

Winnipegjets.com

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/practice-report-may-6>

Practice report - May 6

Mark Scheifele, Josh Morrissey and Logan Stanley all wore non-contact jerseys at Tuesday practice

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – It's unclear how many people love the colour yellow, but for Winnipeg Jets fans, they might like it for the time being.

Mark Scheifele, Josh Morrissey and Logan Stanley were all in the yellow, non-contact jersey on Tuesday afternoon at Canada Life Centre. Scheifele hasn't played since the first period of Game 5 after absorbing a couple of big hits, Morrissey left during the first period of Game 7 and Stanley didn't play at all on Sunday.

"Yeah, today was the first day for Josh, so that was great. For Scheif he was on yesterday, so he's been on, snuck it in there. so, yeah, it's a good sign to see them out there and participating," said Scott Arniel.

"Stan, first day today for him as well. So, yeah, all part of that, we'll go day to day here. Obviously, we'll see where they're at for tomorrow. They've got to wake up tomorrow and see if they've improved from today."

While the Jets wait to see who of the trio in yellow become available for Game 1 against the Stars on Wednesday (8:30 pm CT), they know their goaltender is back on track. Perhaps no one in the organization felt more relief when Adam Lowry sent them to the second round with his goal in double overtime than Connor Hellebuyck.

"I'm really excited. It's a re-start for me," said Hellebuyck.

"Who cares about what just happened? We got through it, and moving forward here I'm really excited to put my best foot forward and do my job."

After the Blues made it 3-1 at the end of the second period on Sunday, Hellebuyck shut the door and started to look more and more like the player that is on his way to winning a third Vezina Trophy. Neal Pionk said that Hellebuyck told the team that he wouldn't let in another goal.

"So, when he says something like that, he believes it," said Pionk.

"And we believed him, and we knew we had to get two more for him and then we're going to do the rest from there."

Game 7 already seems like it was a week ago, but the confidence that comes with getting through an extremely tough series has to be big for Hellebuyck.

“Getting through that, and so for him, not just him, our whole group, to get through that first round is now we can maybe take a breath, move, and again, move on to the next opponent and that's Dallas,” said Arniel.

“Obviously it's going to be a big one, but I think that's just a big weight off his shoulders and now he can reset.”

Dallas went through a similar situation in Game 7 on home ice and down two goals in the third period to the Colorado Avalanche before coming back and moving on to the next round. The Stars are a big team, but it would be tough to expect that the series will be as physical as the matchup with St. Louis.

“They got three lines, real solid lines offensively. They can do things, obviously defensively well,” said Arniel.

“So, I think that it's a different sort of look to what we just saw. But yeah, we know these guys, obviously, they've been hot on our tail all year long. So, it's a great matchup.”

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/winnipeg-scheifele-morrissey-stanley-injury-playing-status-for-game-1-against-dallas>

Scheifele, Morrissey, Stanley game-time decisions for Jets in Game 1 of Western 2nd Round Center, defensemen skate in noncontact jerseys on eve of series opener against Stars

By Tracey Myers

WINNIPEG -- Josh Morrissey, Mark Scheifele and Logan Stanley will be game-time decisions for the Winnipeg Jets in Game 1 of the Western Conference Second Round against the Dallas Stars at Canada Life Centre on Wednesday (9:30 p.m. ET; CBC, TVAS, SN, ESPN).

All three skated in noncontact jerseys Tuesday. Morrissey and Stanley were on the ice prior to Winnipeg's practice, but the defensemen left as it began.

Scheifele, a center, remained on the ice and practiced with the Jets.

“Yeah, today was the first day [on the ice] for Josh, so that was great,” coach Scott Arniel said. “For ‘Scheif,’ he was on [Monday], so he’s been on, snuck it in there. So,

yeah, it's a good sign to see them out there and participating. 'Stan' [Stanley] first day [on the ice today for him as well.

"So, yeah, all part of that, we'll go day to day here. Obviously we'll see where they're at for tomorrow. They've got to wake up tomorrow and see if they've improved from today."

Morrissey sustained an undisclosed injury during the first period of a 4-3 double-overtime win against the St. Louis Blues in Game 7 of the first round here Sunday. He took a hit from Blues forward Oskar Sundqvist along the boards at 4:59 of the first period, then hit St. Louis forward Mathieu Joseph at 7:06. Ten seconds later, Morrissey was defending Joseph, who scored on what proved to be Morrissey's last shift.

Scheifele has missed the past two games because of an undisclosed injury sustained during the first period of Game 5 against the Blues. He has six points (two goals, four assists) in five games, tied for second on the Jets with forward Mason Appleton (six assists).

Morrissey has three assists in seven Stanley Cup Playoff games. He was fourth for Winnipeg during the regular season with 62 points (14 goals, 48 assists) in 80 games.

The 30-year-old was leading the Jets entering Game 7 in average time on ice this postseason (23:30).

It's uncertain when Stanley was injured; he last played in Game 6 against the Blues, logging 9:28 of ice time.

<https://www.nhl.com/news/topic/playoffs/2025/series-k-news/jason-robertson-could-return-for-dallas-at-winnipeg-in-game-1-may-6>

***Robertson could return for Stars against Jets in Game 1
Forward missed 1st round with lower-body injury, led Dallas with 35 goals in regular season***

By NHL.com

Jason Robertson could return for the Dallas Stars against the Winnipeg Jets in Game 1 of the Western Conference Second Round at Canada Life Centre on Wednesday (9:30 p.m. ET; CBC, TVAS, SN, ESPN).

"He's close," Stars coach Pete DeBoer said Tuesday regarding the 25-year-old forward, who has not played since sustaining a lower-body injury during a 5-1 loss at the Nashville Predators in the regular-season finale April 16. "We'll see tomorrow morning. It's all in his recovery and how he feels tomorrow."

Initially considered week to week, Robertson led Dallas with 35 goals in 82 regular-season games and was second with 80 points, behind forward Matt Duchene (82).

The Stars were without Robertson and defenseman Miro Heiskanen in the first round, when they defeated the Colorado Avalanche in seven games. Following a 4-2 win in Game 7 on Saturday, DeBoer said each player was expected to return at some point during the second round, though he wasn't sure when that would be. DeBoer wasn't asked Tuesday about Heiskanen's availability for Game 1.

Each player skated Monday and practiced Tuesday, when Robertson was at right wing on the third line with left wing Mason Marchment and center Wyatt Johnston.

"You take two key players out of anybody's lineup and your team looks different," DeBoer said after the first round. "What I liked about it was, we look different but we found a way, and that's the most important part.

"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."

Heiskanen sustained a knee injury when he collided with Vegas Golden Knights forward Mark Stone during a 4-3 overtime win Jan. 28 and missed the final 32 games of the regular season after having surgery Feb. 4. The initial timeline for his recovery was 3-4 months. The 25-year-old had 25 points (five goals, 20 assists) in 50 games; his average ice time of 25:10 per game was the fifth-most among NHL defensemen.

"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," 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-goalie-connor-hellebuyck-feels-on-his-game-in-second-round>

***Hellebuyck excited to have 'restart' with Jets in Western 2nd Round against Stars
Goalie aims to build on Game 7 win after being chased by Blues 3 times in opening series***

By Tracey Myers

WINNIPEG -- Connor Hellebuyck was making the necessary saves during the third period and both overtimes for the Winnipeg Jets in Game 7 of the Western Conference First Round against the St. Louis Blues on Sunday.

The goalie and Vezina Trophy finalist looked more like his strong, regular-season self after some rough outings during the first round, when he was pulled three times.

"You know, I think there was definitely ... I don't want to call it an awakening, but there was definitely a moment there where I was able to take my game to another level," Hellebuyck of his play in the Jets' 4-3 double-overtime win. "And feeling that, it definitely gives you some momentum and some confidence going into the next round.

"That being said, we're in some new territory that we haven't been in in a little while. I'm really excited. It's a restart for me. Who cares about what just happened? We got through it, and moving forward here I'm really excited to put my best foot forward and do my job."

For the first time since 2021, Winnipeg will play in the second round, starting with Game 1 against the Dallas Stars at Canada Life Centre on Wednesday (9:30 p.m. ET; CBC, TVAS, SN, ESPN). The fact that Hellebuyck is entering this round feeling confident is great news for the Jets.

"I think that I mentioned to [the media] after the game that one of the toughest things in pro sports is getting out of the first round," Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel said. "It is hard. You've got the underdogs in there. Everybody's got a shot at it. There [are] no light opponents and people are coming fresh off the end of the season.

"And so for him, not just him, our whole group, to get through that first round, is now we can maybe take a breath, move, and again, move on to the next opponent and that's Dallas. Obviously it's going to be a big one but I think that's just a big weight off his shoulders and now he can reset. Hopefully he's feeling real good about himself and his game."

The final goal Hellebuyck allowed in Game 7 was to Blues forward Radek Faksa, who gave St. Louis a 3-1 lead with 35 seconds remaining in the second period.

"I think it was after the third one, in the intermission there, he said, 'They're not getting another one,'" Jets defenseman Neal Pionk said. "So, when he says something like that, he believes it. And we believed him, and we knew we had to get two more for him and then we're going to do the rest from there.

Hellebuyck didn't allow anything else, stopping the Blues' final 13 shots. The Jets did the rest in front of him, scoring two goals in the final 1:56 of the third period before captain Adam Lowry scored at 16:10 of double overtime.

Hellebuyck finished the first round 4-3 with a 3.85 goals-against average and .830 save percentage in seven games. He was pulled in all three games in St. Louis, where Winnipeg was outscored 17-5, but he was much better at home, where he was 4-0 with a 2.20 GAA and .885 save percentage.

The 31-year-old won the Vezina as the League's top goalie, in 2020 and last season. This season he's also a finalist for the Hart Trophy, awarded to the NHL's most valuable

player, after going 47-12-3 with a 2.00 GAA, .925 save percentage and a League-leading eight shutouts in 63 games (62 starts).

The Stars are expecting to see Hellebuyck at his award-winning level in this round.

"I'm sure he's going to be great," Dallas coach Pete DeBoer said Tuesday. "I'm sure we're going to see the guy who's up for the Vezina and we have to be prepared for that."

That's the goalie Hellebuyck wants to be. He's getting another opportunity starting in the second round. Sure, there's a lot of pressure, but he's ready to handle it.

"It's one of those things [pressure] that has been building all those years, and I think it's just because I want it so bad," he said. "That being said, it was a long series. There were a lot of ups and downs. Probably the hardest part of goaltending is getting shelled, on the road, and getting pulled, and then coming back the next day and putting your best foot forward.

"That's probably the biggest jump goaltenders make as they're growing up. No matter how much you think you've got a grip on it, there's always more of a learning curve and there's always more pressure on you and there are always different scenarios. I'm very thankful the guys in front of me did such a phenomenal job that series and got us through it. Now it's time to get back to what makes me, me."

<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. Robertson participated in line rushes with Mason Marchment and Johnston at practice Tuesday, when coach Pete DeBoer said he's close to a return and his status for Game 1 will depend on how he feels Wednesday morning. Heiskanen did not skate with the top six on defense and remains day to day.

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, Johnston, Roope Hintz were outstanding in the first round and the depth scoring from players such as Tyler Seguin and Marchment was there as well. Oh, the return of Robertson and Heiskanen wouldn't hurt the Stars' chances, either.

<https://www.nhl.com/news/topic/nhl-edge/edge-stats-insights-for-winnipeg-dallas-series>

***EDGE stats insights for Jets-Stars series
Rantanen's midrange prowess, Pionk's skating distance highlight 2nd-round matchup***

By Fantasy Hockey Staff

NHL.com's fantasy staff continues to cover the latest trends and storylines in the League through the lens of NHL EDGE puck and player tracker stats. Today, we preview the Western Conference Second Round series between the Winnipeg Jets and Dallas Stars.

The Winnipeg Jets and Dallas Stars have advanced to the Western Conference Second Round after their epic Game 7 home wins and will meet in the Stanley Cup Playoffs for the first time.

This series features matchups between the League's two leading scorers from the first round of the postseason in Mikko Rantanen and Kyle Connor (each had 12 points in seven games), elite goalies Jake Oettinger and Connor Hellebuyck and plenty of underlying numbers that can decide the series.

Here are three key advanced stats insights entering the Jets-Stars series:

1. Rantanen's midrange goals, shots on goal

Rantanen scored the only third period hat trick in a Game 7 in NHL history as the Dallas Stars forward helped eliminate the Colorado Avalanche, his former team. Rantanen had 11 of his 12 points (five goals, seven assists) during the final three games of the series against the Avalanche and ranks fourth among active players in career playoff points per game (1.28; 113 in 88 games).

Per NHL EDGE stats, Rantanen scored two midrange goals on two midrange shots on goal (one was an empty-net goal) in Game 7. He ranks among the NHL leaders in

midrange goals (three; tied for second behind former teammate Nathan MacKinnon's four) and midrange shots on goal (eight; tied for eighth) this postseason.

Rantanen, traded twice this season and acquired by the Stars from the Carolina Hurricanes prior to the NHL Trade Deadline, has found chemistry on Dallas' top line with center Roope Hintz, who has 39 points (16 goals, 23 assists) in 41 games for the Stars during the past three playoffs combined (leads team during that span). Per NHL EDGE stats, Hintz ranks second in the League in high-danger shots on goal (12), second in top skating speed (23.67 mph) and second in 22-plus mph speed bursts (nine) this postseason.

Rantanen and Hintz could benefit from the upcoming returns of two injured teammates, forward Jason Robertson and defenseman Miro Heiskanen, who could play at some point during the upcoming series. It's also worth noting Rantanen had nine points (two goals, seven assists) and 14 shots on goal in five games during the Avalanche's 2024 Western Conference First Round series win against the Jets.

2. Oettinger's high-danger prowess

The Stars starter leads goalies from the remaining playoff teams with 49 high-danger saves on 61 high-danger shots faced this postseason. He also leads all goalies this postseason in both midrange saves and long-range saves (51 each) and has not allowed any goals from long range.

Hellebuyck, a finalist for the Vezina Trophy as the League's top goalie and the Hart Trophy as NHL most valuable player, bounced back after two early goals allowed to win Game 7, but he previously struggled to replicate his elite regular-season form, especially on the road. Hellebuyck, who led the NHL in wins (47 in 62 decisions), goals-against average (2.00), save percentage (.925; minimum 35 games) and shutouts (eight) for the second straight regular season, has a .667 high-danger save percentage during the postseason, tied for second worst among goalies with at least one start.

Oettinger and Hellebuyck each allowed 12 high-danger goals during the first round, but Oettinger faced 25 more high-danger shots (61) than Hellebuyck (36). Hellebuyck allowed eight high-danger goals on 13 high-danger shots faced (.385 save percentage) in three road games during the opening round, while Dallas was 3-1 at home during their series win against Colorado.

3. Skating distances of Pionk, Harley

Jets defenseman Neal Pionk, who signed a six-year contract prior to the start of the postseason, finished Game 7 of the first round with 46:15 of ice time, the most in a playoff game in Jets/Atlanta Thrashers history. The Jets were down to five defensemen after Josh Morrissey was injured after playing 2:09. Pionk had the primary assist on the game-winning goal by Adam Lowry in double overtime, marking his third point (all assists) of the game and fifth (one goal, four assists) of the seven-game series.

Per NHL EDGE stats, Pionk skated 6.60 miles in Game 7, the most in a single game this postseason, including 3.67 miles in the defensive zone alone. Pionk now ranks seventh in the entire NHL and third among players at the position in total skating distance (25.01 miles) this postseason, while Stars defenseman Thomas Harley (28.65 miles in seven games) leads the League in that category playing an elevated role in Heiskanen's absence. The status of Morrissey and Heiskanen, as well as the workload and efficiency of Pionk and Harley, will be another crucial storyline during this series.

Among forwards, three players in this series rank among the top 10 in total skating distance through the end of the first round: Connor (25.71 miles, first) and Lowry (22.37 miles, 10th) from the Jets and Stars forward Wyatt Johnston (23.19 miles; sixth), who scored the go-ahead power-play goal in Dallas' Game 7 win.

Canadian Press

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11167600/jets-goalie-hellebuyck-clean-slate/>

After some 1st-round struggles, Jets goalie Hellebuyck gets clean slate against Stars

By Judy Owen The Canadian Press

Connor Hellebuyck says he feels like he's been given a second chance to show what he can do for the Winnipeg Jets.

After faltering at times during Winnipeg's opening-round Stanley Cup playoff series against the St. Louis Blues, the star goalie is carrying a lighter mental load after last Sunday's 4-3 double-overtime Game 7 victory.

"At this point, the pressure has kind of fallen off," Hellebuyck told reporters after the team's optional skate on Tuesday. "The weight of the world is off my shoulders. And that had nothing to do with anyone else, it's just the mental grind of that series. That being said, in that moment it was like a second chance for me.

"I just got to go and play my game and do what I do best. I don't need to do everything."

The victory sent the Jets into the second round of the Western Conference playoffs against the Dallas Stars, which begins Wednesday in Winnipeg.

Jets defenceman Neal Pionk said Hellebuyck made a promise to his teammates during intermission after the Blues took a 3-1 lead with 35 seconds remaining in the second period of Game 7.

"He said they're not getting another one (goal)," Pionk recalled. "So when he says something like that, he believes it. And we believed him and we knew we had to get two more for him and then we're going to do the rest from there."

The Jets did just that.

With Hellebuyck out of the net for the extra attacker and just over three minutes left in the third period, Vladislav Namestnikov scored with 1:56 remaining and Cole Perfetti tied it up with three seconds left.

“Getting into that OT it was, ‘I’m not going to let these guys down,’” Hellebuyck said.

He stopped four shots in the first overtime and then five more before Jets captain Adam Lowry had the puck bounce off him past goalie Jordan Binnington for the series-clinching marker at 16:10 of the second overtime.

“I don’t want to call it an awakening, but there was definitely a moment there where I was able to take my game to another level,” Hellebuyck said. “And feeling that, it definitely gives you some momentum and some confidence going into the next round.”

The Jets had jumped out to a 2-0 lead in the series against the Blues, but the gap was closed after St. Louis won its three home games.

Hellebuyck was pulled in those road matches and replaced by Eric Comrie.

The goaltender from Commerce, Mich., had allowed six goals in a 7-2 loss in Game 3 and all the goals in a 5-1 Game 4 defeat. In a return trip to St. Louis, he was pulled after the second period when he let in five goals in what ended up being a 5-2 loss in Game 6.

The reigning Vezina Trophy winner, who’s up for the top goalie award again and the Hart Trophy for league MVP this season, said he felt like he was playing the puck well.

“And then bad bounces happened or breakdowns happen and you start chasing results a little bit and in the back of your mind the results kind of creep in,” Hellebuyck said. “It makes you wonder, is what you’re doing enough? And that was the biggest thing this series, is what I’m doing enough?”

But he feels the support from his teammates and calls it a “family growth moment.”

“I’m really excited. It’s a re-start for me,” Hellebuyck said. “Who cares about what just happened? We got through it, and moving forward here I’m really excited to put my best foot forward and do my job.”

Hellebuyck finished the St. Louis series with a .830 save percentage and 3.85 goals-against average.

Dallas netminder Jake Oettinger backstopped the Stars to the Game 7 win over the Colorado Avalanche in their opening-round matchup. He has a .911 save percentage and 2.85 goals-against average.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11168201/banged-up-jets-tough-series-dallas/>

Banged-up Jets preparing for tough series with bruising Stars

By Judy Owen The Canadian Press

Mark Scheifele and Josh Morrissey were noticeable at the Winnipeg Jets' optional skate on Tuesday, but not in a really great way.

The two injured stars were wearing non-contact yellow jerseys and are questionable to play in Wednesday's second-round playoff opener against the Dallas Stars — the first time the teams will meet in the NHL post-season.

"We'll go day to day here," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. "We'll see where they're at for (Wednesday).

Scheifele was injured in Game 5 against the St. Louis Blues, a series the Jets won with a thrilling 4-3 double-overtime victory on Sunday.

The top-line centre has been skating and participated in Tuesday's practice in a limited way.

Arniel was including defenceman Logan Stanley in his status update, who was also wearing a yellow jersey. He and veteran blueliner Morrissey were both injured in Game 7 and only skated ahead of the practice.

Dallas, which defeated the Colorado Avalanche 4-2 in Game 7 last Saturday, is also dealing with some injury question marks for the first game of the Western Conference clash.

Forward Jason Robertson, who led the Stars with 35 goals, missed the first round because of a lower-body injury suffered in the team's final regular-season game.

He had a full practice with the Stars on Tuesday in Dallas. Head coach Pete DeBoer told reporters "he's close" to returning to game action.

It was a similar progress report for defenceman Miro Heiskanen, who had knee surgery in early February but is also practising.

"We don't have to play him 26 minutes and that wouldn't be the plan," DeBoer said of Heiskanen.

The Jets earned home-ice advantage throughout the playoffs after finishing first in the league with a Presidents' Trophy-winning 116 regular-season points. Game 2 is Friday.

Dallas finished second in the Central Division and third in the conference with 106 points.

The Jets won three of four games against the Stars during the regular season, including a 4-0 shutout on April 10 when the clubs were vying for top spot in the division.

Jets winger Kyle Connor and Stars forward Mikko Rantanen both have 12 playoff points heading into the series.

Rantanen scored a third-period hat trick in his team's series-clinching win over Colorado.

"They're a heck of a team," Jets defenceman Neal Pionk said of the Stars. "Really well-structured, really tight checking and they have a lot of skill, too. So that's what we're prepared for this series."

Winnipeg's series against St. Louis finished with 623 combined hits. The Jets dished out 322 of them.

Dallas and Colorado combined for 492 hits in their series, with the Avalanche throwing 284.

Arniel said the Stars are a big team and it's "wait and see" about how physical the games will be.

"Each series, each team kind of takes on its own life," he said. "They got three lines, real solid lines offensively. They can do things, obviously, defensively well."

"So I think that it's a different sort of look to what we just saw. But yeah, we know these guys. They've been hot on our tail all year long, so it's a great matchup."

DeBoer has said Winnipeg's defensive strength will be a focus.

Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck claimed a second straight William M. Jennings Trophy this season as the goaltender who played a minimum of 25 games for the team that allowed the fewest goals against (2.32 average) in the league.

Hellebuyck finished the St. Louis series with a subpar .830 save percentage and 3.85 goals-against average. Dallas netminder Jake Oettinger had a .911 save percentage and 2.85 goals-against average against Colorado.

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11168187/analysis-winnipeg-jets-second-round-stars/>

ANALYSIS: Jets' second-round series could go the distance as well

By Paul Edmonds CJOB

The St. Louis Blues were two seconds away from upsetting the Winnipeg Jets on Sunday night. Two seconds!

Of course, as we know, the Jets staged a rally for the ages with that limited time on the clock to eventually win Game 7 and their first-round Stanley Cup playoff series in double overtime.

We make mention of this because it's important to understand and examine how and why the Blues – a plucky group for sure, but one that doesn't match the talent and depth of the Jets – almost ended Winnipeg's season in upset fashion.

For their part, the Blues were able to push the series to the distance and beyond by throwing the puck to the Jets' net at every turn, crowding the net front, defending their goal line and hitting everyone in a Winnipeg jersey – many times with violent intent.

Now – as we witnessed – the Jets responded in kind and also used home-ice advantage to eventually outlast St. Louis, but if you're the Dallas Stars – Wednesday night's second-round playoff opponent for Winnipeg – how much of the Blues' game plan will you use yourself to try to potentially find that elusive edge?

After all, as Jets head coach Scott Arniel indicated Tuesday, his club and the Stars are similar in their composition and the way they play, but it's still a Central Division series and plausible to believe Dallas could see a path to victory based on the St. Louis blueprint.

Meanwhile, after the physicality of their first-round series and the resolve they were forced to show in staring down an early elimination for a third straight year, the Jets must now feel battle-tested and firmly planted for anything Dallas could possibly throw at them.

Conversely, maybe it's the Jets themselves that use what they successfully had to deal with as part of their strategy to advance past the Stars – leading to an intriguing start to Game 1 between the Central Division's two top teams.

If so, don't be surprised if this Jets and Stars series comes down to another Game 7 and the final seconds of it. The final two seconds, in fact!

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/stanley-cup-playoffs-round-2-preview-jets-vs-stars/>

Stanley Cup Playoffs Round 2 Preview: Jets vs. Stars

By Ryan Dixon

Welcome to a second-round series where both teams likely feel like they've already spent the amount of emotional capital required to win the Stanley Cup.

Two series went the full seven games in Round 1 and, as it happens, they were both Central Division matchups.

On Saturday night, the Dallas Stars became the first club in NHL history to overcome a multiple-goal deficit in the third period of a Game 7 and win in 60 minutes. Mikko Rantanen, an Avalanche member for a decade, scored a third-period hat trick to bury his old squad, then used an ice-side, post-game interview to declare he still loved every one of his former teammates.

Twenty-four hours later, the Winnipeg Jets scored two goals with the goalie yanked to pull even versus the St. Louis Blues. The second tally, courtesy Cole Perfetti, came with three seconds remaining in the third and represented the latest Game 7 equalizer in league history. Captain Adam Lowry won the game for Winnipeg in double-overtime.

Anything left in the tank, guys?

Of course, once the puck drops for Game 1 Wednesday in Winnipeg, both the Jets and Stars will be ready to roll — at least mentally, that is.

Making these two teams' first-round experience even more similar, both Dallas and Winnipeg played Game 7 of their matchup without a top forward and (for the most part) without their best defenceman.

The Stars squeaked by Colorado without a single minute from second-leading regular season scorer Jason Robertson or stud blue-liner Miro Heiskanen.

As for the Jets, No. 1 centre Mark Scheifele was injured in Game 5 versus the Blues and didn't play again. Meanwhile, defenceman Josh Morrissey left Game 7 after skating for just 2:09, meaning his team had to get by without him for most of five periods.

The Stars have said they expect Robertson and Heiskanen back in Round 2, though they haven't committed to a timeline.

Scheifele was a game-time decision before Game 7 and the Jets gave no update on Morrissey after their big win.

For the sake of all of us watching this great matchup — the first ever between the franchises — let's hope all four guys get in the series, and soon.

Head-to-Head Records

Winnipeg 3-1-0

Dallas 1-3-0

Jets X-Factor: Getting Scheifele, Morrissey back

Whether they'd admit it or not, the Jets had to be mentally bracing to go through another post-mortem where the team failed in the first round. Winnipeg has more wins than every team in the league in the past two seasons combined (108), but was easily dismissed in five games by the Vegas Golden Knights in 2023 and — despite holding home ice advantage — was pushed aside in five by Colorado last spring.

Then they go out, win the Presidents' Trophy and choke on home ice in Game 7 courageously battle back versus the Blues and snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

Will the weight of the Prairies come off Winnipeg now?

As crucial as it is for both teams to get their injured guns back, you have to think the Jets really, really need Scheifele and Morrissey in the lineup. Without Scheifele, you're looking at a squad where Adam Lowry or Vlad Namestnikov are centering the top unit. And amazing as Neal Pionk was playing 46:15 in Game 7 versus St. Louis, it's not fair to ask him to fill the role of No. 1 guy for two weeks of high-stakes playoff hockey.

Stars X-Factor: Mikko Rantanen

Is the Moose loose?

Mikko Rantanen — the man they call "Moose" — was quiet for four games versus Colorado, then raged like an angry swamp donkey through the wetlands with 11 — 11! — points in the final three contests.

It's obviously been a harrowing season for Rantanen. First, he's ripped away from the only team he's ever known in a January trade. Then, he's pretty much immediately under the gun to decide whether he'd be willing to ink a long-term deal with the Carolina franchise that traded for him. When that didn't come to pass, he was on the move again, this time inking an eight-year extension with the Stars as part of the deadline day transaction.

He's now had about two months to wrap his brain around everything that happened, settling in with the Stars and getting back to being the six-foot-four, 215-pound playoff terror he is.

Also, can Dallas finally get off on the right foot here? Despite making two consecutive conference finals, the Stars have managed to lose eight consecutive Game 1s. That's an almost unthinkable stat for a team that's had the playoff success Dallas has experienced the past couple springs.

It's all well and good that Stars coach Pete DeBoer has an insane 9-0 career record in Game 7s, but maybe Dallas could do a better job of avoiding those winner-take-all situations by posting the odd 'W' out of the gate.

Key Stat: .758

What else can it be but Connor Hellebuyck's save percentage in three Round 1 road games?

If there's an answer for how this all-world goalie struggles so mightily in road playoff games — he's .838 away from Winnipeg in the past three post-seasons — it requires more expertise to provide than you'll find in this corner.

If you're a Jets backer, you have to be hoping it's just an all-time bizarre anomaly and things will normalize now that Hellebuyck is getting a crack at Round 2.

This playoff yips narrative — he's better at home, but still nowhere near what you'd expect for a perennial Vezina contender — felt like it was going to get downright painful when the Blues grabbed a 2-0 lead just over seven minutes into Game 7 on Sunday. Credit Hellebuyck, though, for gathering himself and allowing just one goal in 88:56 of play after that.

Maybe this extremely odd subplot dies with the rest of Winnipeg's Round 1 ghosts.

How Winnipeg Wins: The Jets had the league's best power play in the regular season (28.9 per cent) and were especially deadly on home ice, converting 31.6 per cent of the time.

In the playoffs, those two numbers dipped to 22.7 per cent overall and 20 per cent at home.

Recall, before Scheifele went out of the lineup, the Jets were playing without top wingers Gabe Vilardi (who returned in Game 5) and Nikolaj Ehlers (returned in Game 6).

If Scheifele gets back in the lineup, can the Jets get their man-advantage mojo back?

In terms of players who were in the lineup all seven games, Kyle Connor was fantastic for Winnipeg and is tied with Rantanen and William Nylander for the playoff scoring lead with 12 points. If Connor can keep firing with more support behind him and Hellebuyck looks like his regular self, the Jets — who had a league-best plus-86 goal-differential in

the regular season — will improve their playoff-worst minus-9 mark (at five on five) from Round 1.

How Dallas Wins: If this team puts Robertson and Heiskanen back in the lineup, it's going to be able to grind opponents into dust.

Remember, Tyler Seguin joined the squad right before the playoffs began after missing five months following hip surgery and he popped two goals and four points in the first round. Put Robertson in there and the top nine on this team is unrelenting.

Then there's the defence.

Thomas Harley, who's grown to become one of the best two-way defencemen in the league, saw more total time on ice (197:06) than any player in the league in Round 1. If Heiskanen can come back and relieve that burden by anchoring the other top 4 pair, it's going to be huge for Dallas. Really, DeBoer will get to a point where either Harley or Heiskanen is on the ice for every single life-and-death minute of a contest.

The Stars survived Round 1, but did so with the second-worst five-on-five expected goals for percentage (42.85 per cent) of the 16 teams playing. Getting Heiskanen back could really help swing that.

That's also a good segue to mention one key Star we've glossed over so far, goalie Jake Oettinger. Hellebuyck's Team USA batterymate from the 4 Nations Face-Off had a .911 save percentage against a dangerous Avs team. Basically, Oettinger made all the stops he was expected to and, when the rest of the team is as good as the Stars, that can be enough.

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/05/06/jets-look-to-outshine-stars>

Jets look to outshine Stars

Final Central Division clash a first-time post-season matchup

By: Mike McIntyre and Ken Wiebe

Are we having any fun yet?

By the numbers

Winnipeg Jets vs Dallas Stars

- Winnipeg Jets: 56-22-4, 116 points, first in Central Division, first in Western Conference, first in NHL

- Beat the St. Louis Blues in seven games in the opening round of the Stanley Cup playoffs
- Dallas Stars: 50-26-6, 106 points, second in Central Division, third in Western Conference, fifth in NHL
- Beat the Colorado Avalanche in seven games in the opening round of the Stanley Cup playoffs

The Winnipeg Jets are still alive in the Stanley Cup playoffs thanks to a “Manitoba Miracle On Ice” which included Cole Perfetti’s season-saving buzzer-beater and Adam Lowry’s double-overtime dagger in Game 7 Sunday night against the St. Louis Blues.

All of which begs the next question: What might they do for an encore?

The answers start to come on Wednesday night when the best-of-seven second-round series against the Dallas Stars gets underway at Canada Life Centre.

There’s no shortage of scintillating storylines in the first-ever postseason meeting between these fierce Central Division rivals, who finished first and fifth-overall in the regular season standings. Here are seven key ones.

1) What’s left in the tank?

Both the Jets and Stars were pushed to the absolute limit in the first round. Dallas pulled off the improbable comeback first, rallying on Saturday night from a 2-0 Game 7 deficit to score four unanswered goals to beat the Colorado Avalanche.

“I think when your life flashes before your eyes like it did the last 10 minutes of that Game 7 the other night and you get that close to your season ending, you appreciate every day you can come to work and are still alive here,” Stars head coach Pete DeBoer told reporters in Dallas on Tuesday.

He was talking about his team, of course.

But the same logic would certainly apply to Winnipeg.

Both clubs are coming off incredible highs while also having very little time to catch their breath and recover. In that sense, there should be no real advantage or disadvantage, the way you might get if one team had cruised through its opening round.

“I think we can ride the momentum from the last series win, but at the same time reset and get ready for a new challenge with Dallas,” said Jets defenceman Neal Pionk.

2) Connor Hellebuyck vs. Jake Oettinger

This is a fascinating goaltending battle between the top two American puck-stoppers who were teammates in February at the 4 Nations Face-Off.

Hellebuyck is coming off a shaky series against the Blues, while Oettinger is widely regarded as one of the main reasons Dallas was able to get past Colorado.

That led to plenty of talk that perhaps Oettinger had surpassed Hellebuyck as the likely number one for the U.S. Olympic team next winter.

The real challenge for Hellebuyck might be in his own head, something he spoke candidly about on Tuesday.

"It's one of those things that's been building all those years and I think it's just because I want it so bad," he said of his playoff struggles, which included being pulled in all three games played in St. Louis.

"Probably the hardest part of goaltending is getting shelled, on the road, and getting pulled. And then coming back the next day and putting your best foot forward."

To his credit, Hellebuyck stood tall against the Blues in Game 7 once the deficit hit 3-1 near the end of the second period. He made several key saves in the final frame and the two overtimes and perhaps, in the process, has slayed the proverbial dragon.

"Getting into that OT it was 'I'm not going to let these guys down.' They pulled through and the rest is history," he said. "I definitely felt a little something there. At this point, the pressure has kind of fallen off. The weight of the world is off my shoulders."

If Hellebuyck can return to the type of regular-season form that led to a first-ever Hart Trophy nomination and a fifth Vezina Trophy nomination, then look out.

"We're in some new territory that we haven't been in in a little while. I'm really excited. It's a re-start for me. Who cares about what just happened?" he said.

"We got through it, and moving forward here I'm really excited to put my best foot forward and do my job."

3) Injury concerns

Winnipeg and Dallas are mirror images of each other in multiple ways, including the fact they each pulled off Game 7 victories without their best defencemen and a top forward out of the lineup.

Josh Morrissey suffered an upper-body injury just a few minutes into the contest on Sunday and didn't return, while Mark Scheifele missed a second straight game due to an upper-body ailment. Both participated in Tuesday's practice wearing yellow non-contact sweaters and are considered "game-time decisions" for Game 1.

Miro Heiskanen (knee) and Jason Robertson (knee) missed the entire Colorado series, but both are nearing returns for the Stars.

Obviously, the absence/addition of these four players could drastically alter the series. Jets defenceman Logan Stanley and Stars forward Colin Blackwell are also nursing hurts.

4) Star power

Even if they might be missing a key weapon or two, there's no shortage of firepower on either squad.

Jets forward Kyle Connor and Stars forward Mikko Rantanen led their respective teams with 12 points in the first round, which has them tied for the playoff scoring lead.

Connor scored two game-winners and set up two clinching goals as well.

Nine of Rantanen's points came in the final three games, including being in on all four goals in that Game 7 rally by Dallas. Talk about coming in hot.

The Jets also have the likes of Gabe Vilardi and Nikolaj Ehlers, who didn't start the St. Louis series due to injuries but certainly had an impact by the end of it.

Cole Perfetti certainly fits the billing of a budding star as well after scoring three goals, including twice in Game 7. And don't discount the job Neal Pionk has done on the back-end.

The Stars lean heavily on the likes of Wyatt Johnston, Roope Hintz and Matt Duchene, while Thomas Harley is one of the best young defencemen in the game.

"They're a heck of a team. Really well structured, really tight checking, and obviously they have a lot of skill, too. So that's what we're prepared for this series," said Pionk.

5) Depth/secondary scoring

These are two teams that have faith in all four lines and, given how taxing the opening-round series was on both fronts, you can be sure that both coaching staffs will be leaning on their depth in the second round.

The Jets got at least one point from 18 of the 23 skaters who suited up in the first round, while 17 of the 19 skaters to appear for the Stars also got on the board.

The Jets' depth was heavily tested, but a number of role players came up with big moments, whether that was Lowry delivering the series-clincher in double overtime, or defenceman Haydn Fleury playing more than 33 minutes in what was just his second game of the opening-round series to have a hand in that game-winning goal — even though he wasn't credited with a point.

"We spoke all year about (being) the sum of all parts and that our depth is really good," said Jets defenceman Dylan DeMelo. "That was on display, for sure."

Vladislav Namestnikov, Nino Niederreiter and Morgan Barron all did a bunch of heavy lifting as the series moved along.

The Stars have three balanced lines that can score, while the expected return of Robertson early in the series should stretch out the lineup even further. The Jets got a pair of pivotal fourth-line goals against the Blues, while the Stars got an OT winner from Blackwell in Game 2. You can count on unsung heroes playing a role in the outcome of this great matchup.

6) Home-ice advantage? Road-ice disadvantage?

While it's true the Jets could technically win the Stanley Cup by losing every game they play away from Canada Life Centre, that's a dangerous way to live. But Winnipeg's splits during the first round were quite something: 4-0 at home, 0-3 on the road.

No doubt they'll want to continue using the Whiteout crowd to their advantage, but a Jets team that led the NHL in road victories during the regular season (26) could help the cause with one or two in enemy territory this round.

Dallas was one of the best home teams during the 82-game campaign and went 3-1 at American Airlines Center in the first round and 1-2 in Denver.

7) Bench bosses

The chess match between Arniel and Blues bench boss Jim Montgomery was fascinating to observe and the next one with DeBoer also figures to be highly entertaining.

Arniel's first taste of the Stanley Cup playoffs as a head coach featured plenty of drama and an exhilarating Game 7 victory.

Adjustments were a hot topic of conversation during the opening round and the Jets' ability to adapt should come in handy against a Stars team that is a bit deeper than the Blues and also features a bit more high-end talent.

DeBoer's team also needed a two-goal rally in the third period to avoid extinction as well, as he improved to a ridiculous 9-0 in Game 7s during his time behind an NHL bench.

DeBoer has a decisive edge in experience as an NHL head coach, as his teams have advanced to the Stanley Cup on two occasions (New Jersey Devils in 2012 and San Jose Sharks in 2016) and have been to the Western or Eastern Conference final seven different times — including four times during the past five seasons with both the Stars and Vegas Golden Knights.

As mentioned in the first round, Arniel was an associate coach on the New York Rangers team that lost in the Stanley Cup final in 2014 to the Los Angeles Kings, and he will also lean on his experience at the helm during the run to the Calder Cup final in

2009 with the Manitoba Moose of the American Hockey League as these playoffs move along.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/05/06/the-goalie-whisperer-2>

The goalie whisperer
Jets' Flaherty a humble, one-of-a-kind coach

By: Ken Wiebe

Wade Flaherty is the goalie whisperer.

He is a man who prefers to remain in the shadows, calmly going about his business.

He's the answer to a trivia question that became even more relevant last month when Alex Ovechkin passed Wayne Gretzky for the all-time goal lead in NHL history.

He's also one of the few professional hockey players to drink from the Stanley Cup, the Calder Cup, the Turner Cup and the Kelly Cup. Yet, you won't ever see Flaherty flaunting his resumé or seeking the spotlight.

As the only goalie coach in Winnipeg Jets 2.0 history, Flaherty has worked closely with one of the best netminders of this generation and forged a strong relationship with Connor Hellebuyck, who is up for both the Vezina Trophy and Hart Trophy after his remarkable regular season.

With the Jets preparing for a second-round matchup against the Dallas Stars that opens on Wednesday night at Canada Life Centre, Flaherty's ability to connect with his goalies remains an important storyline. Hellebuyck was able to step up mid-game to backstop his team to a Game 7 victory Sunday after wobbly road losses in a series he admitted put his mental abilities to the test. The Jets netminder now prepares to battle with his Team USA teammate Jake Oettinger.

"When I first met him, I could tell that he believed in me and he really cared a lot about me and my game," said Hellebuyck. "That's a lot more than you can say about a lot of guys. For a lot of guys, it's just a game and they're there to improve their goaltender and that's it. He really cared about everything: off-ice, feelings, energy level. He cared about it all."

Flaherty was forced to do a lot of self-diagnosis during his playing days and the quest to do things better is something that has continued to serve him well as he advanced to the coaching ranks.

"It's his understanding of the relationship in what a goalie needs," said Jets backup goalie Eric Comrie. "He doesn't try to change your game, he tries to add to your game. It's a dialogue here. All three of us are sharing together. Helly, myself and Flats."

A lot of that sharing comes through video sessions. And unlike in many other places, it's not just Flaherty and Hellebuyck bouncing ideas off one another and breaking things down. Because of Comrie's unbridled passion for the sport and the position, he's involved in the process as well.

"It's awesome, listening to them talk about the situations," said Flaherty, noting the importance of feedback. "What it does is that it gets the dialogue going. It's a hot stove of three goalie nerds.

"It's such a benefit for Comrie to be learning from Connor Hellebuyck. On the flip side, Eric Comrie's breakdown of plays can benefit Hellebuyck. It's hugely beneficial for all three of us."

Those benefits have been on display all season long, with both Hellebuyck and Comrie enjoying the best individual results of their respective careers on a team that captured both the Presidents' Trophy as the top team in the NHL and the William Jennings Trophy as the team that allowed the fewest goals.

"This whole time, it's not that I have the right answers. We're going to learn together. We've built our game together," said Hellebuyck. "He knows the mental side of things as well. He knows the whole 360 of it.

"He's never just jamming it down your throat. He's suggesting things here, suggesting things there. Working things through with me. That's when we both improve. I know I'm not alone. When I see things, he also sees things."

As for his philosophy, Flaherty tries to cater to the strengths of each goalie he works with.

"I don't have hard and fast rules. Not one size fits all. But there are some non-negotiables in some aspects of it," said Flaherty. "There are things that we incorporate to make your game more efficient — and better. What it comes down to is doing reps on it until you get comfortable is the idea. I'll never force anything on the goalie, that 'you have to do it this way.' I'll strongly make suggestions, but I'll never force it on anybody."

The ability to see things and dig into them is what has helped each of Hellebuyck, Comrie and Flaherty grow together.

"He's just an easy going guy. We see the game the same way. His understanding of the game is something I'm a big fan of. With how much we help each other. It's a two-way street and it's great," said Comrie. "The big one is the calmness. He's not riding waves. He's done an amazing job of making sure that he stays even keel. It's a process, not a sprint. He's one of the best in the world at that."

So, how did Flaherty get here, to a point in his career where he's highly respected and widely regarded as one of the best in the game at his position?

Let's just say it has been an incredible odyssey — one that includes a slight doctoring of a birth certificate.

Flaherty, now 57, grew up in Terrace, B.C., a relatively small city in the Western part of the province.

He started playing goal himself before he even started skating, the byproduct of growing up with two older brothers.

"My dad always built an ice rink in the backyard. I had two older brothers and I always joke, but at the end of the day, they needed a target and I was the youngest by four or five years," said Flaherty. "Once I got into organized hockey, it was just something that I was drawn to.

"If you go back to that era, I had the Mike Palmateer mask. I painted it myself with the Toronto Maple Leafs logo and, when he went to the Washington Capitals, I did it that way. I was drawn to the goaltenders, visually. That's where it started. All my friends were a year older than me, so my mom altered my birth certificate so I could start minor hockey a year early."

After playing on a number of provincial championship squads and getting some valuable experience playing in the senior leagues as a teenager, Flaherty eventually worked his way up to the Western Hockey League with the Seattle Thunderbirds.

But being in a big city away from home brought its challenges and he bounced around a bit before finding his footing with the Victoria Cougars.

"Everybody wants to play in the NHL," said Flaherty. "You thought of it, but it was such a big dream coming from such a small town."

Although Flaherty was chosen by the Buffalo Sabres in the ninth round of the 1988 NHL draft, he never signed with the organization.

After completing his overage season with the Cougars, Flaherty signed a minor league deal with the Minnesota North Stars and ended up with the Greensboro Monarchs, who were an expansion team in the ECHL.

Coached by Jeff Brubaker, that Monarchs team went on a remarkable run to the Kelly Cup championship in 1990.

Flaherty was in a job share with Nick Vitucci that season and started the playoffs as the No. 2 guy on the depth chart.

“He was a great teammate, a great goalie partner,” Vitucci, now a pro scout with the Nashville Predators, recalled. “It was funny, we went into the playoffs and I got the start in Game 1. We had a big win on the road, we upset the first-place team in the league and then, in Game 2, we lost in overtime and a brawl started. I ended up getting a one-game suspension.

“Wade came in and never gave up the net again. I was his biggest cheerleader the rest of the way, and he was fantastic in that playoffs and brought us a championship.”

That ability to raise his level of the play when the games mattered most would become a calling card for Flaherty at the minor league level.

“He made clutch saves, timely saves. A big-moment goalie is what he was at that level. It didn’t surprise me the success that he had after that,” said Vitucci. “He was a great goaltender. He was very dialled in, focused and all of that, so you would think those would be great traits moving forward to get into coaching, for sure. It doesn’t surprise me at all.

“At the rink, you could tell early on that he was a pro’s pro. The way he went about practising and his preparation, all of that.”

Flaherty eventually got to live his NHL dream, making his debut for the San Jose Sharks and turning aside 43 saves in a 6-4 loss to the Edmonton Oilers on April 12 of 1992.

His time in the NHL included a total of 120 games with the Sharks, Predators, New York Islanders, Florida Panthers and Tampa Bay Lightning.

With the Islanders, Flaherty was between the pipes when Gretzky scored the 894th and final goal of his illustrious career, on March 29 of 1999.

In March of 2003, Flaherty was traded to the Predators and appeared in his final NHL game.

Flaherty was re-signed by Nashville that summer, partly to serve as a mentor for Brian Finley, who was chosen sixth overall in the 1999 NHL draft. That job share was a successful one, but when it came to the playoffs, Flaherty once again got the starting job and helped lead the Predators affiliate Milwaukee Admirals to the Calder Cup.

That summer, Flaherty signed with the Vancouver Canucks, who had the Manitoba Moose as their primary affiliate.

Flaherty spent three seasons with the Moose, helping them reach the conference final in the first season before bowing out to the Chicago Wolves, while also aiding in the development of Alex Auld before Auld graduated to the NHL.

Sharing the crease with a prized prospect was something Flaherty would do for one more season in 2007-08, when he was signed by the Chicago Blackhawks, who had Corey Crawford beginning his pro hockey journey.

“Chicago calls on July 1. I had a conversation about Dale Tallon and he said ‘listen, if there is a call-up, it’s not you,’” said Flaherty. “Your job is to teach him professionalism on and off the ice. I was like ‘100 per cent.’ It was awesome because he threw all of the cards on the table.

“I was there as a mentor.”

Flaherty admits this is where the idea of coaching entered his mind.

Much like he did with the Admirals, at the end of practices, he’s organizing and running some of the extra drills.

“I’m already kind of going into that mode a little bit,” said Flaherty. “Some of the drills I would take, but I’m 38 or 39. I don’t need extra reps. That’s where I got the coaching bug, I guess you would say.”

Flaherty was pondering retirement when an opportunity arose to join the China Sharks in a player/coach capacity on a team that was funded by the San Jose Sharks.

“I was going to retire, but I thought this would be a good way to go out,” said Flaherty. “Have some fun. See a part of the world.”

Near the end of the season in China, Flaherty was contacted by the Blackhawks about a position as a developmental goalie coach to work with Crawford and Antti Niemi.

The problem was that the Blackhawks wanted him to rejoin the organization right away, but Flaherty wanted to honour his commitment to the Sharks before accepting the position.

Eventually, the Blackhawks relaxed the timeline, allowing Flaherty to finish out the season and transition full-time into coaching in February of 2009.

“Now, everybody does it, but I was one of the first in that role,” said Flaherty. “I would say I walked into a perfect storm. Corey Crawford and Antti Niemi were the first two goalies I was working with (as a coach officially). Pretty skilled goalies to begin with.

“I did that for two years and got a Stanley Cup ring.”

In the summer of 2011, Flaherty was hired by the Jets to be the NHL goalie coach and he’s been doing that job ever since.

“It’s no different than playing. I played until I was 39 or 40 and I was still learning. I always said that I would retire if I knew everything — and it’s no different in coaching,” said Flaherty. “You’re always trying to develop yourself. I’m constantly reading or watching videos and looking for different things to incorporate.”

The opportunity to work with a thoroughbred like Hellebuyck is something Flaherty takes great pride in.

“It’s amazing. I always knew Connor Hellebuyck was going to be a good goalie,” said Flaherty. “To do what he’s doing and has accomplished to this point in his early career, I’m not being honest if I say to you ‘I knew he was going to be the best in the world.’ I always knew he was going to be a hell of a goalie. But even with that being said, there are a lot of things you’ve got to get through when you turn pro. There are a lot of mountains you’ve got to climb, hills that you’re going to slide down and he handled them very well.

“He’s very, very competitive. He does not like to get scored on. He wants to get better every day and his standard of his game is above anybody else’s. So, watching him grow from a rookie pro coming out of college to being one of the best in the world, but also becoming a man and a father and a husband, is special. It’s cool to see the whole thing.”

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/05/06/downtown-bars-restaurants-scoring-with-huge-assist-from-jets>

***Downtown bars, restaurants scoring with huge assist from Jets
Excited hockey fans bringing energy, enthusiasm, cash into embattled core***

By: Chris Kitching

The Winnipeg Jets aren’t the only ones who are winning amid the NHL club’s extended playoff run, which is set to continue with another home whiteout Wednesday night.

It’s been a boon to certain businesses — bars and restaurants, in particular — while flooding downtown with thousands of hockey fans, boosting energy and morale and showcasing the city to audiences around the world.

“Any time they are winning, there’s more confidence and pride in the city,” said Dwight Benson, general manager of the Elephant & Castle Pub and Restaurant at 340 St. Mary Ave., a block south of Canada Life Centre. “We’ve been full with a lineup outside (on game days), so it’s great for business. We’re just excited to see a long playoff run.”

Businesses and fans are gearing up for Game 1 of the Jets’ second-round clash with the Dallas Stars, after Sunday’s thrilling Game 7, double-overtime win to end the St. Louis Blues’ season.

Winnipeg will host the first two games — Wednesday and Friday, both starting at 8:30 p.m. — and, if necessary, games 5 and 7. The Jets are in the second round for the first time since 2021.

Each home game will see more than 15,000 fans fill the downtown arena, and 5,000 more will cram into whiteout parties on Donald Street.

Others will watch on screens inside bars or restaurants such as the Elephant & Castle, which has additional staff working on game days. The pub extends its hours when the games have later-than-usual start times.

Jets-themed decorations have been put up inside. Shot specials are delivered on a miniature hockey stick. Slogans, including “Go Jets Go,” and caricatures of Jets players are painted on patio windows outside.

They are among dozens of commercial windows painted by artist Rick Eastland since the playoffs began.

The Jets’ Game 7 win brought an uptick in customers. On Tuesday, he painted windows from about 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. before heading to his usual job as a courier.

After his shift, he expected to resume painting until 10 p.m. The Jets’ run is morphing into a unifying experience for the city, he said.

“The excitement is building,” Eastland said. “It’s transitioning into something the community rallies around.”

At Devil May Care Brewing Co., business has been brisk during home and away game watch parties. The brewery and taproom, at 155-A Fort St., had to ramp up beer production due to increased sales.

“We’re brewing faster than we normally would right now,” co-owner Colin Koop said.

The taproom is bringing in food trucks for the upcoming home games.

Koop said Winnipeggers can sometimes “get down” on the city as a whole, so he’s pleased to see people so enthusiastic.

The Jets’ home playoff games have had evening puck drops, when most retail stores near the arena are closed.

Aimee Peake, who owns Bison Books at 424 Graham Ave., said she hopes the rise in foot traffic will help people discover businesses such as hers.

"I do think that people coming downtown, who don't normally come downtown, for the whiteout parties and the excitement that's going on are becoming familiar with the area, and might walk by," she said.

"It's great for downtown and the city. I think it really is building on the pro-Canadian movement, our revived nationalism. This gives us two reasons to rally and support each other, and get together and celebrate some of the things that we identify with."

Kate Fenske, executive director of the Downtown Winnipeg Business Improvement Zone, said some fans are discovering businesses they weren't aware of.

"Overall, it's a huge win for businesses as the Jets keep winning, which we hope they do," she said.

Businesses and staff are focusing on providing great service because they want customers to return in the future, Fenske said.

Downtown Winnipeg BIZ's enviro team is paying special attention to litter pickup, storefront pressure-washing and other tasks to get the area looking "as best as we possibly can get it," she said.

Downtown resident Gary Jarvis has noticed cleaner and, on game nights, far busier streets, which he was encouraged to see.

"A lot of people are around, which is a good thing," he said. "Sometimes around this area, after 5 p.m. or 6 p.m., it's no man's land."

Jarvis said he hopes the experience changes perceptions about downtown safety and brings more attention to social issues in the area.

A long playoff run could bring long-term benefits to the city. Economic Development Winnipeg's aim is to attract visitors, investments, conferences and events.

"How our city is perceived by those clients, by those decision-makers, the Jets' playoff run has an impact on putting Winnipeg on the map," said Natalie Thiesen, the agency's vice-president of tourism. "It allows us to facilitate those positive conversations about what makes Winnipeg a great place to invest, to visit, to meet."

"It allows us to spark a conversation about... our people, the pride and excitement, and how passionate Winnipeggers are not just about hockey, but the arts and other elements that make our community great."

Economic Development Winnipeg hired 10 social media content creators from key markets in Canada and the U.S. to promote the city during the playoffs.

The posts had more than 58 million views and an “earned media” value of almost \$2 million, Thiesen said.

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/jets-hellebuyck-sheds-weight-of-the-world-in-series-victory>

Jets' Hellebuyck sheds 'weight of the world' in series victory

By Paul Friesen

He's coming off a roller-coaster series that saw him pulled from three games and had analysts debating whether or not he should get the hook in Game 7, too.

Going into the first game of Round 2 against Dallas on Wednesday, Winnipeg Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck acknowledged he had moments where he was also doubting himself during the first-round series against St. Louis.

“That’s when the mind really starts to wander a little bit,” Hellebuyck said on Tuesday. “And makes you think, are you doing anything wrong? As much as you look at it, you know there’s not a whole lot different in your game but you still start to chase results a little bit.”

Despite the two-time Vezina winner’s swollen playoff numbers, the Jets got the result, a double-overtime win over the Blues in Game 7.

The series win comes after two seasons of first-round exits in which neither Hellebuyck nor the players in front of him played anywhere near their best.

“At this point, the pressure has kind of fallen off,” he said. “The weight of the world is off my shoulders. And that had nothing to do with anyone else. It’s just the mental grind of that series.”

That grind saw him give up 16 goals in the three road games and at least three goals in all but one game of the series.

That after averaging exactly two goals against, per game, during the season.

Including the last two years, Hellebuyck has given up at least three in 15 of his last 17 playoff games.

Not one to readily acknowledge feeling pressure or needing to be better, the 31-year-old did the latter going into Game 7, a little of the former on Tuesday.

"It's one of those things that's been building all those years," he said. "I think it's just because I want it so bad. Probably the hardest part of goaltending is getting shelled, on the road, and getting pulled. And then coming back the next day and putting your best foot forward. That's probably the biggest jump goaltenders make as they're growing up.

"No matter how much you think you've got a grip on it, there's always more of a learning curve, always more pressure and different scenarios."

Game 7 against St. Louis threw yet another curve ball at the Hart Trophy finalist as the NHL's most valuable player.

Beaten three times in the first two periods, he had a choice: fold, or find himself again.

"After the third one, in the intermission, he said they're not getting another one," Jets defenceman Neal Pionk recalled. "So when he says something like that, he believes it. And we believed him."

The Jets came back with two to tie it, including the season-saving goal with less than three seconds on the clock to force overtime.

After their goalie had given up three goals on 16 shots, he stopped the next 13.

"I don't want to call it an awakening," Hellebuyck said. "But there was definitely a moment there where I was able to take my game to another level."

His teammates had his back and didn't quit, either.

The result was a shared experience they'll never forget.

"Seeing how many people believe in me and how many people care about me in this room was a really good feeling," Hellebuyck said. "Talk about growth moments, that's definitely a family growth moment, for me personally, at least. Getting into that OT, it was 'I'm not going to let these guys down.' They pulled through and the rest is history."

Actually, the rest is still to come. Starting Wednesday, with a whole new roller-coaster ride and series of potentially career-defining moments.

The man behind the mask is strapped in, his pads strapped up, his confidence reset.

"That's just a big weight off his shoulders," head coach Scott Arniel said.

The first round, with all its possibility and unpredictability, often tests a team like no other. The Jets learned that the hard way the last two years.

"We're in some new territory that we haven't been in in a little while," Hellebuyck said. "I'm really excited. It's a re-start for me. Who cares about what just happened?"

The crowd who kept chanting M-V-P at him, even after the bad games in St. Louis, probably does.

“It’s hard to describe that,” Hellebuyck said. “It’s just so awesome to be part of that. Something I cherish so deeply. It’s a big reason why I’m going to be a Jet for life. This crowd believes in me, this team believes in me, as much as I believe in myself.

“That’s dangerous.”

<https://winnipegssun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/fortune-telling-samberg-struck-by-game-7-dream-come-true>

Fortune-telling Samberg struck by Game 7 dream come true

By Paul Friesen

There was no sign of tarot cards or a crystal ball at Dylan Samberg’s locker stall on Tuesday, nor did he have it closed off in dark curtains.

But when I reminded the Winnipeg Jets defenceman what he’d said going into Game 7 against St. Louis, he agreed it had an eerie, fortune-telling feel to it.

Before Sunday’s game, Samberg was asked how his boyhood dreams of a playoff Game 7 went.

He came up with this. “The classic three seconds on the clock, you miss the shot – and magically another three seconds gets added again.”

The next day, a fanned shot by Nik Ehlers and a second chance led to the game-tying Jets goal by Cole Perfetti with, you guessed it, three seconds on the clock.

“It does sound weird,” Samberg was saying on Tuesday. “Once Nik fanned on it, you’re like, ‘There’s only a few seconds left.’ Then Lows made a good play to get it back to him, and the rest is history.

“It was pretty surreal. Feels weird even thinking about it, still.”

It feels a little weird to be in the second round of the playoffs, too.

The Jets continue their quest for the Stanley Cup against Dallas, beginning Wednesday night at 8:30 in Winnipeg.

“I’ve never seen Round 2,” Samberg said. “This organization hasn’t seen Round 2 in quite some time. We’re all very excited. And we’re playing against a tough opponent who plays a lot like us. So should be a hard-fought battle.”

In one respect, at least, it shouldn't be as hard as the clinching game against the Blues was.

The Jets lost top defenceman Josh Morrissey early in that one, forcing Samberg and defence partner Neal Pionk, in particular, to go the extra mile, literally, when the game went to double-overtime.

The former high-school teammates who grew up together in Hermantown, Minn., combined for nearly 90 minutes of ice time, Pionk clocking in at 45:46, Samberg at an even 44 minutes, career highs for both.

"You guys know the story," Pionk said. "We grew up five minutes from each other. He's four years younger than I am, but I've got three younger brothers so I've basically known him my whole life. And for two guys to do that from a small town is pretty cool."

At the time it was something else.

"I was pretty exhausted after," Samberg said.

"Collective effort, is the way I see it," Pionk added. "We all took turns during our shifts, and did what we had to do. A lot of it's a mindset, too. You've got to mentally prepare yourself for that kind of battle."

Monday was all about recovering.

"It was nice to spend some time outside, get some good Vitamin D and get re-charged," Samberg said.

As for taking a look inside his crystal ball again to see what might be coming against the Stars, the 26-year-old figures it's best to wait a while.

"I've got nothing for you now," Samberg said. "But maybe when we get further into the series I'll have something for you."

We'll definitely check in if there's another Game 7.

<https://winnipeg.sun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/weve-got-our-hands-full-jets-look-in-mirror-and-see-stars>

'We've got our hands full': Jets look in mirror and see Stars

By Paul Friesen

The St. Louis Blues are in the rear-view, but the Winnipeg Jets see their reflection in the Dallas Stars.

When the teams met late in the season, defenceman Dylan DeMelo said it was “like a look in the mirror.”

That continued in the first round of the playoffs, where both pulled off third-period comebacks to win Game 7 of their series, the Jets over St. Louis, the Stars against Colorado.

“We’re a lot alike,” Jets coach Scott Arniel said on the eve of Wednesday’s series-opener. “Dallas just went through the exact same thing, down two goals and having that monster third period to win that series... mirror images of each other.”

Stars coach Pete DeBoer put it another way.

“When your life flashes before your eyes like it did the last 10 minutes of that Game 7 the other night and you get that close to your season ending, you appreciate every day you can come to work and are still alive,” DeBoer said.

In some ways the teams are eerily similar.

Through 82 games, they both scored exactly 275 goals and averaged 28 shots per game.

That’s continued in the playoffs, where they’ve scored an identical 21 goals in seven games.

They both suffered lopsided losses in some first-round games, but came through in dramatic Game-7 fashion.

Dallas had an extra day to come down from their Rocky Mountain high, while the Jets will be feeling the Blues for a while, yet, having gone through the most physically punishing series of the first round.

“I do want to throw out there that the hits ended up being 325 for the Winnipeg Jets and 308 for the St. Louis Blues,” Arniel pointed out. “So we came out on top.”

That may be, but they took a pounding, evident on the expected absences of Mark Scheifele and Josh Morrissey for Game 1 against Dallas on Wednesday.

The St. Louis game plan was to hit everything that moves.

Surely the Stars won’t be as hell-bent on that.

“I don’t know,” Jets defenceman Dylan Samberg said. “We’ll see how the second round pans out. They might not be as physical, but they’re definitely heavy on pucks, heavy in the corners and heavy on battles. They still have a lot of physicality to their game.”

“They play a lot like us... a defence-first mindset.”

The Jets survived the Blues physical onslaught, but barely.

Perhaps the Stars see how well that worked and try a similar approach.

Then again, they are who they are: the No. 3 scoring team in hockey this season, tied with Winnipeg. St. Louis wasn't even in the top-10.

“They'll still be physical,” Arniel said. “They're still in the Central. They're a big team, too. But each series takes on its own life. They've got three real solid lines offensively. So it's a different look to what we just saw.

“But we know these guys. They've been hot on our tail all year long. So it's a great matchup.”

That goes between the pipes, too.

At 26, Jake Oettinger has already taken the Stars to the conference final twice, one more time than Connor Hellebuyck has taken the Jets that far.

Oettinger comes into the series with a .911 saves percentage and 2.85 goals-against-average in the playoffs, significantly better than Hellebuyck's .830 and 3.85 numbers.

Teammates on the American team for the 4 Nations tournament, they'll be nearly 200 feet apart for most of this one.

What's right in front of the Jets, though: the challenge of coming out of the gate fast.

That hasn't been their strong suit, with nerves playing a role in their series opener against the Blues and again in Game 7.

“We actually talked about it this morning,” Arniel said. “It's the one area where we got out-chanced. Not always... but the other night it put us in a hole. This Dallas team, it's even deeper offensively, and we have to make sure that we're ready to go.”

There's no room for a letdown. The emotions of playoff wins and losses will test any team's mettle.

The Jets' historic finish against St. Louis? It's history.

“That was a great accomplishment,” Arniel said. “Now we've got to move on to Dallas, because we've got our hands full.”

<https://winnipegssun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/jets-morrissey-scheifele-expected-to-miss-series-opener-vs-stars>

Jets' Morrissey, Scheifele, expected to miss series opener vs Stars

By Paul Friesen

It looks like the Winnipeg Jets will start Round 2 of the playoffs without defenceman Josh Morrissey and centre Mark Scheifele.

Morrissey didn't even practise with the team on Tuesday, although he did get on the ice before the session.

Scheifele practised, but was wearing the don't-touch-me yellow sweater, an indication he's all but certain to miss Game 1 against Dallas on Wednesday.

"It's a good sign to see them out there and participating," is about all head coach Scott Arniel would say of his two wounded stars. "We'll see where they're at... they've got to wake up tomorrow and see if they've improved from today."

Morrissey, the Jets' top defenceman, was hurt early in Sunday's dramatic, Game 7 overtime win over St. Louis.

Scheifele, their top centre, was hurt in Game 5, missing the next two.

Defenceman Logan Stanley is also out after missing Game 7 and not practising on Tuesday, which means Colin Miller is likely to suit up for his first game since the third game of the Blues series.

Dallas is in a similar situation, awaiting the return of 80-point forward Jason Robertson and defenceman Miro Heiskanen.

Robertson, injured in the last game of the regular season, is more likely to play Game 1.

It's not new territory for the Jets, as they started the first round without forwards Gabe Vilardi and Nik Ehlers.

Morrissey and Scheifele take it to another level.

"It's a rallying point, right?" defenceman Neal Pionk said, looking back at how his team handled the absences in Game 7. "You see a player like Josh go down, who's been huge for us, one of our best players, it's a rallying cry in the locker room. Like, 'Let's do this for him. Let's do this for these guys.' That's where we took the motivation."

Fellow blueliner Dylan Samberg: "There's not much you can do in situations like that. We had a lot of our other defencemen step up, which was great to see."

Game 2 is Friday, after which the best-of-seven shifts to Texas for Games 3 and 4.

Daily Faceoff

<https://www.dailyfaceoff.com/news/2025-stanley-cup-playoffs-winnipeg-jets-dallas-stars-series-preview-pick-prediction-schedule>

2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs: Jets vs. Stars series preview

By Hunter Crowther

Winnipeg Jets: 1st in Central Division, 116 points, def. STL in Round 1 (4-3)

Dallas Stars: 2nd in Central Division, 106 points, def. COL in Round 1 (4-3)

The Skinny

You gotta hand it to the Jets and Stars: they closed out what might have been the best first round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs in recent memory.

Winnipeg held their own in terms of drama: down 3-1 with less than two minutes left in Game 7 of their first-round series against the St. Louis Blues on Sunday, the Jets scored twice, including one with 1.6 seconds remaining in regulation to force it to overtime. After more than 36 minutes of extra time, Adam Lowry tipped in a point shot to win the game and the series, sending Winnipeg to Round 2.

Third-period dominance leads to another comeback, history for Oilers

Dallas won Game 7 of their first-round matchup Saturday against the Colorado Avalanche, down 2-0 midway through the third period before storming back with four straight goals, three of which came from Mikko Rantanen against his former team in what will go down as one of the most memorable periods of hockey ever.

While both teams advanced, they had their share of struggles, with the Jets allowing St. Louis to run up the score in multiple games and come back to force a Game 7. Dallas, meanwhile, took a Game 1 drubbing and at times looked overmatched against the likes of Nathan MacKinnon and Cale Makar. However, both teams pulled magic out of their hats, or pulled something else out of something else, and are now one step closer to hockey's glory.

Head to Head

Winnipeg: 3-1-0

Dallas: 1-3-0

The Jets won three of their four games against the Stars, outscoring them 13-5. Connor Hellebuyck stopped 109 of 113 shots faced, posting a .965 save percentage (SV%) in that span. That being said, both teams have the privilege and curse of playing in the

Central Division, arguably the toughest division in hockey, with the type of zone-entry killing defense and all-world goaltending that makes every whistle in the opponent's zone feel like a win, and makes a Wednesday night in January feel like a Saturday night in May.

Fun fact: it's the first time these two teams have faced each other in the playoffs. Wait, is that a fun fact? I'm not sure, but, regardless, it's a fact.

Top Five Scorers

Winnipeg

Kyle Connor, 12 pts

Mason Appleton, 6 pts

Mark Scheifele, 6 pts

Neal Pionk, 5 pts

Cole Perfetti, 5 pts

Dallas

Mikko Rantanen, 12 pts

Wyatt Johnston, 7 pts

Roope Hintz, 7 pts

Thomas Harley, 5 pts

Tyler Seguin, 12 pts

X-Factor

It's really simple: Connor Hellebuyck. Moving along...

Alright, it's more complicated than that ... actually, it isn't. If we want a series that's half as exciting as what we got in the first round, the Jets' starting goalie will have to step up. It's hard to fathom such a dichotomy between Hellebuyck in the regular season – posting a .925 save percentage (SV%), a 39.6 goals saved above expected (GSAx) (10 more than the next goalie), expected to win his third Vezina Trophy and a finalist for the Hart Trophy – and Hellebuyck in the playoffs, who just allowed five or more goals in three of seven games in the first round. In his last three playoff seasons, his save percentage is .861 and his goals against average is 4.10. It's hard to come up with anything similar in hockey or other professional sports.

Hellebuyck told reporters ahead of Game 5 against the Blues that he's "studied goaltending extremely hard. I've probably studied the most out of anyone in this world, so I know what to do and how to get my best game." I believe him. There's a case to be made he's the best goalie of the '20s, and is already a future Hockey Hall of Famer. But if Hellebuyck wants to be considered one of the greatest of all-time, more than just a statistical highlight and bar trivia answer, then he needs to step up.

If he plays at the level we've seen during Winnipeg's regular season, the Jets could advance to their first Conference Final in seven years. If not, the Stars will have plenty of time to rest while they wait for one of the Edmonton Oilers or Vegas Golden Knights.

Offense

Through the regular season, the Jets' offense looked like it was built for a deep playoff run, with six players hitting the 50-point mark and five more finishing in the 30-point range. Connor recorded a career-high 97 points and finished with his second 40-goal season of his career, while Scheifele's 87 points finished second on the team. Despite missing 13 games with injury, Nikolaj Ehlers' 63 points nearly broke his own career high, and Josh Morrissey continued producing on the blue line with 62 points.

In the playoffs, Connor has been the driving force of the offense, recording 12 points (four goals and eight assists) in seven games, including a three-assist performance in Game 7 against St. Louis. Lowry and Perfetti drove play against the Blues, both with expected goals for percentages (xGF%) of more than 65. You always hear about how the speed of the game increases in the playoffs. But it feels like everything comes to a halt beyond the first 10 minutes of Game 1, with tighter checking and every inch of ice being fought over. That's where guys like Lowry thrive, asserting themselves in the high-danger zone around the net and creating opportunities for themselves and teammates.

Winnipeg had the NHL's best power play in the regular season with a mark of 28.9 percent, but that has seen a sizeable drop in the playoffs, down to 22.7. In fact, they have the lowest mark among teams still in the postseason. If the Jets are going to beat the Stars, they'll need a healthy power play with Scheifele and Morrissey that can match up against a Dallas penalty kill that's running at an 86 percent kill rate.

Just like Winnipeg, the Stars' offensive depth shone through the 2024-25 season. Matt Duchene drank from the fountain of youth and hit the 80-point mark for the first time in three years, and after a slow start, Jason Robertson found his game, finishing with a nice round 80 points. Wyatt Johnson, in just his third NHL season, set career highs in all offensive categories with 33 goals, 38 assists, and 71 points. Last but not least, there's Roope Hintz, the perennial "Oh yeah, that guy!" who again finished just shy of 70 points and makes everyone he plays with look good.

A total of nine players hit the 40-point mark, but that's if we omit Rantanen, whom they acquired ahead of the NHL Trade Deadline. Combine his stats from playing with the Avalanche, Stars and Carolina Hurricanes, and Rantanen's 88 points still put him 15th in the league – not bad for someone whose future wasn't settled for three-quarters of the year.

In Round 1, with Robertson out of the lineup and Tyler Seguin and Mason Marchment playing like they were out of the lineup, Rantanen pulled a Greg Jennings and put the team on his back, putting up 11 points in Games 5, 6 and 7 and recording a series-clinching hat trick at home in Game 7. The guy is a walking video game when it comes to playoff production, and unless your name is Connor McDavid or Leon Draisaitl, no one can match him. If a healthy Robinson joins him on the first line and a healthy Heiskanen takes his spot on the blue line, his offense might spike even higher in Round 2.

Defense

For Winnipeg, all but Haydn Fleury and Logan Stanley finished the regular season with even-strength Corsi percentages of more than 50 percent. Morrissey posted another elite-level defensive season, finishing with 60 points and leading Jets defenders with 49 takeaways. Dylan DeMelo won't grab anyone's attention with his prolific offense, but the former London Jr. Knights U16 standout knows how to separate man from puck and make a strong first pass, and as mentioned earlier, when the ice gets tougher to skate through, guys like DeMelo stand out.

Neal Pionk had been among the most prolific hitters in the game the past three seasons, averaging 191 per year. But in 2024-25, that number dropped to 114. While he missed some time with injury, Pionk spent more time with the puck than without it this season, averaging 22:04 of ice time – the most he's recorded over a full season – and finishing with his best even-strength Corsi percentage in the last five years. While he's continued his strong play in the playoffs – posting a 55 percent even-strength Corsi in seven games – his game was highlighted with the absence of Morrissey, carrying the load after the first period and into the two overtime periods.

The most impressive part of the Stars' victory over the Avalanche may have been that they did it without their best defender in Heiskanen, who has been out since Jan. 28 with a knee injury. The likes of Esa Lindell and Thomas Harley have stepped up in his absence. Yes, even Cody Ceci and Ilya Lyubushkin have played just well enough to keep Dallas in the fight. That being said, Lindell is getting eaten alive with the extra ice time, on the ice for more than double the even-strength shot attempts against (199) than for (97), resulting in a Corsi number of 32.7 percent.

Speaking of Heiskanen, the Finnish standout who would win the Norris Trophy if Cale Makar and Quinn Hughes didn't exist has been skating with the team and could see action early in the series against Winnipeg. If the Stars put him in the lineup, his addition pushes everyone like Ceci and Lyubushkin down the lineup, putting them in the 4-to-6 D range they're more suited for. However, this could all be gamesmanship from Dallas, and Heiskanen isn't even close to returning.

Goaltending

We focused a lot on Hellebuyck when discussing the X-factor of the series, so let's look at Jake Oettinger, a fellow U.S. National Team product. Compared to the first three regular seasons in his career, Oettinger's .909 SV% in 2024-25 was modest, as was the 10.7 GSAX, which ranked 22nd among goalies with a minimum 20 games played. His playoff numbers this spring are strong, with a modestly higher save percentage at .911 but is third among active playoff goalies with a 2.9 GSAX. Take away the five goals against in a 7-4 loss in Game 6, and that save percentage climbs to .916. The Stars' defense is weaker than years past, especially with Heiskanen's absence, but that's a testament to how confident Oettinger looked in net in Round 1. Like the Jets, Dallas has any and all success through the blue paint.

If both Hellebuyck and Oettinger are at their best, Hellebuyck is the better goalie and the Jets will have a greater chance of winning. But if we see flashes of what we saw in Round 1 from the Winnipeg netminder, then the Stars are the likely favorite. DFO colleague Steven Ellis summed up the crease matchup quite well in his Round 2 goalie preview:

“(Hellebuyck) has given fans very little reason to be confident once the games start to matter,” Ellis said. “We’ll see if he can flip the script against Dallas – if not, his fellow countryman will be there to steal the spotlight.”

Injuries

Injuries played a key factor for both teams in Round 1, and those same injuries will carry into the second round. The Jets lost Mark Scheifele for Games 6 and 7 against St. Louis, and Josh Morrissey left the final game of the Stars series midway through the first period with an undisclosed injury. If Winnipeg wants to beat Dallas, both Scheifele and Morrissey will have to be in the lineup sooner rather than later.

For Dallas, the lack of Heiskanen and Robertson hurt them at times against Colorado, especially on the blue line, where depth players forced to take on a bigger role were attacked. If neither player returns in the first two games in Winnipeg, the Jets will have a distinct advantage with the last change.

Intangibles

Winnipeg spent most of the year at or near the top of the league standings – and arguably most importantly, near the top of the Daily Faceoff Power Rankings – but all year, whether it was my DFO colleague Scott Maxwell or hockey fans and pundits in general, no one took them seriously. “Yeah but,” and “we’ll see,” were phrases often muttered. Once the playoffs began, all those fans and pundits were nearly proven right, and if it weren’t for a miraculous comeback, it would have been a disaster in Winnipeg.

But they’re here now, and all the noise from Round 1 was swallowed up by the deafening “Yeahs!” that echoed through Canada Life Centre after their captain clinched their first series victory since 2021. Brandon Tanev is blocking every shot he can and Morgan Barron, with saltwater in his veins from Canada’s east coast, is hitting everything in sight. This Jets squad won the Presidents’ Trophy and is playing desperately – and that’s a good thing. The road to the Stanley Cup is never comfortable, but the glory comes from pushing through.

Meanwhile, Dallas is all swagger right now, thumping the Avalanche in the third period of Game 7 and improving Head Coach Pete DeBoer’s Game 7 record to 9-0. While they’re missing someone like Chris Tanev on their blue line, whose gritty stay-at-home simplicity was a huge factor in them advancing to the Western Conference Finals last season, Harley, Lindell and Ceci are blocking everything they can.

I’ll give Benn and Marchment one thing: despite the lack of production, they tried to tear a piece of skin off someone on Colorado during every shift they were on for. In a seven-

game series, those bruises build up. If they can keep that up against the Jets, hitting Morrissey and Pionk on every dump-in, it will mean something in Games 5, 6, and 7.

Series Prediction

Both teams are riding off the adrenaline of action-packed, come-from-behind Game 7 victories. Man, the Central Division really knows how to deliver. I'm surprised at the amount of assumptions going behind the masses picking the Stars, if only because it's not a guarantee Heiskanen and Robertson are in the lineup for Game 1, and that, as usual, Winnipeg is overlooked and underrated. If Hellebuyck wakes up from this coma and remembers he's a playoff run or two away from the pantheon of 21st-century goaltenders, it will tilt in the Jets' favor.

That being said ... I'm a sucker for a storyline, and the pure dominance from Rantanen may be what tips the scales for the Dallas. Not to mention, I can't envision the likes of Seguin, Marchment, Duchene and Jamie Benn having another quiet series.

Stars in six games.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/do-the-jets-have-a-chance-against-stars-if-scheifele-and-morrissey-miss-time~3128701>

Do the Jets have a chance against Stars if Scheifele and Morrissey miss time? (VIDEO)

Do the Jets have a chance against Stars if Mark Scheifele and Josh Morrissey miss significant time? How much faith should there be in Connor Hellebuyck heading into the second round? TSN Hockey analyst Frankie Corrado joins SC with Jay Onrait to weigh in.

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/game-7-restart-has-hellebuyck-heading-into-series-vs-stars-with-confidence~3128972>

Game 7 'restart' has Hellebuyck heading into series vs. Stars with confidence (VIDEO)

Winnipeg looked down and out heading into the third period of Game 7 down two goals to the Blues, but a last-gasp comeback and 56 straight shutout minutes from Connor Hellebuyck fueled the Jets to victory. Hellebuyck promised his teammates at second intermission that he'd lock it down and he did just that to lead the Jets into the second round. John Lu has more.

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/will-game-7-performance-spark-hellebuyck-vs-stars~3128856>

Will Game 7 performance spark Hellebuyck vs. Stars? (VIDEO)

After rediscovering his form to help the Jets advance past the Blues in the first round, has Connor Hellebuyck erased all question marks around his postseason play? What does Winnipeg and Dallas have in store for their second-round series? Cheryl Pounder and Bryan Hayes join Domino's That's Hockey to discuss.

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/what-do-jets-and-stars-have-in-store-after-first-round-thrillers~3128822>

What do Jets and Stars have in store after first round thrillers? (VIDEO)

With the Stars mounting a thrilling comeback in Game 7, while the Jets pulled off the improbable to stun the Blues and take Game 7 in double-overtime, what do these two have in store for the second round? Bryan Hayes and Cheryl Pounder discuss with their series kicking off on Wednesday.