



IceTimes

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Finland shines on ice

2019 World Juniors recap >

Frolunda wins CHL Final >



From the IIHF President

Competing to grow

By René Fasel

We are just over a month into the new year, and there is lots to report from the international ice hockey scene.

2019 started as usual with the playoff round of the IIHF World Junior Championship, which culminated in a thrilling win by Finland over Team USA in Vancouver.

The two teams competing in the gold medal game meant that tournament hosts Canada weren't in the running, but nevertheless the tournament organizers and Hockey Canada should be recognized for yet another perfectly organized tournament. The IIHF's partnership with Hockey Canada has helped to cement the Juniors as a preeminent tournament on the international hockey calendar, and the benefits that this brings to the event and the participating teams cannot be understated.

The incredible support that Canada's fans showed was also impressive, not just in Vancouver where Team Canada was playing, but

also in Victoria, where teams like Finland and Kazakhstan were enthusiastically adopted and cheered on during the preliminary round.

As the tournament grows, so too does the competitive parity between the top nations. Other countries outside of North America have caught up and this means better games and overall improved development of ice hockey across all nations. Our Championship program is devised with the goal of giving all participants enough chances to compete and grow. Some of the lower division tournaments have already yielded some interesting results this year, with Slovakia's U18 Women's national team advancing to the top division for the first time in its history.

At the other end of the U20 divisions, we have China, which successfully qualified for Division II with an unbeaten record. Going back to the top division, Kazakhstan's performance after moving up from Division IA means the country will compete once again with the best in the world.

These are encouraging signs of progress, and we hope that more countries will be able to gain more competitive experience and give themselves a proper chance to develop.

The World Championship program wasn't the only item on the ice hockey calendar. Clubs

and leagues around the world are in the middle of their seasons, and we just concluded two of our biggest international club competitions.

Congratulations to Frolunda Gothenburg, which hoisted its third Champions Hockey League crown. Congratulations also to Arlan Kokshetau, which became the first Kazakh club to win the IIHF Continental Cup.

In other news, we have announced the group of inductees who will form the IIHF Hall of Fame Induction Class of 2019.

This is a legendary group of athletes and builders who have left a lasting impact on the game. Names such as Hayley Wickenheiser, Miro Satan, and Miko Modano will enter the list of legends that will be inducted at our Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in Bratislava.

I would be remiss not to mention our Paul Loicq Award winner, the late Jim Johansson. Johansson's role in the development of USA Hockey and his presence at the World Juniors and World Championship is certainly missed.

But his legacy will have a long-lasting impact, and should serve as an example for others to follow as we continue our common mission to bring ice hockey around the world.



News and Notes

IIHF

The IIHF Player Safety Committee has introduced a new rule which is in effect for all IIHF tournaments starting from the 2018/19 season.

The committee has created a video designed to provide information and examples of the new Late Hit Rule #153.

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE VIDEO](#)

Rule 153-Late Hit was proposed as a means of differentiating between a player committing a late hit versus a player committing an interference penalty or finishing a check, as well as making a clear emphasis of what constitutes a “clean hit” versus a “late hit”.

FINLAND

The Finnish Ice Hockey Association announced that **Raimo Helminen** will take over as head coach of the U20 men’s team. Helminen will replace Jussi Ahokas, who coached the team for three seasons and reportedly



agreed to coach a club team in the top Finnish league next season.

The 54-year-old was inducted into the IIHF Hall of Fame in 2012. He played 331 games for the Finnish men’s national team between 1983 and 2002 including six Olympic Winter Games and eleven IIHF World Championships. He still holds the record for the most international games played and, shared with fellow countrymen Teemu Selanne, for the most Olympic ice hockey tournaments played.

After finishing his career Helminen was the Tampere’s head coach during the 2012/2013 season. He also joined the Finnish U20 national team first for two years as an assistant coach, then as a head coach at the 2012 IIHF World Junior Championship where Finland finished in fourth place.

The FIHA has planned further ahead and signed **Antti Pennanen** as head coach for the Finnish U20 national team for the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 seasons.



Pennanen has been the head coach of Finnish Liiga club HPK Hameenlinna since 2016 where he spent his career as a junior player and was coaching junior teams until 2011. After that he also worked at senior

level as an assistant coach of Helsinki IFK and as head coach of Jukurit Mikkeli before returning to Hameenlinna.

During the 2016 IIHF World Junior Championship that Finland won on home ice in Helsinki he was the assistant coach of Jukka Jalonen. Like Helminen he’s also on the coaching staff of the men’s national team for this season.

Finland will also continue with **Pasi Mustonen** as head coach of the women’s national team. Mustonen’s contract was extended until spring 2022.



Mustonen will coach Team Finland at the upcoming IIHF Ice Hockey Women’s World Championships, including the 2019 edition 4-14 April on home ice in Espoo, and at the 2022 Olympic Winter Games in Beijing, China.

Under Mustonen Finland has finished in the top-four of the world each year including bronze medals at the 2015 and 2017 Women’s Worlds and the 2018 Olympics.

JAPAN

In partnership between the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) and the Japan An-

ti-Doping Agency (JADA), a “**Real Champion Workshop**” **Anti-Doping Session** was delivered to all attending nations of athletes and their support personnel at the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 Women’s World Championship in Obihiro City, Japan.

The active program content workshop was designed and delivered by JADA which aims that the athlete can recognize the power/value of sport through describing it in their own words.

The Japan Ice Hockey Federation’s Planning Committee also organized a **Development Symposium** during the Women’s U18s. The symposium was aimed at creating a multi-sports concept Development Model within Japan, to develop both hockey players and also athletes in other sports as well. The symposium’s featured speaker was Emily West, USA Hockey’s American Development Model manager for women’s hockey.

KUWAIT

In a bid to boost the growth of hockey and bolster regional ties, a new bi-annual club competition has been launched in the Middle East. The first edition of the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) club tournament contested in Kuwait City saw teams from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the



United Arab Emirates take part.

Played between 18-22 December 2018, the Abu Dhabi Storms from the United Arab Emirates lifted the inaugural trophy as club champion of the Gulf region.

“The aim for the tournament has been to develop ice hockey in the Middle East but also for us in Kuwait to try and grow our ice hockey. There has been a lot of promotion for ice hockey during the tournament and the winner not only takes the cup home, but also will host the next edition of the tournament,” said Bojan Zidarevic, assistant coach of Kuwait Stars and the Kuwait men’s national team.

While the national teams from the Gulf region have competed against other in a bi-annual regional tournament since 2012, the newly launched club competition hopes to add

more games with a competitive edge to the calendar.

RUSSIA

Russia set a new national attendance record on 16 December, with 71,000 fans seeing the Red Machine roll past Finland in St. Petersburg.

The bumper crowd came to the Gazprom Arena, built for the 2018 FIFA World Cup and home to football club Zenit. Thanks to the smaller hockey playing surface, the organizers were able to squeeze in more seats and boost the capacity past the 65,000 that the stadium can hold for football.

The weekend’s hockey crowd was counted at 71,381, a new all-time record for the sport in Russia. The previous mark, variously cited as 50,000 or 55,000, was set back in 1957 at the IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship when the USSR took on Sweden at the then newly-built Lenin Stadium (now Luzhniki Stadium) in Moscow.

It was also the fifth-highest hockey attendance of all time and the second best in Europe. The 77,803 who saw Germany beat Team USA in Gelsenkirchen for the opening of the 2010 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship remains the continent’s biggest so far.

Obituaries

YEVGENI ZIMIN

Yevgeni Zimin, a forward during the height of the Soviet Union’s greatest years, suffered a fatal heart attack in Moscow on Friday, 28 December. He was 71 years old.



Zimin played in four IIHF events and won gold each time. He started with the 1968 Olympics, then won again at the 1969 Worlds, 1971 Worlds, and, finally, 1972 Olympics. He was also a member of the Soviet team that played Canada in the famous Summit Series in September 1972.

In fact, it was Zimin who orchestrated one of the biggest upsets in hockey history. Game one of the Summit Series was played at the Forum in Montreal on 2nd September 1972. Canada took a quick and expected 2-0 lead and everyone across the country anticipated a blowout in the game and series.

Zimin scored a quick goal soon after to make it 2-1, and he scored another later in the game. The Soviets stormed back to win, 7-3. It was, perhaps, his greatest career moment.

In league play Zimin was a star with Spartak Moscow in the late 1960s, winning championships in 1967 and 1969 during an era the league was dominated by city rival CSKA, and scoring the deciding goal against CSKA in the latter. In 1998, his number 7 was retired by the club.

After retiring as a player, Zimin coached Spartak and the Soviet national U18 team at the European championships in the 1980s for a short time. He later became a scout for the Philadelphia Flyers and was seen and heard in Russia as a TV commentator.

OTTO SCHUBIGER

Former Swiss national team forward Otto Schubiger passed away after long illness on 28 January. He was 94.

Schubiger represented Switzerland at several events including the 1948 Olympic Winter Games, where Switzerland won bronze on home ice in St. Moritz, and the 1952 Olympics.

In addition he played in five IIHF Ice Hockey World Championships between 1947 and 1955 winning two more bronze medals in 1951 and 1953. In Switzerland he spent most of his career in Zurich with ZSC and won two Swiss championships (1949, 1961). He also played for city rival GC and was a player-coach for SC Rapperswil-Jona.

2019 HOF class

New legends to join Hall of Fame

By Andrew Podnieks



The IIHF has announced the latest group of players and builders who will form the 2019 Induction Class to the IIHF Hall of Fame.

Swedish record player Jorgen Jonsson, American legend Mike Modano, Slovaks Zigmund Palffy and Miroslav Satan as well as the most successful female hockey player ever, Hayley Wickenheiser, will be inducted into the IIHF Hall of Fame in the player category. The late Boris Alexandrov, a former Soviet national team player and national coach in his native country of Kazakhstan, will be inducted as a builder.

Former Bulgarian goaltender Konstantin Mihaïlov was named Richard "Bibi" Torriani Award winner for his long and unparalleled career while the Paul Loicq Award for outstanding contributions to international hockey goes to the late Jim Johansson from the United States. With the new additions, the IIHF Hall of Fame includes 224 members.



Zigmund Palffy, Miro Satan, Jorgen Jonsson, Hayley Wickenheiser, and Mike Modano are the 2019 Player Inductees.

The induction ceremony will be held on 26th May 2019 in the Slovak capital of Bratislava before the medal games of the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship.

Boris Alexandrov

Every hockey-playing nation has a hero, and for the country of Kazakhstan there is one giant among its stars of the rink – Boris Alexandrov.



Alexandrov was born in the Soviet Union and developed alongside many great players of that nation, and was scouted by the great Anatoli Firsov to play for CSKA Moscow.

In international circles, Alexandrov's greatest goal probably came on New Year's Eve, 1975, at the Montreal Forum. At 20, he was the youngest player on the team, but he scored the tying goal in the third period of what many consider the greatest exhibition game ever played. In 1976, Alexandrov hel-

ped CCCP win gold at the Olympics, and he later played in the inaugural Canada Cup.

But it was after he retired that he became a hero to the new country of Kazakhstan, which had achieved independence in December 1991. Kazakhstan joined the IIHF in 1992 and played as a nation for the first time a year later, in C Pool of the World Championship. Alexandrov played for his country at the 1995 Worlds and took over as coach in 1996, a year after retiring as a player. His effect on the players was immediate. The Kazaks won the C Pool and moved up to the A Pool in 1998.

But before the team played in the 1998 World Championship, the Kazakhs qualified for the 1998 winter Olympics in Nagano. The Kazakhs then went undefeated in three games of the first round of the Olympics to qualify for the main round which featured the top teams and a full slate of NHL players.

Alexandrov continued to coach the national team for the next four years. But one summer day in 2002, driving from Ufa to Chelyabinsk, he was killed in a car crash. A life was taken too early, but his immense influence on the game in his home country has long outlived that tragedy.

Jorgen Jonsson

No player represented Sweden more often than Jorgen Jonsson. He wore the “three crowns” some 285 times during a career that was as successful as any in his nation’s history.



A centreman, Jonsson developed as a teen with his club team Rogle in his hometown of Angelholm. Drafted 227th overall by Calgary in 1994, he joined and then rejoined Farjestad after a short stint in the NHL.

Jonsson’s first tournament was the 1994 Olympics in Lillehammer at age 21, Tre Kronor’s its first ever Olympic gold. Later that year Jorgen helped Sweden win bronze at the World Championship in what was his first of 12 appearances at the year-end tournament. He didn’t play in either 1995 or 1996, but starting in 1997 he played in eleven consecutive World Championships, winning two gold, three silver, and four bronze medals. In all, his 104 World Championship games played ranks 11th on the all-time list.

Jonsson captained Tre Kronor for six straight years (2000-2005) during his 15-year international career, and he played more games as captain than anyone in Tre Kronor history. As

well, Jonsson was part of another group of eight players to win gold at the Olympics and World Championship in the same year, 2006, the only time in IIHF history this has happened.

Jonsson retired from the game in 2009, and after his 13 distinguished seasons with Farjestad the club retired his number 21. In 2012, he became the 58th member inducted into Sweden’s Hockey Hall of Fame.

Mike Modano

Mike Modano’s explosive speed and bullet-like snap shot were his trademarks over a career that lasted two decades on both the NHL and international stage.



Modano was drafted first overall in 1988, by Minnesota, only the second American to be so honoured. He saw his first international play at this time, with the U.S. at the World Junior Championship.

Modano made the transition to the NHL for the 1989/90 season, and he did so without missing a step. He had 29 goals and 75 points as a rookie, and at season’s end, after an early playoff exit, he played in his first World Championship.

But in 1996, Modano created a defining moment in hockey history. Taking on Canada again in the finals of the first World Cup, it was the underdogs who stunned the hosts, in Montreal, 5-2, in the deciding game three. The victory was the most important hockey win in the United States since the Miracle on Ice in 1980.

Modano was named to play in three U.S. Olympic teams in ’98, ’02, and ’06, earning a silver medal on home ice in Salt Lake City. Modano also played at the 2004 World Cup—one of a small group of players to appear in 1991, 1996, and 2004 – and a year later he captained the U.S. at the World Championship at the end of the lockout season.

In the NHL, there is no doubt Modano’s career highlight was the 1998-99 season, one in which the Stars beat Buffalo to win their first and only Stanley Cup. He played most of the playoffs with a broken wrist but assisted on the team’s final five goals over games five and six to win the Cup.

Zigmund Palffy

The flagbearer for Slovakia at the Opening Ceremony of the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, Zigmund Palffy was a hockey hero to a small, hockey-mad na-



tion for more than 15 years.

After a sensational 1991 World Juniors, during which he scored a goal a game and helped Czechoslovakia win a bronze medal, Palffy was drafted 24th overall by the New York Islanders. After making the team at training camp in 1995, he had two dominant seasons, producing 177 points in 161 games.

Palffy also played for Slovakia at the 1994 Olympics, an historic moment for the country that had to qualify to play in Lillehammer, its first ever tournament as an independent nation.

But the greatest moment in Slovakian hockey was yet to come. There was controversy first at the 2002 Olympics because NHL teams didn’t release all Slovak players in timely fashion, and the team finished a disappointing 13th. Every Slovak player in the NHL and around the world knew their nation was world class, and at the World Championship a few weeks later, they were determined to prove it.

The Slovaks beat all comers, including Canada, 3-2, in the quarter-finals. In the semis, against Sweden, the game went to a shootout, and Palffy netted the winning goal to take Slovakia to the gold-medal game. There, Peter Bondra converted a pass from Palffy with exactly 100 seconds remaining in the game, giving their

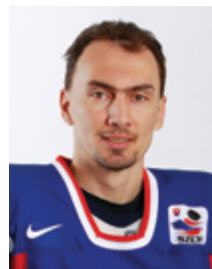
country a 4-3 win over Russia to win the gold medal. It remains the defining moment of their hockey history.

A year later, Palffy helped Slovakia win a World Championship bronze, but midway through the 2005/06 NHL season, he announced his retirement, citing a lingering shoulder injury. Palffy returned home, recovered, and came back two years later, eventually playing at the Vancouver Olympics, his final international event.

His IIHF career is full of highlights. A three-time Olympian, Palffy led the 1994 Olympics in scoring. He was also tied with teammate Jozef Stumpel as top scorer at the 2003 Worlds, and in 12 NHL seasons he had 30 goals or more six times. Over 684 regular-season games, he averaged better than a point a game.

Miroslav Satan

Miro Satan was the consummate professional, leader of the highest standing, and an inspiration to teammates and kids alike.



As with Palffy, Satan helped his new nation qualify for the 1994 Olympics (where he led

the tournament with nine goals), but at the same time he helped the team fight from C Pool of the World Championships (also in 1994) to B Pool (in 1995) to A Pool (1996).

Satan was at home in both the NHL and IIHF. Drafted 111th overall by Edmonton in 1993 and made his NHL debut in 1995/96. He was traded to Buffalo late in that season, and it was with the Sabres that he had many of his finest NHL seasons, culminating in 1999 when the Sabres went to the Stanley Cup finals before losing to Dallas.

A year later, the Slovaks showed what they were capable of at the 2000 World Championship, advancing to the gold-medal game before losing to arch-rivals Czech Republic, 5-3. Satan, the Slovak team captain, led the tournament in goals (10) and points (12) and was named tournament MVP.

Two years later, the Slovaks were back--and finished what they started--winning gold and earning their place in Slovak history. Satan also captained that team and was named IIHF Directorate Best Forward.

In all, he wore the "C" a total of nine times for Slovakia, eight at the World Championships as well as at the 2004 World Cup.

One extraordinary aspect of Satan's accomplishments is the never waning quality of his play. He led the 1994 Olympics in goals, but he also led the 2000 and 2002 Worlds in points. Even still, he won his only Stanley Cup with Pittsburgh in 2009, at age 34, and he won another monumental silver at the Worlds in 2012.

Satan is one of only two players to win silver in 2000, gold in 2002, and silver in 2012 (Michal Handzus being the other). In all, he played 1,050 regular-season games in the NHL.

Hayley Wickenheiser

Long before Hayley Wickenheiser played her final game for Team Canada (at the 2016 Women's World Championship) it was clear she would one day be honoured by the IIHF for her career. She was that good for that long.



She is the all-time leader in scoring at both the Olympics (51 points in 26 games) and Women's Worlds (86 points in 61 games), and that she has won more medals than any other woman (13 – 7 gold, 6 silver).

The numbers show she won a record four Olympic gold medals and was twice named

MVP (in 2002 and 2006) and that no athlete has appeared at more Winter Olympics than her five. In total, she holds or is tied for eight Olympics records and four Women's Worlds records, records achieved during a remarkable 22-year IIHF career.

Wickenheiser made her debut with Team Canada at the 1994 Women's Worlds at the tender age of 15. Three years later, at the next official IIHF event, she was named to the tournament all-star team and was clearly a force to be reckoned with.

What was it about her? In a word – everything. She trained and developed strong legs, giving her a stride no woman could match. She worked endlessly on her shot and could fire the puck like no woman in the game. She trained year-round and was strong enough to play with men, which she did, in Finland, becoming the first woman to score in a men's professional league.

Off ice, her moral and ethical character were so respected that she was asked to recite the athletes' Olympic oath in 2010, and in 2014 she was Canada's flagbearer at the Opening Ceremony. That same year, she was named to the IOC's Athletes' Commission, the most important function an athlete can perform in sport away from the field of play.

**Richard “Bibi”
Torriani Award
Konstantin Mihaylov**



To call Konstantin Mihaylov the defining player of Bulgaria is an understatement.

Bulgaria has competed in 52 World Championships since its first in 1963, and goaltender Mihaylov has played in 28 of those. His dedication to the team, his love of the game, and his skill between the pipes are the stuff of legend.

Mihaylov was the first Bulgarian goalie to train off ice specifically for his position, focusing on stretching, using tennis balls to develop his hand-eye coordination, and working on other drills specific to goalies.

He first played for his country in 1981, at the European Junior Championship B Pool. His first senior event came in 1985 at the World Championship C Pool, in Megeve, France.

That started a record 28 World Championship appearances for the goalie that ended after the 2014 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Division III when he was 49 years old.

He also represented Bulgaria in numerous Inline Hockey World Championships, last time in 2015 after his 51st birthday.

Mihaylov backstopped the country to victory in C Pool in 1991 to earn promotion to B Pool, and the year after the team played well enough to remain in the higher pool for another year.

He was named tournament Best Goaltender twice, first in 1990 and then, incredibly, 16 years later at age 42. He played in three Olympic qualifying tournaments for Bulgaria, in 2005, 2009, and 2015 (when he dressed as a backup for one game).

Indeed, the running joke in the Bulgarian dressing room was that he was named Best Player for his team so often that every friend and relative owned a nice watch (the typical gift for Best Player)!

In league play Mihaylov was a star with HC Levski Sofia, in the Bulgarian league, for whom he played 20 of his 25 seasons. He also dressed for two seasons with Akademik SF (also Bulgaria), and one season with Istanbul Paten Kulubu (Turkey), Amneville (France, Second Division), and CSKA Sofia (Bulgaria).

**Paul Loicq Award
Jim Johansson**



For those who didn't know him, he was Jim Johansson of USA Hockey. For those who did, he was “JJ.”

And, for those in the former category, if you were in hockey, you got to know JJ pretty quickly.

He was a presence at most top-level IIHF events, representing both his country and the game with friendly dignity and a strong moral compass.

Johansson was a Hartford Whalers draft choice in 1982. He went on to play four years of NCAA hockey at the University of Wisconsin, helping the Badgers to a national championship in 1983. After graduating in 1986, he embarked on a pro career in the IHL.

During his university career, Johansson played at two World Junior Championships, and as a pro he played at the 1988 and 1992 Olympics and the 1992 World Championship.

After retiring in 1994, JJ joined the Twin Cities Vulcans, a Junior A level team in the USHL, as their general manager. During his five years there he built a team that won the national championship in 2000, and at that point USA Hockey jumped in.

JJ began his career there as general manager of international activities and within three years was promoted to senior director of hockey operations.

Four years later, he became assistant executive director, a position which more or less put him in charge of every team the United States assembled for IIHF competition, men and women.

Under his watch the U20 team won three gold medals, most memorably in Ufa in 2013. Johansson helped develop the U18 program for men, which also became the dominant team at the world level in that event, and he was responsible for the selection of players to the 2010, 2014, and 2018 Olympics.

More than titles, though, he was both professional and humble, competitive and ethical, hard-working and amiable. He was taken too early, but by the time he left he had already made a lasting mark on the game worldwide.

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Young Lions roar

Ten things we learned from the 2019 World Juniors

By Lucas Aykroyd



The 2019 IIHF World Junior Championship marked the fourth time that the Canadian province of British Columbia hosted an IIHF tournament.

So what did we learn from the exciting U20 showcase in Vancouver and Victoria?

Young Finns are fantastic

Remember, Finland didn't just win the 2014 and 2016 World Juniors – it also captured U18 gold in 2016 and 2018.

So it seems fitting that even though coach Jussi Ahokas missed the birth of his baby son during Finland's playoff run in Vancouver, he got the 3-2 golden goal from another youngster – 17-year-old super-prospect Kaapo Kakko – with 1:26 left versus the Americans.

After a so-so Group B, the Finns played their best hockey when it counted most, from a 2-1 quarter-final shocker over Canada to a 6-1 semi-final stomping of Switzerland. They got stellar performances from captain Aarne Talvitie, leading scorer Aleksi Heponiemi, and all-star goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, among others. Suomi has arrived as a WJC superpower.



Since 2014, Finland's youth program has earned three World Junior and two U18 World Championship gold medals.

America breeds top-end skill

From the American Development Model to the National Team Development Program, USA Hockey preaches skill at every level. Its silver-medal squad this year was no exception.

Brothers Jack and Quinn Hughes dazzled with their skating and puck movement, especially when they played together. Tournament MVP Ryan Poehling modeled two-way smarts. And the slickest goal of the final was Alexander Ch-

melevski's cross-ice, backhanded feed to Josh Norris for the 2-2 equalizer. When you win four straight World Junior medals, you're doing something right.

Undrafted Russians can be deadly

Goalie Pyotr Kochetkov flew under the radar before posting three wins in the 2018 Canada-Russia Series.

Even then, few foresaw the undrafted 19-year-

old Kazan native being named Best Goalie en route to bronze with a 1.45 GAA and 95.3 save percentage.

Surprises like this happen almost annually for Russia, which has medaled at eight of the last nine World Juniors. For instance, in 2012, nobody expected undrafted Nikita Gusev – the future 2018 Olympic scoring champ – to rack up nine points, second only to Yevgeni Kuznetsov, for the silver medalists. Such “secret weapons” mean you can never underestimate Russia.

The world is catching up to Canada

While Canadian fans freaked out about their team's unprecedented failure to medal on home ice, let's get real. If we played these World Juniors over again, don't you think Canada would still be a favourite for gold? Of course it would.

Some questioned the wisdom of coach Tim Hunter's public criticism of 2020 draft-eligible sniper Alexis Lafreniere and his choice of captain Maxime Comtois for an overtime penalty shot versus Finland. And the Canadians scored just 10 goals in four games after the opening 14-0 romp over Denmark, which raised eyebrows. Regardless, this result said more about the rapid improvement of other nations than any diminishing of Canada's great talent pool.



The Swiss managed to best Sweden in the quarter-finals.

Sweden still struggles at crunch time

Unlike 2018, this Swedish team didn't boast budding superstars like Elias Pettersson or Rasmus Dahlin. Still, coach Tomas Montén's boys stretched their country's record-setting preliminary-round winning streak to 48 games. Yet it meant little after a 2-0 quarter-final loss to the Swiss.

The Juniorkronorna bring strength at every position. Their team play is impeccable. However, with just two World Junior gold medals, Sweden must teach lionhearted individuals to take responsibility in the medal round, like Mika Zibanejad on his 1-0 overtime winner versus Russia in 2012.

Swiss are all heart

Life is just more fun when Christian Wohlwend is talking about not being a robot, sharing love, and (of course) yodelling. The 42-year-old Swiss coach's honest, emotional approach struck a chord with his players.

Switzerland hadn't cracked the final four since 2010, and this year's absence of NHL first-round material certainly didn't portend big things. Yet the Swiss gave Group A contenders all they could handle. Philipp Kurashev delivered a hat trick in a crucial 4-0 win over Denmark, and goalie Luca Hollenstein had a 41-save shutout versus Sweden in the quarter-final. They ran out of gas versus superior Finnish and Russian teams, but their heart was unquestioned.

Anything is possible

If on Christmas Day you'd predicted the bizarre events at these World Juniors, you would have received more than a few raised eyebrows.

The Danes had zero preliminary-round goals. The Swiss got two penalty shot attempts on the same call against Russia. The flu-stricken Swedes iced just 15 skaters versus Kazakhstan.

And facing Canada, Finland's Eeli Tolvanen bounced the last-minute quarter-final equalizer

in off Aleksi Heponiemi's leg before Noah Dobson's broken stick in overtime led to Toni Utunen's winning goal.

Teenagers...what are you gonna do?

Czechs, Slovaks still treading water

After finishing fourth in Buffalo, the Czech Republic yearned to claim its first medal since 2005's bronze. However, goalie Lukas Dostal's brilliance couldn't make up for the underwhelming offence from returning 19-year-old stars Filip Zadina (0-1-1), Martin Necas (1-3-4), and Martin Kaut (3-1-4). They came seventh with a 3-1 quarter-final loss to the Americans.

Slovakia brought back close to half its roster from Buffalo, fueling aspirations of another Cinderella run like 2015's bronze. Instead, the Slovaks settled for eighth place for the fifth time in the last 10 years after an 8-3 quarter-final she-lacking by Russia.

Kazakhstan makes you sing

The Kazakhstan Ice Hockey Federation can empathize with relegated Denmark's pain. After all, when the former Soviet republic last made the elite division in 2009, it got walloped 15-0 by host Canada, and wouldn't return till this year.



Kazakhstan managed to remain in the top division.

However, playing at Victoria's packed Save-On-Foods Memorial Centre clearly agreed with the Kazakhs. Victoria fans embraced the underdogs, joyfully singing Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline" when they scored.

Kazakhstan then swept the Danes in the relegation round. For some of these kids, it'll be the highlight of their international hockey careers.

Vancouver and Victoria rock

With great enthusiasm and world-class organization, British Columbia's biggest city and its provincial capital combined for the sixth-highest attendance in tournament history (304,393). It set a high standard for the 2020 World Juniors in the Czech Republic.


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Video Highlights: 2019 IIHF World Junior Championship



Click here to view all the game highlights from the 2019 IIHF World Junior Championship

All-Star Team

Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, G, FIN

Alexander Romanov, D, RUS
Erik Brannstrom, D, SWE

Grigori Denisenko, F, RUS
Philipp Kurashev, F, SUI
Ryan Poehling, F, USA

Directorate Best
Forward, All-Star, MVP



Ryan Poehling,
USA

7 GP, 5 G, 3 A, 8 P, +5

The Montreal Canadiens' first-round draft pick was a key piece for Team USA, leading the tournament in scoring and collecting a trio of individual awards. Poehling was effective on both ends of the ice, handling defensive zone pressure and creating a number of good scoring chances throughout the tournament.

Directorate Best
Defenceman



Alexander
Romanov, Russia

7 GP, 1 G, 7 A, 8 P, +12

The 19-year-old KHL blueliner was second overall in scoring for Russia and No. 1 among all defencemen. Another Canadiens prospect along with Poehling, Romanov acted as an extra forward in the Russian attack, while on the backend posting a sparkling +12 rating.

Directorate Best
Goalkeeper, All-Star



Pyotr Kochetkov,
Russia

5 GP, 4W, 1.45 GAA, 95.30 SVS%

Notwithstanding a tough outing against Team USA in the semi-finals, Kochetkov was otherwise brilliant between the pipes for the Russians. His 34-save performance in the bronze medal game against the Swiss was key to helping his team claim yet another World Juniors medal.

Canada wins gold

Defeat USA in overtime at Women's U18s

By Andrew Podnieks



Maddi Wheeler scored on a power play 1:34 into overtime to give Canada gold with a 3-2 win over the United States.

Taking the puck down the right side during the four-on-three, she cut to the goal and banged in her own rebound. The gold ends USA's run of four in a row and is Canada's first since 2014.

"I just came off the bench, and with a four-on-three power play, I had a lot of space," Wheeler said. "We've been doing well on our net drives, so I just went wide and cut in and had a bad-angle shot. The rebound popped out, and I buried it. I think because it's a gold-medal game you have to do whatever you have to do to get a goal. I knew that even if I didn't score, going to the net would create a good scoring opportunity. It did."

Canada got the man advantage thanks to a great rush by Danielle Serdachny, who also scored the opening goal. She barrelled down



Canada led Team USA 1-0 and trailed 2-1 before winning in overtime on a power-play goal from Maddi Wheeler.

the right side and along the boards behind the goal, forcing Abbey Murphy to hold her.

"I was just trying to go to the net, but I didn't see an option," Serdachny described. "I took it around and drew a penalty, which turned out well for us."

That the goal was scored with the extra skater is not surprising. The hard-fought game featured many power plays both ways, including several five-on-three chances, and all goals but one were scored with an extra player.

"It's difficult to be killing penalties all the time, but both teams had to do it," Serdachny noted. "It was really about bouncing back after a goal or penalties that made the difference."

Canada was led by goalie Raygan Kirk. She took over for Mahika Sarrazin after the first game and played the rest of the way, earning MVP honours along the way. "All three of us [goalies] came in about even, so when I got the nod I had to try to play my best," she said. "Clearly it worked. It feels great! I think we were all nervous before the game, but it was good-nervous. We used our energy as a team."

It was a single man advantage that helped Canada tie the game at 11:11 of the third period. Serdachny made a great pass to Anne Cherkowski in front, and she converted it to perfection, making it a 2-2 game. That set the stage for the dramatic and quick overtime.

"We had a great tournament," said American Makenna Webster. "We played every game as hard as we could, but it wasn't our game today. We'll learn from this. It's brought us closer as a team. Hopefully next year will be our year."

Backed by the great goaltending of Erica Jaskari, Finland beat Russia 3-0 to win the bronze medal. The Russians fired 25 shots at Jaskari but couldn't beat her. Finland had 19 shots on two Russian goalies.

This is only the second bronze for Finland at WW18. The other came back in 2011. Every other year they finished either 5th or 6th.

Sweden finished in fourth place, followed by Switzerland and the Czech Republic, which defeated Japan 3-1 in the third game of the relegation round to send the Japanese down to Division I. Japan next year will be replaced by Slovakia, which will play in the top division for the first time ever.

Robert Hradil / HHOF-IIHF Images


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Video Highlights: 2019 IIHF U18 Women's World Championship



[Click here to see highlights from the 2019 IIHF U18 Women's World Championship gold medal game](#)

All-Star Team

Saskia Maurer, G, SUI

Alexie Guay, D, CAN
Nelli Laitinen, D, FIN

Elisa Holopainen, F, FIN
Katy Knoll, F, USA
Ilona Markova, F, RUS

Directorate Best
Forward, All-Star



Elisa Holopainen, Finland

6 GP, 5 G, 3 A, 8 P, +2

Tournament scoring leader Holopainen averaged over a point a game in the tournament. The Tuusniemi native's best games came in the opener against Japan, where she potted both her teams goals, and in the quarter-finals against Sweden when she scored the overtime winner.

Directorate Best
Defenceman, All-Star



Alexie Guay, Canada

5 GP, 2 G, 4 A, 6 P, +2

Guay was far and away Canada's top defenceman and one of the best players in the 2019 U18 Women's Worlds. Her six points in five games was good enough for third in scoring among all skaters. Guay has earned two All-Star selections in both her U18 Women's Worlds appearances.

Directorate Best
Goalkeeper, All-Star



Saskia Maurer, Switzerland

5 GP, 1.55 GAA, 94.81 SVS%, 1 SO

Following Florence Schelling's retirement, Switzerland's search for its next great goalie might end sooner than expected with Maurer's performance in Japan. The 17-year-old opened the tournament with a 1-0 shutout of the Czechs. She stopped 146 of the 154 shots she faced in the tournament.

Back on the throne

Frolunda earns second CHL trophy

By Risto Pakarinen



Not many things can come between Joel Lundqvist and a Champions Hockey League title, as the longtime captain has now led his Swedish club to its third CHL title.

Lundqvist collected two assists, and goaltender Johan Gustafsson made 34 saves as the Swedes cruised to their third CHL championship with a 3-1 victory over Red Bull Munich.

“We’ve had some tough weeks behind us, and it was good to see the whole team get up for this big game,” Lundqvist said.

Frolunda’s Ryan Lasch won the 2018/19 CHL scoring title, with 22 points in 13 games. Munich’s Trevor Parkes was named the competition’s MVP.

The name of the game was simple. Either Red Bull Munich would become the first German club team to win a European title or Frolunda Gothenburg would claim their third CHL title and



Frolunda Gothenburg has now won three Champions Hockey League trophies since the league’s inception in 2014/15.

tie Metallurg Magnitogorsk for most European titles in the post-Soviet era.

The first ten minutes of the game delivered a promise of a close game, at the top of European hockey. Munich was aggressive and with an early power play giving them extra support, they pushed Frolunda onto their heels early on.

About halfway through the period, Frolunda got their first power-play opportunity, and Samuel Fagermo fired a slapshot that only a teenager

oozing with self confidence can shoot, and beat 2018 Olympic Best Goaltender Danny aus den Birken high on the glove side. Aus den Birken came into the final with a 93.3 save percentage.

Ten minutes later, Lasch and Lundqvist were at it again as the puck went around the Munich zone, four Frolunda players passing it in a tic-tac-toe fashion before Pontus Westerholm deflected Simon Hjalmarsson’s hard pass into the net, giving the hosts a three-goal lead going into the final period

Munich had a golden opportunity to get back into the game when they got to play 5-on-3 for about 30 seconds, but the Frolunda penalty killers, and goaltender Gustafsson, stood tall. With 1.40 remaining, Gustafsson made a huge glove save that brought the crown onto their feet.

Munich needed a push, and halfway through the period, coach Don Jackson pulled aus den Birken to get a two-man advantage during a powerplay. That worked, and Yasin Ehliz made it a two-goal with a blistering wrister, with 8.31 remaining in the period.

But Frolunda managed to weather the storm, and Joel Lundqvist could look forward to hoisting the CHL trophy for the third time.

“This one is better than the first one (against Karpat) because we go to win it at home. We rewarded our fans with a big game,” he said.

“We’ve battled all year, and it’s really great to win it. Now we have a break so we can relax a little,” Lasch added.

At their post-game celebration coach Ronnberg shouted to Lasch, “One more, one more.”

Always one more. That’s what champs are made of.

Arlan gets the plate

Kazakh club wins Continental Cup

By Martin Merk



A new IIHF Continental Cup champion was crowned, as Arlan Kokshetau won the deciding game against Belfast Giants 3-2 in the sixth round of the penalty-shot shootout.

Yevgeni Gasnikov scored his team's two goals in the shootout and the national champion of Kazakhstan became the first team from the country to hoist the Continental Cup's winners' trophy.

"It's unbelievable. I'm happy that we won the game. I will be able to tell this story to my children and grandchildren about these moments. What emotions. It's the first time I won the trophy. It's amazing. I have no words to describe my feelings," Gasnikov said ending the game with his shootout-winning goal.

Last year Nomad Astana was close to becoming the first winner from Kazakhstan but lost the deciding game to host Yunost Minsk. History didn't repeat for Arlan Kokshetau this year



The Arlan Kokshetau players and staff celebrate the historic Continental Cup win, the first both for the club and the country.

but it was a close game that remained open until the end.

For the Belfast Giants it was a bitter end. They worked long and hard to erase a two-goal first-period deficit, which they eventually did midway the third period. Both teams had chances to decide the game in the remaining minutes and during the five-minute 3-on-3 overtime but eventually the shootout had to decide. And

like in the 65 minutes before Arlan Kokshetau was the more efficient team in front of the net.

The Continental Cup win by the Kazakh champion is not just a premiere but the biggest tournament win in history for Kazakh ice hockey.

The Belfast Giants outshot Arlan Kokshetau 41-30 but eventually it was Arlan's Gasnikov who scored the deciding goal and silenced the eu-

phoric crowd of over 5,000 fans at the SSE Arena Belfast.

The first three rounds of the shootout were goalless. Patrick Dwyer was close for Belfast but his shot went from the post to the crossbar and back. Gasnikov scored in the fourth round. In the fifth round Vadim Berdnikov could have made everything clear but saw his shot saved. All pressure was on Belfast's Justin Johner to tie the game and force tie-breaking shots after the standard five round – and he did it. David Rutherford took the first shot to start the tie-breaking rounds but it was saved. Gasnikov came for his second penalty shot attempt. He scored again and Arlan Kokshetau became Continental Cup champion in its first participation.

"It's the most important medal of my career," Poloshkov added. "I hope that we come back next season and show the best game for our fans."

The Belfast Giants had to settle for silver, Poland's GKS Katowice earlier secured bronze. The top-two teams also shared individual awards amongst themselves. Stanislav Borovikov of Arlan Kokshetau was voted Best Defenceman by the Tournament Directorate while two Belfast Giants players won other awards. Tyler Beskorowany was named Best Goaltender and his teammate Darcy Murphy Best Forward.

William Cherry

Estonia promoted

Juniors go undefeated on home ice

By Henrik Manninen



Estonia went unbeaten in five games won the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey U20 World Championship Division II Group A on home ice in Tallinn.

Sweeping through the tournament undefeated, Estonia needed only four games to clinch top spot. The Estonians will move up to the Division I level for the first time since 2009.

The Baltic nation struck gold courtesy of a 7-2 win against Korea in front of 1,730 inside Tondiraba Icehall to win promotion to Division IB. Estonia had earlier in the tournament edged Spain (2-1) in their opener, overcome top-seeds Lithuania after penalty shots (2-1) before downing Great Britain (5-2) during day three. The 2-1 shootout win over their Baltic rival Lithuania proved to be crucial for the tie-breaker.

“First of all this win is a testament to the good work we’ve done over a number of years. If



The Estonian U20 national team outscored the opposition 25:7 in five games to take home the gold medal in Tallinn.

we look at the bigger picture, the Estonian Ice Hockey Association has done a good job, offered players opportunities to play elsewhere. Looking specifically at this team, we have a strong team mentally, always staying positive and our level of performance is high. We only conceded six goals in four games and defended really well throughout the tournament,” said Estonia’s U20 head coach Simo Luukkainen.

Seven different scorers with all four lines be-

win against Korea is a testament to Estonia’s team-effort. Against a battling Korean team, it was far from plain sailing for the hosts, who required a final frame five-goal splurge before sealing their gold medals with one game to spare.

18-year-old Artemi Aleksandrov praised the togetherness of the team as a contributing factor to their success.

“I didn’t think about scoring points, I just wanted to win the gold medal. Everybody on the

team works hard and our coach works well with the team. We are very friendly with each other. Nobody is yelling at each other, so it is a great thing and it was so nice to play for Estonia at this tournament,” said Tallinn-born Aleksandrov, who plays his hockey in Sweden for Rogle Angelholm’s U20-team.

In just over three months’ time the Tondiraba Icehall will play host to the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Division I Group B. With Estonia last year finishing a fine third, the feel-good factor is hoped to continue with more juniors also finding their way into the senior national team fold.

“From this group of U20-players there could be a spine for a future national team. At the same time, the Estonian men’s national team standard has also risen of late, but it is realistic that two to five players from the U20 will play also for the men’s senior team this spring,” said Luukkainen.

Lithuania closed out the tournament in second place, followed by Great Britain which earned bronze thanks to a 7-2 win over Spain.

Romania and Spain finished in fourth and fifth place respectively, while Korea will be relegated to Division II Group B after earning just one point in five games played.

Henrik Soots

Serbia steps up

Veteran team rolls in Zagreb

By Andy Potts



Serbia's U20 national team took gold in the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey U20 World Championship Division II Group B after winning five out of five in Zagreb, Croatia.

Fred Perowne's roster confirmed top spot with a 6-2 win over the Netherlands. The Dutch, relegated from Division IIA last season, eventually finished third behind host nation Croatia.

It was a sense of 'mission accomplished' for Serbia. A year ago, on home ice, the team missed out on promotion due to an overtime loss against eventual group winner Spain. Twelve months later, there was no mistake. Several players from the 2018 team were available once again and their experience was a big factor in Serbia's success here.

Those returnees included captain Andrija Spanjevic, who collected the top defenceman award after contributing six assists



After last year's silver on home ice, the Serbian U20 national team won it all playing in neighbouring country Croatia.

in five games. Marko Dragovic, the tournament's top forward and leading goalscorer with 10 (7+3) points was also part of last season's roster. Those two formed part of an 11-strong contingent from Crvena Zvezda Belgrade. Serbia's 29th-place overall finish in the U20 World Championship program is the best placement since 2006.

Head coach Perowne, a Quebec-born naturalised Serb whose first engagement in the Balkans was back in 2001 as a forward with Vojvodina Novi Sad, was also back for a second year. His commitment to growing hockey in the region also inspired him to help establish

Hockey Without Borders, an organisation that places volunteer coaches in a range of countries across the former Balkans and beyond to the Baltics and as far as India.

Serbia went into Monday's play knowing that victory over the Dutch would clinch top spot, although a defeat could set up a three-way tie involving Croatia as well. For the Netherlands, it was win or bust and the Oranje struck first through Wouter Sars in the seventh minute. Serbia replied quickly through Lazar Pejicic, another returnee from 2018, and went in front late in the first frame on a power-play goal from Srdjan Subotic. Dragovic potted his seventh of

the tournament in the second period as Serbia extended its lead to 4-2 before Subotic and Mirko Djumic scored their second goals of the game to complete a 6-2 scoreline.

The host nation finished with silver medals, moving ahead of the Netherlands on the final day thanks to a 2-1 win over Israel.

The Israelis also had something to celebrate after securing fifth place in the pool and preserving their place for next season. Last year's Division III champion ensured its survival with an impressive 5-1 victory over Mexico led by two goals and an assist from Yuval Halpert.

Mexico failed to record a single victory and drops to the basement division for 2020. Belgium, which survived after coming out ahead in a three-way tie for the last three places 12 months ago, improved to collect two victories in Zagreb and stood clear in fourth spot.

Croatia's Dominic Canic led the scoring chart with 11 (2+9) points, one ahead of Dragovic and Sars, who tied for second with identical 7+3 returns. Djumic also collected 10 points, with three goals and seven assists. While Serbia picked up the awards for the tournament's best defenceman and forward, Croatia's goalie Domagoj Troha was nominated as the best netminder.

China makes strides

Perfect record earns promotion

By Ryan Healy



China defeated Australia Sunday night by a score of 5-1 to take home the gold at the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey U20 World Championship Division III.

The Chinese team, coached by IIHF Hall of Famer Jakob Kolliker, was dominant throughout the tournament, outscoring their opponents 49-5 on route to a perfect record.

China will now advance to Division II Group B for 2020, an important success for the Chinese Ice Hockey Association, who is in the middle of a push to rapidly improve their hockey program ahead of the 2022 Olympic Winter Games on home ice in Beijing.

This win comes after the team was edged out from advancement in 2017 and 2018. When asked what he thought pushed them over the edge, Kolliker pointed to their disciplined play.

“The team worked hard. They were disciplined



The Chinese U20 national team won the Division III in its third attempt with a strong show of offence in Iceland.

the whole tournament,” the former U20 national team coach of Switzerland said. “I think that was the key – working and discipline. They stayed in the range, and I’m happy about this... I’m happy we can end the week like this, with a medal.”

China’s players dominated the scoring leaderboard, claiming the top-five spots for total points, and throughout the tournament, it was clear that their skill, speed, and conditioning were all at a level unmatched by their competition. Yan Jun-cheng topped tournament scoring with seven goals and 13 assists in five games, and also tied

for a tournament-best +19.

In goal, the Chinese duo of Wu Siming and Zhang Yuhang were the stingiest in the tournament, allowing only a single goal in each of the team’s games. Huang posted an impressive 93.7 save percentage, edged out only by China’s Wu Siming at 93.9. Huang also averaged 47.8 saves per game, a tournament best, earning him the award for top goalie.

Bronze medallist Turkey returned to Division III in 2019 after playing in Division IIB in 2018. They

finished the tournament 3-2, including a 12-1 loss to China in the semi-finals, but were able to shake off that loss and put in a strong performance to secure the bronze in a 6-0 win against neighbouring rival Bulgaria.

Despite being forced out of medal contention, the Icelandic team delivered a strong showing in front of their home crowd, including an overtime win against Australia in their opener. In the end, they lost only one game – a 4-2 heartbreaker against Turkey. A win in that game would have secured Iceland first place in Group A, but with the loss, they instead fell to third in the group. Despite that disappointment, the tournament was a success not only for the team but for the host organisation, Ice Hockey Iceland.

2019 saw the tournament re-expanded to eight teams from the six-team structure used in 2018, with Chinese Taipei and South Africa returning to U20 Division III play. South Africa finished the tournament with two wins, both in close contests against New Zealand, who finished the tournament winless.

The award for top forward went to Iceland’s Heidar Kristveigarson, who was the tournaments second top goal scorer, with eight goals in five games. Top defenceman went to China’s Zhang Dehan, who was fourth in total scoring with one goal and fourteen assists.

Gunnar Jonatanarson

Reaching the top

Slovakia women's U18 team makes history

By Andy Potts



Slovakia won promotion to the top division thanks to a convincing 5-1 victory over Germany in the U18 Women's World Championship Division I Group A decider.

The result means Slovakia will face the best in the world for the first time in its history, becoming the 12th nation to make it to the highest level in this age group.

The teams went into the final match-up with the Germans in the ascendancy. Slovakia's 5-2 loss against Italy on Thursday left it two points behind and knowing that only a win in regulation would be good enough to take gold in the Austrian town of Radenthein. Germany, meanwhile, had won all four games but needed at least one point to edge by Slovakia.

However, a blistering start from Slovakia saw Peter Kudelka's team jump into a 2-0 lead inside the first seven minutes. Germany ran into penalty trouble early on, handing the Slovaks a



Slovak players and staff celebrate after earning its first-ever promotion to the top-level IIHF U18 Women's World Championship.

5-on-3 advantage. It took just nine seconds for Michaela Hajnikova to convert that opportunity, and Nina Cengelova added a second with the Germans still on the penalty kill. Three unanswered goals in the final frame secured the victory and the gold medal.

"We were well prepared for Germany," Kudelka was quoted on the website of the Slovak Ice Hockey Federation website. "We studied their

game and we knew what to expect. Of course, those two quick power-play goals really helped us, but even after they got back into the game we showed the tenacity, spirit and organization to regain control and get the win."

Hungary took bronze, helped by impressive individual contributions from two forwards. Emma Kreisz led the scoring with 10 (2+8) points, one ahead of Mira Seregely (5+3). Seregely tied

with Kubiczek on five goals to share the leading goalscorer honours and was chosen as best forward at the tournament. Goalie Zsolia Toth had a goals against average of 1.80 to win the award for top netminder. Slovakia's Diana Vargova was the leading blue-liner with 5 (2+3) points in her country's gold medal run.

Italy, bronze medallists 12 months ago, dropped to fourth while newly-promoted Denmark preserved its position in the group thanks to a crucial 4-1 victory over host nation Austria. Two goals from Alberte Schlie in the first period set the Danes on the way to that win; the newcomer also took the Italians to overtime before losing 2-3.

That left Austria rooted to the foot of the table. This year's host had finished fourth last time out, ahead of Hungary and relegated Norway. But in 2019, home advantage could not save Jyri Kivela's team. Losses in the first four games condemned the Austrians to the drop; an overtime victory against Italy thanks to Katherina Heuberger's goal 16 seconds into the extras was scant consolation on the final day.

Next season's Division I Group A will see France return after winning promotion in Dumfries. Japan drops down from the top division after losing out against the Czechs in the relegation playoff on home ice in Obihiro.

France wins gold

Goalies impress in Dumfries

By Andy Potts



France won gold in 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 Women's World Championship Division I Group B thanks to a week of superb goaltending.

In five games, the French allowed just one goal all week – and that came in the closing minutes of the fifth and final encounter against pre-tournament favourite Norway.

It was too little, too late for the Norwegians. Going into the final showdown in Dumfries, Scotland, the French knew that anything better than a loss in regulation would secure top spot and banish the memories of missing out against Denmark 12 months earlier. A first period goal from Manon le Scodan set Les Bleuettes on the way and the lead lasted until the 55th minute when Stine Kjellesvik finally solved Justine Crousy Theode to tie the game at 1-1.

That set up an anxious finish for France, but Norway could not find another goal and the



The French players celebrate after winning the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 Women's World Championship Division I Group B.

game eventually went to a shootout. The Scandinavians won it thanks to Marthe Brunvold's successful attempt, but the victory was bitter-sweet: France topped the group by one point, Norway had to settle for silver in its bid to bounce back after relegation from Division IA last season.

French goalie Theode was the star of the tournament. The 17-year-old, a participant at the 2017 IIHF goaltending camp in Granada, was in dominant form throughout the competition. In

her first three games she was flawless as France defeated China 7-0, host nation Great Britain 3-0 and Poland 4-0. Her shutout streak came to an end on 224:44 minutes when Kjellesvik got that tying goal and robbed her of a perfect week.

Understudy Sabrina Roger stepped in for the last 10 minutes of the win over Poland and played the whole of a 3-0 victory over the Netherlands to claim a shutout of her own.

Norway, too, was miserly, allowing just three goals in regulation. Mia Isdahl, of Lorenskog IK, played every minute for her country and had an SVS of 95.45% in a tournament where forwards found life difficult. Incredibly, that percentage placed her third behind Theode (98.36) and Howard (95.73). In Thea Jorgensen, Norway had the best defenceman of the tournament.

Out of the medals, Poland came fourth ahead of China. However, forward Wiktoria Sikorska finished the tournament as leading scorer with 10 (7+3) points from five games. The 15-year-old from Slavoj Cesky Tesin had a hand in all but two of her country's 12 goals and was nominated as top forward. Le Scodan, who plays for HC74 Chamonix, was second on the list with 8 (3+5) while Jorgensen's 4+1 was good enough for third overall and was the best result among blue liners.

The Chinese girls, many of whom will have hopes of getting into the frame for the 2022 Olympics in Beijing, found life tough at this tournament. A slow start brought back-to-back losses against France and Norway before a 4-1 victory against the Dutch moved the team out of relegation danger. That narrow loss to GB ended any medal hopes and Don Strople's charges ended with a 2-4 reverse against Poland. The Netherlands, promoted last year, lost all five games and will return to the qualification group next season.

Gallery



Finland's Kaapo Kakko celebrates after scoring the game winning goal on USA's Cayden Primeau at the 2019 World Juniors gold medal game.



Russia's Ivan Muranov races USA's Phil Kemp for the loose puck at the 2019 World Juniors.



Switzerland defeated Sweden in the quarter-finals in a major World Juniors upset.



Hendrik Soots

Great Britain scores a goal against Korea at the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey U20 World Championship Division I Group A.



Gunnar Jonatansson

New Zealand's juniors players perform a traditional haka ceremony on the ice in Reykjavik at the Division III U20s.



Nicolas Zangerle

Slovakia celebrates with fans after earning its first-ever promotion to the U18 Women's World Championship top division.



A Serbian player is checked but not before diving and getting the puck past the Dutch goalie at the 2019 IIHF U20 World Championship IB.



France's U18 goalies had a great Division IB tournament, allowing just one goal in five games.



China's U20 junior team won promotion with an unbeaten record at the U20 Division III.

Karl Denham

Gunnar Jonasson

From worst to first

Ahokas leads Finns back to promised land

By Andrew Podnieks

It's been a wild and crazy two years for Finnish coach Jussi Ahokas.

He attended the 2017 World Junior Championship as nothing more than an interested observer but ended up taking over the job as head coach midway through the tournament after a poor start by the team.

And just last month, still the head coach, he led the team to a gold medal in Vancouver. Not a month later, he resigned his position because he'll be coaching an unnamed team at the senior level this fall. In the meantime, he spoke with the IIHF about his career, the last two months, and his future.

It's not so often that a goalie becomes a coach. How did that happen for you?

We see the ice, the whole game, when we watch from the net. Maybe when I was playing I wasn't thinking exactly as a coach, but I was thinking how we should play on the defensive side and offensive side.



Ahokas took over the U20 team during the 2017 Juniors, leading them from the relegation round and to gold two years later.

I've always loved hockey and wanted to be involved in it. I even did my education in it. I have a Bachelor's degree in sports and coaching in Finland. Hockey has always been my passion.

Why were you interested in coaching at the U18 and U20 level?

Those are the development years, and when you're a young guy like me you don't get a coaching job right away with the senior players.

You start at the junior level and move up, then the national team, then the senior team.

You became head coach under the strangest circumstances. How did it happen?

I already knew that I would be the coach of the U20 team the next year [2018], so I was there just watching games. Some people said I was doing commentary for TV, but that's not true. I came only to watch. The first games didn't go well, and I never would have wanted to take the job under that kind of situation, but I was asked to, so I had to jump in.

When you were putting this team together for Vancouver and Victoria, what were your ambitions?

We came to play for gold. These days we always have good teams and think we can win. We had a good warmup tournament, and I always knew we had a team capable of winning gold. And then we had a good buildup during the tournament. I had confidence in the team.

How did the team improve during the tournament? You lost twice in four games during the preliminary round.

We beat Canada in an exhibition game, so that gave us a lot of confidence, and I think for us we



Ahokas will step down from the U20 program after 2019.

played a bad game against Sweden and lost just 2-1, and in the USA game, they won, but I don't think it was a 4-1 game.

But then I think the preliminary round is just to get the team going, and you just think about getting to the quarter-finals. But then, your game has to improve. You have to get the lines right, the confidence. That's where I think we did well.

How did you adjust against the US in the gold-medal game after losing to them in the preliminary round?

We watched their games and learned how they played, and understood what we had to do in certain situations. We had to play better to have a chance because some things we didn't do well in the first game.

Little things, and confidence after two good games in the playoffs against Canada and Switzerland, were very important. We knew if we played well we could win.

How did you keep the players calm during the third period when the US came back from 2-0 to tie the game?

Well, you have the TV timeouts where there is time to speak to the players and build up their confidence. Small things, get the guys encouraged and get them believing in themselves again.

There was only a small time we didn't play well in the third, but after that we got our game back together. In championship games, it's always tight. But it went well for us.

Does it help to have several players on the U20 team who had played with you on the U18 team?

Of course. We start their national team programming when they're 16, and we watch them come along, so we know them all really well by the time they get to the U20 level. It's really important for us, how the whole program works for players between 16 and 20.

Were you aware it was your last U20?

Yes, I knew. I was with the national team for five years, so I think it was a good time to move on.

And a lot of these players will move on and you'll see them later at the senior level.

Yes. I can't say right now where I'm going, but I'm sure I'll see a lot of these players later. But the players on this team, we'll know each other for the rest of our lives and remember this gold medal.

Fact File: Jussi Ahokas, FINLAND



- Born: 15 Nov 1980 in Oulu, Finland
- Former goaltender
- Coached Finland to gold medal at 2016 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship
- Took over U20 team from Jukka Rautakorpi during 2017 World Juniors
- Led team out of relegation round to 6th place finish in 2018, gold in 2019



Coming up

**2019 IIHF World Championship
Division II, Group A**
SERBIA, Belgrade 09.-15.04.2019

2019 IIHF Women's World Championship
FINLAND, Espoo 04.-14.04.2019

**2019 IIHF Women's World Championship
Division I, Group A**
HUNGARY, Budapest 07.-13.04.2019

**2019 IIHF Women's World Championship
Division I, Group B**
CHINA, Beijing 06.-12.04.2019

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**2019 IIHF Women's World Championship
Division II, Group A**
GREAT BRITAIN, Dumfries 02.-08.04.2019

**2019 IIHF Women's World Championship
Division II, Group B**
ROMANIA, Brasov 01.-07.04.2019

**2019 IIHF U18 World Championship
Division II, Group A**
LITHUANIA, Elektrenai 07.-13.04.2019

**2019 IIHF U18 World Championship
Division II, Group B**
SERBIA, Belgrade 25.-31.03.2019

**2019 IIHF U18 World Championship
Division III, Group A**
BULGARIA, Sofia 25.-31.03.2019

**2019 IIHF U18 World Championship
Division III, Group B**
SOUTH AFRICA, Cape Town 09.-12.04.2019

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