to face off against his younger brother Brayden comes on Monday when the Jets host the St. Louis Blues at Canada Life Centre.

The Jets will be looking to regroup after dropping two of three games on their most recent road trip, while the Blues are riding a 12-game winning streak that has propelled them into the first wild card position in the Western Conference.

“We look forward to it. It’s fun to get the chance to see him and play him,” said Luke. “I am the most biased older brother in the world, but he’s done a great job of leading that team. It’s pretty impressive the run that they’re on right now.

The Schenn brothers, who grew up in Saskatoon and are two years apart in age, have a tight relationship that includes providing unwavering support while also being open enough to provide constructive criticism when it’s called for.

When the unvarnished truth comes from a place of caring, it can be easier to digest — especially when coming from a person with more than 1,000 games of NHL experience and his name on the Stanley Cup (which applies to both players in this case).

“Growing up, we always pushed each other. We always trained together,” said Luke, noting that he tries to watch as many Blues games as he can. “We are always each other’s biggest supporters and critics. We can just be honest with each other, in terms of what we think about our game.

“Sometimes if I’m not playing well, Brayden will watch and give me his advice or pointers, which I take seriously and vice versa. We train together in the summer, we talk every day during the season.”

The Schenns both earned a silver stick for 1,000 NHL games played this season — with Luke hitting the milestone on Oct. 17 as the Nashville Predators hosted the Edmonton Oilers, while Brayden went up against the Washington Capitals on Feb. 27.

“To be able to achieve that and to be the first set of brothers ever to do it in the same year, it’s pretty crazy if you think about it,” said Luke, who captured two Stanley Cups as a member of the Tampa Bay Lightning in 2020 and 2021. “We came into the NHL at different times, but have had great coaches and teammates along the way and great family support to be able to achieve this together.

“It’s (about) the journey and being able to continue to grind and go through some ups and downs and have that longevity. To get to celebrate it with friends and family is pretty special.”

One of the most enjoyable parts of the journey for Luke and Brayden was having the opportunity to be teammates with the Philadelphia Flyers for parts of four seasons between 2012 and 2016.

Eventually, Luke was traded to the Los Angeles Kings, while Brayden was acquired by the Blues in a deal that was pivotal to St. Louis winning its first Stanley Cup in franchise history.

“You know what, it’s been interesting. We had the chance to play together for three-and-a-half years in Philadelphia, which was a special time in our careers,” said Luke. “If you look back at it and you think of how cool it was to get a chance to play with your brother. To do all of the little things, driving to practise, dinners on the road, lots of playing.

“Our careers have taken us on different paths. I got traded to LA, he remained in Philly and then he ended up in St. Louis, which ended up being the best thing for his career.”

Interestingly enough, there was a time a few weeks ago when the idea of becoming teammates again was a legitimate possibility.

There were multiple teams that investigated the possibility of reuniting them before the Blues went on this impressive heater that’s reminding some observers of the 2019 run.

“We talked about it,” Luke admitted. “There were some things going on behind the scenes. (Brayden) had a full no-trade clause. I wasn’t totally expecting to get traded at all because I had another year left on my contract.

“I knew there were a couple of teams sniffing around a little bit. But he had control of it and he didn’t really want to leave. He’s in a great spot. He’s been there for a long time, he’s the captain there. There were conversations leading up to it, for sure. The Blues were in a certain position, with where they were in the standings. They were definitely not in the same spot as they are now.”

So instead of being teammates again and chasing a Stanley Cup together, they remain opponents who could end up colliding during the post-season, which would be taxing on Jeff and their mother Rita, along with their sisters Madison and Macy.

For the time being, both the Jets and Blues will be looking to finish the regular season on a high note.

The addition to the Jets by general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff has changed the complexion of the defence corps and Luke's solid play prompted goalie Eric Comrie to call him "the human eraser" during an interview after Thursday's 4-0 victory over the Vegas Golden Knights.

"He likes to erase things that happen on the ice that aren't so good," said Comrie. "He's unbelievable blocking shots. He's a big boy. I mean, he obviously has a lot of hits in his career. He's pretty high up there on the hit list."

Luke, who is currently chasing Washington Capitals captain Alex Ovechkin for third place on the all-time hit list, says the human eraser nickname dates back to his time suiting up for Canada in 2008 when he was starring for the Kelowna Rockets of the Western Hockey League.

"You know what, that has stuck with me since the 2008 world juniors. (Analyst) Pierre McGuire came up with it," said Luke. "He started calling me that and it's followed me throughout my career. I get a big chuckle out of it. It's more of a joke more than anything."

"After my 1,000th NHL game this year, I had a big 1,000th game party and Ryan O'Reilly — who is pretty good on the guitar and crafty with the song writing. He wrote a song and played it in front of everyone at my party. There were probably 130 people there and he called it 'The Human Eraser.' He was just basically chirping me and poking fun at me. It's a memory that I'll always have. That name stuck with me, but O'Reilly bringing it to life in song form is pretty funny."

Luke has two assists, 52 hits and 22 blocked shots in his 11 games since joining the Jets, while providing a calming presence both on and off the ice.

"Big impact. Defensively, he is elite," said Jets right-winger Mason Appleton. "Really good in the corners at winning his battles and being physical, boxing out and not letting guys get to the net. He's a piece that really is appreciated on our back end. Off the ice, he's a good leader and does a lot for our club. He's getting more and more comfortable and he's been a huge addition for us."

Luke's best hockey figures may be just around the corner.

"He was tremendous for us — and really played his best hockey in the playoffs," said New Jersey Devils head coach Sheldon Keefe, who was behind the bench of the

Toronto Maple Leafs when Schenn was acquired prior to the NHL trade deadline in 2023. "He was on a pairing with Morgan Rielly at the time and he was tremendous.

"Physical, tough, such a presence. But also broke the puck out well and did little things that help you win. I've got a lot of respect for him and his game and what he brought to our group there."

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipegsun.com/sports/the-big-bad-st-louis-blues-jets-host-the-leagues-hottest-team-on-monday>

The big, bad St. Louis Blues: Jets host the league's hottest team on Monday

By Gordon Anderson

Here come the big, bad St. Louis Blues.

The Jets host the red-hot Blues on Monday at the downtown rink.

"We have a big game coming up on Monday," forward Mark Scheifele told reports after a 4-1 loss to Utah on Saturday night. "We've got to come out and play a hard 60 minutes and then go from there."

Puck drop is 6:30 p.m.

After dispatching of the Colorado Avalanche, 5-3, on Saturday night, the Blues have won a dozen consecutive games.

"They have been playing good hockey," Scheifele continued. "They have a lot of good players making some good plays. They've been a fun team to watch, and hopefully we can slow them down."

St. Louis let go of Drew Bannister on Nov. 24, after less than a full calendar year on the job. Jim Montgomery assumed the head coaching duties five days after he was let go by the Boston Bruins on Nov. 19.

The Blues went 9-12-1 under Bannister's leadership. With Montgomery in charge, the Blues are 33-16-6.

The Blues (43-28-7) currently occupy the first wildcard spot in the Western Conference with 93 points.

"They're hot right now," Cole Perfetti said. "They're playing well, getting some good goaltending and they're scoring a lot of goals. Things are going right for their group. They're a good team, we know what they're all about."

As if the Jets (52-21-4) needed additional incentive to snap the longest current winning streak in the NHL, but Winnipeg is one victory away from breaking a team record of 52 regular season wins, set last season.

"We just have to focus on our effort and if we take care of ourselves, the results should go our way," Perfetti said.

<https://winnipegssun.com/sports/arniel-blends-the-bench-looking-for-a-spark-in-jets-4-1-loss-to-utah>

Arniel blends the bench looking for 'a spark' in Jets 4-1 loss to Utah

By Gordon Anderson

Entering the third period down by three goals on Saturday night, the bench boss blended his forward groupings,

The result was a promotion for Cole Perfetti, the Whitby, Ont., native skating with Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor.

The trio contributed to the Jets only goal in a 4-1 loss to Utah in Salt Lake City.

"I was just kind of mixing all the lines up a little bit, just to get a spark," head coach Scott Arniel told reporters in Utah. "I just wanted to get those guys out there as much as possible. They spent an awful lot of time in that end of the rink. I was hoping for a little bit more, but they had some good opportunities."

Even though Scheifele's goal went into the books as an unassisted marker, Perfetti and Connor both missed point-blank opportunities seconds before #55 intercepted a clearing pass by Ian Cole and deposited the puck behind Karel Vejmelka.

"I was just trying to complement them and find some open ice," Perfetti said about his job on the top line.

Perfetti has his goal streak halted at three consecutive games. He has 18 goals, one away from his career high of 19, set last season.

"Perfetti played great," Scheifele said. "He was in the right spot, he made a lot of great passes. He did a lot of good things out there, so it was fun to play with him in the third."

Brandon Tanev, Vlad Namestnikov and Alex Iafallo skated on a line, while Nino Niederreiter skated with Adam Lowry and Mason Appleton. Nikolaj Ehlers took the pre-game skate but was downgraded to scratch status.
Streak snapped

The Hockey Club scored two power-play goals on three chances. Coming into the game, the Jets were 10 for 10 on the PK in a five-game stretch, dating back to the 3-2 win over the Capitals.

The Jets were whistled for three minors in the first, the final one carrying over into the second period.

Clayton Keller and Barret Hayton scored man advantage goals for the home side. Keller also added an assist on Hayton's goal, bumping him up to 500-point status.

Winnipeg is 14th overall in the league, with a penalty kill rate of 79.2 per cent. The Jets surrendered three goals on a dozen chances in four games against Utah.

"Yeah, I mean, first one we win the faceoff, and we don't get the puck down the ice," Arniel said. "Next one, it's a seam play, a double seam pass. Usually, we've got numbers and bodies there. The penalty kill has been trending the right way. Just those were two big goals that we don't give up normally."

Rare air

Mark Scheifele hit the 800-point mark when he scored a power-play goal at 2:45 of the third period.

Blake Wheeler leads the Jets 2.0 franchise with 812 points. Dale Hawerchuk scored 978 points with the original Jets franchise. Thomas Steen is second with 861 points.

Considering the context of the game, the Jets de facto number one centre wasn't in a celebratory mood.

"Yeah, obviously cool," Scheifele said. "It would have been better in a win."

Homeward bound

The Jets finished their final extended road trip of the regular season with a 1-2-0 record.

They lost to the Los Angeles Kings and beat Las Vegas prior to Saturday's setback. The locals are 24-15-0 on the road, with games in Chicago and Dallas later this week to close out the road portion of the schedule.

The Capitals and the Jets are the only teams in the national league with 24 road wins heading into league play on Sunday afternoon.

"The road trip was OK," Perfetti said. "Obviously, a big win in Vegas but we probably would have liked (to have the Utah game) back. We don't end it on...you know, we had the door open there with the Dallas game earlier and could have put a stranglehold on it, and we really shot ourselves in the foot. We would have liked to have had this effort back."

The team was outscored 8-6 on the trip. They lost 4-1 to the Kings before the 4-0 win against Vegas.

“Yeah, not great,” Scheifele said about the three-city trip. “It was a stinky one in L.A., a great one in Vegas, and a stinky one on Saturday.”

As Perfetti briefly referenced, the Stars lost 5-3 to the Pittsburgh Penguins on Saturday afternoon. Dallas remains four points behind the Jets for first place in the Central Division.

Saturday was a golden opportunity for the local lads to get some breathing room. The Jets have five games remaining and Dallas has six.

“We’ve talked about it for the last three, four weeks,” Arniel said. “We’re not waiting for some other team to beat Dallas. We can’t sit and do that.”

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6257284/2025/04/07/winnipeg-jets-kieron-walton-connor-hellebuyck/>

Jets sign Kieron Walton, Connor Hellebuyck’s greatness and the playoff push

By Murat Ates

Winnipeg is pushing for a Central Division title and you want to know how the Jets shape up for the playoffs.

This month’s mailbag was full of postseason questions. Should Logan Stanley, Colin Miller or Haydn Fleury be dressed for Game 1? Whatever happened to Ville Heinola, and what’s his ceiling if all goes well for him?

What’s my assessment of Stanley’s recent performance? What would it take for Connor Hellebuyck to be considered the best American goaltender of all time?

But first: A hearty thank you to Matthew L., whose question about Kieron Walton contributed to a scoop.

Note: Submitted questions may be edited for clarity and style.

What is going on with Kieron Walton? Is he not signing his entry-level contract for a reason? Would love to see him with the Moose if/when Sudbury is eliminated. — Matthew L.

No issues here: I can report that Walton has signed a three-year entry-level contract with an AAV of \$858,000. Walton’s ELC will start next season, which means Manitoba must sign him to an amateur tryout agreement so he can play in any of the four remaining Moose games. I expect that to happen.

If you missed it, here's what I wrote last week in choosing Walton as the Jets' prospect who had "the most promising season."

Walton was the 187th player taken in the 2024 draft. Almost everything he's accomplished since then makes you wonder how he lasted that long. The 6-foot-6 forward more than doubled his OHL point production this season, finishing with 92 points in 66 games after posting 43 points in his draft season. It's rare for a forward of his size to possess such a slick offensive toolkit; Walton is doing his best to emulate the greats, watching Tage Thompson clips in his spare time and building his own highlight reel.

Walton finished his OHL playoffs with five points in four games as Sudbury was swept by Kingston. Manitoba's next game is April 11 at home against Iowa.

At this point, what is the realistic ceiling for Ville Heinola? —Liam D.

I don't expect Heinola to factor into Winnipeg's stretch run or playoffs, so there are two options for the next step in the defenceman's career.

One option is that the Jets, who haven't dressed Heinola in a game for over a month, set him free. Heinola is under contract next season but so are Josh Morrissey, Dylan DeMelo, Colin Miller, Luke Schenn, and Logan Stanley. Dylan Samberg is one of Winnipeg's top RFA priorities. The Jets have engaged in extension talks with Neal Pionk's representatives, although nothing is imminent. If Pionk does re-sign with Winnipeg, Heinola will have competition with at least seven waivers-eligible defencemen at training camp, plus Elias Salomonsson. If coaching and management have largely found Heinola unworthy of game action this season, it would take a stunning run at training camp for him to win a job.

But what does "setting him free" mean? Winnipeg could trade Heinola if it finds an interested party at the draft or during the offseason. I think it's more likely that he takes another swing at Jets camp in September, hoping for the good health that's eluded him for two straight seasons. The Jets have lost Johnathan Kovacevic and Declan Chisholm to waivers in the past; Heinola could be next in line, depending on what plays out at camp.

What kind of ceiling should we set for Heinola? At this point, I think an NHL top-four job is probably out of reach. Heinola is 24 years old but has missed playing time during an important stage of his development. That was true in the 2021 season when a depleted Winnipeg team called Heinola up to its taxi squad and didn't use him, true when the Jets upgraded their defence and Heinola was justifiably on the outside looking in, true when he fractured his ankle in 2023, when his ankle was infected in 2024, and again in 2025 now that he's not getting into games. A player doesn't go from that kind of role to top-four success without a long, multiseason stretch of play figuring things out on the third pair.

Heinola's best-case scenario, whether in Winnipeg or elsewhere, is that somebody gives him a chance. I could see him emerging as an everyday player on a sheltered third pair — someone you don't trust against elite competition but who makes enough puck retrievals and exit passes to help his team generate offence. I hesitate to look beyond that, regardless of Heinola's draft pedigree or talent level.

Connor Hellebuyck is four wins away from tying the NHL record for wins in a season. How many games do you think he starts down the stretch? —Alexander H.

I think Hellebuyck gets three or four of Winnipeg's five remaining games. The St. Louis, Dallas, and Edmonton games seem automatic. The Jets could rest him against Chicago on Saturday, Anaheim to end the season, or both. Hellebuyck sat for Laurent Brossoit to end last season, so I'm assuming the Ducks game goes to Eric Comrie now.

For the purposes of committing to a guess, I'll say Comrie gets Chicago and Anaheim, leaving Hellebuyck short of tying the wins record. I suppose they could get excited if he wins against St. Louis and Dallas and give him the Chicago game too (and chasing the division title is a good pretense to keep the starter in net). In the end, though, the team's playoff success matters far more than an individual record.

To my eye, the Logan Stanley we've seen lately looks more like a credible piece on a Cup-worthy team than at any other time in his career. What is your assessment of his current play, playoff role and high and low potential for next season? —Dan N.

You asked your question before Stanley had his puck stolen by Andrei Kuzmenko, then fell on his attempt to dig in and get back to defend the rush. I agreed with its premise when I read it: I wasn't going to heap adulation upon Stanley for looking like he belonged, but it had seemed he was playing a cleaner brand of hockey for two or three games.

Then, this happened.

Kuzmenko made a great play while Stanley's feet failed him.

At his best, Stanley is an adequate third-pairing defenceman in his own zone who looks for opportunities to jump into the attack from the offensive blue line. He shoots a lot of pucks — sometimes good, sometimes at the expense of better offensive opportunities — and gets a lot of pucks out of Winnipeg's zone in the form of chip-outs that turn into fresh transition attempts by his opponents. (I'm not trying to demonize him for the chip-outs, but getting out of the zone with possession is preferred and it is not Stanley's strength.)

Stanley is a physical presence who makes occasional big hits and is willing to drop the gloves, despite not appearing to have the natural disposition for an enforcer's role. Add it all up and Stanley's best, to me, is an adequate third-pairing defenceman who can win the sheltered minutes he gets.

How much will he play during the playoffs? Schenn is Winnipeg's most likely third-pairing defenceman. Schenn is great in the centre slot, great along the boards, and pretty good at short-range passes that put his partner in good position to break out. Schenn doesn't have the footspeed or the long-range passing skills to key breakouts on his own and makes a lot of the same "off the glass and out" plays that Stanley does. These might feel safe, but they allow opponents to reload and try out another attack. There's a reason the Jets' first move upon acquiring Schenn was to try him with Fleury: In theory, Fleury brings the fleet feet and puck skill to get the puck up ice on teammates' sticks.

But Fleury did not do well enough that his role is beyond doubt. Miller is the best defenceman available to play beside Schenn, but I'm not sure that the Jets are interested in a righty-righty third pairing. Heinola is like Fleury in that he seems like an ideal stylistic fit, but the Jets have used him so infrequently that they'd be asking him to jump onto a speeding train from a standstill.

I think Stanley gets playoff minutes. I think a lot of those minutes come alongside Schenn on the third pairing and I think the Jets spend most of those shifts in their own zone. In that role, I worry about Stanley at his worst; his first step and change of direction are slow, and his positioning and reads are not flawless enough to make up for that. We haven't seen much of the Stanley/Schenn duo so far; they've been outscored 1-0 in just over four minutes together.

How far away is Hellebuyck from being the best American goalie of all time? Does a third Vezina and a medal next year at the Olympics make him the best? —Chris H.

My first draft of this answer got philosophical about the difficulty of comparing goaltenders across generations. Why fault Mike Richter for playing in an era when Dominik Hasek won six of eight Vezina Trophies? Why blame Ryan Miller for playing in Buffalo and Anaheim for so many lean years, ultimately never winning a Stanley Cup? On the opposite side of that, is it fair that three-time Cup winner and all-time American wins leader Jonathan Quick automatically gets the No. 1 spot? Most metrics we use to demonstrate greatness — wins, Stanley Cups, and goals against average — are team stats.

We don't have goals saved above expected across generations because tracking shot locations is relatively new in NHL history. Hockey Reference attempts a "goals saved above average" comparison that shows John Vanbiesbrouck as No. 1 all-time among American goalies; that's not the definitive answer, either.

Part of me wants to attack this problem by comparing every consensus top-10 American goalie to their peers in each year of their respective careers. I think we need to consider peak quality, number of elite seasons, career accomplishments and special criteria like moments of greatness, Cups and medals.

Hellebuyck's peak is as good as any American goalie's. He's put together eight seasons of elite play in a row (unless you'd like to omit 2021-22, when Winnipeg missed the playoffs). He's sixth all-time among American goalies in wins (and only one win behind Craig Anderson in fifth). Team Canada beat Hellebuyck for gold at the World Cup of Hockey but the 2025 Stanley Cup playoffs and 2026 Olympics provide new opportunities for transcendent moments.

I'd like to see Hellebuyck put together a few more elite seasons or add championship hardware or both before I'm ready to call him No. 1. Hellebuyck can do it, but there's a gap that needs to be closed — whether it's the 85 regular season wins that separate Hellebuyck from Quick in top spot, or the 16 playoff wins that separate him from the Stanley Cup.