

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/jake-oettinger-connor-hellebuyck-goalie-matchup-2025-second-round>

***Hellebuyck vs. Oettinger goalie matchup in Western 2nd Round
Jets boast likely Vezina Trophy winner, Stars look to counter with experienced
playoff starter***

By Kevin Woodley

Goaltending is an integral part of the Stanley Cup Playoffs. To better understand the strengths and weaknesses of each goaltender remaining, the past 100 goals allowed for each goaltender in the regular season and every goal in the playoffs were charted to see what patterns emerge in the second-round matchups.

These two teams have never met in the playoffs before, but they won't need to rely on the goalies knowing each other from the 4-Nations for information because having each played 50-plus playoff games, their tendencies and relative strengths and weaknesses are well known.

Jake Oettinger

Dallas Stars

Oettinger is no stranger to playoff pressure, starting for Dallas in each of the last four seasons, including two trips to the Western Conference Final, despite being just 26 years old.

Create scrambles from bad angles: Goals scored on shots or passes that bounced off a body or stick in front of the net accounted for 23 percent off the regular season goals and six of 20 in the first round, both well above 14 percent average for the over 8,500 goals tracked for this project since 2017. While the general rule for creating that chaos is to get bodies to the net, Oettinger handles screen shots well, but nine of the 23 broken-play goals he gave up in the regular season originated on sharp-angle attacks from near or below the goal line. There was also a tendency to get a little busy in these scrambles, which accounted for some of the five-hole goals because lateral pushes from the butterfly require a goalie to lift their knee off the ice, and times he got caught outside his posts, opening short-side bank shots or far-side wraparounds.

East-west and quick: Shots after passes and plays that cross the middle of the ice increase the chances of scoring on any goalie, and they accounted for 22 of the tracked goals on Oettinger in the regular season and five of 20 in the first round. While neither number is far off the 22.1 percent average, it's worth noting how Oettinger plays them, with a tendency to set up wide on plays coming down the wing, which increases the distance he must travel to get across on lateral passes, especially higher in the zone, making it important to get shots off quick and aim at the far side rather than trying to go against the grain back into his late coverage. Oettinger has a somewhat distinct move

down into his save stance, lowering his hips and widening his base, which limits mobility for any goalie, so passing after he sets increases scoring odds.

Net drives depend on handedness: Oettinger does a nice job mixing up his net-play coverage with a variety of post-integration techniques that gives shooters different looks, but it is often related to the handedness of the shooter on a net drive below the face-off circle. If he squares up and overlaps his posts on a player on his forehand, he's got better coverage for a shot, but it takes more of his frame outside of the net and makes it harder to get across on low lateral plays, including wraparounds. If he tucks inside his post using a RVH on a player cutting in on their backhand, he's in a better position for plays into the middle but sometimes there can be a little space short side over the shoulder or pad on an open shot. Nathan MacKinnon took advantage of this in Game 7 of the first round by driving on the backhand, then after Oettinger dropped into the RVH, he pulled it to his forehand for a quick short-side goal in tight.

Active rebounds: Oettinger only gave up one rebound goal in the first round but there were 13 in the regular season sample, which is only slightly above the tracked average (11.7), but 10 came in just 18 games after the 4 Nations Face-Off, and the total was also above the average last season too. Winnipeg shooters will have to keep in mind that second chances will bounce harder and travel further off Oettinger's Bauer pads, so being too close doesn't always help.

Breakaways: One-on-one chances, including off in-zone breakdowns that put a skater in alone, account for 16 goals in the regular season and three in the first round, and while the simple answer would be not to give up so many breakaway chances, it may be worth noting that five of 16 were scored five-hole, and eight came on shots or dekes against the grain.

Connor Hellebuyck *Winnipeg Jets*

Hellebuyck is the favorite to win the Vezina Trophy voted as the NHL's best goalie for the second straight season and third time in his career, but playoff success has been harder to come by for the cerebral 6-foot-4 goalie, who was coming off consecutive first-round exits before advancing in seven games against the St. Louis Blues, and has a save percentage in the .800s for a third straight postseason.

High glove? The high total over Hellebuyck's glove in the first round will almost certainly draw a lot of attention but the reality is there was no consistent theme to the scoring chances. Only three came on clean looks, and one of those was a one-timer in the slot. The first and last high-glove goals were on 3-on-2 rushes. The rest were a mix of broken play bounces and screen chances, and the reality is Hellebuyck, who holds his glove high in a "fingers-up" position, hasn't struggled with these types of shots in the past. His regular season goal chart is balanced, and while it's worth noting those numbers don't represent a save percentage, Hellebuyck's high-glove results are typically better than the tracked average.

Get to the net: Taking sightlines away from a top goalie is almost cliché, especially in the playoffs, but Hellebuyck's incredible ability to anticipate plays and read shot releases make it even more important. Screens were a primary factor on 13 of the tracked goals, which is better than the tracked average (15.1 percent) and Hellebuyck and the Jets managed traffic well during the season. But it was an issue in the playoff last season, factoring in on seven of 24 goals (29.1 percent) that the Colorado Avalanche scored while eliminating Hellebuyck and the Jets in five games, and was the primary factor on seven of 25 in the first round this year.

Create chaos: Traffic can also make it harder to see and read passes and beat them to the next spot, all things Hellebuyck relies on, and leads to more scrambles from pucks that hit legs, sticks and skates in front. Hellebuyck, whose side-to-side movement from his knees has slight delays simply because of a slightly narrower butterfly than many of his peers, gave up 19 goals on those types of scrambles during the season and seven more in the first round (28 percent), well above the 14 percent average. It also leads to more rebounds, which accounted for 11 goals this season, and those can also force more of those lateral recoveries like on Nathan Walker's tap-in rebound goal late in Game 5 of the first round.

East-west attacks: Creating lateral plays across the middle of the ice has long been considered an important way to attack a goalie considered by many to be the best in the NHL on straight lines chances. Hellebuyck was beaten 24 times in the regular season on passes and play across the slot, which is only slightly above the average of 22.1 percent, and only four times by the Blues in the first round. Making a second play back across the other way, which increases the odds of scoring on any goalie, did leave him stranded outside his net coverage a lot, including seven of 24 in the regular season and on the opening goal in Game 7 against St. Louis.

<https://www.nhl.com/news/topic/playoffs/2025/series-k-news/jason-robertson-miro-heiskanen-to-return-for-dallas-stars-in-second-round>

***Robertson, Heiskanen set to return for Stars in Western 2nd Round
Leading goal-scorer, top-pair defenseman each missed opening series with
lower-body injury***

By Taylor Baird

DALLAS – Jason Robertson and Miro Heiskanen, who each missed the entire Western Conference First Round for the Dallas Stars, are expected to return from injury in the second round, though coach Pete DeBoer is not certain when that will be.

"I believe you're going to see them both play in the second round, but I don't know if it's going to be Game 1 or Game 3 or Game 5," DeBoer said after eliminating the Colorado Avalanche in Game 7 on Saturday. "I consider them both day-to-day now, but there's still some hurdles. It depends on when we start the series, how much time we have between now and Game 1. We'll have a little better idea as we get closer."

They each skated Monday in Dallas, but DeBoer said he wasn't sure if they would play Game 1 against the Winnipeg Jets at Canada Life Centre on Wednesday (9:30 p.m. ET; CBC, TVAS, SN, ESPN).

"You take two key players out of anybody's lineup and your team looks different. What I liked about it was, we look different, but we found a way, and that's the most important part," DeBoer said. "To take the two guys out of our lineup, and what they mean to us in every facet of how we play, and still find a way for the group to not use it as an excuse and keep battling and to grind. I couldn't be prouder of our group because we had to do it a different way."

Robertson sustained a lower-body injury in the regular-season finale, a 5-1 loss to the Nashville Predators on Apr. 16. Initially considered week-to-week, the 25-year-old forward led Dallas with 35 goals in 82 games and was third with 80 points behind Mikko Rantanen (88) and Matt Duchene (82).

Heiskanen sustained a knee injury when he collided with Vegas Golden Knights forward Mark Stone on Jan. 28 and missed the final 32 games of the regular season after undergoing surgery on Feb. 4. The initial timeline for his recovery was three to four months. The 25-year-old defenseman had 25 points (five goals, 20 assists) in 50 games while averaging 25:10 of ice time per game, the fifth-most among defensemen in the NHL.

"When you lose two guys like that that are as important to our team as those two guys are, not many teams are getting through that," Stars forward Wyatt Johnston said. "I think it just shows the resiliency and the depth that we have. Everyone had to step up and cover those holes. It was awesome. Hopefully, we get them back as soon as possible because even though we can help try to fill those holes, they're two amazing players."

<https://www.nhl.com/news/topic/playoffs/2025/series-k-news/winnipeg-jets-dallas-stars-western-2nd-round-series-preview>

2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs: Jets vs. Stars Western 2nd Round preview Winnipeg, Dallas face off for 1st time in postseason after dramatic series wins

By Tracey Myers

The second round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs features eight teams in eight best-of-7 series, which start Monday. Today, NHL.com previews the Western Conference Second Round between the Winnipeg Jets and Dallas Stars.

(1C) Winnipeg Jets vs. (2C) Dallas Stars

Jets: 56-22-4, 116 points

Stars: 50-26-6, 106 points

Season series: WPG 3-1-0; DAL: 1-3-0

Game 1: Wednesday at Winnipeg (9:30 p.m. ET; CBC, TVAS, SN, ESPN)

The Jets and Stars will face off in the Stanley Cup Playoffs for the first time in the Western Conference Second Round.

Each went seven games in their respective first-round series to get to this point, and both did it with comeback wins in the finale. The Stars rallied from down 2-0 in the third period to defeat the Colorado Avalanche 4-2 in Dallas on Saturday.

"It's up there for sure, just the way we did it," forward Wyatt Johnston said of how much of a feel-good win it was. "There probably wasn't a whole lot of belief that we were going to get it done with 15 minutes left in the third. Just awesome the way we battled back, especially in front of the home crowd. It was amazing. It's up there for sure. Hopefully there are a lot of pretty special games and special wins coming up in the next little while."

The Jets came back from trailing 2-0 and 3-1 to win 4-3 in double overtime against the St. Louis Blues on Sunday.

"It's hard to put into words," captain Adam Lowry said. "Our mantra from training camp (was) get better every day, focus on the process and the results will take care of themselves, and I'm just really proud of the guys."

"You get down 2-0, Game 7, it kind of feels like it's an insurmountable lead 3-1 late, but to score two with the goalie out and to just have life. And for 'Fetts' (Cole Perfetti) to bring the building to its feet (to tie the game) with (2.2) seconds left is incredible. So, a wild game, but that's our group. There's not a lot of quit in here."

Both teams are also dealing with injuries. Jets center Mark Scheifele (undisclosed) has been out since the first period of Game 5 and defenseman Josh Morrissey (undisclosed) did not come back after leaving in the first period of Game 7. Scheifele skated on his own in a track suit Saturday but did not Sunday. Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel didn't have an update on Morrissey after Game 7.

The Stars were without forward Jason Robertson (lower body) and defenseman Miro Heiskanen (knee) in the first round. Both skated during an optional practice Monday, but coach Pete DeBoer said a decision on Game 1 has yet to be made.

Game breakers

Jets: Kyle Connor pretty much picked up where he left off in the regular season. After leading the Jets with 97 points (41 goals, 56 assists) in 82 regular-season games, he's first with 12 points (four goals, eight assists) in the playoffs. Two of his goals were game-winners and it seemed that if there was a big scoring play, Connor was somehow involved.

Stars: Mikko Rantanen couldn't have made a bigger statement than he did in Game 7 of the first round against his former team. The forward, who the Stars acquired from the Carolina Hurricanes before the NHL Trade Deadline on March 7, had 12 points (five goals, seven assists) in seven games, including a hat trick in Game 7. The Stars have a few good offensive weapons, but it starts with Rantanen.

Goaltending:

Jets: Connor Hellebuyck had a tough time in the first round on the road, where he was pulled in every game in St. Louis. He was 4-3 with a 3.85 goals-against average and .830 save percentage in the first round. At home, he went 4-0 with a 2.20 GAA and .885 save percentage and started to look more like himself as Game 7 continued. The reigning Vezina Trophy winner voted as the League's top goalie is a finalist again this season and a finalist for the Hart Trophy given to the most valuable player in the NHL. Eric Comrie came in relief three times and has a 1.40 GAA and .923 save percentage.

Stars: Jake Oettinger was 4-3 with a 2.85 GAA and .911 save percentage against the Avalanche. The 26-year-old is coming off another regular season getting the bulk of the work, going 36-18-4 with a 2.59 GAA, .909 save percentage and two shutouts in 58 starts. Backup Casey DeSmith came into the third period of Game 4 after Oettinger was pulled, saving 13 of 14 shots in a 4-0 loss. He has a 3.03 GAA and .929 save percentage.

Numbers to know

Jets: Winnipeg became the 22nd Presidents' Trophy winner to play a Game 7 and the eighth in the opening round. They are the fifth Presidents' Trophy-winning team to win Game 7 in the first round, joining the 2011 Vancouver Canucks (against the Chicago Blackhawks), the 1992 New York Rangers (against the New Jersey Devils), the 1990 Boston Bruins (against the Hartford Whalers) and the 1989 Calgary Flames (against Vancouver).

Stars: Dallas has gotten at least one series win in three straight postseasons going back to 2023 and is 5-2 in seven playoff rounds over that span. The Stars' streak of three consecutive playoffs with a series win is tied for the second longest in their history (also three from 1983-85). Their longest was four in a row from 1998 to 2001.

They said it

"We've said it all year long. We'll take what we can from these games. Yeah, this is an emotional high, but we have had those moments throughout the year, obviously, not to this magnitude, but we've got to be able to settle down and refocus our efforts here on the next round." -- Jets forward Kyle Connor on preparing for the Stars

"Let's be honest, he took over the series the last three, four games. He just decided that we were not going to go home, and we were not going to lose. I think it started then, but I mean, what you witnessed there was special. This was Colorado and the team he had played [with] for a decade, and I don't know all the behind the scenes, what went on

there, but he was a motivated guy to make an impact in this series, and he just got better and better." -- Stars coach Pete DeBoer on Mikko Rantanen

Will win if...

Jets: They get more secondary scoring. Even if Scheifele returns, the Jets can't just rely on him and Connor to carry the load. The good news is they started getting others involved as the season wore on. Perfetti started capitalizing. So did Vladislav Namestnikov and Neal Pionk.

Stars: If they keep getting the most out of their top players. Rantanen, Wyatt Johnston, Roope Hintz were outstanding in the first round and the depth scoring from players such as Tyler Seguin and Mason Marchment was there as well. Oh, the return of Robertson and Heiskanen wouldn't hurt the Stars' chances, either.

Dallasstars.com

<https://www.nhl.com/stars/news/dallas-stars-ready-to-adapt-to-a-new-series-with-its-own-personality-against-the-winnipeg-jets-050525>

***Stars ready to adapt to a new series with its own personality
From shutting down two of the best forwards in the league to now facing one of the strongest defensive teams, Dallas is ready to adjust to a new heavyweight tilt***

By Mike Heika

Styles make fights, they say, and that should be a central point when the Stars and Winnipeg Jets meet in the Second Round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs starting Wednesday.

The Jets, after all, are seen as one of the most relentless defensive teams in the NHL, and that should be different than what the Stars just saw in the free-wheeling Colorado Avalanche. Still, coach Pete DeBoer said the key for Dallas is playing its own game to the best of its ability.

"Nothing is that dramatically different," DeBoer said. "They're all versions of each other. I think Winnipeg defends really well. They hang their hat on defending, so that presents a little bit of challenge than the individual player who can break you down."

Stopping the Avalanche was sort of tuned to stopping Nathan MacKinnon and Cale Makar. Stopping Winnipeg is more about controlling yourself. The Jets are a fantastic counter-attack team and an incredibly patient group, so Dallas needs to play smart. But, as DeBoer said, playing smart is a requirement in every series.

"We know what to expect from Winnipeg. They won the league this year in the regular season, they finished ahead of us," Stars center Matt Duchene said of a Jets team that won the Presidents' Trophy and finished 10 points ahead of Dallas, which was fifth best

in the NHL. "Going into the Colorado series, you thought it was going to be more freewheeling, but then it wasn't. Give them credit, they were stingy."

And stingy is the word you hear most about the Jets. Winnipeg led the league in best GAA at 2.32 goals against per game and goalie Connor Hellebuyck is the favorite to win the Vezina Trophy as best goalie in the league. In four games against the Stars, Hellebuyck went 3-1-0 with a 1.01 GAA and .965 save percentage.

"That's real. We own that record," DeBoer said. "They were better than us in the games we played against them in the regular season. They won the Presidents' Trophy, that's real. They earned all of those things, so it's on us to prove that we can beat them."

The Stars are hoping starting on the road will be a good thing. Dallas has typically started at home in series and is 0-7 in Game 1s under DeBoer. So, getting Games 1 and 2 in Winnipeg on Wednesday and Friday could be a good thing.

"We'd love to take Game 1," Duchene said. "It would be really nice to start with the ball."

Dallas has rallied back to win five of the series when they lost Game 1, so they understand the process of the playoffs. That's one of the reasons the poor results against Winnipeg don't really faze the Stars.

"I think playoffs are a different animal," Duchene said. "We didn't like a lot of our games against them, but playoffs is different. They play kind of a playoff style during the regular season, and we at times didn't adapt to that. Now, we're in the playoffs. You go in with an open mind and this series will take on its own life and its own personality, and we'll just adapt."

A big help in adapting could be the return of defenseman Miro Heiskanen, who has been out since January 28 with a knee injury. Before Heiskanen went out, the Stars ranked sixth in the league in shots on goal against at 26.7 per game. In the time he was out, the Stars ranked last at 32.7. In the seven playoff games, Dallas was outshot 26.6-to-34.3. Winnipeg outshot opponents 27.7-to-23.7.

"We've noticed that a lot," Duchene said of Heiskanen's absence. "He plays so many minutes and does so many things. The guys who have been in have done a great job, but you don't replace a guy like that."

Jason Robertson also missed the First Round after suffering a lower body injury in the final regular-season game. Both Heiskanen and Robertson have been skating and could return, but DeBoer said on Monday that decisions won't be made until Game 1. Duchene said the players know how much both could add, but also how well the current players did in beating Colorado.

“It would be really nice to get our full team together,” Duchene said. “At the same time, we’re not counting the hours ‘til we get those guys back. We know we can do it with what we have. We just showed that.”

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/05/05/the-goal-heard-around-the-province>

The goal heard around the province

Perfetti’s game-tying goal inks Jets forward in the hockey history books

By: Mike McIntyre

Be honest. How many times have you gone back and watched it? Five? Twenty five? One hundred?

We’re talking about “The Goal by Cole,” which has instantly rocketed to the very top of memorable moments — or, in this case, mere seconds — in Manitoba sports history.

The latest game-tying tally in Game 7 playoff history, which occurred late Sunday night inside Canada Life Centre, was the stuff of Hollywood, staving off elimination for the Winnipeg Jets and setting the table for a dramatic double overtime series-winner by captain Adam Lowry.

The official scoring play reads as Cole Perfetti from Kyle Connor and Nikolaj Ehlers at 19:57 of the third period to make it a 3-3 game against the St. Louis. But this is one of those times where the simple summary doesn’t do justice to what actually went down.

To set the scene, we’ll remind you the Jets had pulled goaltender Connor Hellebuyck, which had already led to the deficit being cut to 3-2 after Vlad Namestnikov’s shot deflected off Blues defenceman Ryan Suter at 18:04.

St. Louis had taken a couple shots towards the empty net — just missing by a few feet on one occasion — to allow the Jets to continue having a pulse.

Lowry, who was the de facto No. 1 centre for this game with Mark Scheifele out with an upper-body injury, had made a nice zone entry to allow the Jets to try and get set up.

Let’s break it down frame-by-frame and look at how the perfect storm of skill, grit, determination and puck luck sent the Whiteout into an absolute frenzy.

11 SECONDS...

The puck is somewhere in a sea of humanity which involves three Jets players — Lowry, Perfetti and Gabe Vilardi — and a pair of Blues. It’s pinned against the boards well to the right of St. Louis goaltender Jordan Binnington — which is where you’d want

it to be in your end while clinging to a one-goal lead that has you on the cusp of advancing to the second round.

Credit Vilardi, who is like a Hoover vacuum in these situations, for winning the intense battle and emerging with the puck. But he's under intense pressure and immediately tries to backhand it to Lowry, only to have it go off the skate of St. Louis forward Pavel Buchnevich, who had been hovering behind the five-man scrum.

Buchnevich clearly felt it but couldn't find it. Fortunately, for the Jets, Lowry did. This whole sequence took several seconds off the clock. If the Jets lose the puck at any point, their season is toast.

7 SECONDS...

Lowry only has one real option here, to throw it back to Nikolaj Ehlers who is standing alone on the left blue line. Ehlers, who has never met a puck he didn't want to shoot, immediately steps into a one-timer.

However, he completely whiffs on it — something he'd done countless times this game. Ehlers was only playing for a second game since his return from a lower-body injury that cost him seven in a row and was obviously battling rust.

The clock reads 6.3 seconds as his stick (sort of) hits the puck. It's at 5.7 as it arrives in the location of where Lowry and Blues forward Robert Thomas are. Both go for it, but Lowry uses his size to get positioning and does the only thing he can — shovel it off his backhand straight back to Ehlers.

If Lowry doesn't box out, their season is toast.

The clock reads 4.1 seconds as Ehlers gets a second chance. There's no margin for error.

"I fan on the first one, so I thought, I'm not gonna let that happen again," said Ehlers.

4 SECONDS...

Having flubbed the shot attempt, Ehlers is now thinking "pass" — which is quite something considering his club is four seconds away from elimination. His only real option is Kyle Connor who is completely across the ice, all alone near the right faceoff dot. Clearly, at that point, the Blues don't view him as any threat. And, really, why would they?

"I knew KC was over there. If we can get the goalie moving just a little bit, we might be able to create something," Ehlers explained.

The Jets have the extra man on the ice so somebody was going to be open. Ehlers finds that guy with one of the crispest passes you'll ever see.

It hits Connor's stick at 3.3 seconds.

Clearly there is no time to waste. Connor can't try and stop the puck to set up a perfect shot or pick a corner. All he can do is one-time it and hope for the best.

The release comes at 3.2 seconds.

"I knew it was winding down. Just trying to get a puck centred and get it to the net," Connor said of his mindset.

"There have been situations I can remember throughout the year that have been like that. You're almost relying on muscle memory, knowing your routes, doing your job, just playing for the man next to you and getting it done."

3 SECONDS...

Having emerged from that earlier board battle, Perfetti has gone straight to the front of the net as he's supposed to. He's directly in front of Binnington, perfectly positioned between veteran Blues defencemen Colton Parayko and Justin Faulk.

Parayko appears occupied by Vilardi, who is just to his right, but Faulk is trying to play Connor's shot and actually slides to his left in an attempt to block it. In the process, he opens up a perfect seam for Perfetti to get his stick on the puck and deflect it over a stunned Binnington, just under the crossbar.

In the heat of the moment, the clock stopped at 1.6 seconds but it was later adjusted to 2.2. The NHL always rounds up, which is why the goal was officially deemed at 19:57.

"Some great plays late in that game. A lot of that starts with Gabe and Lows down low, battling. Exhausted, but battling through and winning puck battles," said Perfetti.

"Then Fly makes a great play to KC, he makes a great play to me, and I just kind of chipped it in. Again, no quit. Guys were exhausted but fought until the last second and we got it done."

The scenes that followed were incredible.

Binnington laying flat on his face. Thomas burying his head in his hands. Perfetti looking like he was going to go straight through the glass with one of the biggest jumps you've ever seen. A mob scene with all six Jets — defenceman Neal Pionk was the only one not to touch the puck during this sequence — leaping into each other's arms.

All 15,225 fans bouncing up and down and off each other. Thousands of people at the downtown street party going bonkers. Similar celebrations, no doubt, in living rooms and rec rooms across the province and beyond.

An entire hockey world melting down over the drama.

"It's euphoric. It's emotional. It's motivating. We used that in overtime," said Connor. "The crowd was incredible. We really felt like they were standing on their feet. The loudest they've ever been, and I've ever heard them. I think we just fed off that and just kept rolling. It gives you that extra energy to dig in at the back end of your shift and bear down."

The Stanley Cup playoffs are something else. And the Jets now have a signature moment that will go down in hockey history.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/05/05/an-innate-ability-to-step-up-when-needed>

***An innate ability to step up when needed
Pionk, Lowry's impact on Jets exemplified in Game 7***

By: Mike McIntyre

Adam Lowry and Neal Pionk have plenty in common.

Not only are they good hockey players, they are also good humans who have planted their roots deep in Winnipeg. They are also consummate professionals, fierce competitors and terrific teammates who have shown an innate ability to step up when needed.

Take Sunday night for example. Lowry was thrust into being the team's No. 1 centre with Mark Scheifele missing a second straight game due to an upper-body injury. And Pionk was suddenly the top blue-liner with Josh Morrissey knocked out of the game in the first period.

This had a popular analytics writer, known on social media as JFresh (@JFreshHockey), posting the following on his X account midway through Game 7 against the St. Louis Blues with the Jets in a two-goal hole and starting at a third-straight first-round playoff exit:

"There will be a lot of Hellebuyck discourse but admittedly it's not ideal to try and win a game 7 with Neal Pionk as your #1 defenceman and Adam Lowry as your #1 centre," he wrote.

That aged about as well as egg salad left out in the summer sun.

Lowry would show why he's the face of the team by not only playing a pivotal role in Cole Perfetti's game-tying goal with less than three seconds remaining in regulation, but then by scoring the dramatic double-overtime dagger which sent the Jets on to the second round.

“Just leads by example, does everything the right way. When you see a guy like that putting his body on the line, doing everything he possibly can for this team, you have no choice but to follow,” Perfetti said of the captain.

“He is vocal in the room, but I think the way that he leads this team is through his actions and through his play. When he’s doing that and giving everything he has every second of his shift, you have no choice but to follow him and give everything you have. We’re lucky to have him as our leader.”

Pionk, meanwhile, had the game of his life. He played a career-high 46 minutes and 15 seconds — just eight seconds short of the NHL’s all-time record for a Game 7 — while chipping in with three assists including firing the shot which struck Lowry on the way into the net. He played 59 shifts and dished out six hits and blocking four shots.

Pionk just signed a six-year contract extension worth a total of US\$42 million and just showed his worth in one memorable, magical night.

“The winning goal, P getting that puck to the net front and Low getting a piece of it. When those guys have to play those heavy minutes like that, it was special and that’s guys stepping up and that’s what we needed,” said Jets head coach Scott Arniel.

Lowry was recently named Winnipeg’s King Clancy Memorial Trophy nominee, which is awarded annually “to the player who best exemplifies leadership qualities on and off the ice and has made a noteworthy humanitarian contribution in his community.”

You couldn’t find a better candidate than the 31-year-old, who was the second-ever draft pick of the 2.0 Jets back in 2011. The first, of course, was Scheifele.

Following Sunday’s game, there was an emotional exchange broadcast for the hockey world to see between Lowry and former Jets head coach Rick Bowness, who is now serving on the TNT panel.

“You know what I think of you,” Bowness began.

“Bones! Ah, you’ll bring a tear to my eye,” said Lowry.

“I know man, I know. Listen, that’s why you’re captain. That effort, that gutsy effort from that team tonight personifies you,” said Bowness, who stripped Blake Wheeler of the captaincy prior to the 2022-23 campaign, then gave the “C” to Lowry prior to the start of the 2023-24 season.

“Your work ethic, your team commitment, your compete. Man, I couldn’t be happier for you. You know I love you. You know I miss you. I couldn’t be happier for you. I’m very, very proud of you.”

Lowry was visibly moved as he sat in a mostly empty Canada Life Centre, speaking to Bowness on live TV.

“Thanks, Bones. Those words mean a lot to me. I love you. I appreciate the relationship, the time we got to spend together,” said Lowry, who mentioned seeing Bowness at a Jets game near the end of March and that he’s happy his wife, Judy, is doing well after some previous medical issues.

“We miss you in Winnipeg.”

Lowry then showed why he’s such a valuable ambassador not only for the organization but the city itself.

“Winnipeg gets a lot of flak. But it’s a great community and we have tremendous support,” Lowry began as he addressed the international audience.

“It’s a great organization. I’ve been fortunate to play my whole career here. We have an owner who cares deeply about us. We’ve got a real tight group of guys. Unfortunately, the last couple years we just haven’t performed in the playoffs. You get a bad rap, people don’t want to come to Winnipeg and whatnot, but we have a group of guys that love coming to the rink and love trying to get better. This city supports us everywhere you go.”

As for Pionk, the 29-year-old undrafted college free agent who was obtained in the Jacob Trouba trade, was recently voted as Winnipeg’s Bill Masterton Memorial Trophy nominee, which is awarded annually to the player who “best exemplifies perseverance, sportsmanship, and dedication to the game.”

It’s been well-documented how Pionk was best friends of Adam Johnson, the pro hockey player who died from an on-ice injury in 2023. He’s also battled plenty of injuries and adversity in his career, often playing through intense pain, and has been a frequent target from some very vocal critics who have wanted the Jets to move on from him.

Obviously, the hope is that Scheifele will be back soon and Morrissey’s ailment isn’t serious. The Jets took a well-deserved day off Monday, so no immediate updates on their status were available. They’ll return to the ice for practice on Tuesday to prepare for the start of a second-round series with the Dallas Stars on Wednesday night at Canada Life Centre.

But if players such as Lowry and Pionk are called upon to take on even bigger roles in their absences, is there any doubt they’ll answer the bell?

After all, when the club needed a boost in its biggest game of their season on Sunday, Lowry and Pionk were leading the way. That’s just who they are.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/05/05/jets-fans-soar-with-rally-barf-bags-aboard-flight-winnipeggers-overcome-with-playoff-frenzy>

Jets fans soar with 'rally' barf bags aboard flight; Winnipeggers overcome with playoff frenzy

By: Scott Billeck

Their seats really were way up in the nosebleeds, and there were no white towels to be found, so the industrious high schoolers grabbed the closest thing they could find.

Airline barf bags.

A Jets fan's gotta do what a Jets fan's gotta do at 30,000 feet in a Winnipeg Whiteout.

And while the tense, hold-your-breath, there-is-no-tomorrow Game 7 double-overtime action from downtown Winnipeg streaming on an iPad screen more than 1,000 kilometres away aboard a WestJet flight may well have been nausea-inducing, the Junior Pilots U17 Navy girls volleyball team from Niverville enthusiastically swung their sick sacks in an effort to help push the National Hockey League's best team past the St. Louis Blues and into the second round of the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Manitobans love their Jets.

The Niverville volleyballers were in Calgary to compete in a weekend USports recruiting tournament. They were at the airport, watching the third period of the game in a lounge before their flight home began boarding.

"We were able to catch Winnipeg's second and third goal that tied it before the main boarding was called," said coach Dylan Zacharias.

The Jets were trailing 3-1 in the do-or-die game when Vladislav Namestnikov scored with just under two minutes remaining to get the home side within one. Then, as the final seconds ticked down along with fans' hopes for a a miracle comeback, Cole Perfetti tipped a shot into the Blues goal with three seconds left, tying the game and sending more than 20,000 fans inside and outside Canada Life Centre into a frenzied celebration.

And it felt, Zacharias joked, like WestJet was in on the moment.

"Between the time we all boarded and the time we took off, we were all able to watch the first overtime," he said.

By the time the plane hit cruising altitude — and the point where passengers could purchase Wi-Fi — the puck had just dropped in the second overtime period.

“We had to bypass all of the (geographic broadcast) restrictions, but we were able to get it on,” Zacharias said. “One of our parents ended up holding up an iPad in Row 4, and the girls were sitting in the rows behind and cheering. Everyone on the plane was cheering it on.”

Quite a bit closer to the mayhem unfolding downtown, Carter Polanski and his teammates were huddled on the bench during a 3-on-3 game at Canlan Sports on Ellice Avenue, watching the end of the third period on Polanski’s phone.

Not far away, the referee was doing the same, watching on his phone.

When Perfetti’s tip crossed the goal line, the referee jumped into the air and leaped into the arms of the players on the bench.

“I was shocked, I couldn’t believe the Jets came back, and then I was really excited — obviously, the ref was, too,” Polanski said.

“It’s awesome. I feel like the Jets have kind of been looked down on recently with their losses, so I was very excited. It was pretty awesome.”

Meanwhile, one city business is making it... snow-ish.

Dreamcatcher Promotions, a local First Nations-run business, has printed 120,000 Whiteout rally towels, with another 40,000 on the way as the Jets gear up to host at least the first two games of the second-round best-of-seven series against the Dallas Stars, which begins Wednesday night.

Owner Michelle Cameron, who is from Peguis First Nation, said their machines have been running 14 hours each day.

“It’s been a dream come true,” said Cameron, who watched with teary eyes as 15,225 of her towels were waving inside the arena when she attended Game 1 of the opening round. “As a First Nation-owned company, we don’t get these opportunities. So for us, it’s unheard of.”

The partnership began after Cameron met Jets co-owner Mark Chipman at a local event a few years ago. A coffee meeting followed and she pitched the company’s growing capacity.

“He was impressed by our story of growth and wanted to work with an Indigenous company,” Cameron said. “The opportunity came and we seized it.”

Dreamcatcher Promotions started printing different Jets-branded T-shirts and hats, and the partnership has blossomed ever since.

“Because of the tariffs, it was important the Jets supported Canadian and local, and that’s why “printed locally” is also on the towels.

Annabella Maguet wasn’t just waving the towels — she was wearing them Sunday.

Maguet collected several towels from Games 1, 2 and 5, enough to fashion her own Whiteout-themed pants and jacket.

“After Game 1, I saw one of my friend’s moms, who had made pants from old whiteout towels, and I thought it was such a good idea, so I kind of re-created her look,” she said.

She didn’t stop there, however. After Game 5, Maguet and her mother, Carolyn, managed to find a few more, enough to sew together the matching jacket.

“I got so many compliments, and so many people were asking if I would sell to them or how much I was charging for them, which is funny, because I’m not really a seamstress,” she said. “I just fix up my family’s clothes and my brother’s hockey gear.”

Sunday night’s thrills rippled south down Carlton Street, and hung a right on Broadway, leading to the Manitoba legislature.

“I left a good chunk of my voice (at the game), but I will always be able to say: ‘Go Jets go!’ and ‘We want the cup!’” said Premier Wab Kinew during Monday’s question period, repeating the chant three times to cheers from the assembly.

New Progressive Conservative Leader and former Blue Bombers offensive lineman Obby Khan also took a moment to salute the moment.

“Go Jets go!” he said while referring to the “incredible overtime action.”

Finger-lickin’ playoffs, baby!

Even KFC is leaning into the playoff energy, embracing a long-running local meme that ties its acronym to the Winnipeg Jets’ leading scorer.

The brand, which partnered with the Jets earlier this season, is playing along with fans who’ve dubbed Kyle Connor “Kyle F—ing Connor” for years.

“It became very clear to us how much Jets fans love ‘KFC’, with many rocking their own version of KFC bucket hats with Kyle’s face pasted on,” said Lauren Pottie, a senior manager at KFC Canada. “So the KFC-KFC connection really was borne out of that and with the playoffs, we knew this was the time to celebrate these local rituals and go all in.”

Pottie said the partnership between the Jets and the fried chicken giant is about connecting with the local culture and the fans.

Connor has been working with the brand, they said.

“We do have plans beyond this ad campaign to enrich the game day experience of Jets fans,” Pottie said. “We’ve partnered with local creators and huge Jets fans to build on the momentum and excitement that surrounds these playoffs.”

That includes some unique KFC swag to help fans cheer on the Jets and Connor at an upcoming game, Pottie said.

Details on that are still to come.

Canadian Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/sports/hockey/2025/05/05/greatest-hits-jets-and-blues-doled-out-plenty-of-punishment-in-bruising-series>

Greatest Hits: Jets and Blues doled out plenty of punishment in bruising series

By: Judy Owen, The Canadian Press

WINNIPEG – The Jets and Blues likely woke up Monday with aching muscles and bruised bodies after an opening-round NHL playoff series filled with punishing hits.

Winnipeg’s players had their pains eased, though, by an epic 4-3 double-overtime victory Sunday night in Game 7 after captain Adam Lowry scored at 16:10.

The Jets host the Dallas Stars in the Western Conference second round, with the first game Wednesday and the second on Friday. It’s the first time the clubs will meet in the post-season.

“They’re a great team, we’re a good team. I can’t wait for that battle,” Jets forward Nikolaj Ehlers said of the Stars after Sunday’s victory.

There’s no doubt the Jets were battle-tested against the Blues, and earned a day off Monday to rest and recover.

Winnipeg out hit St. Louis 73-49 in the league’s third-longest Game 7 that ran 96 minutes, 10 seconds.

“I was pretty gassed, I’m not going to lie,” Ehlers told reporters. “I’m standing here and my legs are a little shaky.”

The series finished with a current playoff-high 623 combined hits. The Jets dished out 322 of them.

It took its toll.

Fans will be waiting for updates about injured stars Mark Scheifele and Josh Morrissey when the team returns to practice Tuesday.

Morrissey left Sunday's game about eight minutes into the first period after the defenceman absorbed some heavy checks. Scheifele missed his second consecutive game with an upper-body injury the centre suffered in Game 5.

Jets head coach Scott Arniel, in his first year after two seasons as associate coach, said the players' resolve in Game 7 was "absolutely amazing."

"I've seen a lot of hockey games, been in a lot of hockey games. To be a part of that was one of the most exciting games I've been a part of," said Arniel, a former original Jets forward.

"Man, we were extremely nervous to start the game. Got down quickly, but just our resolve, just our ability to stay in it pretty much that's all I kept preaching. Just hang in there, just hang in there."

St. Louis mounted a 2-0 lead after Jordan Kyrou scored on his team's first shot of the game, followed by Mathieu Joseph's goal on the fourth shot at 7:16.

Jets forward Cole Perfetti redirected his first of two goals past Jordan Binnington at 11:41 of the second period on the power play to make it 2-1. Radek Faksa then scored for the visitors with 35 seconds remaining in frame.

Winnipeg's determination led to a pair of goals after goalie Connor Hellebuyck was pulled for the extra attacker with just over three minutes left in the third.

Vladislav Namestnikov's shot went off Ryan Suter's skate with 1:36 remaining. Perfetti made it 3-3 with another redirection and three seconds left in regulation — the latest tying goal in a Game 7 in league history.

The Jets outshot the Blues 11-4 in the first overtime period and continued their dominance.

It paid off when defenceman Neal Pionk fired the puck from the point and it deflected off Lowry into the net — making him the second captain in league history to score an overtime goal in a Game 7.

"I think anyone watching that one, it'll be in the memory bank for a long time," Arniel said of the victory.

Now the Jets turn their focus to the Stars, who ended their first-round series against the Colorado Avalanche last Saturday with a 4-2 victory in Game 7.

The Jets earned home-ice advantage throughout the playoffs after finishing first in the league with a Presidents' Trophy-winning 116 regular-season points.

Dallas was second in the Central Division and third in the conference with 106 points. Winnipeg won three of four regular-season meetings with the Stars.

The Jets are heading to the second round for the first time since 2020-21 — and after being knocked out of the opening round the past two seasons.

"It's nice to kind of have those questions put to rest, (about) can this team get out of the first round," Lowry said.

"I'm just happy that the good guys were able to prevail and we can move on and I'm really looking forward to the second round. It's going to be a heck of a series with the Stars."

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipegsun.com/sports/i-turned-it-around-connor-rebounds-after-a-shakey-start-to-help-jets-beat-back-the-blues>

'I turned it around': Connor rebounds after a shaky start to help Jets beat back the Blues

By Gordon Anderson

Jets forward Kyle Connor had a forgettable first frame, but he rebounded in spectacular fashion as impact players often do.

Connor picked up three helpers as the Jets advanced to the second round following a 4-3 double overtime victory over the St. Louis Blues in Game 7 at the hangar downtown on Sunday night.

"You're not just going to sit there and sulk," Connor said. "You have to do anything you can to help the team push forward. A little bit of a function of how our team went, and just staying in the fight. I was able to contribute on a couple goals. I turned it around and played a great second half (of the game)."

Connor made two incorrect reads prior to the goal by Jordan Kyrrou at 1:10 the first period. In the end, he was the last line of defence prior to the puck crossing the line but got caught puck watching as the Blues sniper pushed the puck over the line.

More than six minutes later Connor lost the puck to Mathieu Joseph in the neutral zone. Joseph raced up ice and beat Connor Hellebuyck with a wrist shot from the right faceoff circle at 7:16 of the first period.

Another responsibility of a team leader is owning up to mistakes that happen on the ice.

"I want those plays back," Connor said. "I turned one over on the second goal. The first goal, I kind of got out of position and lost where I was. The two-on-one, never the way you want to start, with a minus two"

Jets head coach Scott Arniel says his team was hesitant to make plays early on. It just so happens, that Connor's mistakes led directly to goals soon after.

"It seemed nobody wanted to make a play," Arniel said. "We got rid of pucks quickly, we sat back kind of allowed them, even on the first goal they came down and skated 200 feet, came down the ice to make that play."

Connor started his rebound in the second period as he earned the primary assist on Cole Perfetti's power-play goal at 11:41.

Gabe Vilardi won the faceoff back to Neal Pionk, as Connor peeled off the circle to the half boards to the left of the Blues net. Pionk passed the puck to Connor, the Jets winger quickly whipping the puck to Perfetti near the goal line. Perfetti then redirected the Connor pass over the left shoulder of Jordan Binnington.

And Connor also earned the primary assist on Perfetti's game-tying goal at 19:57 of the third period.

Nikolaj Ehlers passed the puck cross ice through the high slot to Connor near the half wall to the left of Binnington. The puck was on and off Connor's stick in a flash, the pass heading to a soft spot in the coverage at the top of the crease. Perfetti reached out and redirected the pass into the top half of the net.

Connor then picked up the secondary assist on Adam Lowry's series clincher at 16:10 of the second overtime.

Connor circled behind the Blues net and passed the puck off the boards to Neal Pionk at the left point. The Jets defender launched the puck at the net, Lowry redirecting the shot into the right side of the cage.

Connor ended the quarterfinal series against St. Louis with four goals and eight assists. Connor is tied with Mikko Rantanen for the scoring lead after the end of the first round.

"Connor had a lot of chances. Even tonight, he had some looks," Arniel said. "That's what you need. You need those guys going to those tough areas. He's been through this before, he's had experience in the playoffs and those are the type of guys that you need to step up and he did that for us in this series. He scored some huge goals for us."

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/i-cant-wait-for-that-battle-jets-play-the-dallas-stars-in-round-2-of-the-nhl-playoffs>

'I can't wait for that battle': Jets play the Dallas Stars in round 2 of the NHL playoffs

By Gordon Anderson

There are two obvious truisms about both the Dallas Stars and the Winnipeg Jets.

The Central Division enemies begin the second round of the Stanley Cup playoffs on Wednesday evening at the downtown rink.

"They're a great team and we're a good team," Jets forward Nikolaj Ehlers said. "I can't wait for that battle."

Ehlers assisted on the game-tying goal by Cole Perfetti on Sunday night as the Jets beat the St. Louis Blues 4-3 in double overtime.

Game time is 8:30.

Unlike the series against the Blues, there are no multiple days off between games.

Game 2 is Friday night in Winnipeg. Game time is 8:30 p.m. Game 3 is set for Dallas on Sunday night.

The Stars were the first of these division foes to perform late-game heroics to progress into the second round. The Stars beat the Avalanche 4-2 in Game 7 action on Saturday night.

Dallas scored four third-period goals to erase an Avalanche two-goal advantage. Mikko Rantanen netted three goals in the third. Wyatt Johnson also contributed a power-play goal. Rantanen has five goals and six assists in his last three games.

The Jets and Stars matched up four times during the regular season.

The Jets won three of four. The only loss was a 3-1 setback in Dallas back in early December. The home side outscored the Stars 13-5. Both teams battled down the stretch to win the division, but the Jets, essentially, erased Dallas from the Central Division race with a 4-0 triumph on April 10.

"We've got no choice but to get a good recovery on Monday," Kyle Connor said about recovery process prior to the opener against the Stars. "We've said it all year long. We'll take what we can from these games. Yeah, this is an emotional high, but we have had those moments throughout the year – obviously, not to this magnitude, but we've got to be able to settle down and re-focus our efforts here on the next round."

Rantanen and Kyle Connor are tied for top spot in the playoff points race, both players with 12 points. Rantanen has five goals and seven assists. Connor has four goals and eight helpers.

<https://winnipegssun.com/sports/jets-in-need-of-repair-morrissey-and-scheifele-casualties-of-a-physical-series-against-the-blues>

Jets in need of repair: Morrissey and Scheifele casualties of a physical series against the Blues

By Gordon Anderson

Even high-octane players need a little top up every now and then.

A total of 623 hits were dished out in the now completed seven-game series between the Winnipeg Jets and the St. Louis Blues.

In Game 7 alone both teams bashed each other with reckless abandon, the Jets outshooting the visitors 73-49 in game that went into double overtime.

"I was pretty gassed, I'm not going to lie," Jets forward Nikolaj Ehlers said. "I'm standing here, and my legs are a little shaky."

According to the league's website, the previous record for most hits in a regular-season game, overtime included, was 120, set back in 2019 between the Montreal Canadiens and the Pittsburgh Penguins. The teams combined for 122 hits on Sunday night.

Jets captain Adam Lowry scored the series winner at 96:10 sending the Jets onto the second round to face the Dallas Stars.

And while the Jets will fight another day, Josh Morrissey and Mark Scheifele were forced into the med tent due to the physical nature of the series. Both players were clearly targets the entire series.

Morrissey left Sunday's game after he received a glancing blast from Oskar Sundqvist behind the Jets net in the first period. The club didn't officially comment on the severity of the injury, but it appeared to be upper body in nature.

Morrissey logged 2:09 of ice time on four shifts.

In Morrissey's absence Dylan DeMelo logged 36:40 of ice time, Luke Schenn ended with 36:40, Haydn Fleury skated for 33:02, Dylan Samberg played 44 minutes, and Neal Pionk led the team with 46:15 of ice time.

“What a yeomen’s effort by our defence,” Arniel said. “Fleury did a fantastic job. but everybody, all five of those guys, they had a different partner every shift because of the rotation and just having to, not only defend but they had to be a part of our offense.”

Pionk had three assists, including the primary on the Lowry goal. Samberg also picked up a helper on Vlad Namestnikov’s goal in the third period.

Mark Scheifele left Game 5 after a couple of hard hits in the first period as Brayden Schenn and Radek Faksa both smacked the Jets top centre. Debate raged on which hit actually caused him to miss the final two games. Scheifele played eight minutes in the Game 5 triumph last Wednesday. His injury was not disclosed.

The Jets top centre skated by himself on Saturday morning prior to Game 7. Head coach Scott Arniel listed him as a game-time decision. On Sunday morning Scheifele was downgraded to out for the final game in the series.

“We’ll find out once we get through all this craziness, see where everybody’s at on Monday,” Arniel said. “We’ll do a roll call, check on Morrissey. We’ll just move forward with him and everybody else.”

The Jets had an off day on Monday.

In Scheifele’s absence Namestnikov moved to the first line centre position and scored once in Sunday’s victory. Namestnikov also scored the winner in Game 5, a 5-3 victory over the Blues.

“Missing some guys and guys stepping up and playing bigger roles, there’s no quit in this team,” Cole Perfetti said. “We never had any doubt. This is a special group and Sunday night was a good picture of what this group is like, how there’s no quit.”

Perfetti scored twice on Sunday. He sent the game to OT when he netted the equalizer at 19:57 of the third period.

This was the third-longest Game 7 in league history.

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/video/jets-kevin-he-blazing-a-pathway-and-making-nhl-history-along-the-way/>

Jets' Kevin He blazing a pathway and making NHL history along the way (VIDEO)

Sportsnet celebrates Asian Heritage Month, as Donovan Bennett goes deep with Kevin He, the 2024 draft pick of the Jets, who became the highest China-born player taken in the NHL Draft and the first player born in China to sign an NHL contract.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/jets-manufacture-a-victory-for-the-ages~3128312>

Jets manufacture a victory for the ages (VIDEO)

The Jets were facing elimination in the dying seconds of Game 7 but in their desperation, they found a way to stay alive in a wild double-overtime victory over the Blues. Relive the emotional ride that powered Winnipeg to the second round.

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/are-jets-a-different-team-after-surviving-first-round-marathon~3127747>

Are Jets a different team after surviving first round marathon? (VIDEO)

After barely surviving a first round marathon against the Blues in thrilling fashion, are the Jets a different team because of it entering their second round series against the Stars? TSN Hockey analyst Frankie Corrado joins Domino's That's Hockey to discuss.

CBC Manitoba

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/winnipeg-jets-playoff-run-generates-invaluable-free-publicity-for-city-1.7527184>

Winnipeg Jets playoff run generates 'invaluable' free publicity for city Social media posts, television coverage worth millions in 'earned media'

By Cameron MacLean · CBC News

The success of the Winnipeg Jets in the NHL playoffs so far this season has done more than lift the spirits of hockey fans — it has given the city a wealth of free exposure.

The televised hockey games — and the accompanying whiteout street parties — have put a spotlight on the city and its downtown.

It's too soon to know the full economic impact of the games and parties, which draw an estimated 22,000 people to the events, a spokesperson for True North Sports and Entertainment said in an email statement.

"The broader exposure of the Whiteout, for the sport, the Jets and our city, is invaluable," spokesperson Krista Sinaisky wrote.

Economic Development Winnipeg has contributed up to \$90,000 to the parties through the City of Winnipeg's special event tourism fund.

It also partnered with 10 social media content creators from across Canada and the U.S. to come to Winnipeg and promote the games. That content generated 58 million views, worth about \$2 million worth of "earned media," said Natalie Thiesen, vice-president of tourism.

"That ability to position our city in a different way and having more eyeballs on Winnipeg, allows us to do our jobs and extend our reach in a way that our budget doesn't allow," she said.

Paying to promote the city on a television program with the level of viewership of an NHL game doesn't come cheap, said Martin Fisher, CEO of Show and Tell Agency, a Winnipeg-based advertising firm.

"You probably would end up having to spend about \$1.5 million, \$2 million to get the number of eyeballs that would have seen that on a ... North American basis ... You're into Super Bowl kind of money," said Fisher.

The whiteout parties began in 2018. An analysis from Economic Development Winnipeg found the event saw 120,500 people attended the parties over the course of the six weeks the Jets were in the playoffs that year. That did not include the 15,000 people watching the game inside the arena or at downtown bars, restaurants and other places.

In terms of "earned media" — essentially third-party publicity without direct payment — Economic Development Winnipeg calculated the value at roughly \$2.2 million, including nearly 400 separate news articles with a reach of over 233 million views.

The total cost of the party in 2018 was \$2,167,000, including \$1,084,000 from True North Sports and Entertainment, \$120,000 from Economic Development Winnipeg and \$962,000 from the City of Winnipeg, not including \$153,000 it received from True North to cover extra policing and transit costs.

Felicia Wiltshire, communications director for the City of Winnipeg, said in an email the city may also provide additional "in-kind" services, and is heavily involved in planning and execution of the events including any necessary road closures, city beautification and other work.

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6336019/2025/05/06/nhl-playoffs-winnipeg-jets-lowry-bowness/>

Adam Lowry, Rick Bowness and the special Game 7 moment that was years in the making

By Murat Ates

Adam Lowry's voice broke when he heard Rick Bowness' voice on the other end of the line.

Speaking on TNT after scoring the Game 7 winning goal in double-overtime, Lowry appeared surprised to hear the voice of the head coach who made him captain.

"Listen: That's why you're captain," Bowness told Lowry. "That effort and that gutsy effort from that team tonight personifies you."

Lowry's emotion is obvious in the video. Winnipeg's Game 7 win, and Bowness' message along with it, were years in the making. Lowry's heart-and-soul effort indeed personifies the Jets. Winnipeg's team is more than the sum of its parts; it's a collection of players who want to play for Winnipeg and for each other. Lowry's leadership as captain has helped more of his teammates feel like their best selves.

To hear it from Bowness directly clearly made Lowry emotional.

"He said, 'You're going to bring a tear to my eye,'" Bowness told The Athletic on Monday. "Well, we both did."

Bowness is retired now. His former associate coach and now the Jets head coach, Scott Arniel, gets to enjoy the impact of Lowry's leadership. But this story starts a little over three years ago, in December 2021, with a shocking departure. Three seasons ago, there was no chance that Lowry could have been named captain at all.

Winnipeg's players didn't get advance warning when Paul Maurice abruptly resigned on Dec. 17, 2021. The Jets were only three points outside a playoff spot and the expectation on the outside was that they should be able to put together the kind of run that erased their slow start.

But Maurice kept his departure closely guarded such that Lowry was also left in the dark — even though his dad, Dave Lowry, was on Winnipeg's staff as an assistant coach. On the day Maurice resigned, the Jets promoted Dave Lowry to take over in his absence. It put immediate strain on the relationship between father and son.

"Like, you couldn't have told me or given me a heads up?" Adam Lowry remembers thinking. "This is a pretty big deal. And it's not that I'm not ecstatic for my dad's opportunity but, one, we were stunned that Paul was leaving. Two, this changed the whole dynamic of the player/coach relationship that we had at the rink."

Assistants tend to be the "players' coaches" of an NHL coaching staff. The head coach plays the role of disciplinarian, doling out ice time and making lineup decisions. When players are upset, their ire is usually directed at the head coach — and that worked out fine for the Lowrys before Maurice resigned. There was a change in the Jets' dressing room when Dave Lowry took over.

“It was hard for my teammates. I think, for the most part, they handled it really well. People said it was hard to vent or talk about the coaches — and that’s a common thing. Sometimes people get fed up and venting is a natural reaction but, certainly, they were cognizant of how I might view these things or if I might change my perception on how I view them,” Lowry said.

It added an awkward dynamic to a team already well-known for internal disagreements. The 2021-22 Jets were well-stocked with talent but didn’t see eye-to-eye about a lot of things. There were cultural issues created in part by ex-captain Blake Wheeler’s old-school, top-down approach; in part by Maurice’s inability to address those issues; and in part by players — PL Dubois, most famously — who simply did not want to play in Winnipeg.

There’s no way that version of the Jets, with Dave Lowry as head coach, could have made Lowry the captain he is now — even if Wheeler hadn’t occupied the role.

“There would have been no chance,” Dave Lowry told *The Athletic*. “One of the hardest things was when Paul (Maurice) left, we lost a really good leader. Not in terms of play and performance but in terms of the vocal component of it. You have a father/son relationship and I’m not oblivious to the fact that, if he stands up and says something or challenges a player, what’s the first thing they’re going to say? ‘Your dad told you to say that.’ We, as a coaching staff, lost that voice.”

Father and son put their personal connection on hold as well. Instead of having nightly recaps, talking up each other’s performances the way so many parents and their children do after a game, they decided to keep a professional distance. They each remember seeing each other only a couple of times away from the rink.

“I think the one was on his birthday,” Adam said. “My mom was in town. And then the one was on my birthday ... There was this glass wall between us.”

The Jets missed the playoffs and did not renew Dave Lowry’s contract. Assistant coaches Jamie Kompon and Charlie Huddy were also let go.

That Winnipeg’s management didn’t immediately recognize this as an untenable situation — and was similarly slow to address Winnipeg’s other cultural problems at the time — held the team back from reaching its potential. No one put it better than Paul Stastny did in the Jets’ exit interviews that year.

“We’ve got to have more respect for each other. When you don’t have that, when you don’t care about the teammate next to you — potentially — and you just care about what you’re doing or certain individual things, that starts bleeding into the game,” Stastny said.

It was a damning statement and, from at least one player's perspective, an honest assessment of Winnipeg's team culture. It soon became the reason Bowness was the right head coach — and Lowry the right captain — for a new Jets era.

Bowness was well aware of the Jets' reputation for locker room issues when he was hired on July 3, 2022.

"I wasn't in that room, but I was hearing that the Xs and Os were secondary and culture was number one," Bowness told The Athletic. "Then you start reading the comments from players. It had to get your attention and it had to get addressed. That's what we did."

Bowness spent his summer reaching out to Jets players directly, asking questions about what had gone well, what hadn't and what needed to change. On Sept. 16, the Jets put out a press release announcing they would play the season without a captain, but with "a group of assistants yet to be determined." Wheeler's "C" was removed, but he remained with the team. That itself was a difficult situation, with Wheeler later conveying he felt "blindsided" by the move, but it began Winnipeg's cultural shift.

The Jets made the playoffs in Bowness' first season but fell to Vegas in five games. Speaking at the podium in Las Vegas, Bowness expressed tremendous distaste for the team's lack of pushback when the season and playoffs got tough.

"It's the same crap we saw in February," Bowness said at the time. "As soon as we were challenging for first place and teams were coming after us, we had no pushback. This series, we had no pushback. Their better players were so much better than ours, it wasn't even close."

The Jets traded Dubois to Los Angeles on June 27, 2022, for Gabriel Vilardi, Alex Iafallo, Rasmus Kupari and a second-round draft pick. On June 29, they bought out Wheeler's contract. For Bowness, it was a major plateau in the dressing room's shift from the old guard to the new.

"Listen, I spent nine years with the Jets in the 80s. I never heard one person say Winnipeg wasn't a great place to play or that they didn't want to be there. So when I heard that people didn't like Winnipeg or didn't like the culture, those things hit home with me. The first thing we were going to address was that," Bowness said.

As Bowness made his changes from the top, Lowry grew in his role with the Jets organization and the community. Jets chairman Mark Chipman approached Lowry with the opportunity to get involved with the Toba Centre; Lowry embraced it and wowed the Winnipeg-based non-profit with his humility and willingness to learn. Bowness empowered Lowry on the ice with some of the toughest checking line assignments in the NHL; Lowry responded by taking his game to its highest level. After scoring 21 points playing for his dad, Lowry produced 36-point and 35-point seasons playing shutdown roles on Bowness' teams.

On Sept. 12, 2023, Lowry was named captain.

“When you see a guy like that putting his body on the line, doing everything he possibly can for this team, you have no choice but to follow,” Cole Perfetti said of Lowry. “He is vocal in the room, but I think the way that he leads this team is through his actions and through his play.”

There is also the matter of Lowry’s classiness off the ice. Bowness remembers how hard it was to be away from his head coaching duties, but how much sense it made to be with his wife, Judy, after she suffered a seizure in October 2023. Arniel took over as interim head coach during Bowness’ absence, paving the way for the success he’s having now. Bowness is proud of him for that.

But Bowness most fondly remembers his return for an act of kindness from Lowry.

“I’ll go back to when we had our medical issue last year and I came back (to the team) in Florida,” Bowness said. “Adam made sure I got that game puck. We’d won 3-0 so it was a big game for a lot of players. But he took the time to say, ‘Make sure Bones gets that puck.’”

Back in 2022, when times were tough, Lowry thinks the Jets were trying to make the best of a bad situation. The suddenness of Maurice’s departure left general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff and his staff without an abundance of options.

Lowry said assistant GM Craig Heisinger spoke to him after that season to address his concerns. Heisinger told him the Jets had failed to recognize the added pressure and stress. The Jets have put people and processes in place such that they don’t end up in such an untenable situation again. The Jets have added four psychologists to their staff since that time.

“That, for me, goes a long way to show how the organization cares about us as people,” Lowry said. “They care about the members of their organization, they take feedback, and they try to improve our quality of life. In turn, it improves our quality of play.”

Lowry’s growth between his toughest season and today’s Round 2 appearance is not a straight line. It would not be precise to say he scored the goal that got Winnipeg to Round 2 against Dallas because the Jets recognized their cultural issues and addressed them in multiple ways. But the human side of the game clearly matters to him, his teammates, his parents and the coach who made him captain. Bowness and Lowry expressed their love for one another as people in that surprise call on TNT.

“Thanks, Bones,” Lowry said. “Those words mean a lot to me. I love you. I appreciate the time we got to spend together.”

Before the call ended, Lowry expressed appreciation for Bowness' wife, Judy, and respect for Bowness' awkward position as the former head coach of both Dallas and Winnipeg. He joked about needing to send a care package Bowness' way to guarantee support for the Jets in Round 2.

But what about Winnipeg's progress, three years after Bowness was hired? Is this team showing him what he hoped to see when he and his staff went to work three years ago?

"The ultimate goal is what Winnipeg has now," Bowness said. "They play so hard for each other and push each other. That's a winning team."

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6335337/2025/05/06/2025-nhl-playoff-preview-winnipeg-jets-dallas-stars/>

2025 NHL playoff preview: Winnipeg Jets vs. Dallas Stars

By The Athletic NHL Staff

By Shayna Goldman, Dom Luszczyszyn and Sean Gentille

It's always fun to see Stanley Cup playoff series exceed their expectations. That, somehow, is what we got from both Central Division matchups.

That's saying quite a bit; when the Dallas Stars-Colorado Avalanche series began, it felt like one of the most heavily anticipated first-round series in recent memory. Elite teams. Human drama. Couldn't ask for much more, and both teams came through. The Winnipeg Jets, meanwhile, avoided disaster spectacularly behind an in-series redemption arc starring the best regular-season goalie on the planet.

Tough acts to follow. We believe in them, though.

The odds

If odds set expectations, expect more drama in the Central.

This series — between the Presidents' Trophy winners and a team many pegged as the one to beat after a massive deadline add — is about as tight as it gets. As has been common in these playoffs, where not much separates the top teams on paper, this looks close to a pick 'em. That should mean a tightly contested battle between the Jets and Stars that could go the distance.

There are a lot of caveats to that analysis, more than arguably any other series in recent memory. Will Connor Hellebuyck bounce back? Has Mikko Rantanen's game returned for good after a post-trade lull? How many games will the Stars and Jets get from their currently injured star players? All questions without concrete answers (though we'll give our best guess).

Those considerations make this a difficult series to peg, where a toss-up slightly shaded to the Stars feels safest. All we know is this series should be a battle.

The numbers

On paper, this is the closest Round 2 matchup, with just a plus-2 Net Rating separating these teams.

The Jets established themselves as a defensive powerhouse this season, giving Hellebuyck more support than he has had in years. At five-on-five, Winnipeg was stingy, only giving up 2.34 xGA/60. With Hellebuyck between the pipes, the team allowed a league-low 1.72 GA/60.

But a lot of that defensive zone stability slipped in Round 1. Technically, the Jets allowed a lower rate of expected goals against at 2.17 per 60, but there were more glaring slip-ups, especially on the road. Winnipeg allowed some dangerous looks off the rush and left their goaltender exposed to a lot of screened shots, which he responded to really poorly.

The Stars' offense may create trouble for the Jets' back end in Round 2. Dallas' five-on-five offense was top-seven in the league in both expected and actual goal creation over the regular season. That slipped in Round 1 against the Avs, but could rebound as this group gets healthier.

Defense is a potential weak point for Dallas until Heiskanen returns. That became glaring after the 4 Nations Face-Off and remained a problem in Round 1, with the team giving up 3.24 xGA/60 in seven games.

The Stars' penalty kill wasn't perfect in terms of shot quality, but goaltending made up for it. The opposite was true for the Jets in Round 1; the team gave up very little but didn't always get timely saves. That's something to watch in this series, considering how high-octane the Stars' power play was against Colorado.

The big question

Can Connor Hellebuyck bounce back?

Playoff reputations are not etched in stone. They can follow a player for years and get stickier with each new disappointment. Redemption, though, is always a possibility. Narratives can change.

There is no denying that Hellebuyck, over the last three playoffs, has not been good enough. That's his narrative: He is not a big-game player, he can't handle the heat. His work against the St. Louis Blues was particularly unfathomable; it was Hellebuyck's worst series yet, with some truly unconscionable goals allowed.

But the Jets are still alive. They survived one of the worst goaltending playoff performances we've ever seen, and that's a testament to the team in front of

Hellebuyck. It's what's supposed to make Winnipeg different this year. It gives Hellebuyck the opportunity to change his narrative. Every new series is a chance for redemption, and no player needs it more than he does.

One year removed from allowing 6.5 goals above expected in five playoff games against the Avs (or 9.1 per seven games), Hellebuyck allowed 9.8 goals above expected against the Blues — the most he has ever given up in any given seven-game sequence ever. His previous low, minus-7.6, came back in 2017.

Over his last two Vezina seasons, Hellebuyck had 111 distinct seven-game sequences during the regular season. In those, Hellebuyck was below average just five times and his lowest mark is just minus-2.1 goals allowed. That's who Hellebuyck should be. Who he's been during the season and who he's been in the postseason could not be more different.

What Hellebuyck offers to us is an extreme lesson in goalie volatility — and its ability to snowball to truly unbelievable places when the temperature rises. His playoff work goes well beyond general small-sample goalie wackiness. It is so extreme that it cannot be chalked up to 'stuff happens.' Stuff like this defies any ounce of logic. It should not happen.

But to Hellebuyck, it has. League-best regular seasons followed up by league-worst playoffs, to these extreme degrees, is not normal. And that makes for a very tricky conundrum regarding expectations for the Jets in this series. Winnipeg's 50-50 shot against Dallas depends heavily on a Hellebuyck redemption, which does not feel like a safe bet.

While the model did downgrade Winnipeg's Defensive Rating (from plus-46 to plus-39), it's clear there is a wide range of possibilities for the Jets depending on which version of Hellebuyck shows up.

Hellebuyck's projected Net Rating of plus-28 is the base case, one built on regressing his last five regular seasons (with more weight on the last two), where the expectation is he saves 0.37 goals above expected per game. If he can reliably be counted on to repeat this season's 0.64 per game, Winnipeg's odds shoot up to 64 percent.

If, however, Playoff Hellebuyck has another unfortunate performance and allows one goal above expected per game (his average over the last three playoffs), Winnipeg's odds would drop all the way down to 9 percent. Yes, 9 percent.

More than any other team, Winnipeg's success hinges greatly on the impact of one player — a player whose current impact could not be more unpredictable and whose downside looks tremendous. That the Jets got by the Blues was miraculous. The Stars — a loaded offensive team — are a different beast.

Stopping the high-flying Stars in their tracks is a great place for Hellebuyck's redemption arc to start. It's also where things can spiral further downward. It's on Hellebuyck to decide where his narrative goes next.

The X-factor

How will injuries shift the balance of this series?

The key to winning a Central Division matchup in the opening round? Play Game 7 without one of your best forwards and No. 1 defenseman, naturally.

Credit to both the Jets and Stars for pulling that off — it's no small feat. Especially given the circumstances both teams found themselves in, down by two in the third period. But pulling that off for a long stretch of time against better competition is a tall task.

In this series, at least to start, the Stars and Jets are in the same boat. The point at which either team will reach shore with a healthy roster is what makes projecting it so tricky. Without firm timelines on Mark Scheifele, Josh Morrissey, Jason Robertson and Miro Heiskanen, we're left guessing on that return.

What we can tell you is the worst-case scenario for each team.

At full health, the Jets would be favored in this series at 52 percent due to their having home ice advantage. If Dallas starts fully healthy, Winnipeg's chances would drop to 47 percent without Scheifele, 42 percent without Morrissey and 38 percent without both. That's for the whole series, which feels unlikely. The more games Scheifele and Morrissey play, the better the outlook.

On the flip side, the Stars (starting at 48 percent) are at 43 percent without Robertson, 42 percent without Heiskanen and 37 percent without both.

None of that is to say neither team can manage without its stars, just that the road to the conference final becomes that much more challenging. We're expecting the Stars duo back sooner, which is what gets the series to 50-50, but even that forecast is clear as mud.

Whatever happens, this series is so close that whoever returns first (and closest to 100 percent) could end up being the difference.

The rosters

The Stars had two primary problems heading into the playoffs. The right side of the defense was a liability without Heiskanen, and Rantanen, who they brought in to be The Guy at the top of the lineup, had yet to hit his stride, which was extra concerning with Robertson injured.

Rantanen came into this year with a Net Rating of at least plus-19 in each of the last three seasons. He was around a plus-17 at the time of the first trade, with an average

Game Score of 1.27, but ended the year at about a plus-10. A few things contributed to that drop-off: a lack of scoring with the Canes despite promising underlying numbers, poor play-driving in Dallas and less ice time since leaving the Avs. With the Canes, his average Game Score plummeted to 0.66; in Dallas, it was 0.70.

But after an up-and-down season with a lot of change and adjustments, Rantanen came to play when it mattered most and eliminated his former team in the process. After scoring a Game 7 hat trick, he ended Round 1 with five goals and 12 points and an average Game Score of 1.37, and paced at a plus-24 Net Rating.

Rantanen is finally adjusting to his surroundings in Dallas and finding chemistry on an all-Finn line with Roope Hintz and Mikael Granlund. That could be a sign he is on track to return to his pre-trade caliber. If this is the Rantanen Dallas can expect going forward — the Rantanen they paid a lot for — we're probably underestimating their chances here. Rantanen, at a plus-17 Net Rating, swings the series odds four percentage points in the Stars' favor.

The Stars' forward depth gives them their biggest edge in the playoff field, which helped them weather Robertson's absence. Tyler Seguin's return reunited a productive second line with Mason Marchment and Matt Duchene, which outscored Colorado 2-1 in Round 1.

After a slow start to the playoffs, Wyatt Johnston found the scoring touch that made him stand out last spring. If he can keep that up, he should help turn around a third line with Jamie Benn, who had mixed results against the Avs. Considering some of the Jets' injury woes, the matchups may not be as daunting, either — the Stars' third line got a heavy dose of Nathan MacKinnon's line in Round 1 and had to fight through those minutes with Esa Lindell and Cody Ceci on the back end.

Not only does it hurt the Stars to be without Heiskanen's two-way skill, but it also forces other defensemen out of their depth. Ceci has been tasked with playing matchup minutes, and in Round 1, the team gave up an xGA/60 of 4.0 with him and Lindell on the ice at five-on-five. Oettinger stopped the bleeding and kept their actual goal rate down to 1.75 per 60, but that may not be sustainable.

Heiskanen's return will help reset the Stars' defense and give Thomas Harley more top-four support, whether they are reunited or split across two pairs. But the team has to get by until then.

The Jets got reinforcements back in Round 1 with the return of Gabriel Vilardi and Nikolaj Ehlers, but Scheifele's status is uncertain.

Scheifele and Connor were dynamic together to open the series. Connor, tied with Rantanen as the league leader with 12 points, comes into this series with a plus-11 Net Rating to lead the Jets forwards. But can he keep that up against the Stars without a true 1C? Connor started Game 7 with Vladislav Namestnikov, but ended up spending

most of the night with Adam Lowry, whose plus-3 Defensive Rating leads all forwards in this series. Lowry doesn't thread the needle offensively, but could help Connor win his minutes against the Stars' best.

Year after year, Ehlers stands out as one of the Jets' top forwards in the regular season but wilts in a playoff environment. He proved that wasn't the case in Game 7, with a gutsy lateral pass to Connor that set up Cole Perfetti's game-tying goal. It was shaky on the way there, but at the biggest moment, Ehlers delivered.

After being scratched through most of last year's postseason, Perfetti is showing he can thrive in a playoff environment. He is a shooting threat and is driving to the quality areas, which helped set up both of his Game 7 goals. With Ehlers and Namestnikov, the Jets' second line earned a 54 percent expected goal rate and outscored opponents 24-14 in the regular season — that's the kind of production, at minimum, this team needs to counter the Stars' middle six.

As long as Lowry stays with Connor, the third line won't be as defensively sound. But if Sunday's in-game tweaks hold, Vilardi could make it more of a scoring threat.

On the back end, the Jets must also prepare to play without Morrissey, whose status is uncertain.

In Game 7, Dylan DeMelo spent a lot of time with shutdown defenseman Dylan Samberg, and the two were lights-out in 10:37 five-on-five minutes. The Jets attempted 15 shots, limited the Blues to two against and earned 94 percent of expected goals. But that likely leaves the team's defense too top-heavy against a deep opponent.

Samberg and Neal Pionk, who take on top competition, become the de facto top pair without Morrissey. But the bottom-four configuration is tricky, considering how much the third pair already burned the Jets in Round 1.

Logan Stanley and Luke Schenn were crushed in their third pair minutes against the Blues; St. Louis earned a 60 percent expected goal rate in their minutes and outscored the Jets 4-1. Haydn Fleury can help there and looked composed in Game 7, but he's no savior — the third pair is still a point of weakness that can be exploited. Against a Stars team with a loaded top nine, it gets even dicier and creates even more problems for a shaky Hellebuyck between the pipes.

The key matchup

Connor Hellebuyck vs. Jake Oettinger

At some point last week, when Hellebuyck and the Jets were at their low point, it felt like we were getting an early referendum on Team USA's starting goaltender at the 2026 Olympics. How could you go with Hellebuyck in a high-stakes environment over Oettinger, who was in the process of adding to his (already impressive) case for No. 1?

Now, thanks to his final four periods or so in Game 7, Hellebuyck has re-entered the conversation. Oettinger's reputation doesn't need that level of rebuilding, though. In his last four postseasons, he 1) had one of the best series by a goaltender in recent history, against Calgary in 2022; 2) led Dallas to consecutive conference finals in 2023 and 2024, though he was certainly better the second time around; and 3) got them out of a series in which they missed their No. 1 defenseman and All-Star winger.

Oettinger didn't allow a third-period goal against the Avs until Game 6, then shut Colorado down for the final 19:29 of Game 7, a stretch in which Dallas took the score from 2-0 to 4-2. That's big-game, resume-building stuff, and Oettinger now has the opportunity for even more of the same.

The bottom line

Between key injuries and Hellebuyck's playoff demons, the deck is stacked against the Jets right now. Winnipeg's star power is lacking, while the Stars are just heating up. But these teams are more than what they did in Round 1.

The Central Division has been a battle all season long, and this series will likely be no different.