

<https://www.nhl.com/jets/news/three-things-rantanen-hat-trick-gives-stars-game-1>

***Three things - Rantanen hat trick gives Stars Game 1
Scheifele scores in his return to the lineup but Jets fall 3-2***

By Jamie Thomas

WINNIPEG – The Winnipeg Jets lost their first home game of the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs thanks to a 3-2 loss to the Dallas Stars in Game 1 of the Second Round at Canada Life Centre. Nino Niederreiter and Mark Scheifele scored for the Jets who will host Game 2 on Friday. Connor Hellebuyck made 21 saves and lost his first regulation home game since January 4 (4-2 loss to Detroit).

RANTANEN ATTACK

The Jets faced Mikko Rantanen a combined seven times in the regular season (4 GP with COL, 1 with CAR and 2 with DAL) and held the Finnish star to two points (1G, 1A). Adam Lowry's line was matched up with the Stars top line of Rantanen, Roope Hintz and Mikael Granlund and shut them down through 30 minutes until Rantanen went to work. Rantanen scored three goals in a span of 7:55, making him the first player in nearly 40 years to record a hat trick in consecutive playoff games and third in NHL history (Jari Kurri 1985, Doug Bentley 1944).

55 SCORES IN HIS RETURN

Mark Scheifele missed the last two games of the series with the St. Louis Blues but made his return to the lineup Wednesday night. Despite the fact that Scheifele missed the last 10 periods, he was tied for second on the team in scoring with six points. With the Jets down 3-1, Scheifele took a pass from Gabe Vilardi and wristed home his third goal of the playoffs to make it 3-2. Scheifele had numerous chances in the third period to tie the game but could not beat Jake Oettinger. The Jets number one centre played 22:36, had seven shots on goal and won 64% of his faceoffs.

POWER PLAY OUT OF SYNC

The Jets power play was back on track in the final two games of the last series against the St. Louis Blues. Wednesday night, the Jets had Mark Scheifele, Gabe Vilardi and Nikolaj Ehlers together on the ice for the first time in almost two months. Winnipeg went 0-for-4 with the man advantage and had seven shots on goal during those four power plays.

"Yeah, for sure. I thought we still had some good chances," said Scheifele.

"We still have some good looks, obviously, some things that we can do better, execution level wise. We had a pretty good power play all year. And we just got to put one in the net."

NHL.com

<https://www.nhl.com/news/topic/playoffs/2025/series-k-news/dallas-stars-winnipeg-jets-game-1-recap-may-7>

***Rantanen scores 2nd straight hat trick, Stars top Jets in Game 1 of West 2nd Round
Gets 3 straight in 2nd period for Dallas; Scheifele has goal in return for Winnipeg***

By Darrin Bauming

WINNIPEG -- Mikko Rantanen scored a natural hat trick in the second period, helping the Dallas Stars to a 3-2 win against the Winnipeg Jets in Game 1 of the Western Conference Second Round at Canada Life Centre on Wednesday.

"Sometimes it's ups and downs in hockey and now it's going well individually and as a team," Rantanen said. "But it's important in the playoffs, like I've said before, if you win or you have a good game never get too high. You've got to reset and enjoy. Enjoy it for five minutes after the game and then reset."

Rantanen became the first player in Stanley Cup Playoffs history with multiple three-goal periods in the same postseason; he had three goals in the third period against the Colorado Avalanche in Game 7 of the first round on Saturday.

"[Rantanen is] just somebody that you always have to know when he's on the ice," Winnipeg coach Scott Arniel said. "Whenever you face elite players, you have to know where they are. Obviously, he's feeling it coming off of Game 7. We've got to know when he's on the ice. He's a guy that you have to make sure especially you tie up that stick of his."

The forward has 14 points (eight goals, six assists) in his past four games. He has factored on 12 straight Dallas goals which marks the longest streak by a player in Stanley Cup Playoffs history.

"Let's see how long he can run this for," Dallas coach Pete DeBoer said. "Yeah, he's rolling and he's feeling it. Pretty impressive, what he's doing. I mean, considering the opponent and the time of year and how he's dominating games -- really impressive."

Jake Oettinger made 29 saves for the Stars, who are the No. 2 seed from the Central Division.

"I thought [Oettinger] was excellent," Rantanen said. "I think we played a good two periods and then they were pushing really hard in the third and we kind of sat back maybe too much. We talked about trying to be aggressive but they're obviously a very good team. They were pushing and we were kind of on our heels. 'Otter' was the difference-maker in the third."

Nino Niederreiter and Mark Scheifele scored for the Jets, who won the Presidents' Trophy which is awarded annually to the team with the best regular-season record in the NHL. Connor Hellebuyck made 21 saves.

"Right out of the gate I thought our detail, whether that was on face-off execution, when we won draws, whether that was tape-to-tape passing, just execution -- there was a lot of sloppiness to that game," Arniel said. "That did not feel like a playoff game, Game 1 in Round 2. That felt like Game 45 in the middle of December. Obviously, we know the high that we're on coming off that St. Louis game, but man, this is the playoffs. That's a game that no matter how you start the game or however you get into the game it's one of those ones that there's a way we have to play as a group and that's not how we played tonight."

Game 2 in the best-of-7 series is here on Friday (9:30 p.m. ET; CBC, TVAS, SN, TNT, truTV, MAX).

"It's never easy, especially here [in Winnipeg], especially against this team," Dallas forward Sam Steel said. "We wanted to get out ahead early and I thought we had a great start and just love the way we play for the most part. It's not perfect, but it's a great Game 1 on the road."

Niederreiter made it 1-0 Jets at 3:30 of the second period, chipping a backhand in off the far post from below the right face-off dot on the rush.

"We need to be sharper, we need to be better, we just need to be better on details," Niederreiter said. "As cliché as it sounds, our overall game wasn't good enough."

Rantanen then scored three consecutive goals in a span of 7:55.

He tied it 1-1 at 8:43, jamming in the rebound from Evgenii Dadonov's one-timer.

"We've traditionally been a four-line team so [Rantanen's] taken a little bit of a haircut ice time-wise with us," DeBoer said. "But I've been trying to supplement that a little bit because he is used to getting more ice and it's a lot easier when he's going like he is now, obviously."

Rantanen made it 2-1 with a tip on Thomas Harley's shot from the point at 14:21 and pushed it to 3-1 on the power play when his shot redirected in off the stick of Jets defenseman Dylan Samberg at 16:38.

"Sometimes it goes that way," Rantanen said. "The third goal goes off them and goes five-hole. Or when you're going through a tough stretch, you feel like you could only pray for those and those never come."

Scheifele cut it to 3-2, scoring 57 seconds later with wrist shot in the slot at 17:35 after Gabriel Vilardi stole the puck from Dallas forward Jamie Benn behind the net.

"I don't think we really found [our game] until the third period," Scheifele said. "It obviously wasn't a great start, so obviously there are some things that we can do better. We didn't play great, and we were right in it, so there's a positive you can take out of it. From there, we can move on to the next one."

Scheifele missed the previous two games because of an undisclosed injury sustained during the first period of Game 5 in the first round against the St. Louis Blues.

"It was awful," Scheifele said of having to watch Games 6 and 7. "It's a feeling that you don't want to wish on anyone. It was tough to watch, but obviously just super proud of the boys for that Game 7 comeback and win and to make sure my season wasn't ended. That was amazing by them and now we've moved on to another series."

NOTES: Rantanen entered Wednesday tied with Mario Lemieux who had a point on nine straight playoff goals with the 1992 Penguins. ... Dallas won the opening game of a playoff series for the first time since the Stanley Cup Final in 2020, ending an eight-game skid in series openers. ... Stars forward Jason Robertson skated 13:34 in his first game of the playoffs after missing the first round with a lower-body injury. Robertson led Dallas with 35 goals in 82 regular-season games and was second with 80 points, behind forward Matt Duchene (82). ... Winnipeg outhit Dallas 46-24. ... Scheifele led all Jets players with seven shots on goal, and has seven points (three goals, four assists) in six games in these playoffs.

<https://www.nhl.com/news/topic/playoffs/2025/series-k-news/mikko-rantanen-comfort-level-production-rising-for-dallas-stars>

***Rantanen's comfort level, production rising for Stars
Forward has 2nd straight hat trick in Game 1 win against Jets, 14 points in past 4 games***

By Tracey Myers

WINNIPEG – Mikko Rantanen talked about how he continues to feel comfortable with the Dallas Stars since they acquired him from the Carolina Hurricanes ahead of the NHL Trade Deadline in March.

"I think the Finns help," the forward said with a smile at Dallas' number of his fellow countrymen. "Obviously, they're good, dear friends of mine and I knew them from before, before even I came to Dallas. But all the guys, the rest of team are good friends of mine, too. They've been very welcoming and helping me a lot to settle in."

There's no doubt that comfort has translated to the ice, where Rantanen had his second hat trick in as many games to push the Stars to a 3-2 win against the Winnipeg Jets in

Game 1 of the Western Conference Second Round at Canada Life Centre on Wednesday.

He became the first player in nearly 40 years to have a hat trick in consecutive playoff games and third in NHL history. The most recent was Jari Kurri, who did it for the Edmonton Oilers in Games 5 and 6 of the 1985 Western Conference Final. Rantanen has 14 points (eight goals, six assists) in his past four Stanley Cup Playoff games with the Stars.

Has he ever been on a scoring streak like this?

"I don't think so, no," he said. "But, you know, linemates, teammates are obviously helping me a lot on the ice and such a deep lineup we have so it doesn't really matter who you play with. I've got to thank my linemates and teammates."

Rantanen's previous hat trick came in Game 7 of the first round, when he helped the Stars come back from a 2-0 deficit to eliminate his former team, the Colorado Avalanche.

"Keep it going. Let's see how long he can run this for," Stars coach Pete DeBoer said. "Yeah, he's rolling and he's feeling it. Pretty impressive, what he's doing. I mean, considering the opponent and the time of year and how he's dominating games, really impressive."

Oh, and in case another impressive stat is needed, Rantanen has factored on each of the Stars' past 12 goals, the longest streak by a player in playoff history. He's scored six of their past seven goals.

"Twelve straight? Yeah, I've never heard of that," said Stars forward Jason Robertson, who loves a good hockey statistic. "There you go. I mean, we'll take it."

"He's a premier player. He gets good bounces and I'm sure everyone else will get good bounces, too. He's working hard, everyone else is working hard and I'm sure everyone in here is itching to take the load off him. But we're happy to take his performances and we'll just find ways to win."

This performance helped the Stars break their Game 1 winless streak at eight. The last Game 1 win came Sept. 19, 2020, when they won the opener of that year's Stanley Cup Final against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

Game 2 against the Jets is here on Friday (9:30 p.m. ET; CBC, TVAS, SN, TNT, truTV, MAX).

Rantanen played heavy minutes when he was with the Avalanche, usually with center Nathan MacKinnon. The Stars wanted to keep that going, so on Wednesday they

played him on the top line with left wing Mikael Granlund and center Roope Hintz but also on the fourth line with center Sam Steel and right wing Evgenii Dadonov.

"We've traditionally been a four-line team so he's taken a little bit of a haircut ice-time wise with us," DeBoer said. Rantanen logged 19:08 of ice time on 28 shifts in Game 1.

"But I've been trying to supplement that a little bit because he is used to getting more ice and it's a lot easier when he's going like he is now, obviously."

Rantanen's two 5-on-5 goals came when he was out there with Steel and Dadonov.

"Yeah, it's a treat," Steel said. "He's one of the best players in the world and he's just on fire right now, so we're just trying to get him the puck. But he makes a lot of responsible plays too, he's easy to play with."

Jets coach Scott Arniel liked how Winnipeg's third line of left wing Nino Niederreiter, center Adam Lowry and right wing Mason Appleton played against the Stars' top line.

"But at the end of the day, he went to the net. He's a big man that got there with his stick and he's just somebody that you always have to know when he's on the ice," Arniel said.

"Whenever you face elite players, you have to know where they are. Obviously, he's feeling it coming off of Game 7. We've got to know when he's on the ice. He's a guy that you have to make sure especially you tie up that stick of his."

Rantanen has found his comfort level, on and off the ice. It's led to big things for him and the Stars.

"Sometimes it goes that way," Rantanen said. "Sometimes it's ups and downs in hockey and now it's going well individually and as a team. But it's important in the playoffs, like I've said before, if you win or you have a good game never get too high, you've got to reset and enjoy. Enjoy it for five minutes after the game and then reset."

Canadian Press

<https://www.chrisd.ca/2025/05/08/winnipeg-jets-dallas-stars-round-2-game-1/>

'This is the Playoffs': Winnipeg Jets Disappointed After Game 1 Loss to Dallas Stars

By Jim Bender, The Canadian Press

The Winnipeg Jets reflected the play of assistant captain Mark Scheifele on Wednesday.

After missing two games with an upper-body injury, Scheifele returned to action for Game 1 of Winnipeg's second-round series against the Dallas Stars.

The marquee centre scored as his Jets fell 3-2 to the Stars, but said getting back up to speed took time.

"I probably didn't find my stride until the second, probably later in the second, the third period," Scheifele said. "Then, I started feeling better. So, you're moving on to the next one, be better for the next one."

His teammates took just as long to find their stride.

Dallas outshot Winnipeg 9-0 in the opening seven minutes of the game, and took a 3-1 lead midway through the second period.

"It obviously wasn't a great start, so obviously there are some things that we can do better," Scheifele said. "We didn't play great and we were right in it, so there's a positive you can take out of it. From there, we can move on to the next one."

Nino Niederreiter also scored, getting the Jets on the board at the 3:30 mark of the second.

Mikko Rantanen replied with three straight goals for the Stars.

Dallas had a great start on Wednesday, Niederreiter said, and that's something Winnipeg needs to improve.

"Our start was, once again, not very good. It's something we know we've got to do better," said the Swiss winger, noting the matchup with the Stars will be "completely different" than the first-round battle his team fought against the St. Louis Blues.

"(The Stars) are obviously a very experienced team. They know how to be in a tight game, they are extremely patient. That is something we've got to learn from."

Falling behind has become the norm for the Jets this post-season. The team has surrendered the first goal in five of its eight playoff games this year, and needed a dramatic comeback to beat the Blues in Game 7.

"We need to be sharper, we need to be better," Niederreiter said. "We just need to be better on details. As cliché as it sounds, our overall game wasn't good enough."

Jets coach Scott Arniel agreed that details were an issue on Wednesday.

"There was a lot of sloppiness to that game," he said. "That did not feel like a playoff game, Game 1 in round two. That felt like game 45 in the middle of December."

“Obviously we know the high that we’re on coming off that St. Louis game, but man, this is the playoffs. That’s a game that, no matter how you start the game or however you get into the game, it’s one of those ones that there’s a way we have to play as a group and that’s not how we played tonight.”

Losing Game 1 in front of a sold-out home crowd is disappointing, the coach said.

“We know we just gave up home-ice advantage,” he said. “And that wasn’t a game where they rolled over top of us for three periods. That was a game where we weren’t at our best, and we should have been here, especially at the start of another series at home.”

Winnipeg will host the Stars in Game 2 of the best-of-seven series on Friday.

Sportsnet.ca

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/we-werent-at-our-best-jets-disappointed-with-performance-in-game-1-loss/>

'We weren't at our best': Jets disappointed with performance in Game 1 loss

By Jacob Stoller

WINNIPEG — The adrenaline hangover from Sunday’s overtime thriller was palpable.

The crowd was hardly in Whiteout ‘mania’ mode. The players lacked pop. Their opponent? Skilled, to be sure, although hardly intimidating.

Game 1 of the Winnipeg Jets’ second-round series against the Dallas Stars — a 3-2 loss — hardly felt like a playoff game.

“That felt like Game 45 in the middle of December,” Jets head coach Scott Arniel said. “Obviously, we know the high that we’re on coming off that St. Louis game, but man, this is the playoffs.”

If it weren’t for the 12 saves Connor Hellebuyck made in the first period — where the Jets didn’t even get a shot on goal until the 12:45 mark — this game would’ve been long gone. Winnipeg was flat off the hop, allowing Dallas’ loaded top nine to generate chance after chance.

After that initial shooting gallery, it’s not like the Stars were overly imposing. Well, except for their ‘Moose,’ Mikko Rantanen, who potted a natural hat trick in the second period.

There was a path to a win. The Jets just jumbled it, thanks to an unconvincing forecheck and a lopsided loss in the one-on-one battle department. Not to mention the fact that they went 0-for-4 on the power play.

“We just gave up home ice advantage,” Arniel said. “And that wasn’t a game where they rolled over top of us for three periods. That was a game where we weren’t at our best, and we should have been here, especially at the start of another series at home.”

A glass-half-full approach, though, would lead you to believe this series is certainly winnable for the Jets. Dallas is hardly as suffocating as St. Louis was, and there was plenty of real estate for Winnipeg’s top guns.

“I’m not harping back onto St. Louis, but we didn’t have a lot of room to make plays, to hold onto pucks (in that series). Tonight we had time. And we didn’t make the plays,” Arniel said. “

In Round 1, St. Louis was able to take the Jets’ stars out of games by delivering bone-crushing hits. While Dallas delivered three hits on Mark Scheifele — mind you, none of them were very noticeable — they weren’t able to get a piece of Nikolaj Ehlers or Kyle Connor.

“We rushed ourselves. I think we were thinking that people were going to come pouring over top of us,” Arniel said. “We had more time to make plays and to execute, and I just felt that that was probably the biggest thing. We weren’t crisp that way.”

The Moose Is Loose

Containing Rantanen is going to be the biggest key from here on out.

After scoring three goals in Game 1, the Finnish star has now recorded 14 points in his last four games.

“We all know how elite he is. He’s really done it these last few games and throughout his whole career,” Jets winger Nino Niederreiter said. “Always (been) a fantastic player, but we’ve got to find a way to shut him down and not make it too easy on him.”

Two of Rantanen’s goals were scored right in front of Hellebuyck’s crease.

“He’s a big man that got (to the net) with his stick, and he’s just somebody that you always have to know when he’s on the ice,” Arniel said.

You can’t man-on-man defend Rantanen — the Stars have other uber-talented forwards that will make you pay — but there has to be some onus on the Jets defenders to get in his grill. St. Louis’ high-end players — i.e. Robert Thomas and Jordan Kyrrou — weren’t anywhere near the calibre of Rantanen. And Arniel’s going to have to adjust accordingly.

Line Juggling

Speaking of adjustments, Arniel re-jigged his middle six after the first two periods — placing Ehlers alongside Adam Lowry and Mason Appleton.

Ehlers has fared well alongside Lowry at various points in the year, providing a new wrinkle alongside their shutdown centre. This might be the type of series where we see Arniel lean into that duo more.

The Jets' identity line — Lowry, Appleton and Niederreiter — has lost its lustre lately. While they do a fine job containing opponents' best players, their counterattack has dried up. They're not as efficient off the cycle, and in turn, the offence has dried up. Those aren't ideal ingredients for a line that's facing Rantanen and Roope Hintz.

Ehlers provides Lowry and Appleton — two meat-and-potato players who generate offence off the cycle — with the type of speed that can not only get that trio out of their own zone, but create chaos in the offensive zone.

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/video/how-can-the-winnipeg-jets-shut-down-stars-rantanen/>

How can the Winnipeg Jets shut down Stars' Rantanen? (VIDEO)

Jennifer Botterill joins Evanka Osmak and Ken Reid on Sportsnet Central to discuss what the Winnipeg Jets need to do in order to shut down Dallas Stars' Mikko Rantanen for the rest of the series.

TSN.ca

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/can-the-jets-slow-down-rantanen~3129670>

Can the Jets slow down Rantanen? (VIDEO)

Craig Button joins SC with Jay Onrait to discuss if he thinks the Jets can slow down Mikko Rantanen, if Winnipeg's healthy forwards can give the team confidence that they can win the series against the Stars, and if Connor Hellebuyck will have to outplay Jake Oettinger for the Jets to win the series.

<https://www.tsn.ca/nhl/video/lu-jets-need-to-be-sharper-on-their-details-when-trying-to-contain-rantanen~3129667>

Lu: Jets need to be sharper on their details when trying to contain Rantanen (VIDEO)

The Moose got loose in Game 1 as Mikko Rantanen scored three goals in the second period to power the Stars to a win over the Jets. John Lu joins Jay Onrait to discuss if Winnipeg can stop Rantanen, how Mark Scheifele looked in his return, and if Jets fans can expect Josh Morrissey to return for Game 2.

The Athletic

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6341370/2025/05/08/jets-stars-game-1/>

Mikko Rantanen records another hat trick, Stars edge Jets in Game 1: Takeaways

By Murat Ates and Mark Lazerus

WINNIPEG — The Winnipeg Jets can't stop Mikko Rantanen either.

Rantanen, coming off a massive effort in Game 7 of the Dallas Stars' first-round series, started the second round with another hat trick and helped the Stars to a 3-2 victory over the Jets in Game 1 on Wednesday night at Canada Life Centre.

The Stars trailed 1-0 in the second period when Rantanen — often being double-shifted — scored at the 8:43 mark, and then at 14:21, and then at 16:38 (on the power play) to give the Stars a 3-1 lead.

Rantanen had recorded a hat trick in the Stars' Game 7 victory over Colorado, and the Jets had even more Game 7 first-round drama, as they rallied from a late two-goal deficit to eliminate the St. Louis Blues.

In a tight Game 1 on Wednesday, Rantanen and the Stars did the most to carry over the momentum. Rantanen moved into the NHL playoff scoring lead, with eight goals and seven assists for 15 points. He's either scored or assisted on 12 consecutive Stars goals, and has now posted eight goals and six assists in his last four games.

This despite him being all over Winnipeg's pregame scouting report.

"He's a big man and he's hard to move," Jets head coach Scott Arniel said before Game 1. "When he decides to take pucks to the net, you've got to get into him early because he can do that. And then he has the offensive instincts and then the skill set that he has — he's an elite goal scorer in this league."

Mark Scheifele, back in the Winnipeg lineup, brought the Jets back within a goal 57 seconds after Rantanen scored his third, but Stars goalie Jake Oettinger finished with 29 saves, and this time there were no late heroics from the Jets. They came close, as Stars defenseman Esa Lindell knocked away a potential goal in a six-on-five situation.

The victory snapped a baffling streak, as the Stars had lost eight consecutive Game 1s, with their last opening-game victory coming in the 2020 Stanley Cup Final.

'Moose' on the loose

Adam Lowry is one of the top defensive centers in the NHL, so naturally, Arniel utilized the home team's last-change privileges to keep him on the ice against the red-hot

Rantanen, known as “Moose.” But there are ways around that, especially in the second period, when the teams have the long change.

Stars coach Pete DeBoer gave Rantanen several extra shifts on the fourth line in Oskar Bäck’s spot, alongside Sam Steel and Evgenii Dadonov, and it paid off big-time as he scored on two of them during his second-period hat trick. On the first, he made a one-handed lunge to bat in a Dadonov rebound (Lowry was on the ice for this one). On the second, he deflected a Thomas Harley shot past Hellebuyck.

“It’s a deep lineup we have,” Rantanen told ESPN’s Leah Hextall during the second intermission. “Even fourth-line guys are making plays. Lot of skill through the lineup and they made a couple nice plays there to set me up. It was good.”

Of course, the way Rantanen’s going, you could put him on a line with DeBoer and Casey DeSmith and he might pot a pair per period.

“He’s a game-changer, right?” DeBoer said. “You saw that last game, but he’s a game-changer in a league where everybody’s only got one of those guys, maybe two. The eight teams left probably have a couple each. I think the games get tight-checking, the scores get lower, there’s less and less room and those types of players have the ability to make something out of nothing. He did that the other night (in Game 7) for us. That’s sometimes what separates teams this time of year.”

Hellebuyck helps Jets survive red-hot Stars start

Hellebuyck struggled against the Blues, giving up 26 goals in the series and getting pulled three times on the road.

That’s what made the “MVP!” chants he got from fans at Canada Life Centre so striking, both before Game 7 against St. Louis and again on Wednesday night.

“It’s hard to describe that. It’s just so awesome to be part of that,” Hellebuyck said of the crowd support. “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. That’s when things get going and things get rolling. Having them behind me, I don’t want to say (it’s) a sigh of relief, but just a proud moment in my world.”

Hellebuyck helped Winnipeg withstand Dallas’ strong start to Game 1, as he made 12 first-period saves, including eight before Winnipeg had a shot on goal. Hellebuyck robbed Rantanen after a great low-to-slot pass from Mikael Granlund, and also turned aside a dangerous Wyatt Johnston rush shot. He gloved down Granlund’s backhand deke with less than three minutes to go in the third period, too — and it still wasn’t enough to earn the win.

It's difficult to fault Hellebuyck for any of Rantanen's goals — nor does his play in Game 1 prove that he's all the way back. There's still some work to do. He finished Game 1 with 21 saves on 24 shots — many of them dangerous.

Mark Scheifele scores in return to Jets' lineup

Scheifele missed the end of Winnipeg's first-round series after taking heavy hits from Brayden Schenn and Radek Faksa in the first period of Game 5. The Jets persevered, closing out Game 7 without him, but it wasn't easy without their No. 1 center.

Scheifele scored a goal in his return to Winnipeg's lineup on Wednesday, finishing off a centering feed from Vilardi 57 seconds after Rantanen's hat-trick goal. He was dangerous on the power play, even though he didn't score on the man advantage, and led the Jets with seven shots on goal.

There were a few uncharacteristic giveaways from Scheifele, but Winnipeg should head into Game 2 with its full complement of forwards intact.

Winnipeg still fighting against net-front traffic

DeBoer promised to take a page out of the St. Louis Blues' playbook when it came to net-front play against the Jets, and Rantanen's second goal was proof he did his homework.

"We'd be crazy not to look at what we felt St. Louis did well and where we felt maybe St. Louis fell short, that maybe we'd have to be better at," DeBoer said before Game 1. "The recency factor is always critical when you're pre-scouting. There's no more recency than the seven games those two teams just played. So, we've looked at that pretty heavily."

The Stars responded by driving to the front of the net with multiple layers of screens, looking for more of the greasy goals that beat the Jets in Round 1. No goaltender gave up more goals in the first round via deflection, screen, or both than the 11 Hellebuyck did against St. Louis — and Rantanen's deflection of Harley's shot made it 12.

Robertson returns

Early in the first round, injured Stars defenseman Miro Heiskanen was skating with the Stars while Jason Robertson was still limping around American Airlines Center in a heavy, thigh-to-ankle knee brace. But Robertson was the first to make it back, returning to the lineup for Game 1. DeBoer eased him into the rotation, playing him on the third line with Wyatt Johnston and Mason Marchment, but in more limited minutes.

Robertson's postseason numbers are solid — 38 points in 45 games over the last three seasons — but he's been streaky. Still, he led the Stars with 35 goals in the regular season and had 80 points.

"Instant offense, right?" DeBoer said before the game. "He's our best goal scorer, probably, Mikko aside. But also what you realize with Robo, he's a big body and he

plays a heavy game, a playoff-type game. He's hard on pucks, he protects pucks, he goes to scoring areas on the ice."

Robertson finished the game with one shot on goal in 13:44 of ice time.

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6341336/2025/05/08/jets-stars-mikko-rantanen-nhl-playoffs/>

Jets frustrated by Mikko Rantanen, lack of rhythm in Game 1. What are the keys to Game 2?

By Murat Ates

WINNIPEG — The Winnipeg Jets saw Mikko Rantanen coming, but he lit them up anyway. Now his name is etched into the NHL history books twice over, and the Dallas Stars have a 1-0 series lead.

Rantanen's second-period hat trick gave him points on 12 straight Stars goals, surpassing Mario Lemieux's streak of points on nine consecutive goals for the 1992 Pittsburgh Penguins. He's also the first player in Stanley Cup playoff history to score multiple hat tricks in a single period.

It's not as though the Jets didn't know what kind of problem he could be. Rantanen was all over Winnipeg's pregame scouting report after his Game 7 third-period hat trick against Colorado. He was also burned into Winnipeg's memories after what he did to the Jets for Colorado last year: nine points in five games, including the series-winning goal. Rantanen was a big part of Jets head coach Scott Arniel's game plan, which included extensive head-to-head minutes with Adam Lowry's shutdown line and the Jets' top defence pair of Dylan Samberg and Neal Pionk.

The shocking thing is how little of the puck Rantanen needed to do his damage.

That Rantanen still found time, space and the offensive spark to win Game 1 for Dallas is partly a testament to his incredible ability, and partly a testament to his coach, Pete DeBoer. Rantanen scored three goals in a 7:55 span and possessed the puck for less than two seconds on each. The Jets played Rantanen hard throughout those six shifts, predominantly using Lowry's line against the Stars' top line of Rantanen, Roope Hintz and Mikael Granlund. He barely had the puck, making only one play with it aside from the three goals he scored, but Rantanen didn't need to hold the puck to do his damage.

"Let's see how long he can run this for," DeBoer said. "He's rolling and he's feeling it. It's pretty impressive, what he's doing."

Rantanen scored his first goal by reacting to a rebound faster than Samberg in the Jets' slot. He scored his second goal on a deflection from the circle to Connor Hellebuyck's right. His third goal took puck luck — a Stars-friendly bounce off of Samberg on a Dallas

power play — but that's two of three goals with better execution than that of the Jets who tried to mark him.

DeBoer gave Rantanen extra shifts in the offensive zone by double-shifting him on the Stars' fourth line. He scored both five-on-five goals while playing with Sam Steel and Evgenii Dadonov.

"He's used to playing big minutes in Colorado with (Nathan) MacKinnon," DeBoer explained. "We've traditionally been a four-line team, so he's taken a little bit of a haircut ice-time-wise with us. But I've been trying to supplement that a little bit because he is used to getting more ice, and it's a lot easier when he's going like he is now."

Remember MacKinnon? The superstar without whom Rantanen isn't meant to be able to succeed? That Avalanche misstep looks costlier by the game. Rantanen's hat trick puts him atop playoff point scoring, with eight goals and seven assists for 15 points, and makes him a way-too-early Conn Smythe Trophy favorite.

'We gave up home ice,' and keys to a Jets win in Game 2
The keys to winning Game 2 go well beyond containing Rantanen.

There's a lens through which Winnipeg's 3-2 loss to Dallas was the least miserable, most correctable loss of the Jets' playoffs, but Arniel sounded uniquely frustrated postgame.

"We know we just gave up home-ice advantage, and that wasn't a game where they rolled over top of us for three periods," Arniel said. "That was a game where we weren't at our best, and we should have been."

Whether it was a case of Winnipeg needing more time to get over its dramatic, double-overtime win in Game 7 or a one-off case of awful execution, the Jets took a long time to assert themselves in Game 1. Mark Scheifele was Winnipeg's most dangerous player by the end of the night, but opened the game with a series of giveaways. Nikolaj Ehlers put an impressive backhand deke wide — and won several races to keep power-play shifts going in the offensive zone — but got his signals crossed with his linemates multiple times over.

"There was a lot of sloppiness to that game," Arniel said. "That did not feel like a playoff game, Game 1 in Round 2. That felt like Game 45 in the middle of December. Obviously we know the high that we're on coming off that St. Louis game, but man, this is the playoffs. That's a game that no matter how you start the game or however you get into the game, it's one of those ones that there's a way we have to play as a group, and that's not how we played tonight."

Key No. 1: The Dallas Stars are not the St. Louis Blues

The Stars took one key page out of the Blues' playbook, but making Winnipeg's night miserable via thunderous bodychecks was not one of them. Whereas St. Louis ranked fourth in the playoffs in hits per minute of play, the Stars are last.

It sounds absurd, but that may have thrown Winnipeg off in Game 1.

"I'm not harping back onto St. Louis, but we didn't have a lot of room to make plays, to hold onto pucks. Tonight we had time and we didn't make the plays," Arniel said. "We rushed ourselves. I think we were thinking that people were going to come pouring over top of us. We had more time to make plays and to execute."

Winnipeg made some poor decisions with the puck against St. Louis in the moments leading up to heavy hits. Knowing they were about to get run, Jets players rushed their decisions or lobbed the puck straight back to Blues players while protecting themselves. (Nathan Walker's goal in Game 6 may be a good example; Josh Morrissey lobs the puck to Justin Faulk in the neutral zone while appearing to duck out of a check from Alexey Toropchenko.)

The Stars gave Winnipeg more time to work with, changing the rhythm of the game — and it somehow became a problem for the Jets instead of an advantage. In a postseason marked by poor Jets starts, the first period of Game 1 was particularly rough. Dallas jumped out to an 8-0 lead in shots, including two each by Rantanen and Hintz. On Friday, the Jets will need to do a much better job of using the time and space given to them on the power play and at even strength.

"Our start was once again not very good," Nino Niederreiter said. "It's something we know we've got to do better and it was a completely different series than the St. Louis one. They are obviously a very experienced team. They know how to be in a tight game; they are extremely patient. That is something we've got to learn from."

Key No. 2: The Dallas Stars can play like the St. Louis Blues

The Jets have given up more goals on deflections and screens than any other team in the playoffs. Rantanen's second goal brings that total up to 12, which is nearly 40 percent of all goals Winnipeg has allowed and roughly twice the amount allowed by Toronto and Dallas, who are No. 2 and 3.

So yes, there's a playbook to beat Winnipeg. Rantanen's Avalanche perfected it last year, the Blues nearly knocked Winnipeg out in Round 1 and the Stars are creating plenty of double-layered screens of their own. Remember Dallas' 8-0 run of shots at the start of the game? Only two of them came without a Stars player in the slot. Most of them occurred with two or even three Stars players crashing the net. The good news from Winnipeg's perspective is that Hellebuyck was dialed in from the opening whistle and appeared to have elevated his play from Round 1. The bad news is that there were a lot of quality scoring chances tucked into that scoreless flurry to start the game.

Key No. 3: The Winnipeg Jets need to play like the Winnipeg Jets

This brings us back to the Jets' struggles to generate offence in Game 1.

Scheifele returned to the top line with Kyle Connor and Gabriel Vilardi. It took them a long time to get going, but Scheifele's line ended up controlling play, with Arniel matching it up predominantly against the Stars' second and third lines. Scheifele scored Winnipeg's second goal on a wrist shot from the slot and led all skaters with seven shots on goal.

"I probably didn't find my stride until the second, probably later in the second, the third period. Then I started feeling better," Scheifele said.

The positive storylines should have continued, given that Winnipeg was playing with a full complement of forwards for the first time since March 23, but that was not the case. The Vladislav Namestnikov line with Ehlers and Cole Perfetti was outshot 7-2. The fourth line was outshot 3-0. Even Lowry's line with Niederreiter and Mason Appleton spent more time in the Jets zone than the other end of the rink, although Niederreiter did open the scoring with a backhand goal.

The Jets' lack of generation was their biggest problem, and they got in their own way more than the Stars made it difficult for them. Arniel seemed to agree, saying he shuffled his lines in the third period because "there was nothing going on. ... I was just trying to get a little bit of a shakeup there."

An optimistic take on the Jets' play in Game 1 would suggest they kept things close and their goaltender played well. They were in it until the end, despite not bringing a game that resembled their best. A pessimistic take would suggest Dallas was, like the Jets, processing the comedown from a dramatic Game 7. If Winnipeg has a higher level to get to, so, too, must Dallas.

Part of Arniel's frustration was the opportunities the Jets didn't capitalize on.

"There's areas we need to exploit," Arniel said. "I saw a lot of stuff tonight that we'll look at on video tomorrow."

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6333478/2025/05/07/connor-hellebuyck-jets-playoffs-stars/>

Let's try to make sense of Connor Hellebuyck's playoff struggles

By Jesse Granger and Murat Ates

Goaltending is more mental than physical, and Connor Hellebuyck of the Winnipeg Jets might provide the best example.

He's long been a positive example, becoming one of the best in goal despite not being the most flexible or athletically gifted. His super-processor of a brain and his ability to diagnose plays as they unfold make him special. At his best, it's as if Hellebuyck sees into the future and positions himself perfectly for the shot that only he sees coming.

Lately, he's been an example for how the mental side of goaltending can go wrong.

For the third consecutive year, Hellebuyck has struggled mightily in the playoffs following a brilliant regular season. He and the Jets escaped the first round after a double-overtime win over St. Louis in Game 7, but Winnipeg will need a much better version of Hellebuyck to beat the Dallas Stars in Round 2.

It's all but a certainty that Hellebuyck will win his third Vezina Trophy next month. His save percentage of .830 this postseason would be the worst by that year's Vezina winner since 1996, and the second-worst in the 42 years since the award was voted on.

Hellebuyck's -9.82 goals saved above expected ranks last in these playoffs and is the third-worst mark by any goalie in a single postseason since the stat was tracked in 2007.

What is going on? Why does this generation's most consistent netminder suddenly lose his mojo when the postseason arrives? With a series win under his belt, and the pressure to be perfect lifted, will he finally return to the form we're used to seeing?

There isn't a simple answer. If there was, Hellebuyck and the Jets would've found it by now.

The truth is nuanced, with several factors at play. There's the human element – the pressure associated with playoff hockey and the mental toll that can take on anyone, even a hyper-focused professional athlete. There's also data and game film that could point to the root cause for Hellebuyck's struggles, which are specific to his style of play and the way goals are scored in the playoffs — or the workload he takes on.

The narrative around his playoff performance has become so loud, he can't escape it. Publicly, he has said all of the right things about blocking out the outside noise, but he's a smart guy.

"I am going to be better," Hellebuyck said following Game 4, when he was pulled after allowing five goals on 18 shots. "I've studied goaltending extremely hard. I've probably studied it the most out of anyone in this world. So I know what to do, and how to get my best game."

Hellebuyck has made a career of bold proclamations like that one. He committed to his "big and boring" style as a teenager, confidently choosing which aspects of NHL goaltenders' games did and didn't work for him. He asserted that he was a Vezina Trophy goaltender long before he posted the numbers to back it up and has been a

longtime proponent of focusing only on positive framing. He believes that his reality is determined by his focus.

Last year's playoff devastation — 24 goals allowed in five games against Colorado — strained his self-confidence, leading to the proclamation that he put too much weight on himself and would need to focus more on the team game. But on the eve of these playoffs, he explained he was going to go after a shutout every game, and that last year's talk of putting less weight on his own shoulders had not made it to Round 1.

"I scrapped that real fast," Hellebuyck said. "That is what makes me me, that is what I feed off, and I'm going to continue to do that because I know that gives this team the best chance to win."

By the nature of the position, goalies have a lot of time to think, and that's not always a good thing. Athletes in any sport are at their best when they enter a "flow state," allowing their body to react to the play naturally.

Mike Valley played goalie professionally, coached the Dallas Stars' goalies from 2009-17, and has co-authored several books focusing on the mental aspects of the position. He understands the mind of a goaltender as well as anyone.

"If you're in the NHL, you've been working your whole life for these moments," Valley said. "When it's not playing out the way you want it to play out, of course you get some doubt. You're wondering how this is happening when you've done everything to be ready."

"You're going to tell everybody you're not thinking about it, but you can't lie to yourself. You have these thoughts in your mind, regardless of if you're Connor Hellebuyck or anyone in any other sport or occupation. What are people saying? Why is this happening to me? How did that go in? All of those little moments of thought interrupt the patterns of you being able to play the way you're supposed to play."

There's research that suggests a lack of confidence or anxiety can lead to slower reaction times, and make it harder for the brain to process stimuli and respond quickly. These challenges aren't unique to Hellebuyck, but the stresses could be magnified in his case because of his prolific regular-season numbers and the mounting rhetoric around his previous playoff performances.

"It's not for a lack of trying," Valley explained. "You almost try too much. Your brain is over-thinking, and it literally stops your body from doing what it needs to do. ... There probably aren't many people who care as much as he does, or wants to deliver for his team as much as he does. That's not the problem."

It's likely Hellebuyck entered this postseason in a great state of mind, coming off his best season yet and ready to prove the doubters wrong. What happened on the ice that caused a shift?

"I felt like I was playing my game and moving well and seeing the puck well," Hellebuyck said. "And then bad bounces happened or breakdowns happened and you start chasing results a little bit and in the back of your mind the results start creeping in. It makes you wonder is what you're doing enough?"

Hellebuyck plays a unique style of goaltending. He has built his entire game around his two biggest strengths: his size and his brain.

At 6-foot-4, 207 pounds, Hellebuyck takes up a lot of the net. He maximizes that advantage by playing a more passive style from deeper in his crease, which gives him less ground to cover to remain on angle with the puck as it moves around the offensive zone. That, combined with his exceptional play-reading skills, means he's rarely out of position.

Goaltending becomes more difficult for everyone in the playoffs, when teams send hoards of bodies to the front of the net to create screens, deflections and overall chaos in front of the goalie. There's a chance that Hellebuyck, with his specific style, is hurt more by this change than other goalies.

He moves less than most goalies, both in navigating around the crease and in his head movements, which are minimal. While this typically helps him track pucks, because his eyes are so quiet, it has looked like Hellebuyck isn't as adept at fighting to see through screens in this postseason. At times, it looks like he accepts screens and relies solely on positioning to make the save, rather than bobbing, weaving and battling through the traffic to regain sight of the puck.

That, combined with the fact that Winnipeg has allowed more of these types of shots than most teams, is not a recipe for success. Several of the Jets' defensemen are on the smaller side, suggesting they're not as equipped to defend the net front and clear sight lanes for their goaltender.

"I think there's a blueprint of how teams want to play us," Hellebuyck said. "That being said, I think we have an answer for it."

The data backs up this theory. The Jets have allowed 11 goals this postseason that were the result of a screen, a deflection or both, which is the highest of any team in the playoffs.

It's interesting to note that three of the four worst teams when it comes to this statistic are Winnipeg, Los Angeles and Tampa Bay. It's no coincidence that the three Vezina Trophy finalists – Hellebuyck, Darcy Kuemper and Andrei Vasilevskiy – all had terrible statistics in the first round and two of them bowed out early. Even St. Louis' Jordan Binnington, who is lauded as a clutch playoff performer, gave up four goals by tip and/or screen in Game 7 on Sunday.

There's no question these are incredibly talented goalies – most of whom already have their name on the Stanley Cup – but it's hard to stop pucks you don't see.

It's also no coincidence that goalies who haven't had as many screened shots go in are putting up great numbers. Carolina allowed three goals by way of screen, but all three were after Pyotr Kochetkov took over for the injured Frederik Andersen. With Andersen in net, the Hurricanes allowed zero screened goals, and he leads the NHL in playoff save percentage (.936) and goals saved above expected (6.89).

This isn't meant to excuse Hellebuyck entirely. Dealing with screens and deflections is part of playing winning playoff hockey, and the goaltender is as responsible for it as his defenders. At the same time, if his teammates can create better lanes for him to see the puck, it will help build his confidence and rhythm within the game, which could create a snowball effect in a positive direction.

"It's all about quieting the mind," Valley said. "Thoughts create muddy water."

As a result, it was no longer just the incredibly difficult screened shots that were finding their way past Hellebuyck. In the first round, he made uncharacteristic mistakes and allowed goals that he otherwise wouldn't. At times, it looked like he was fading away from shots, caught guessing rather than remaining patient and reading the game. Taking that extra inch of depth while challenging the shooter can be the difference between saves and goals, and Hellebuyck hasn't looked confident in the crease.

On this goal by Blues rookie Jimmy Snuggerud in Game 5, Hellebuyck was frozen by a shot fake and left drastically off his angle.

This is the type of positioning error we simply do not see from him. He set his feet as Snuggerud began the shot fake, and never shuffled over as the shooter drifted to a completely different angle, leaving space to the short side.

It also looked like he second-guessed himself, going for a glove save when he could've stuck his pad out. When confident, Hellebuyck makes one shuffle to his left to cut off any shooting angle, drops into a wide butterfly and allows the shot to hit his left pad.

In this case, likely because he can feel that he's off his angle by the time the shot comes, Hellebuyck drops into a narrow butterfly and tries to react rather than block. His read looks tentative, reaching his glove at the puck rather than staying tall and flaring his pads out wide. That ends up creating the hole that the puck finds.

Hellebuyck's heavy workload is yet another factor. He tied for the league lead with 63 games this season, and has topped 60 appearances in each of the last four seasons. No goalie with 60 regular-season starts has won the Stanley Cup since Jonathan Quick in 2012, and the game has changed a lot since then.

Perhaps fatigue is why he doesn't look quite like the Hellebuyck we're used to seeing in the regular season. His 542 starts since 2016-17 aren't just the most of any goalie, they're 42 clear of everyone else. That's a lot of miles on his legs in a position at which it's tough to feel confident if you're chasing the play.

On this goal by Robert Thomas in Game 4 the Jets made so many mistakes it's easy to lose count, highlighting that it hasn't just been a Hellebuyck problem, but a team problem. Even still, on this play Hellebuyck doesn't look like the patient, cerebral goalie who led the league in every metric this season.

As Thomas walked in, it appears Hellebuyck guessed that he would deke to his forehand, or shoot to the short side. Hellebuyck shifted his weight and momentum by slightly leaning to his left in preparation for that move, so when Thomas cut back to the backhand he was unable to explode to his right, left out of position and helplessly stabbing at the puck with an uncommitted poke check.

Doubt is a dangerous thing in sports, but Hellebuyck isn't the first player this has happened to, and he certainly won't be the last. In his case, he has a strong foundation, both in his goaltending technique and in his inner circle of support. He has all the tools to change this narrative.

It wasn't that long ago that Sergei Bobrovsky was viewed in the same light — as a talented goalie who couldn't get it done in the biggest moments. He has since proven how silly that notion was all along, leading Florida to back-to-back trips to the Cup Final, and hoisting the trophy last summer.

This is only the narrative until Hellebuyck changes it.

Perhaps the historic comeback and ensuing double-overtime victory in Sunday's Game 7 is exactly what Hellebuyck needed. He didn't have to be particularly great in that game to get the victory, but maybe that's the point. The realization that perfection isn't needed could prove to be even more valuable than standing on his head.

Hellebuyck stopped the last 13 shots he faced in Game 7. None were bigger — or more encouraging — than a save on Colton Parayko's transition chance midway through the first overtime.

It wasn't the most visually impressive save. It wasn't flashy, and that's why it was encouraging. Hellebuyck has been saying, since he was a child, that he wants to be the big and boring goalie. On that play, he read the Blues' rush well. He identified the trailer (Parayko) early on, stood his ground waiting for the back pass, then confidently pushed out to the top of his crease and set his edges early. By the time Parayko fired, Hellebuyck was patiently waiting for the shot, with his arms connected to his body and no holes to shoot at.

He was big. He was boring. He made it look easy, which is what we're used to seeing Hellebuyck do.

"The weight of the world is off my shoulders," Hellebuyck said Tuesday. "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 a second chance for me. I just had to go and play my game and do what I do best. I don't need to do everything. I just need to play my game and do the best I can and bring it every single night."

Given the way things have gone, it's certainly fair to be skeptical of his chances heading into the second-round series against the Dallas Stars, who scored the third-most goals in the NHL this season. Even if he didn't look it over those last six games, this is still soon-to-be a three-time Vezina trophy winner. That's a club that includes only Martin Brodeur, Patrick Roy, Dominik Hasek — and likely Hellebuyck.

"He's still a great goalie," Valley said. "It's just that greatness hasn't been able to come out yet. It's just a matter of time for a guy like that, that it does, but it takes something to interrupt that pattern."

Global Winnipeg

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11169948/rantanen-hat-trick-leads-dallas-stars-past-winnipeg-jets-in-game-1/>

Rantanen hat trick leads Dallas Stars past Winnipeg Jets in Game 1

By Russ Hobson & Tyson Rewucki Global News

When you're hot, you're hot.

Mikko Rantanen scored three times in the span of just eight minutes for his second straight hat trick and the Dallas Stars won Game 1 over the Winnipeg Jets 3-2 on Wednesday at the Canada Life Centre.

Mark Scheifele returned to the lineup for the Jets, but the Stars scored three straight goals in the second period to end an eight-game losing streak in Game 1's.

"I thought our detail, whether that was on faceoff, execution when we won draws, whether that was tape to tape passing, just execution – there was a lot of sloppiness to that game," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. "That did not feel like a playoff game in Game 1 in round two. That felt like game 45 in the middle of December.

"We know the high that we were on coming off that St. Louis game, but man this is the playoffs."

Rantanen became the first player in 40 years and just the third in NHL history to record hat tricks in consecutive playoff games. And he's also the only player in Stanley Cup Playoffs history with multiple three-goal periods in the same post-season.

"He's always a fantastic player, but we got to find a way to shut him down," said Jets forward Nino Niederreiter. "And don't make it too easy on him."

Niederreiter and Scheifele scored the goals for Winnipeg in the loss as they went 0-for-4 on the power play.

In what's becoming a bad habit, the Jets had another rough start with the Stars registering the first nine shots of the game before the Jets finally turned it around.

The loss ended the Jets franchise-record tying four game home win streak in the playoffs.

"I'm disappointed," Arniel said. "The players are disappointed too. We know we just gave up home ice advantage and it wasn't a game that they rolled over top of us for three periods. That was a game where we weren't at our best."

With Scheifele returning to the lineup, it was the first time in the playoffs the Jets had a full compliment of forwards after Scheifele missed the final two games of their first round series.

"I probably didn't find my stride until probably later in the second and the third period," said Scheifele. "Then I started feeling better, so, move on to the next one, be better next one."

The Jets took that energy right into the game, starting off with two huge hits from Jets captain Adam Lowry.

The Stars maintained some early O-Zone pressure just over 4 minutes into the game, but Connor Hellebuyck was solid early, stopping three quality chances from the Stars, including a one timer from Rantanen.

Just before the halfway mark, the Jets began to generate some of their offensive chances after not getting their first shot on goal until 7:15 into the game. Gabriel Vilardi grabbed the puck from behind the net and set up Kyle Connor for a one timer in the slot, but Jake Oettinger stood tall.

The Jets would nab the game's first power play of the night after Stars forward Mason Marchment held Neal Pionk as he entered the offensive zone. The power play would start with Nikolaj Ehlers getting a decent chance, trying to stuff it short side on Oettinger, but it would not go. Vilardi would have another chance later on in the man advantage, with some nifty stick handling, but Oettinger was able to squeeze the puck against the post. The Stars were able to kill the penalty, keeping it a scoreless game.

The reunited Jets top line with Scheifele's return picked up right where they left off. Connor had a chance right in front but Oettinger made a really nice glove save. Shortly after that, Scheifele would set up Vilardi with a cross seam pass for a one timer, but again, Oettinger would make the save.

The Jets would head back to the power play with seven seconds left in the period, but there would be no late scoring in this period. The Jets outshot the Stars 13-12 and out hit Dallas 14-10.

The second period would begin with a Jets power play but Winnipeg would be unable to open the 2nd with a goal.

Three and a half minutes into the second the Jets would open the scoring. Niederreiter came flying down the right wing side and flicked a backhand past the blocker side to put the Jets up 1-0.

The Jets would ratchet up the physicality, Brandon Tanev laid a huge hit on Stars D-man Esa Lindell in the corner and Morgan Barron followed that with a huge hit in the other corner.

The Jets were controlling the play until just before the 11 minute mark when a one timer from Evgenii Dadonov squeaked through Connor Hellebuyck. Rantanen potted home the loose change to tie the game up at 1-1 for his sixth goal of the playoffs.

Shortly after the goal, the Jets would head back to the power-play after a 2 minute hooking call went to Jamie Benn. Outside of a chance by Vilardi in front towards the end of the penalty, the Stars did a good job of shutting down the Jets power play.

With just over five minutes left, the Stars would maintain offensive zone time and Rantanen would pick up his second of the night after deflecting a point shot from Thomas Harley, beating Hellebuyck upstairs.

The Stars would continue to get chances, but Hellebuyck made his two best saves at this point in the game, when he snagged a wicked wrist shot from Matt Duchene in the slot and followed that up with an equally impressive glove save on Harley.

The Jets would take their first penalty of the game after Hadyn Fleury was called for interference. The Stars would get right to work on the power play after Hellebuyck misplayed a Rantanen pass in front.

It wouldn't take long for the Jets to respond. Scheifele received a great pass from Vilardi behind the net and ripped a wrister to beat Oettinger low glove side.

The Jets out shot the Stars by a narrow margin 21-20 and out hit the Stars 34-18 in the middle frame.

The third period would start with the Jets switching Niederreiter and Ehlers up front. Vilardi would be called early in the period for interfering with Stars forward Jason Robertson. The Jets wouldn't have to kill the whole two minutes after Tyler Seguin took a 2 minute high-sticking penalty.

Outside a Connor chance midway through the power play, the Jets would once again fail to generate enough traffic and chances on the man advantage.

The Jets would have a late push, with a scramble in front of the net that almost saw puck cross the goal line.

The series resumes on Friday with Game 2 at the Canada Life Centre at 8:30 p.m.

CBC Manitoba

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/bettman-winnipeg-visit-1.7529544>

Bettman speaks glowingly of Jets franchise, says Winnipeg fans won't soon forget playoff heroics
NHL commissioner speaks to media before start of 2nd-round playoff series

By Stephen Ripley · CBC News

The commissioner of the National Hockey League says he has no concerns about the future of the Winnipeg Jets, especially after the team's epic comeback in Game 7 of their first-round playoff series.

Gary Bettman spoke to media in Winnipeg on Wednesday night, before the start of the Jets' second-round series against the Dallas Stars.

"I've never worried about Winnipeg long-term," Bettman said.

"Things are great and you have moments like Sunday night. That's going to be in people's minds for a long, long time."

Bettman started his remarks by suggesting everyone was "still recovering" from Winnipeg's heart-stopping 4-3 win over the St. Louis Blues on Sunday, which was decided in double overtime after the Jets tied the game with three seconds remaining in the third period.

"There is nothing in playoff sports like our first round," Bettman said, crediting the NHL's competitive balance and the unpredictability of its games.

"You've got to watch down to the very last tick of the clock in our game to know what's going to happen."

Both the weather and the mood around the hockey club were a lot sunnier for the commissioner's arrival on Wednesday than they were when he came to town back in February 2024. That visit came amid a slump in attendance, which had some fans worrying about the franchise's viability in the NHL's smallest market.

At the time, Bettman described the Jets as "a model franchise" and expressed confidence in their ability to fill the seats at Canada Life Centre. He reiterated that support on Wednesday, noting the club has seen attendance rise this season and is riding a 13-game home sellout streak.

"The organization had to go through a process of transitioning the season ticket base," he said. "It's not the first time I've seen a club have to go through that. It's happened in other clubs where your fan base starts aging and you have to get it younger."

The commissioner was also asked on Wednesday about the potential impact of U.S. tariffs on the league's operations and salary cap, which he described as unpredictable.

When talk of a tariff war first started heating up, Bettman said, there was concern it could affect the seven teams north of the border, due to a possible drop in value of the Canadian dollar. But he noted the dollar has actually risen in recent weeks.

"I don't think anybody knows, and we're just going to have to watch and see how it all unfolds," he said.

"Canada and the United States [are] great friends, great allies, great countries ... hopefully this is just a moment in time."

Whatever the economic future holds for the NHL, Bettman said Winnipeg will remain an important part of the league — a fact he said is underscored by the throngs of white-clad fans he's seen, both in the seats and in the streets.

"Everybody has something in common that brings them together, namely the Jets, and to me, that's all good."

Winnipeg Free Press

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/05/07/rantanen-on-a-rampage>

Rantanen on a rampage

Stars red-hot sniper sinks Jets with second-period hat trick

By: Ken Wiebe

This time, there was no personal vendetta to sort through, but Mikko Rantanen still made life miserable for the Winnipeg Jets on Wednesday.

On the heels of eliminating his former team with a four-point effort in Game 7 against the Colorado Avalanche, the Dallas Stars winger delivered a natural hat trick to propel his team to a 3-2 victory over the Winnipeg Jets before a sellout crowd at Canada Life Centre.

Rantanen now leads the Stanley Cup playoffs with eight goals and 15 points in eight games, an impressive total, especially when you consider he's gone through the emotional toll of being traded twice this season before signing an eight-year extension with the Stars.

"He went to the net. He's a big man that got there with his stick and he's just somebody that you always have to know when he's on the ice," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. "Whenever you face elite players, you have to know where they are. Obviously, he's feeling it coming off of Game 7. We've got to know when he's on the ice. He's a guy that you have to make sure especially you tie up that stick of his."

Rantanen seems to be getting more and more comfortable in his new surroundings and that's a scary proposition for opponents.

"He's an absolutely fantastic player — big, strong and does a lot of really, really good things out there," said Jets centre Mark Scheifele. "He's an absolutely phenomenal player and when you need to take away that time and space, it makes it harder but obviously, he's a fantastic player I've got to really watch out for him."

"I mean he's a game changer," said Stars head coach Pete DeBoer. "You saw that last game. But he's a game changer in a league where everybody's only got one of those guys, maybe two. The eight teams left probably have a couple each. I think the games get tight checking, the scores get lower, there's less and less room and those types of players have the ability to make something out of nothing."

That was definitely the case in Game 1 and that's why the Stars drew first blood in this battle for Central Division supremacy.

The best-of-seven series resumes on Friday night before the series shifts to Texas for Game 3 on Sunday afternoon.

Let's take a little closer look at what transpired in the series opener:

THE MISSED OPPORTUNITY

For the first time in four playoff series, the Jets have dropped the opener.

Arniel was a tad perplexed with the slow start when he spoke to reporters after the game at the podium and broke things down.

"I'm disappointed. And the players are disappointed too," said Arniel. "We know we just gave up home-ice advantage. And that wasn't a game where they rolled over top of us for three periods. That was a game where we weren't at our best, and we should have been here, especially at the start of another series at home."

It was another slow start, as the Jets gave up the first eight shots on goal of the contest.

Although they turned the tables before the period was complete, the lethargic start is something they'll look to change for Game 2.

"Our start was once again, not very good," said Jets winger Nino Niederreiter. "It's something we know we've got to do better. They are obviously a very experienced team. They know how to be in a tight game, they are extremely patient. That is something we've got to learn from."

"I wish I could give you a better answer, but we need to be sharper, we need to be better, we just need to be better on details. As cliché as it sounds, our overall game wasn't good enough."

THE CHANCE

After scoring twice in less than two minutes with the goalie out in favour of an extra attacker on Sunday in Game 7, the Jets nearly had another late tally with the net empty on Wednesday.

Scheifele had a great chance in tight and the rebound was loose momentarily in front, but Gabe Vilardi's shot was blocked by the foot of Stars defenceman Esa Lindell.

"Yeah, I didn't really see. I was kind of over to the side, so it's just kind of sitting there," said Scheifele. "I think Gabe tried to get a stick on it, and kind of got tied up. (Nikolaj Ehlers) tried to get a stick on it, and they just beat us to it. And it was obviously right there."

Close, but there was no miraculous rally to be had on this night.

"It was a mad scramble," said Arniel. "Had a couple whacks at it, but (Stars goalie Jake) Oettinger found a way to get a piece there. Their defence all piled in, it looked like kind of a big rugby scrum happened there. Just couldn't find the puck to get it loose."

THE STRETCH PASS

Jets defenceman Haydn Fleury went from being a healthy scratch in five of the first six games of the Stanley Cup playoffs to playing 33:02 in Game 7 against the Blues.

When Josh Morrissey was forced to miss Game 1 of the second round due to a suspected shoulder injury, Fleury took his spot on a pairing with Dylan DeMelo.

Fleury's skating ability should be a big benefit in this series against a Stars team that plays a heavy game.

"We need some mobility and that's what Haydn brings," said Arniel. "We've asked him over the course of the season to step up his role at different times and he's done that. He's played some big minutes that maybe he hadn't in the past. Obviously, the other night was big for him."

Fleury carried some of that momentum from the seventh and deciding game into the series opener.

On the first goal of the contest, Fleury made a heads up play, coming around the net and making a stretch pass to Mason Appleton at the offensive blue line.

Appleton found Nino Niederreiter, who beat Jake Oettinger with a sneaky backhand at 3:30 of the second period.

Fleury was in the box for cross-checking when Rantanen completed the hat trick, but that was more of a push to the pants that caught Tyler Seguin off guard.

And after the Jets had the first three power plays of the contest, it wasn't a surprise that Fleury was penalized on the play.

THE RETURN

Although he was officially listed as a game-time decision, there was little doubt that Scheifele was going to be back in the lineup for the first time since suffering an undisclosed injury in Game 5 against the St. Louis Blues when he was on the receiving end of a pair of jarring hits from Brayden Schenn and Radek Faksa.

After sitting out Games 6 and 7, Scheifele was back for the opener and made an immediate impact, skating on the top line with Kyle Connor and Gabe Vilardi.

After the Jets fell behind 3-1, Vilardi took advantage of a defensive-zone turnover by Stars captain Jamie Benn, who lost control of the puck below the goal line.

Vilardi found Scheifele alone in the slot and he buried his shot for his third goal of the postseason.

Getting Scheifele back in the lineup allowed the Jets to run their full forward group for the first time since Mar. 23, when Vilardi suffered an upper-body injury late in the third period against the Buffalo Sabres.

"It certainly helps your group when you have that depth and that's the biggest thing for me. That depth is now back there," said Arniel. "As you guys know, I'm pretty confident, as Pete is with his group, to throw four lines out there and to throw them against anybody at any time."

THE CHESS MATCH

Both teams aren't afraid to run four lines and all three D pairings, which is important when you consider how hard the Jets and Stars had to work in order to advance to the second round.

The Jets didn't use a hard match in Game 1, although they did run out captain Adam Lowry against Stars top centre Roope Hintz for a chunk of the contest.

Prior to the game, DeBoer was asked if there was anything from the blueprint the Blues put forth to have success in the first round battle with the Jets that he might try to implement in this series.

"Well, I think that's all part of our pre-series planning. We'd be crazy not to look at what we felt St. Louis did well and where we felt maybe St. Louis fell short, that maybe we'd have to be better at," said DeBoer. "The recency factor is always critical when you're pre-scouting. There's no more recency than the seven games those two teams just played. So, we've looked at that pretty heavily."

THE KEY PLAY

Rantanen's pass attempt for Roope Hintz goes off the skate of Jets defenceman Dylan Samberg and into the net to complete his second hat trick in consecutive games.

THE THREE STARS

1. Mikko Rantanen, Stars, Recorded a natural hat trick.
2. Thomas Harley, Stars, Had an assist, logged 25:07 of ice time.
3. Mark Scheifele, Jets, Scored a goal in his return to the lineup.

EXTRA, EXTRA

Special teams were a factor in this one, as the Jets power play finished zero-for-four, while the Stars got the game-winning goal on the power play from Rantanen at 16:38 of the second period and finished one-for-two.

Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck finished with 21 saves, while Stars goalie Jake Oettinger finished with 30 and was serenaded with "U.S. backup" chants during the second period.

While both teams got a top forward back from injury, the Jets were without Morrissey and the Stars were without top D-man Miro Heiskanen. Morrissey, who left Game 7 against the St. Louis Blues in the first period after taking four shifts and playing 2:09, was moving well at the morning skate and looks like a candidate to suit up in Game 2 against the Stars. As for Heiskanen, his timeline is a bit unclear, though he continues to progress from the knee injury he suffered in an awkward collision with Vegas Golden Knights captain Mark Stone on Jan. 28. The Jets were also without defenceman Logan Stanley (undisclosed injury) and the Stars played without winger Colin Blackwell (undisclosed).

Stars winger Jason Robertson suited up in his first game of the 2025 Stanley Cup playoffs after suffering a knee injury in Game 82 of the regular season. Robertson played on a line with Wyatt Johnston and Mason Marchment and took 19 shifts for 13:44 of ice time, recording one shot on goal.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/05/07/bettman-praises-winnipegs-hockey-culture>

Bettman praises Winnipeg's hockey culture

By: Mike McIntyre

Don't ask Gary Bettman to name a favourite franchise. That would be like asking a parent to choose which child they prefer.

However, the NHL commissioner who brokered the return of the best hockey in the world to this market back in 2011 admits he enjoyed seeing the excitement surrounding the thrilling, Game 7 comeback by the Winnipeg Jets that now has them skating in the second round of the Stanley Cup playoffs.

"You have moments like Sunday night, that's going to be in people's minds for a long, long time," Bettman said Wednesday prior to puck drop at Canada Life Centre for the second-round series against the Dallas Stars.

"You see the connection to the club and to hockey and to the city. Sports brings people together. The Jets bring people of Winnipeg together. It's part of the community. It's part of the quality of life. And I think people recognize that."

There was no breaking news reason for Bettman's visit — he's simply making the rounds to various playoff cities this spring — but there was a much different tone compared to his last time in town.

That happened midway through the 2023-24 season, with Winnipeg's attendance issues becoming a growing concern and Bettman and Jets co-owner Mark Chipman sounding the alarm, including meeting with various stakeholders in an attempt to drum up support.

There's no victory lap yet, but the Jets did enjoy a year-over-year jump of nearly 1,000 fans per game this past season (14,366, the largest since the pandemic, compared to 13,490 last year) while capturing the Presidents' Trophy with a 56-22-4 record.

They sold out the final eight games of the regular-season, and 16 overall, and have now hosted five consecutive full houses for the playoffs.

The Jets boosted their season-ticket base to approximately 10,000 — up about 500 overall — but are still striving to get it back to their previous high of 13,000. Getting additional corporate support has been the main focus.

“I don’t think tickets are an issue,” Bettman said this time around.

“I think the club, the organization had to go through a process of transitioning the season ticket base. It’s not the first time I’ve seen a club have to go through that. It’s happened to other clubs where the fan base starts aging and you have to get it younger.”

Bettman said he never believed this was a “long-term issue” and isn’t surprised to see the market respond.

“It was more about re-positioning what had to be done. Things are great,” he said.

Bettman mentioned the Whiteout street parties, joking that if he were a bit younger he might have ventured outside to watch Game 1 of Jets vs Stars with the masses.

“I think everyone is still recovering from Sunday night,” he joked. “It goes to the point that sports brings people together. Not everybody at one of these outdoor viewing sessions knows each other. But they’re all part of the community and everybody has something in common that brings them together — namely the Jets. To me that’s all good.”

Bettman touched on a few other topics of local interest, including the possibility of the Jets getting another Global Series game in the near future. The last one occurred in November 2018 when Winnipeg played the Florida Panthers in Finland.

“It’s a work in progress. Like outdoor games, we have a long line of teams that have put their heads up and said they’d like to play. And we try to manage that process in a fair, orderly and sensible way,” said Bettman.

“(The Jets) are always on our list. They represented the league very well when they were in Finland.”

Bettman also discussed the ongoing economic issues between the United States and Canada including tariffs and what impact that could have on the seven teams north of the border.

“Now it’s a little unpredictable. Every time I’ve been asked the question I’ve said ‘Well, if it affects the Canadian economy and the Canadian dollar drops, that may create some issues,’ he said.

“But the Canadian dollar has gone from 70 to 73 cents, so it’s actually getting stronger. So the answer is I don’t think anybody knows. We’re just going to have to watch and

see it how it all unfolds. Hopefully we're just dealing with a moment in time. Canada and the United States are great friends, great allies, great countries. "

Bettman, who has been at the helm of the NHL since 1993, said he's seen the Canadian dollar dip into the low 60s and be above par.

"You just have to ride the wave," he said.

The NHL is currently in negotiations with the NHLPA on a new collective bargaining agreement, and Bettman told the Free Press that an issue that hits close to home for several Jets players — neck guard protection — is on the agenda.

So far, the league has not made neckguards mandatory following the tragic on-ice death in England of pro hockey player Adam Johnson, who was best friends with Jets defenceman Neal Pionk.

"We are discussing it. I never find it constructive when I'm having the discussions to a certain point to do it publicly but we are," said Bettman.

"Obviously that is something the Players Association and the league would have to jointly agree to, and it's something that is being discussed."

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/05/07/new-foes-familiar-faces>

New foes, familiar faces

Schenn brothers make peace as Arniel faces off against Jets 1.0 teammate

By: Mike McIntyre

Let the record show Luke Schenn has no brothers, cousins or other distant relatives suiting up for the Dallas Stars.

"No, no. No family over there," the Winnipeg Jets defenceman said with a chuckle Wednesday morning.

It sounds like that's a good thing. The 35-year-old admits the just-completed seven-game series against younger brother Brayden's St. Louis Blues took a heavy emotional toll — one he's not eager to repeat any time soon.

"To be honest, it was fun," said Schenn, "but it was also brutal at the same time."

There was no shortage of awkward moments over the past couple weeks.

How about when Brayden became public enemy No. 1 for a questionable high hit against top Jets centre Mark Scheifele, knocking him out of Game 5 and creating a verbal battle between the clubs, the head coaches and the fan bases?

"I personally love the way he plays, a hard, physical brand of hockey, but then when he's running over your own guys on your own team you're kind of sort of caught in between on a lot of things," said Schenn.

How about in Game 6, with the Jets suffering a third straight blowout loss in St. Louis and looking to get their pound of flesh in a nasty third period. There was Brayden having words with Luke, earning an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty in the process.

"I'll keep that one in 'personally,'" Schenn said when asked for details of what was said.

"He was just competing. He was pretty involved emotionally, obviously physically, and kind of getting under guys' skin throughout the whole series, and just kind of came by our bench and had a couple words, and I'd had enough, I was having a tough game myself and I just had enough and went over. And we both got in trouble from my mom and dad after."

Ouch.

How about in Game 7 overtime, when Brayden flipped the puck over the glass in his own zone and the Jets — who had staved off elimination with a season-saving goal at 19:57 of the third period — had the chance to put the Blues away on the ensuing power play.

"I was on the ice there, I was on the blue line and he launched (it) over the glass and I was, obviously, you're doing everything to win, but you don't want to see it go down like that on a personal level," said Schenn.

St. Louis would ultimately kill the two-minute minor, meaning Brayden wouldn't personally have to wear the loss all summer, but Winnipeg did go on to win in double overtime with Adam Lowry deflecting home Neal Pionk's shot.

All of which culminated in a long embrace between the two brothers during the handshake line.

"What he said is, 'One for the memories and best of luck and try to go get another one,'" said Schenn, a reference to the two Stanley Cups he previously won with Tampa Bay.

"We knew it was gonna be emotional, obviously, going into the series and it's just crazy the way that everything happened down the stretch there. It's still hard to believe and, still, for a good part of a couple days I think both sides are probably pretty stunned."

Schenn said the on-ice stuff was hard enough. Not being able to lean on Brayden during the two-week series — and vice versa — due to a self-imposed communications blackout was the most difficult.

“(Normally) when you’re in a playoff series or throughout the course of the season, if I have a tough game personally or a tough loss or a good one, Brayden’s usually my first call to kind of break down the game with and get advice from just because we know each other so well, we push each other,” he said.

“And the communication’s cut off — I think it was tough both ways when you’re trying to bounce some thoughts, or whatever you’re going through, off one another.”

They’ve made up for lost time since the final buzzer, sharing several moments in the stands with their parents in an otherwise empty Canada Life Centre late Sunday night and then in multiple phone calls a day ever since.

“Things are back to normal for sure,” said Schenn.

“It’s funny, you know, now breaking down the series of what (was) sort of going on behind the scenes, what they were saying about our team and guys on our team and vice versa, and just sort of the ins and outs of the game. Now, obviously, we can share a little bit more now that it’s done.”

Schenn wasn’t willing to reveal publicly what those tidbits involved, but did say that there was a plea from his father, Jeff, prior to the Game 1 puck drop.

“It was tough for our family and just kind of everyone to go through it but, going into the series, my dad told us both all he wanted was a Game 7 overtime and then we could figure it out from there, and sure enough he got what he wanted,” said Schenn.

“We’ll have memories for a lifetime there and, at the same time, kind of a relief that it’s over.”

Friendship on hold

Jets head coach Scott Arniel finds himself going up against familiar faces for a second straight series. Last round it was Blues head coach Jim Montgomery, who briefly played for Arniel as a member of the Manitoba Moose. Although they took some funny shots at each other over the whole Schenn/Scheifele matter, they hugged it out at the end of Game 7.

This time it’s Dallas head coach Pete DeBoer, who Arniel previously coached with at the World Championships.

“Great guy, great coach,” said Arniel. “I’ve got a lot of respect for him, how he approaches things. I’ve been in clinics with him. Just the way he speaks, the way he handles himself, yeah, he’s certainly one of those guys that I look to in how he goes about his business. But, sorry, the friendship’s over. Now, we’ve got to take care of business.”

Arniel also goes way back with Stars general manager Jim Nill — the pair were teammates with the 1.0 Jets for parts of two years, with Nill being acquired in a trade with the Boston Bruins early in the 1984-85 season. Morris Lukowich went the other way. The Jets were actually in Boston for a road game when the deal went down,

“All they did was pick up their bags and go from one dressing room to the other, so he became an instant teammate,” Arniel recalled. “I was real happy to see him because he was a great teammate, a hard-nosed guy, a great guy. He’s had great success, obviously, with what he’s been doing, starting in Detroit and obviously with Dallas.”

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/05/08/fiesty-finn-a-challenge-for-jets>

***Fiesty Finn a challenge for Jets
Dallas superstar Rantanen shows no signs of slowing down***

By: Mike McIntyre

The Winnipeg Jets have a big problem.

A six-foot-four, 215-pound problem, to be more precise. His name is Mikko Rantanen, and the man known to teammates as “Moose” is running wild these days.

How exactly do you stop him?

Rantanen’s former employer, the Colorado Avalanche, couldn’t find an answer. They’re making tee times now after he torched them for 11 points (five goals, six assists) in the final three games of their first-round series, which went the distance.

Now it’s the Jets who are tasked with trying to corral the scorching-hot Finnish power forward. They’re not off to a great start, with Rantanen scoring all three goals for the Dallas Stars on Wednesday night in a 7:55 span of the second period. That’s all the offence the visitors needed to wrestle home-ice advantage away from the Presidents’ Trophy winners.

What Rantanen is doing so far in these playoffs isn’t just special. It’s historic. He’s now been involved in 12 straight Dallas goals — either scoring them himself or making an assist on them — which is an NHL record. He entered Game 1 against Winnipeg tied with Mario Lemieux (points on nine straight goals in 1992) before quickly making it his own.

He’s also just the third player in NHL history — and the first since Jari Kurri exactly 40 years ago — to record hat tricks in consecutive playoff games.

“Keep it going. Let’s see how long he can run this for,” Stars coach Pete DeBoer said following the 3-2 victory over the Jets. “Yeah, he’s rolling and he’s feeling it. Pretty

impressive, what he's doing. I mean, considering the opponent and the time of year and how he's dominating games, really impressive."

We take you back to February when the Avalanche, apparently believing they wouldn't be able to meet Rantanen's asking price as a pending restricted free agent, shipped him to the Carolina Hurricanes in a blockbuster trade. At the time, Jets coach Scott Arniel and several players expressed relief he was finally out of the Central Division and Western Conference.

Yeah, about that.

Rantanen was back in the blink of an eye, with the Hurricanes unable to sell him on a long-term hockey home in Raleigh. The Stars swooped in, landing him in yet another blockbuster and quickly getting his name on an eight-year, US\$96-million extension.

We'd say that deal is aging pretty well, so far.

"He's an absolutely fantastic player — big, strong and does a lot of really, really good things out there," said Jets centre Mark Scheifele.

The Jets have first-hand experience seeing the type of damage Rantanen can do in the playoffs. While still with the Avalanche last spring, he had nine points in five games (two goals, seven assists) as Colorado eliminated Winnipeg in the first round.

He may be wearing different colours now, but he's the same lethal player who doesn't need much time or space to make an impact. His first goal came when he poked home a loose puck during a goal-mouth scramble, while his second came on a perfect tip of a Thomas Harley point shot. His third, on the power play, was a bank shot off Jets defenceman Dylan Samberg.

"We all know how elite he is. He's really done it these last few games and throughout his whole career," said Nino Niederreiter. "Always a fantastic player, but we've got to find a way to shut him down and not make it too easy on him."

Easier said than done. Consider that on Wednesday night, Arniel wisely had his shutdown line of Niederreiter, Adam Lowry and Mason Appleton out at five-on-five against Rantanen's line with Roope Hintz and Mikael Granlund as much as possible.

"I thought the Lowry line did a great job," Arniel said after the game.

He's right. They did. The problem is, DeBoer also did a great job in double shifting Rantanen, getting him out at times with fourth-line skaters Sam Steel and Evgenii Dadonov and, it would appear, catching the Jets a bit by surprise and tilting the ice at times.

“He’s used to playing big minutes in Colorado with (Nathan) MacKinnon. We’ve traditionally been a four-line team so he’s taken a little bit of a haircut ice-time-wise with us,” said DeBoer.

“But I’ve been trying to supplement that a little bit because he is used to getting more ice and it’s a lot easier when he’s going like he is now, obviously. I don’t think it matters to him who he’s out there with. He’s trying to make a difference when he’s on the ice every time he’s out there.”

The game is won between the lines on the ice, of course. But give credit to a veteran coach like DeBoer for finding a way on the road, without the benefit of last change, to create some mismatches. That’s something Arniel will no doubt want to guard against heading into Game 2 on Friday night.

“He’s just somebody that you always have to know when he’s on the ice,” Arniel said. “Whenever you face elite players, you have to know where they are. Obviously, he’s feeling it coming off of Game 7. We’ve got to know when he’s on the ice. He’s a guy that you have to make sure especially you tie up that stick of his.”

Arniel mentioned having plenty to video to review with his club during Thursday’s off-ice session, and we suspect a huge chunk of that involved clips of Rantanen doing his thing. There’s only a handful of legitimate superstars like him in the league, and the Jets certainly didn’t face anything similar in their first-round series against the St. Louis Blues.

Although he struggled mightily during his brief time with Carolina and got off to a slow start with the Stars, Rantanen has clearly settled in and found the perfect fit in Dallas. It doesn’t hurt that the team is filled with fellow Finns.

“Obviously, they’re good, dear friends of mine and I knew them from before, before even I came to Dallas,” Rantanen said Wednesday night. “But all the guys, the rest of team are good friends of mine, too. They’ve been very welcoming and helping me a lot to settle in.”

That’s bad news for Central Division foes like the Avalanche and Jets.

They don’t give out the Conn Smythe Trophy for playoff MVP until the end of the Stanley Cup Final, but Rantanen is making a compelling case as the overwhelming early favourite.

The Moose is loose and showing no signs of slowing down.

Winnipeg Sun

<https://winnipegsun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/from-game-7-high-to-game-1-low-jets-burned-by-stars-in-series-opener>

From Game 7 high to Game 1 low: Jets burned by Stars in series opener

By Paul Friesen

There would be no miracle finish this time.

The Winnipeg Jets threw everything they had at the Dallas Stars in the dying minutes of Wednesday's game, but came away with a 3-2 loss in their second-round playoff series opener.

All five goals came in the second period, the Jets opening and closing the scoring.

It's in between those goals where they got burned.

The red-hot Mikko Rantanen produced a natural hat-trick, his second straight playoff hattie, as the Stars had handed Winnipeg's its first home-ice loss of the post-season.

"There was a lot of sloppiness to that game," Jets coach Scott Arniel said. "That did not feel like a playoff game, Game 1 in Round 2. That felt like Game 45 in the middle of December. Obviously we know the high that we're on coming off that St. Louis game, but man, this is the playoffs."

With the crowd on its feet and looking for a repeat of Sunday's two-goal comeback in Game 7 against St. Louis, the Jets came close on a mad scramble with a little more than a minute left and their net empty, but couldn't jam it by Jake Oettinger.

Mark Scheifele returned from an injury to score the Jets' second goal, Nino Niederreiter the first.

But the Jets misfired and mishandled pucks all night, hurried when they didn't have to and find themselves down in a series for the first time against a Central Division rival that hounded them all season.

"I'm disappointed," Arniel said. "And the players are disappointed, too. We know we just gave up home-ice advantage. And that wasn't a game where they rolled over top of us for three periods. That was a game where we weren't at our best. And we should have been here, especially at the start of another series at home."

"There's a way we have to play as a group and that's not how we played."

Final shots favoured the Jets, 31-24, including 10-4 over the final 20 minutes.

"I don't think we really found it until the third period," Scheifele said. "It obviously wasn't a great start... we didn't play great and we were right in it, so there's a positive you can take out of it."

Arniel was hoping his team wouldn't have to deal with stage fright again after suffering cases of it in Games 1 and 7 of the first round.

Call it whatever you want, but Dallas was all over the Jets early, getting the first nine shots on goal, a couple of them high-quality.

The Jets finally registered their first some nine minutes in, and with the help of a couple of Stars penalties the tables turned from there, taking the next nine shots on net.

Oettinger and Connor Hellebuyck were up to the task, and it was zeroes on the board through 20 minutes.

That all changed, big-time, in the second.

The Stars goalie had no answer for Niederreiter's quick backhand 3:30 in, and the crowd came alive.

Several minutes later The Moose, a.k.a Rantanen, horned his way into the series, reaching to shovel a rebound past Hellebuyck for his sixth goal of the playoffs.

The Jets got their third power play soon after but didn't do much with it.

Rantanen struck again in the second, tipping a point shot for his fifth goal in his last two playoff games, and Dallas had its first lead.

"Whenever you face elite players, you have to know where they are," Arniel said.

Before the period was up, the big Finn made it back-to-back playoff hat-tricks, the first player to do that in 40 years, his innocent-looking shot deflecting off Haydn Fleury's skate and fooling Hellebuyck on a Dallas power play.

A Stars trade deadline acquisition, Rantanen's natural hattie came in less than eight minutes.

Less than a minute later, Scheifele weighed in.

Fed by Gabe Vilardi in the slot, No. 55 made no mistake for his third of the playoffs, and the Jets were down, 3-2, after a five-goal second period.

After the way the Jets rescued Game 7 against the Blues, a sellout crowd may have shrugged off a simple one-goal deficit with 20 minutes remaining.

Arniel won't shrug off the loss.

"I saw a lot of stuff that we'll look at on video."

One is the power play, where the Jets went 0-for-4, the Stars 1-for-2.

"We still had some good chances," Scheifele said. "We had a pretty good power play all year. We've just got to put one in the net."

Game 2 is in Winnipeg on Friday.

<https://winnipegssun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/front-and-centre-scheifele-completes-jets-forwards-for-game-1-vs-stars>

Front and centre: Scheifele completes Jets forwards for Game 1 vs Stars

By Paul Friesen

The Winnipeg Jet got a surprise dose of good news just before opening their second-round playoff series with Dallas on Wednesday.

No. 1 centre Mark Scheifele was cleared to play, marking his return from an injury that took him out in Game 5 against St. Louis.

Scheifele had been a full participant in Winnipeg's morning skate, but head coach Scott Arniel termed him a "game-time decision."

Then again, Arniel gives everyone that designation in the playoffs, not wanting to tip his hand to the opposition.

He did talk about the possibility, though, of having a full forward contingent for the first time since March.

His team began the playoffs without Gabe Vilardi and Nik Ehlers, then lost Scheifele one game before Ehlers returned.

"It's good to see that we're getting healthy," Arniel said. "Getting Gabe back in that series, getting Nik back in that series, was big. I'm sure Dallas is thinking the same thing, with their injuries and getting their top guys back. That depth is now back there."

Scheifele took his usual spot between Kyle Connor and Vilardi. That freed up Adam Lowry to return to third-line duties and Morgan Barron to take his place back on Line 4, between Alex Iafallo and Brandon Tanev.

"I'm pretty confident... to throw four lines out there and to throw them against anybody at anytime," Arniel said.

The Stars were getting close to full health up front, too, as leading goal scorer Jason Robertson suited up for his first playoff game on Wednesday.

"Instant offence, right?" Dallas coach Pete DeBoer said of Robertson's potential return going into the game. "He's a big body and he plays a heavy game, a playoff-type game. He's hard on pucks, he protects pucks, he goes to scoring areas on the ice. He's good on the walls. We missed him since he's been out."

Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey was not ready for Game 1, after going down in Game 7 of the first-round series against the Blues.

That left room for Colin Miller to play his second game of the post-season.

Game 2 of the Dallas series goes Friday in Winnipeg. The series shifts to Dallas for Games 3 and 4, Sunday and Tuesday.

<https://winnipegsun.com/sports/hockey/nhl/winnipeg-jets/memories-for-a-lifetime-schenn-brother-battle-fun-but-brutal>

Memories for a lifetime: Schenn brother battle 'fun, but brutal'

By Paul Friesen

If Winnipeg Jets defenceman Luke Schenn appears to be skating a little more freely in the second round of the playoffs, it's because he's not dragging around a truckload of conflicting emotions.

The 35-year-old took some time before Game 1 against Dallas on Wednesday to reflect on what was a unique and difficult challenge in Round 1: playing against his brother Brayden and the St. Louis Blues.

"Brayden and I knew that it was going to be memories for a lifetime, whichever way it shook out," Schenn said. "And to be honest, it was fun... but it was also brutal at the same time."

Brutal because he had to watch his brother run into his new teammates — the Jets picked up Schenn at the trade deadline.

"I personally love the way he plays. A hard, physical brand of hockey," Luke said. "But then when he's running over your own guys... you're caught in between on a lot of things. So it was tough for our family and just everyone to go through it."

One of those Brayden Schenn hits took out Jets star Mark Scheifele for Games 6 and 7. Scheifele was a game-time decision for the series-opener against Dallas on Wednesday.

Defenceman Josh Morrissey was out, not from a hit by Brayden, but out nonetheless.

“That St. Louis series was something else in terms of physical play,” Luke said.

The emotions came to a head in Game 5 when the brothers got into a verbal battle.

“He was pretty involved emotionally, obviously physically, and getting under guys’ skin throughout the whole series, and just came by our bench and had a couple words,” the Jets’ Schenn said. “And I’d had enough. I was having a tough game myself and I just had enough and went over. And we both got in trouble from my mom and dad after.”

Another moment of emotional turmoil for the defenceman came when his brother, the Blues captain, was penalized for shooting the puck over the glass six minutes into overtime of Game 7.

“You’re doing everything to win,” Schenn said. “But you don’t want to see it go down like that, on a personal level.”

The Jets didn’t score on the power play, but did cap their dramatic, third-period comeback with a goal in double-overtime.

Which brought the two together in the handshake line, something they never thought would happen as they grew up playing street hockey in Saskatoon.

“We knew it was going to be emotional, going into the series,” Schenn said. “It’s just crazy the way everything happened... it’s still hard to believe and still, for a good part of a couple days, both sides are probably pretty stunned.”

After shedding their gear, the brothers came out of their respective dressing rooms and sat with their parents in the stands, one elated about advancing to Round 2, the other devastated, with the parents somewhere in between.

In the days since, the boys could get back to their usual routine of exchanging phone calls and talking about their teams, only this time with the backdrop of an unforgettable series as opponents.

“Breaking down the series of what (was) going on behind the scenes, what they were saying about our team and guys on our team and vice-versa,” Schenn said. “And just the ins and outs of the game. We can share a little bit more now that it’s done.”

He wouldn’t share a sample of those conversations, though.

"I'll keep that between us."

From here on, Schenn can dial up his brother anytime for some insight on another team they both know well: the Central Division-rival Stars.

"Probably a more veteran lineup... guys that have been there a little bit longer," he said. "There's some similarities, yet there's some differences. You play this team throughout the regular season and have a bit of an idea of what to expect, but (when) the series gets going it takes on a life of its own."

"Dallas had a huge Game 7, too, so both teams are feeling pretty good about themselves. It's going to be another great series."

Without the family baggage.

"We'll have memories for a lifetime," Schenn said. "At the same time, a relief that it's over."