



# WINNIPEG JETS

Central Division

Preseason Power Ranking **13**



**861**  
FRANCHISE WINS

**52-24-6**  
110 Points  
2023-24 SEASON

**2nd**  
DIVISION

Winnipeg, Manitoba - Canada Life Center (15,321)  
Head Coach: Scott Arniel (0-0-0, 1st Season)

**2023-24: Lost in First Round**

## Top Notch Defense Guides Jets

The Winnipeg Jets were a dark horse pick to make a deep playoff run last year after the team finished with 110 points and finished second in the Central Division behind a Vezina Trophy winning season from goaltender Connor Hellebuyck and a defense that allowed the fewest goals in the NHL. It wasn't to be though, as the team crashed out of the postseason in the first round against Colorado. The vaunted defense that had carried them all year collapsed as the team gave up 28 goals over the 5-game series loss. Head coach Rick Bowness retired after the season and assistant coach Scott Arniel was promoted to the top job.

### Forwards

The Jets lost Sean Monahan and Tyler Toffoli to free agency this year, but several talented forwards remain in Winnipeg. **Kyle Connor** saw his production drop last year, in part due to injury. He still managed to lead the team with 34 goals. The Jets hope to see him get back to the form he showed the two seasons before last, when he topped 80 points each year. **Mark Scheifele** is a two-way, playmaking center and has reliably put up 60-70 points in each of the last nine seasons. **Nikolaj Ehlers** rebounded from several injury plagued years and put up 61 points last year. **Gabe Vilardi** played just 47 games last year, but was a huge contributor when healthy with 22 goals. **Cole Perfetti** took a big jump in his 2<sup>nd</sup> season with a career high 19 goals and 38 points. Winnipeg will be looking for Vilardi and Perfetti to help make up for the losses in free agency. **Vladislav Namestnikov** had 37 points last year, but the Jets will be asking him to be their second line center to start the year even though his career statistics do not show the kind of production typically expected from a player at that spot on the depth chart. It is possible that his numbers will improve while playing with Ehlers and Perfetti, but putting him in that role could be asking a bit too much. **Nino Niederreiter** brings solid defensive play and is a power forward who is more than capable of driving to the net to score. He scored 18 goals last season and can be penciled in for 30-40 points.



Photo via The Hockey Writers

**Adam Lowry** is the captain and while he has always been a good defensive forward, his offensive game has improved in the last two years with 35 points each year. **Mason Appleton** found great chemistry on a line with Niederreiter and Lowry last year and it led to a career high in goals and assists for him. **Morgan Barron** is a valuable fourth line piece who can play all three forward positions, has size and skill, and scored a career high 11 goals last season. **Alex Iafallo** showed promise early in his career after being signed by Los Angeles as an undrafted free agent, but his production dropped upon his arrival in Winnipeg last year.

### Defense/Goaltending

**Josh Morrissey** has developed into an elite offense-minded D-man in the last two seasons. Last year, he didn't quite reach the heights of his '22-23 season where he scored 16 goals and 76 points, but he came close with 69 points. **Dylan DeMelo** won't bring quite that much offense, though he did score 31 points last year and is a shutdown defenseman who is excellent at keeping the puck away from opponents and moving it out of the defensive zone. **Neal Pionk** creates a good amount of offense, but he is on the smaller side for a defenseman, which can cause him to lose battles along the boards and in front of the net. **Dylan Samberg** jumps up to the second pair after a decent season where he was an effective shot blocker. **Colin Miller** has often been injured, but is serviceable if healthy.

**Connor Hellebuyck** won the Vezina Trophy last year for the second time in his career. He finished second in the league in wins, second in save percentage, and fourth in GAA while also winning the Jennings Trophy for fewest goals allowed. He is without a doubt a top-3 goaltender right now and when he's at his best, it's extremely difficult to get the puck past him. He started the third most games of any goalie and that trend will likely continue this year, particularly since the Jets signed **Kaapo Kahkonen** as the backup. While Hellebuyck was the NHL's best goaltender last season, Kahkonen very well may have been the worst, with a sub .900 save percentage and the 2<sup>nd</sup> worst GAA among goalies with 25+ games played, an ugly 3.64. To be fair to Kahkonen, he spent much of last year playing for San Jose, whose defense was the worst in the league by far. His numbers improved after a late season trade to the Devils.

### The Bottom Line

Due to the losses in free agency, the Jets don't look as formidable this year. The team's center depth in particular could be suspect and may not match up well with the top teams in the league. That said, there is still plenty of talent on offense. New coach Arniel worked under the now retired Rick Bowness and should be able to keep the team playing the stellar defensive system that Bowness developed. On top of that, when you have a goalie as elite as Hellebuyck, you have a chance to win almost every game. The Jets may not be Stanley Cup contenders as they were last year, but they will remain in the playoff conversation.

**2024-25 Projection: 43-31-8 (94 points) - 4th in Central**





## Connor Hellebuyck



Photo via Major League Fishing

### JETS 5-YEAR POINT TREND

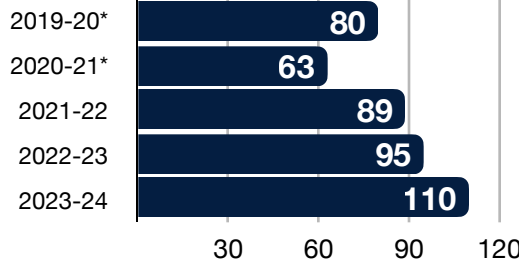


Photo via YouTube

### 2024-25 Schedule

October 2024						
			EDM 9 10:00		CHI 11 8:00	
MIN 13 6:00					SJ 18 8:00	
PIT 20 3:00		STL 22 8:00		SEA 24 10:00		CGY 26 7:00
	TOR 28 7:30		DET 30 7:30			

November 2024						
					CBJ 1 7:00	
TB 3 3:00		UTA 5 8:00		COL 7 8:00		DAL 9 7:00
		NYR 12 7:00		TB 14 7:00		FLA 16 7:00
		FLA 19 8:00			PIT 22 7:00	NSH 23 7:00
	MIN 25 8:00		LA 27 10:00		VGK 29 8:30	

December 2024						
DAL 1 4:30		STL 3 8:00		BUF 5 7:00		CHI 7 4:00
CBJ 8 6:00		BOS 10 8:00		VGK 12 8:00		MTL 14 7:00
		SJ 17 10:30	ANA 18 10:00			MIN 21 7:00
	TOR 23 2:00					OTT 28 7:00
	NSH 30 7:30	COL 31 8:00				

January 2025						
				ANA 2 8:00		DET 4 3:00
		NSH 7 8:00			LA 10 8:00	COL 11 7:00
		VAN 14 8:00		SEA 16 8:00		CGY 18 7:00
	UTA 20 9:30		COL 22 9:30		UTA 24 8:00	
CGY 26 6:00		MTL 28 7:00		BOS 30 7:00		

February 2025						
						WSH 1 7:00
		CAR 4 8:00			NYI 7 8:00	
				2025 NHL 4 Nations Face-Off		
				2025 NHL 4 Nations Face-Off		
						STL 22 7:00
		SJ 24 7:30		OTT 26 7:00	NSH 27 8:00	

March 2025						
						PHI 1 7:00
		NYI 4 7:30		PHI 6 7:00	NJ 7 7:00	
CAR 9 5:00		NYR 11 8:00			DAL 14 8:00	
SEA 16 9:00		VAN 18 10:00		EDM 20 9:00		
BUF 23 3:00		WSH 25 8:00			NJ 28 8:00	

March/April 2025						
						PHI 1 7:00
VAN 30 3:00		LA 1 10:30		VGK 3 10:00		UTA 5 7:00
		STL 7 7:30		DAL 10 8:00		CHI 12 7:00
EDM 13 7:00				ANA 16 7:00		

HOME

AWAY

### Projected WPG Lineup

#### Forwards

	Left Wing	Center	Right Wing
Line 1	81 Kyle Connor	55 Mark Scheifele	13 Gabe Vilardi
Line 2	27 Nikolaj Ehlers	7 Vladislav Namestnikov	91 Cole Perfetti
Line 3	62 Nino Niederreiter	17 Adam Lowry	22 Mason Appleton
Line 4	36 Morgan Barron	19 David Gustafsson	9 Alex Iafallo

#### Defense

Line 1	44 Josh Morrissey	2 Dylan DeMelo
Line 2	54 Dylan Samberg	4 Neal Pionk
Line 3	6 Colin Miller	64 Logan Stanley

#### Goaltenders

Starter	37 Connor Hellebuyck
Backup	34 Kaapo Kahkonen

#### 2023-24 NHL Ranks

POINTS - 110 (4th)  
 GF - 259 (15th)  
 GA - 198 (32nd)  
 PP% - 18.75 (22nd)  
 PK% - 77.13 (21st)  
 SV% - .918 (1st)

### 3 < Number to Know

The Jets' three shorthanded goals last year tied for worst in the league. Winnipeg allowed the fewest goals in the NHL despite having a penalty kill that ranked 22nd.

#### PLAYER SPOTLIGHT

### KYLE CONNOR - LW



#### 2023-24 Statistics

GP	G	A	PTS	+/-
65	34	27	61	-6

Through seven years in the NHL, Connor has not failed to score 50 points or more in a season. He announced himself as a star with 47 goals and 93 points in the 2021-22 season and followed that performance with 80 points in 2022-23. Injuries hurt his production last year, but he led the team with 34 goals and made his second all-star team. A healthy Connor continuing to produce at a high level would go a long way in making sure Winnipeg returns to the postseason.