



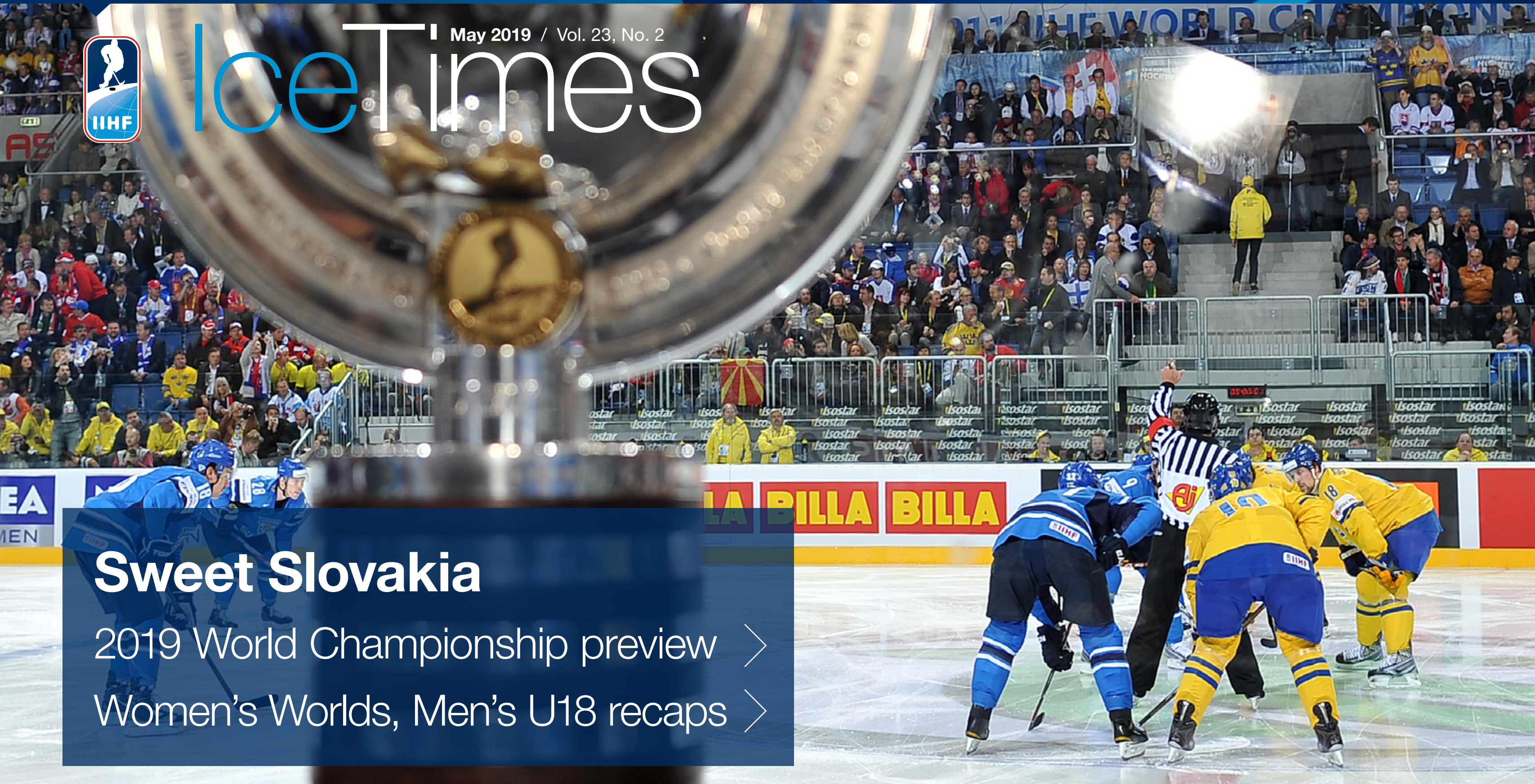
# IceTimes

May 2019 / Vol. 23, No. 2

## Sweet Slovakia

2019 World Championship preview >

Women's Worlds, Men's U18 recaps >



From the IIHF President

## Breaking new ice

By René Fasel

**We are into the last month of the 2018/2019 international ice hockey season. As we get ready to drop the puck at the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship, we look back as some great moments in the past season.**

We have seen some wonderful stories written on the ice at all levels of play within the IIHF Championship program.

I must start with the Women's World Championship, which marked a new stage in the evolution of the women's game. When we agreed to increase the number of teams at the top division to 10, there were a few questions about how we would manage the level of play and keep the competitive balance fair.

For so many years we have seen the top two nations in women's ice hockey, Canada and USA, demonstrate what the peak level of women's ice hockey can be. The incredible games that these two powerhouses played

against each other gave the world a glimpse of what women's ice hockey can be, and the potential it has to grow and to entertain fans.

Their success set a very high standard for other nations to reach, and although I am grateful for the contributions of these two countries to the women's game, seeing Finland's silver medal run on home ice in Espoo was very gratifying, and marks a true milestone for the game's development.

I commend the Finnish Ice Hockey Association for their hard work and dedication to raising the women's national team to new heights. I must also acknowledge the amazing work done by the local organizing committee and broadcasters for bringing the tournament the promotion and exposure it deserves. Never before have people been so emotionally invested in women's hockey in a non-Olympic year.

We had other great stories on the ice in Espoo, with Team France earning its first-ever victory at the top division, along with a great performance from the Czech Republic and Japan. All this bodes well for the future of the women's game.

It has been a banner year so far for the Nordic nations, with Finland earning a gold and silver at the World Juniors and Womens' Worlds,

and Sweden claiming its first-ever U18 World Championship title. Full credit to the Swedes for finally getting a gold in this tournament, I expect it won't be the last.

The IIHF's work is all about growing the game, and we have seen good evidence that the game is growing outside the top nations. We have Great Britain back in the World Championship for the first time since 1994, and a great story in the Balkans with Serbia earning gold in all three categories of the men's World Championships. Next year will see Hungary compete in the top division Women's World Championship for the first time, and we even saw Thailand's womens' team earn its first-ever tournament title at the 2019 IIHF Women's Challenge Cup of Asia. Félicitations!

But before we close the book on this great season, we have one small matter of business to take care of.

I am so happy to be returning once more to Slovakia, a hockey-mad country which will host its second IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship. I hope that you get the chance to travel to Bratislava or Kosice and experience this passion for yourself, as our annual festival of hockey celebrates its 83rd edition.

Time to hit the ice!



## News and Notes

### CHINA

An IIHF delegation including IIHF President **René Fasel** and Vice President **Thomas Wu** visited the Ice Sports Center of the Beijing Sport University on 11 April 2019. The delegation was accompanied by the Deputy Secretary General Ms **Wang Chunlu**, Director of Foreign Affairs Mr **Si Liang** and working staff of the Chinese Ice Hockey Association.

The ice rink visit is considered as a major action of realizing the “Three Transitions” aim and prompting the preparation for the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, has just been put into use recently. The arena adopts an air film steel structure and is equipped with a 60-on-30-metre ice sheet which meets the criteria of the IIHF.

While visiting the arena, Fasel and his colleagues watched a training of the team from the Chinese ice hockey college. Fasel had a cordial talk with the players, gave a faceoff and took pictures with the team.



The Chinese Ice Hockey Association has been working on enhancing the professionalism, standardization and scientification of their foreign affairs work by executing a well-round measure of hosting and participating games and increasing the communication and cooperation with the IIHF. Fasel suggested that the IIHF will work together with CIHA to make contributions to the development of Chinese ice hockey and realize the goals of “hosting good games and playing good games” and “encouraging 300 million people to participate in ice sports”.

### FINLAND

During the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey Women’s World Championship, the IIHF held a Coaching Symposium in Helsinki, Finland. Coaches, administrators, parents, educators, and member national associations all want the best for women’s hockey players.

Zsuzsanna Kolbenheyer, Chairwoman of the IIHF Women’s Committee and IIHF Council Member, and Tuula Puputti, General Secretary of the 2019 Women’s Worlds and General Manager of Team Finland, welcomed the speakers and participants.



Aku Nieminen, the IIHF’s Membership Development Manager, spoke about the 2018-launched Partnership for Progress Program. Designed to help bigger hockey nations and organizations help their developing counterparts, the program has already included such events as a Women’s Management conference in Radenthein, Austria and a Learn to Play seminar in Sofia, Bulgaria.

One of the most colourful presentations came from Sarah Murray, who coached the historic Unified Korean team at the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics. Murray highlighted four keys to success with that team: communication, creating a shared goal, controlling the controllables, and flexibility. She faced challenges on the road to good team play and peaceful cooperation.

Saara Niemi (nee Tuominen), a two-time Olympian and five-time Women’s Worlds player, spoke about the lessons she learned as a bench boss with the CWHL’s expansion Kunlun Red Star in 2017-18 and the new HIFK Helsinki women’s club this season. Project Expert Frauke Kubischta focused on the overall objectives of both the IIHF and the International Ice Hockey Centre of Excellence in Vierumäki. She outlined how the new IIHF Coach Development Framework will use guiding principles to develop better coaches and players.

### NORWAY

The Norwegian national team has been recognised by the United Nations for its efforts to reduce its carbon footprint and become The world’s first «climate positive» national team.

This includes the team’s use of reusable bottles and tap water avoiding plastic bottles, recycling bins at every event, using online ticket system, using of public transportation, shortest possible distance between hotel and arena, only use of hotels that have good routines for sustainability and sale of used equipment for supporters / clubs.

But still, the team must travel around for playing matches and unfortunately these trips often involve taking a flight since there are long distances and the time period between matches are limited.

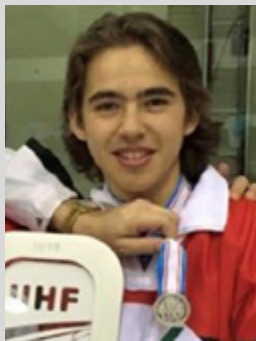
Recognizing this national team sponsor Telia, together with the national hockey team, decided to make their 2019 season not only climate neutral, but climate positive.

This means that the full team will strive to reduce greenhouse gas emissions related to their sports season as much as possible, and then over-compensate for the unavoidable emissions using **United Nations-certified credits**.

## Obituaries

### ARUNAS BERMEJO

21-year-old Mexican national team forward Arunas Bermejo passed away on 25 April 2019. He died of a heart attack in his bed in the morning at his apartment in Vilnius, Lithuania.



Bermejo played his junior hockey in Mexico before moving to the United States when he was 18 to play three seasons in the junior league Western States Hockey League for the Phoenix Knights, Lake Tahoe Icemen and Valencia Flyers. During the off-season he moved to Lithuania to start his senior hockey career.

He played for the Mexican senior national team in the 2017 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Division II Group B as well as two U20 and two U18 World Championship events.

His death came as a shock to the Mexican and Lithuanian ice hockey families. Bermejo grew up in Mexico. His father Francisco worked for many years in the Ministry of Sports while his Lithuanian mother Ausra works as a figure skating coach in Mexico.

### LUDEK BUKAC

Legendary Czech coach Ludek Bukac passed away on 19 April at the age of 83.



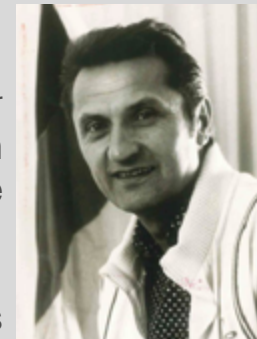
Bukac was inducted into the IIHF Hall of Fame in 2007 and was also a member of the Czech Hall of Fame. He spent most of his career as a player with Sparta Prague and represented the Czechoslovak national team in 30 international games including two World Championships in 1961 and 1963 winning World Championship silver and the European title in 1961.

However, he had a much bigger impact in his later career behind the bench. In 1979 he joined Karel Gut as assistant coach of the national team before becoming the Czechoslovak national team's head coach in 1981 at the Canada Cup and the World Championship, finishing both times in third place.

That was followed by two World Championship silver medals in the following years and silver at the 1984 Olympics. At the 1985 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship on home ice in Prague the colour of the medal was finally gold breaking the Soviet dominance.

### JAN STARSI

IIHF Hall of Fame member Jan Starsi passed away on 13 April after long illness. He was 85 years old.



The Slovak legend was born on 17 October 1933 in Sokolce in the Zilina region and spent most of his playing career with Slovan Bratislava. He won five silver medals in the national competition and was the goal scoring leader of the Czechoslovak league in 1960.

He represented Czechoslovakia in the 1960 Olympic Winter Games and in four IIHF Ice Hockey World Championships winning one silver medal and two bronze.

But Starsi became even more successful as a coach, first with FC Bayern Munchen then Slovan Bratislava. For most of the '70s he was the co-coach of the Czechoslovak national team together with Karel Gut. During this period he won World Championship gold in 1976 and 1977, silver in 1974, 1975 and 1979, Olympic silver in 1976 and led the Czechoslovaks to second place at the 1976 Canada Cup.

Starsi was inducted into the IIHF Hall of Fame as builder in 1999 and was later also inducted into the Slovak and German Hall of Fames.

### ADAM SVOBODA

Former Czech national team goaltender Adam Svoboda passed away today. He was only 41.



According to information published by the police he committed suicide. His body was found dead at his residence in the Pardubice region.

Svoboda played 21 years of professional ice hockey, mostly in his country for Sparta Prague, Pardubice, Slavia Prague, Plzen and Hradec Kralove in the top league as well as stints in Germany (Nuremberg), Russia (Togliatti, Omsk), Sweden (Timra) and in his last season 2016/2017 in Kazakhstan for Beibarys Atyrau. With Slavia Prague in 2008 and with Plzen in 2013 he won two Czech championships.

Internationally he represented the Czechs at two World Junior Championships and one U18 European Championship. He played for the men's national team for many years and had 41 international games but didn't play a game in the four World Championships he was on the roster including the gold-winning team in 2005.

This season he worked as goaltending coach for his former club team Dynamo Pardubice and earlier with the Czech Ice Hockey Association.



## The Worlds Await

International ice hockey returns to Slovakia

By Andrew Podnieks



**The 83rd edition of the World Championship will be played in Kosice and Bratislava in May, and two countries in particular are ecstatic for that fact—Slovakia and Finland.**

Slovakia, of course, is thrilled to be hosting the event for only the second time. The first, in 2011, also in these two cities, was wildly successful, and organizers are expecting even greater crowds and support eight years later.

Finland is equally excited, though, because in 2011 it won gold with a dominating 6-1 performance over arch-rivals Sweden. The Lions would love to duplicate their success.

The most important thing organizers would love to change from eight years ago is the one thing they can't do anything about—the play of their team. In 2011, Slovakia won only once in the preliminary round and once again in the qualification round, finishing in 10th place.

The nation has plenty of reasons to be excited, though. Their Canadian coach, Craig Ramsay, is a forward-looking strategist, and the players have bought into his style, while general manager Miroslav Satan represents the very heart and soul of the team.



*Finland's national team and its fans brought the party to Bratislava back in 2011, who will be next to raise the IIHF Trophy?*

More than anything, Slovak players are known and respected for their devotion to the national team, and this year all available stars are coming. With them they bring medal expectations as well. At least six NHL players are coming, notably Tomas Tatar from the Montreal Canadiens, Richard Panik from Arizona, and Andrej Sekera from Edmonton. As well, Ladislav Nagy, who will turn 40 on June 1, will be in the lineup. He played on the gold-medal team in 2002 and the bronze-medal team a year later.

Finnish fans will recall with fondness the gold-medal game of 2011 which gave the team its second championship after 1995. Sweden scored early in the second period and appeared in control, but a goal from Jarkko Imonen with only seven seconds left in the period tied the game.

Early in the third, that momentum continued as Suomi scored two quick goals. They added three later in the period and skated to a convincing 6-1 win.

Another country looking forward to this World Championship with extra spirit is surely Great Britain. A powerhouse in the 1930s, it hasn't played at the top level since 1994 and has played with the big boys only twice since 1952 (1962 in Squaw Valley being the other appearance).

The Brits will have on their team Liam Kirk, drafted by Arizona in the NHL in 2018, and Brett Perlini, the son of Fred, a former NHL player himself. Peter Russell is back for a fifth year with the team, and he was the leader last year when they beat hosts Hungary, 3-2, in a shootout on the final day to earn promotion.

That win also spelled joy for Italy, which was also promoted from Division I-A last year. The Italians are trying to gain some traction in the top pool. They have been promoted four times in the last decade, but each time they have been demoted right away.

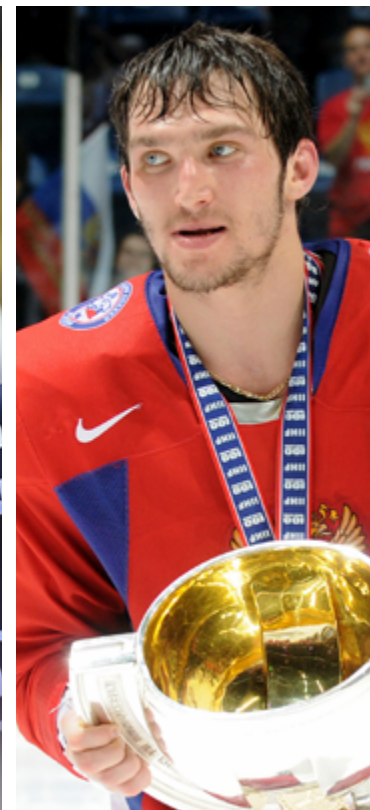
Coached by Clayton Beddoes, a former NHLer, the Italians have many experienced players on their roster, notably Marco Insam, Armin Hofer, and Armin Helfer. They will play in Group B in Bratislava, while Great Britain will be in Kosice's Group A.

Last year's gold medallists, Sweden, come to Slovakia to defend their title, and they do so

with a roster culled almost entirely from the NHL. Such is their depth of talent, they are the most prominent European nation in the league and seem to be growing each year. The only player not from the NHL is goalie Jhonas Enroth, who used to be in the league. Notable talent includes NHL rookie phenom Elias Pettersson, Loui Eriksson, Elias Lindholm, William Nylander, and legendary goalie Henrik Lundqvist. This is a team built to win—young, skilled, and familiar with the Tre Kronor system under coach Rikard Grönberg.

Surely one story worth following will be the play of Switzerland. Proving that their remarkable run to the gold-medal game in 2013 was no fluke, they came within a goal of gold last year, losing to the Swedes in a shootout on the final day. Patrick Fischer's team might be thin on NHL talent, but it includes many players from last year, as well as 20-year-old Nico Hischier, the first overall draft choice by New Jersey two years ago.

Canada being Canada, it will come to Slovakia with an all-NHL roster chock full of talent, led by a trio of 2018 Stanley Cup runners-up from the Las Vegas Golden Knights: Shea Theodore, Jonathan Marchessault, and Mark Stone. They will be joined by Pittsburgh's Stanley Cup-winning goalie Matt Murray and Sean Couturier, a star with Philadelphia.



*Slovakia 2019 will have some star power with Henrik Lundqvist, Patrick Kane, Alex Ovechkin, and Roman Josi playing.*

And for the first time in a very long time, it is more than worth noting the talent the United States will bring. Having won gold at the Worlds only once (way back in 1933), USA Hockey has typically had trouble getting its best players to come overseas after what is usually a disappointing NHL season.

Not so in 2019. Chicago's Patrick Kane is back for a second straight year, and is the captain, and he'll be joined by Jack Eichel, Johnny Gaudreau, Ryan Suter, and Dylan Larkin. As well,

Jack Hughes is on the team. He'll turn 18 on 14 May and is expected to be drafted first overall in the NHL's draft in June. In truth, this American team should win a medal for coach Jeff Blashill.

Sixteen teams will play 64 games over 17 days. Each team has a goal—a medal, a quarter-finals appearance, avoiding relegation—and performance under pressure will determine who leaves happy and who doesn't. But for hockey fans in Slovakia, it promises to be a tournament full of great games and drama.



## Finland hosts wild Women's Worlds

Ten things we learned from the 2019 IIHF Women's World Championship

By Lucas Aykroyd





Building off the momentum of PyeongChang, the 2019 IIHF Women's World Championship in Espoo, Finland made history.

Here are 10 things we learned.

### 1) U.S. outshines the rest

Objectively, the deepest, most talented, and most consistent team claimed its fifth straight Women's Worlds gold medal. Earning a record-setting fourth tournament scoring title (11 points), Hilary Knight had goals in seven straight games. Kendall Coyne Schofield (nine points) kept flying with the newly stitched "C" on her jersey. The U.S. outscored opponents 41-5 and, as usual, had the best power play (29.1 percent). Its defence combined for a whopping 29 points. Right now, the reigning Olympic champs look set to repeat in 2022.

### 2) Finns have closed the gap

Whether you supported or opposed the video goal judge's decision to disallow Petra Nieminen's overtime goal in the final, the host nation indisputably had a game-changing tournament. Coach Pasi Mustonen's team finally beat Canada in a semi-final and went the distance with the Americans.



Annie Pankowski scored twice, including the shootout winner, as the U.S. claimed a wild 2-1 victory over Finland.

Finland competed with true sisu (guts) and overcame big psychological hurdles. It's now a three-horse race for gold.

### 3) Hiirikoski does it all

Finnish veterans like tournament all-star Michelle Karvinen (eight points) and Susanna Tapani (seven points) stepped up, but no skater shone like captain Jenni Hiirikoski. Averaging 26:03 in ice time per game, the 32-year-old tied Kirsi Hanninen's 1999 record for most points by a blueliner (10). She deserved her MVP, Best Defender, and all-star honours. For the Finns, an overlooked tragedy was that Hiirikoski didn't score on her

end-to-end rush that preceded the gold-medal video review. If she had, it would have rivaled Geraldine Heaney's thrilling winner at the 1990 Women's Worlds in Ottawa.

### 4) Raty may be the GOAT

Finnish goalie Noora Raty did all she could to try to become a champion. In the playoffs, Raty made 43 saves on Canada and 50 on the U.S. for a superb 95.8 save percentage. Cumulatively, that's the greatest goaltending performance in IIHF women's hockey history. The 2018 Olympic all-star swept the goalie awards on her Espoo home ice.



Hiirikoski (left) and Raty brought Finland to new heights.

### 5) This is Canada's wake-up call

Canada failed to make the final for the first time in 19 Women's Worlds, and hasn't won gold since 2012. Recovering from a knee injury, superstar centre Marie-Philip Poulin played just 4:44 in Espoo, hobbling her team's chances. Blayre Turnbull's injury during the semi-final loss to Finland also hurt.

On the plus side, acting captain Brianne Jenner schooled opponents on faceoffs and scoring leader Natalie Spooner showed great net-front presence. That said, it's time for the 2019 bronze medalists to reevaluate their "blue-collar team" identity, seeing how the U.S. has dominated with puck possession and creativity.

## 6) Girls just wanna have fun

Canada's highlight was 21-year-old rookie Loren Gabel, who tied Natalie Spooner for second in tournament goals (six). And young players generally shone in Espoo. All-star U.S. defender Cayla Barnes, just 20, dazzled with six points in her Women's Worlds debut after going pointless in PyeongChang. Elisa Holopainen (17), Viivi Vainikka (17), and Sanni Hakala (21) showed why they could form Finland's first line in Beijing, and blueliners Ronja Savolainen (21) and Nelli Laitinen (16) played big roles too. Czech forward Natalie Mlynkova (17) had as many goals (3) as aces like Canada's Rebecca Johnston and the U.S.'s Amanda Kessel.

## 7) Czechs rising, Swiss stumble

Even though the Swiss finished fifth and the Czechs sixth, it felt like the reverse. Outscored 25-3, Switzerland couldn't challenge its Group A opponents. Lacking stars like retired goalie Florence Schelling and defender Christine Meier, plus injured forward Lara Stalder, the young Swiss were even outshot 87-25 in total when fourth-place Russia beat them 2-1 in the round-robin and 3-0 in the quarter-finals. It's a far cry from Switzerland's 2014 Olympic bronze medal heyday. Meanwhile, the Czechs ruled Group B, getting balanced scoring from NCAA-trained forwards like captain Alena Mills



*Espoo embraced the Women's World Championship and was rewarded with a historic performance by the home team.*

and Denisa Krizova. Their respectable 3-1 quarter-final loss to Finland marks them as a nation to watch.

## 8) Russia's defensive play needs work

In fairness, Russia has just 2,650 registered female players, while Finland, recently its closest rival, has 5,858. The superpower that dominated men's IIHF competition for decades and remains a threat at every World Championship could invest more in its women's program. That

said, it's unacceptable that against medal-winning countries, the Russians were outscored 34-1 in Espoo. Forward Alexandra Vafina blamed making the "same mistakes" repeatedly. Witness the three wrap-around goals Canada's Natalie Spooner scored on Nadezhda Morozova. With coaching and conditioning, this stuff is fixable.

## 9) Work ethic lifts Germany, Japan

Germany couldn't match its historic 2017 four-

th-place finish, but coming seventh with Jennifer Harss's great netminding and a consistent, gritty effort was still commendable. In a Forbes interview, Hilary Knight praised eighth-place Japan, which fell 4-0 to the U.S. in the quarter-final: "The level of discipline – I think also combined with their endurance, and strength and conditioning – I was really impressed. They held us to four goals. I've never played against a more disciplined team before." Led offensively by veteran Hanae Kubo (four points), the Japanese, with an average age of 23, never made it easy on anyone.

## 10) 10-team format a success

Granted, Sweden will not remember the inaugural 10-team Women's Worlds fondly. Only able to defeat newly promoted France, the dispirited Damkronorna were relegated along with Les Bleues. Sweden's demise – after failing to medal since 2007's bronze while paradoxically building Europe's best women's league in the SDHL – is a tale for another time. However, the new 10-team format showcased this fast-growing sport at its finest and created anticipation for the 2022 Beijing Olympics. Espoo's average attendance of 1,767 per game and total attendance of 51,247 set new European records. Get ready for on-ice thrills and off-ice pandemonium at the 2020 IIHF Women's World Championship in Halifax and Truro, Nova Scotia.


**May 2019** / Vol. 23, No. 2

## Video Highlights: 2019 IIHF Women's World Championship



Click here to see highlights the 2019 IIHF Women's World Championship

### All-Star Team

**Noora Raty, G, FIN**

**Jenni Hiirikoski, D, FIN**  
**Cayla Barnes, D, USA**

**Michelle Karvinen, F, FIN**  
**Hilary Knight, F, USA**  
**Kendall Coyne Schofield, F, USA**

Directorate Best  
Forward, All-Star



## Kendall Coyne Schofield, USA

**7 GP, 5 G, 4 A, 9 P, +11**

It's been a banner year for the USA forward. Fresh off an appearance at the NHL All-Star game, where she made history by participating in the Fastest Skater competition, Coyne Schofield paced Team USA with nine points in seven games, eight of those scored at even strength.

Directorate Best  
Defenceman, All-Star,  
MVP



## Jenni Hiirikoski, Finland

**7 GP, 2 G, 8 A, 10 P, +5**

A true legend in Finnish ice hockey, Hiirikoski once again swept the individual awards, adding still more shine to what is a surefire Hall of Fame career. The Finnish captain led her team and all defenders with 10 points, earning her seventh Top Defenceman award and fourth All-Star selection.

Directorate Best  
Goalkeeper, All-Star



## Noora Raty, Finland

**6 GP, 2.20 GAA, 93.66 SVS%, 1 SO**

The 2019 Women's Worlds was a vintage Raty performance. On more than one occasion she raised her game and her team to new heights, inspiring the home crowd in the process. The veteran goaltender for Suomi was at her peak in Finland's stunning upset of Canada in the semis, making 43 saves on 45 shots.

# Sweden wins U18s

## Tre Kronor's young guns make history

By Lucas Aykroyd



**Lucas Raymond completed his hat trick in overtime as host Sweden won its first gold medal ever on home ice at the IIHF U18 World Championship.**

"I just saw it went in and it was pure happiness," said Raymond. "It's huge. But the most important thing is the win. To do it here, it's amazing, and the hat trick wouldn't mean anything if we didn't get the win."

With the Swedes moving the puck beautifully in the Russian zone, Raymond took a cross-ice pass from Alex Brannstam, moved into the middle, and unleashed a glove-side wrister from above the hash marks that beat Russian goalie Yaroslav Askarov at 5:44. Ecstatically, Raymond ripped off his helmet as his teammates mobbed him by the glass.

It's the first Swedish IIHF title at home since Örnsköldsvik's own Daniel and Henrik Sedin led Tre Kronor to end the 27-year World Championship



Lucas Raymond completed his hat trick in overtime as host Sweden won its first gold medal ever, defeating Russia 4-3.

"home ice curse" in Stockholm in 2013. This is also just the second time a U18 host team has triumphed, 10 years after the U.S. did it in North Dakota.

These kids weren't even born when the U18 World Championship debuted in 1999. But the wait was worth it for Three Crowns supporters.

The fifth all-European U18 World Champions-

hip final was a classic. Russia rallied from a 2-0 second-period deficit to lead 3-2 before head coach Magnus Havelid's boys tied it up and sent it to overtime.

Sweden's Hugo Alnefelt shone in his goaltending duel with Askarov. The Russians outshot Sweden 38-30.

Russia still achieved a major success with its

fourth silver medal in tournament history (2000, 2002, 2009). The Russians have won gold three times (2001, 2004, 2007) and bronze three times (2003, 2011, 2017).

"Step by step, we played more and more in a better way," said Russian head coach Vladimir Filatov. "There are some old Russian sayings that we are preparing for a long time, but then we drive fast. You can say that it was like this for us during this tournament. I would agree that the players improved a lot in the playoffs."

In the big picture, it's possible that this year's bronze medal game featured bigger future NHL stars, such as the U.S.'s Jack Hughes and Cole Caufield. Caufield was named the MVP after leading all scorers with 14 goals, tying Alexander Ovechkin's single-record tournament record from 2002.

The U.S. earned the bronze medal with a 5-2 win over Canada, and Jack Hughes earned his place in history on Sunday. With a goal and two assists, the American captain broke Alexander Ovechkin's career points record (31). Hughes finishes his two-year U18 career with 32 points.

Switzerland beat Slovakia 6-3 in the third and deciding game of their relegation series in Umea. The Slovaks are relegated to Division IA for 2020.

Steve Kingsman / IIHF Images


**May 2019** / Vol. 23, No. 2

## Video Highlights: 2019 IIHF U18 World Championship



Click here to see highlights the  
2019 IIHF U18 World Championship

### All-Star Team

**Yaroslav Askarov, G, RUS**

**Philip Broberg, D, SWE**  
**Cam York, D, USA**

**Cole Caulfield, F, USA**  
**Jack Hughes, F, USA**  
**Rodion Amirov, F, RUS**

Directorate Best  
Forward, All-Star, MVP



## Cole Caulfield, USA

**7 GP, 14 G, 4 A, 18 P, +12**

With all eyes on projected #1 NHL draft pick Jack Hughes, his linemate Culfield went out and lit up the U18s. By the end of the preliminary round, Caulfield had scored more than 35 percent of the U.S.'s tournament-leading 31 goals. The American sniper finished with 14 goals, tying Alexander Ovechkin's single-record tournament record.

Directorate Best  
Defenceman, All-Star,



## Philip Broberg, Sweden

**7 GP, 2 G, 4 A, 6 P, +2**

Broberg opened up the season with a strong performance at the Gretzky Hlinka Cup, scoring three goals and four points to help the Sweden to a silver medal. After notching an assist the World Juniors, Broberg was the top defender playing on home ice in Sweden, helping his country earn its first U18 title.

Directorate Best  
Goalkeeper, All-Star



## Yaroslav Askarov, Russia

**6 GP, 2.31 GAA, 91.62 SVS%, 1 SO**

A 40-save performance in the semi-finals from Askarov helped Russia pull off a huge upset over the powerhouse United States team at the U18 Worlds. Combined with a strong performance at the Hlinka Gretzky tournament the previous summer, Askarov has further cemented his status as Russia's next top goaltending prospect.

## 3 golds for Serbia

**Seniors come from behind to earn gold**

By Henrik Manninen



**In a roller-coaster ride of a tournament, Serbia won gold at the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championships Division II Group A in Belgrade.**

Down but never out, Marko Brkusanin became Serbia's hero when he coolly slotted home the game-winning penalty shot against Spain and lifted the hosts into the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championships Division I Group B.

A desperate Serbian team had been in fourth place, when they were offered a lifeline in their final game against Spain. Blueliner Stefan Boskovic drew them level with 28 seconds left of the third period before Serbia's netminder Arsenije Rankovic then saved three out of four Spanish penalty shots as 1,276 cheering home fans lifted the roof inside Belgrade's Ice Rink Pionir.

Serbia's 3-2 win over Spain marks the end of



*Serbia's hockey program has earned an unprecedented medal haul, claiming three IIHF Championships in 2019.*

a historical season and possibly the start of a new exciting chapter for Serbian hockey.

Serbia's U20 and U18 national teams had already won gold at their respective World Championships at Division IIB level. Now they were joined by the senior team who won Serbia's third consecutive gold medal this season and their first one at senior level since 2009. 17-year-old prospect Marko Dragovic played an integral part in Serbia's success this season, winning gold in all three categories.

En route to their gold, Serbia first saw off

Croatia (3-1) before losing to Australia (2-3). They bounced back with straight wins against China (6-5) and Belgium (6-3) before finally toppling Spain following a nerve-racking final round of games.

Serbia's final day celebrations was made possible thanks to neighbours Croatia, who earlier that day edged Australia, the leader of the standings after four days, 2-1. Both teams then watched on as Serbia collected their gold medals while dwelling on what could have been.

Croatia, who came within an earshot of gold,

had to settle for silver, while Australia who entered the final day in pole position, finished up with the bronze medals. At the other end of the table, Belgium got relegated to Division IIB after losing the deciding game for fifth place to China.

With his 5 points (3+2) captain Marko Sretovic was Serbia's joint top-scorer and together with Stefan Ilic, the two sole survivors on the roster who last won gold for Serbia at senior level. At the 2009 IIHF World Championship Division II Group B Sretovic tasted success and promotion in Novi Sad in what was different times for Serbian hockey.

"At that time hockey was at the highest level in Serbia. That team was more experienced. This year we have many young players with a lot of speed who helped us to win many of our games," said Sretovic, who after winning his second gold at senior level has come full circle in a long and distinguished national team career.

During the first game of the final round, there was a hint of nostalgia inside Ice Rink Pionir as ex-Yugoslavian friendship came to the fore with the Belgrade-crowd cheering on neighbours Croatia to the tilt against Australia. A win for Croatia also meant that hopes for Serbian gold were kept alive.

## Israel moves up

### Blue Eagles win goal fiesta in Mexico

By Andy Potts



**Israel secured promotion to the Division II Group A of the IIHF World Championship after topping its group in Mexico City.**

In a tournament full of goals – 138 markers were shared between the six nations – Israel had the most prolific offence, claiming 32 of them on its way to victory.

The Israelis, with a roster that included former KHLer Eliezer Sherbatov, confirmed top spot with a comfortable 7-3 victory over Georgia on the final day. But the team might have secured gold with a game to spare. The team's fourth game saw it drop its only point, tying Mexico 4-4 before prevailing in overtime, to give New Zealand a fighting chance going into the final day's play.

However, Israel made no mistake against the Georgians. After allowing a power-play goal midway through the first period, two goals from Sergei Frenkel – both assisted by Sherbatov



Led by KHLer Eliezer Sherbatov, the Israelis lit the lamp an incredible 32 times in just five games at the tournament.

– turned the game around. Four unanswered goals in the middle frame, two of them to Sherbatov, put the game and the tournament to bed. Georgia staged a mini rally early in the third but Israel had the final say when Artem Vernyy scored into an empty net with that man Sherbatov collecting an assist for his sixth point of the game.

New Zealand, for its part, lost out to Iceland as North Atlantic edged South Pacific for the silver medals. Iceland jumped to a 4-0 lead after two periods and the Ice Blacks could not find a way back despite scoring twice in the final frame.

Sherbatov, once of Slovan Bratislava but now playing for Kurbads Riga in the Latvian championship, ended the tournament as leading scorer with 15 (7+8) points. Along the way he picked up a new nickname from the Mexican broadcast commentators, who dubbed him 'Mr. Danger'.

Defenceman Evgeni Kozhevnikov was next on the list with 14 (5+9) and his Bat Yam team mate Sergei Frenkel was third with 11 (6+5). Frenkel's tally also included that overtime winner against Mexico. Bat Yam, three-time winners of Israel's

hockey championship, supplied six of Robert Holik's roster.

Mexico's overtime loss against Israel did more than slow the champion's march to gold. That topsy-turvy game saw the host nation lead 3-1 at the first intermission before trailing 3-4 at the start of the third. Carlos Gomez got the tying goal in the 48th minute, handing Mexico a vital lifeline in its battle against relegation.

Collecting a point from that game gave the Mexicans a lift – and they continued that upswing in a final-day showdown against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. A powerful 8-2 victory ensured that Mexico preserved its Division IIB status at the expense of the Koreans, who are relegated to Division III for the first time since 2015.

Behind Israel, Iceland took the silver medals with New Zealand collecting bronze. Georgia, newly promoted to this level, consolidated its position with a fourth-place finish thanks to victories over Mexico and Iceland.

Sherbatov was unsurprisingly chosen as top forward. Iceland's Dennis Hedstrom was voted best goalie as Iceland allowed 15 goals in its five games, the least porous defence at the event. New Zealand's Stefan Amston was picked as best defenceman.

Gunnar Jonatanarson

# Bulgaria is golden

## Claim Division III title on

By Ivan Tchechankov



**In a period of one month, Bulgaria's ice hockey program has managed to strike gold twice on the world stage.**

Four weeks ago the U18 team won a promotion to the Division II Group B. This time around it was the men's team that secured the first place in 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championships Division III on home ice in Sofia.

In the round-robin tournament Bulgaria went undefeated in the first four games and secured the top position and promotion to the higher division one day before end of play. The host country started with a 12-2 rout against South Africa, continued with a narrow 3-1 win over Turkey and followed with more victories: 6-2 against Turkmenistan and 11-2 against Chinese Taipei. The Bulgarian men's team has won an IIHF tournament only twice in the history – in 1998 (then Group D) and in 2014 (Division III).



*The Bulgarian players celebrate after earning their fourth win in the fourth game and securing gold in Division III.*

"It was not as easy as the results suggest. I came here for one purpose only – to earn a place in the upper level. Last year we couldn't do that, so now I am very happy that we did it", said head coach Robert Kalaber. The 49-year-old Slovak is in this position for a second season. Last year he led the Bulgarian team to second place in the tournament in South Africa with the only loss coming against Georgia.

"Compared to last year the most improved part is the discipline of the team. There are some young boys on the roster who play abroad like Miroslav Vasilev. Now they are one year older and continue to progress. I can see improvement in most of these players, including the goaltender Dimitar Dimitrov. What is important is that we have convinced all players to subordinate everything in the name of the team. It does not matter who is the best, who is the youngest

or the oldest, they all played for the team and the results were seen," continued Kalaber.

Only 5 of the 18 players on the Bulgarian roster did not score a goal in the tournament. Vasilev led with 16 points (10+6), Hodulov has 10 (6+4), Boyadjiev is next with 8 (2+6) and Muhachev has 7 (4+3). The team also ranked number 1 in all major statistical scoring and special team categories

On the fourth day Bulgaria had to win against Chinese Taipei in any way to secure the first place. Tzu-Chieh Lin opened the scoring with a rebound in the 13th minute, but Bulgaria tied five minutes later after a combination between Vasilev and Muhachev. Just 11 seconds after serving his penalty for hooking Miroslav Vasilev blasted the puck from zero angle towards the opponent's goaltender and made it 2-1. This was just a start for the 6-goals period and another double digit win score for the "Lions". I.

Before the last day of play Bulgaria has the maximum of 15 points, followed by Turkey (9), Turkmenistan (7), Luxembourg (6), and Chinese Taipei (5). A wild 9-7 victory in their final game against Chinese Taipei saved South Africa from going winless in the tournament, but the team will nevertheless be relegated to the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championships Division III Qualification.

Kostadin Andonov

# Germany promoted

## U18s power to gold and 2020 Top Division

By Andy Potts



**Germany stormed to promotion in 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship Division I Group A with a perfect record from its five games in Grenoble, France.**

So great was the German dominance that Frank Fischoder's team secured gold with a game to spare: back-to-back 5-2 victories over Denmark and Kazakhstan left its closest rivals in its wake and promotion was confirmed in emphatic style with a 13-1 drubbing of relegation-bound Ukraine. An impressive week of hockey was rounded off with a 9-3 victory over the host nation to make it five wins from five as the youngsters brought Germany back to the top level of U18 hockey for the first time since 2015.

Head coach Fischoder said: "This was a great performance from everyone involved. I am very proud of the team and the entire staff who worked hard for this success. It's a very important achievement for German hockey that our under-18s are first class once again and, at the



The German U18 national team celebrating their promotion to the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship.

same time, it was a great end to a long season."

The news was also a boost to Toni Soderholm, head coach of the men's national team, as he prepares for next month's World Championship in Slovakia. "This promotion is enormously important for the future of German hockey and it gives everyone incredible motivation. It proves that we are ready for the next level and for the challenges that lie ahead."

The German success in France follows the pro-

motion of the U20s on home ice back in December and means that next season will see Germany competing at the top level of all three age groups in the men's game. With the country promoting its POWERPLAY 26 vision of establishing itself as a regular medal contender in the coming years, development of its youth development program is vital.

President of the German Ice Hockey Association and IIHF Council Member Franz Reindl was delighted with the results in France.

"Congratulations to the team, coach and staff for reaching our big goal with four wins in a row," he said after the demolition of Ukraine. "This team has been incredibly stable and the guys worked at a high level. This promotion means another step forward for German ice hockey after the promotion of the U20s and a seventh-placed finish from the women's team. It all fits in with our concept. We will see a lot more of these players in the future."

When Reindl talks about seeing more of these players, he could have the likes of Tim Stutzle in mind. The 17-year-old from Viersen is off to the NCAA next season where he'll play for the University of New Hampshire. Last season he plundered 55 (23+32) points in just 21 games for Adler Mannheim's U20 team, prolific scoring while competing against older players. In Grenoble he potted 9 (2+7) points and was selected as the tournament's leading forward.

Kazakhstan took second place in the tournament behind Germany, beating Denmark in a shootout on the last day to move in front of the Danes. Norway came in fourth with host nation France down in fifth place following its relegation from the elite pool last season. Only an overtime victory in the opening game against Ukraine, secured by a Quentin Tomasino goal, secured the French a place in Division IA and sent newly-promoted Ukraine back to Division IB.

Fabian Baldino

## Japan grabs gold

### Outlast favourites to earn promotion

By Szabolcs Zavodszky



**Japan's U18 national team went to Hungary, for the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship Division I Group B, and claimed first place with one day left and four wins in four games.**

The Japanese did not lose until the final day when they had already locked up promotion and the gold medal.

It's safe to say that only Japan left the tournament happy with the gold medal around their necks. Austria, Slovenia and Hungary were considered the three favourites for promotion. Despite this Japan came in and took care of business. "We already had the gold after the fourth game, however, it was still hard mentally to play the fifth game," said Takeshi Yamanaka, the Japanese coach, after the close of the tournament.

The first real upset of the tournament came during the first game of the third match day as



Japan's U18 team came ready to play in Hungary, and has now won promotion to Group A for the first time since 2011.

Italy beat Slovenia 2-0. Fadani picked up the shutout win with Cristellon and Soelva scoring for Italy. The second game was a battle of undefeated teams as Japan took on Austria. Austria jumped to a 2-0 lead after two periods on goals by Harnisch and Kandemir but in the third period Japan battled back as Ando and Ueno scored to tie the game with Hanzawa scoring the game winner with just under five minutes left to play.

After the game Japanese coach Takeshi Yamanaka had the following to offer: "Our players worked hard today, both goals against us were unlucky. We picked up our play in the second period, we moved well and skated a lot, this was the key to today's victory. This is the past now and we need to look forward to the next game to pick up another three points."

The third game of the day produced nine goals as Hungary came back from being down 4-1 and tying it up at four all before Britain scored in the final minute of play to take the three points in the upset win. The day of upsets really shook up the standings in the Division I Group B.

Austria took a big hit in their chance to passing Japan when they followed their one goal-defeat with an overtime win over GB. In the final game of the day it was Japan picking up the shutout win over Slovenia. Sato played lights out in the win for Japan while Ueno scored twice for the Japan.

With the win the Asian nation had locked up the gold medal and promotion to the next level. The tournament win and 17th place overall in the U18 World Championship program is the best result for Japan in seven years.

On the final day of the tournament the rest of the positions were up for grab as well as some teams trying to avoid relegation. Italy got past Great Britain in their final game by the score of 3-1 to avoid relegation with GB needing Hungary to lose their last game to also avoid relegation. Austria defeated Slovenia to pick up second place. Hungary defeated Japan 5-3 to go from last place when the game started up to third and picking up the bronze.

## Poland rolls at U18s

**Sweep Division IIA, move up to DI**

By Andy Potts



**An impressive week's work saw Poland's U18s score 36 goals in five games to romp away with gold in the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship Division II Group A.**

The Polish offence got steadily stronger throughout the competition, culminating in a 13-0 demolition of Spain to celebrate the title and elevation to Division IB after a two-year absence.

Playing in a city built to house workers at Lithuania's largest power station, Poland's electric attacking play simply overloaded the opposition. Under the guidance of head coach Tomasz Demkowicz, who played for Poland in the country's last top-division World Championship appearance in 2002, the team was a class of its own.

Poland began with a 3-1 success over Romania, the team demoted into this section last year. Jakub Blanik snapped a 1-1 tie at the start of



*Under the guidance of head coach Tomasz Demkowicz, the Polish U18 squad was a class above everyone else.*

the third, Marcin Plachetka scored a short-handed effort two minutes from the hooter and the Poles were up and running. A 7-1 thumping of host nation Lithuania, led by two goals apiece for Maciej Witan and Mateusz Bezwinski, confirmed that this team was a force to be reckoned with. The same two players shared three more goals in a 5-0 win over Korea as Poland opened up a lead at the top of the table after three games.

Following the rest day, the Poles kept on scoring

goals. Estonia was still in with a chance of gold until three goals in the first 10 minutes put Poland on its way to a crushing 8-2 victory. Then came that drubbing of relegated Spain to finish. Witan signed off with a hat-trick and Sebastian Brinkus scored 2+3 on the night to finish on top of the scoring charts. Demkowicz could celebrate a flawless campaign in his first experience as head coach of a Polish national team.

Second place went to the host nation Lithuania, which matched last season's result. Estonia, fif-

th last year, rebounded to claim third and will be back for a fourth successive season at this level. That's the best spell in the country's history of U18 World Championship play.

At the end of the table, newly-promoted Spain found life tough. As well as stepping up a level, this was a young roster – the average age was barely 16-and-a-half – and many of the key players from last year's champions were now too old to compete. Despite a difficult week, Spain managed to pick up a point from a 4-5 overtime loss against Romania. The Romanians took fourth place ahead of Korea.

Not surprisingly, Poland's players also dominated the individual scoring charts. The team had four youngsters who scored 10+ points with Cracovia Krakow forward Sebastian Brynkus leading the way on 16 (4+12). Brynkus has seen his development accelerate this season, playing 36 times in Poland's national championship and also representing the country's U20s before coming to Lithuania as an assistant captain in his second U18 campaign.

Maciej Witan, was the tournament's leading goal scorer with six goals. (4+6), with teammate Szymon Bieniek getting the top defence-man nomination. Lithuania's Nikita Kuzminov, was chosen as top goalie with a save percentage of 92.13.

## New heights

### Hungarian women earn historic promotion

By Szabolcs Zavodszky



**Hungary will be promoted together with second-ranked Denmark after winning gold at the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship Division I Group A in Budapest.**

"This is a sweet taste since there was tremendous pressure on the team. We played against some hard opponents as we battled for promotion, this is a great feeling right now. We needed to play as a team and not rely on two or three key players," said Hungary's head coach Pat Cortina after the last game, a win against neighbour Austria.

Heading into the tournament there were no clear-cut favourites to win the group but it did make things easier that the top-two teams in the group were to move up to the top division with the new format and ten teams. Hungary and Denmark will replace Sweden and France for the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship in Halifax, Canada.



*For the first time ever, the Hungarian women's national team will compete in the Women's World Championship top division.*

Everyone knew that a loss would not eliminate the chances of promotion but make things harder. Heading into the final game day no team had locked up promotion. Denmark, Norway, Austria and Hungary all could have closed out the day with a top-two finish. In the first game of the day Slovakia just got past Italy by the score of 2-1. Denmark pulled off a bit of a surprise as they shut out Norway 4-0 thanks to two goals by Jakobsen and excellent play by Repstock-Romme between the pipes.

With Norway losing to Denmark that meant that Hungary was through to the top division and Norway was out for sure.

Now it was down to who would be joining the host nation. If Austria won, Austria would take the gold and Hungary the silver and Denmark the bronze. If Hungary won, then it would be Hungary taking the gold, Denmark the silver and Norway the bronze. In short, depending on the result Austria could finish first or fourth, go up or stay where they were.

The final game of the tournament started out great for Hungary as Gasparics gave Hungary the lead 21 seconds into the game. Minutes later Austria also found the back of the net by a goal from Meixner. The game remained deadlocked at 1-1 until the third period when Bernadett Nemeth scored to make it 2-1. This would end up being the winning score as Hungary won promotion on home ice to the top division for the first time in history of the senior Women's World Championship.

"I can't even put it into words what I feel right now. We were already all pumped up when we saw how many fans came out to see us play," said Gasparics.

Denmark earned promotion also thanks to the help it got from Hungary. The country had a short stint at the top level when appearing in the first ever IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship back in 1992 where it finished in seventh place. Since reappearing in international women's ice hockey in 1999, Denmark has played either at the second or third level of the program missing out on promotion by just one win in 2013.

While Gasparics won the award as best forward, Charlotte Wittich of Austria won the vote for the best defender while Norway's Ena Nystrom got the award as best goaltender.

## Dutch women fly up

### Bottom-ranked Netherlands promoted

By Martin Merk



**The Netherlands were flying high at the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship Division I Group B in the Chinese capital of Beijing.**

As last-seeded team they beat all five opponents with a clean record to earn the second promotion in two years and play at Division I Group A level. It's the first time ever the Netherlands earned promotion to the second-highest level in women's senior hockey.

With the win the Dutch finish 17th overall in the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship Program and close to the highest ranking position ever, 16th (in 1999, 2013 and 2015), a place they could improve next year.

The Netherlands have played among the third-tier nations for most of the 2000s but suffered relegation in 2016. Last year they won the Division II Group A with a 5-0 record and now continued their streak with five more wins and



*It's the first time ever the Netherlands earned promotion to the second-highest level in women's senior hockey.*

as one of very few teams to win an IIHF championship as lowest-seeded team.

A 5-2 win against top-seeded Korea on the opening day was followed by a 3-1 victory against Kazakhstan. In front of 1,570 spectators at the new Shougang Ice Rink in a former factory the Dutch also blanked host country China, 4-0, before beating second-seeded Latvia 3-1.

On the last day only Poland had a chance to

take over the Dutch with a regulation time win. The Poles, one of the newer women's teams in their third year at this level, won all games except the one against Korea before the last day. Although the Dutch outshot the Poles 46-13 it indeed became the tightest game for the orange-and-white team. After a scoreless opening frame captain Savine Wielenga opened the scoring 30 seconds into the second period. The game remained open for a while until at 8:52 Zoe Barbier sealed the win with the second goal.

It was already the second shutout for Nadia Zijlstra, who had an excellent tournament with a 95.89% save percentage that was only beaten by Latvia's Kristiana Apsite (96.26%), the busiest goaltender with 206 saves and 214 shots on goal who was awarded the Best Goaltender award. Chaelin Park of Korea was named best defender while Wielenga was voted best forward by the directorate. The 30-year-old Dutch forward led the tournament in points (10) and goals (8). Korea's Jongah Park also had 10 points (6+4) while Poland's Karolina Pozniewska finished third with nine points (5+4).

Top-seeded Korea with many players from last year's Unified Korean team at the Olympics couldn't weather the Dutch storm on the first day and also lost to China on the second day. Wins over Poland (4-3), Kazakhstan (5-1) and Latvia (4-1) propelled the team to a silver-medal finish with 9 points, same as Poland, which won bronze.

For host China the tournament went the other way than Korea's. The host nation of the 2022 Olympic Winter Games started with two wins against Latvia and Korea but then lost the other three and fell to fourth place. Kazakhstan saved its place in the group on the last day while Latvia has been relegated as last-ranked team with only four goals in five games.

## Slovenia grabs gold

**Homegrown talent leads team to Division I**

By Andy Potts



**Slovenia powered to the summit the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship Division II Group A on the back of a devastating performance from its free-scoring first line.**

The combination of captain Pia Pren, Sara Confidenti and Julija Blazinsek delivered 47 points in five games to set the team atop its group in Dumfries. Pren, 27, led the way with 20 (6+14) as she dominated the scoring for the tournament. Confidenti (7+7) and Blazinsek (7+6) were the key beneficiaries of those 14 helpers.

Slovenia's success follows the decision to move Olimpija Ljubljana, the country's leading women's team, to the cross border Elite Women's Hockey League. Although the team found life tough in a competition that features rivals from Austria, Hungary, Kazakhstan and Italy, the experience of competing at a higher level provided a big boost for many of the team. Nine of Franc Ferjanic's roster came from directly from Olim-



*Slovenia dominated the competition in Dumfries.*

pija, while others, including Blazinsek, spent some time on that team over the course of the season.

Slovenia wasn't the only nation celebrating progress. Spain, making its first appearance, followed up last year's promotion with a bronze medal. A 3-2 victory over Australia on the final day took Spain to nine points, with its other successes coming in that shoot-out win over Slovenia, a 2-0 regulation triumph against Mexico and a shoot-out loss to the North Koreans.

Hosts Great Britain took silver for the second year running. A 2-1 victory over the Koreans on Tuesday left Cheryl Smith's team one point behind Slovenia and ruing a 2-4 loss against the eventual champion earlier in the week. DPR Korea took fifth place. At the foot of the table, Australia failed to win a game and was relegated to Division IIB after three seasons at this level.

## Chinese Taipei wins

**U18s power to gold and 2020 Top Division**

By Andy Potts



**Chinese Taipei enjoyed a perfect week in Romania as it won the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship Division II Group B.**

After posting five victories from five games, the team secured its second promotion in three seasons of IIHF competition, improving on last season's silver medals at this level when it finished behind Spain in Valdemoro.

The race went down to the final day, although Chinese Taipei held the upper hand going into the tournament's decisive game against Iceland. The Icelanders had lost game two of their campaign against New Zealand and knew that only a win in regulation would be enough to pip Chinese Taipei by virtue of a better head-to-head record. New Zealand was also in the mix, and its 5-1 victory against Croatia in Sunday's opening game would set up a three-way tie on 12 points if Iceland could beat the impressive Taipei roster.



*The Chinese Taipei players celebrate a goal vs Iceland.*

The ladies from the North Atlantic gave it a good go: this game was alive until the final 10 minutes, when Hui-Chen Yeh and Sing-Lin Tao scored twice in 13 seconds to turn a precarious 3-2 scoreline into a commanding 5-2 advantage that endured until the hooter. First Yeh stole the puck in the Iceland zone and advanced to make it 4-2, then the next attacking face-off for Chinese Taipei saw Yang-Chi Lin launch a point shot that Tao redirected past Karitas Halldorsdottir. The game, and the tournament, was won.

Iceland's loss saw it drop to third place behind New Zealand. Second place for the Silver Fernz represents the country's best-ever finish in IIHF World Championship play. Previously NZ's best was a third place in Division IIB in 2017. For Iceland, it's now three bronze medals in four seasons at this level. Turkey and Croatia finished fourth and fifth place, while Romania was relegated.

## Thai break through

**Women's team makes history in Abu Dhabi**

By Martin Merk



**The IIHF Ice Hockey Women's Challenge Cup of Asia has a new winner. For the first time Thailand won the tournament at the 2019 edition that was held in Abu Dhabi.**

The United Arab Emirates hosted nine teams during the week-long event with five teams playing in the top division and four more teams playing it out in a separate Division I tournament.

The event mostly included teams from smaller ice hockey programs in Asia that don't compete in the IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship program with two exceptions. Chinese Taipei competed with a different, younger team in Abu Dhabi than recently at the Women's Worlds while New Zealand used the event again to send its U18 team.



*Thailand's women's team won their first ever IIHF trophy in women's ice hockey, one point ahead of Chinese Taipei.*

In the past it became a clash for gold between these two special teams but not this year as Thailand won with its "regular" women's national team.

The foundation to the success was already laid in the first game of the tournament where Thailand beat Chinese Taipei 3-2. Pijittra Saejear opened the scoring already after two-and-a-half minutes but Fang-Chi Wu tied it up for Chinese Taipei two minutes later. Nion Putsuk gave Thailand the 2-1

lead during a power play at 12:07 and Nuchanat Ponglerkdee's third goal at 7:55 of the second period turned out to be the game-winner. Pei-Chen Liu's goal early in the third period brought Chinese Taipei within reach but despite several power plays her team didn't manage to tie the game.

Defending champion Chinese Taipei continued with a flawless tournament and Malaysia (13-2), Singapore (3-1) and New Zealand (3-0), however, it needed Thailand to lose

four points to claim first place. Thailand had a minor setback in a shootout loss against New Zealand's U18 team. The scoreless game was decided in a penalty-shot shootout. Both New Zealand's Lilly Forbes and Thailand's Wasunun Angkulpattanasuk kept their shutout streak until Jamie Kaiser scored the first and only goal with the 10th shot to give the Kiwis the win and extra point.

The Thai didn't lose any more points after that and beat Singapore (9-1) and Malaysia (9-2) to win their first ever IIHF trophy in women's ice hockey one point ahead of Chinese Taipei.

Also the bronze winner wrote history as Singapore beat New Zealand's juniors 5-2 in the teams' first game followed by a 5-2 win over neighbour Malaysia and after two losses against the top-two teams finished in third place. New Zealand had to settle for fourth place while the Malaysians, promoted to this level, finished winless.

Thailand's Ponglerkdee led the tournament in points (6+5=11) and was voted Most Valuable Player. Other awards went to Singapore goaltender Qina Foo, Thai defender Sirikarn Jittersin and Su-Ting Tan as best forward with her tournament-leading eight markers.

Yuka Fukuma

## Gallery



Players from Team USA celebrate with the championship trophy at the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship in Espoo, Finland.



Finland takes to the ice at the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship



Chloe Aurard's goal in OT gave France its first victory in Women's Worlds history..



Chris Tanouye/HHOF-IIHF Images

Sweden's Lucas Raymond celebrates with teammates after scoring the overtime goal to beat Russia and win U18 gold.



Steve Kingsman / HHOF-IIHF Images

USA's Cole Caufield gets tripped up by Russia's Yaroslav Askarov on a shootout attempt at the U18 semis.



Matt Zamboni/HHOF-IIHF Images

Team Japan bow to their fans following a 3-0 win over France at the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship.



Team Serbia lifts up recently-appointed head coach Alexandre Dandenault after winning at the World Championship Division II Group A.



Hungary celebrates after earning its first-ever trip to the top division of the Women's Worlds



The nine teams from the two tournaments at the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's Challenge Cup of Asia came together for a joint photo after the closing ceremony in Abu Dhabi.

# The Brits are back!

## Great Britain makes return to the top

By Andrew Podnieks

**Today, Andy French is the general secretary of Ice Hockey UK, but his humble beginnings 35 years ago couldn't have prepared him for what has happened during his time in the game, both personally and in his home country.**

### When did you start in hockey?

I've been involved in hockey in the UK since 1983. I started as an equipment manager with a team called the Peterborough Pirates, and I was there for 13 years. I went to Cardiff as the GM in 1996, and the year before, when Britain came down (to B Pool), I was made the GM of the national team. I stayed there until 2002. That year, I started to work with the league. It was known as the Super League and then it became the Elite League, but I also worked for the federation. I've been going to congress for nearly 20 years.

**GBR was in the lower division for a quarter century. What has happened recently that gave the team the push it needed to get back to the top?**



Great Britain came out on top in a wild tournament at the 2018 Division I Group A, winning promotion for the first time since 1994.

We came close twice before when Paul Thompson was coach, but we didn't quite make it. We've worked on improving the whole domestic program from the bottom up. The Elite League has gotten better every year, and each team has to have a certain number of Brits on it. The I-A team that won last year was almost all Brits,

and Pete Russell is our most decorated coach at U18 and U20. He was then given the opportunity to coach the senior men. He put in place a five-year plan to get back on top, and he did it in four, so we're one year early!

**Has the quality of hockey improved in**

### the last generation, or is this promotion a fluke?

We're a unique country in hockey. We're divided, so we have an English Association, a Scottish Association, an Irish Association. But we did a lot of work together to create a structure. Once a month we shut down to have what we call conference finals, and we've done that for 25 years now. It's called the conference weekend. We do this for under-11 kids, and every age to under 17, the best kids in the country, and in five parts of the country. Then all our top coaches go there to watch and find the best players for training camps in August. That coincides with how we've developed the national team.

### Is it tough getting kids interested in hockey in such a football-mad country?

We don't have problems with kids at a young age because they're keen and eager and want to try hockey. It's when they get to 17, start getting interested in ladies and other things, that we have trouble keeping them. And when they're 20, they're not qualified for the U20 program. So if they're a mediocre player, there's still a massive gap between the league and national team and they have to compete with imports. The professional teams have 14 imports, so the young Brit might end up sitting on the bench and feeling it's not worth it to carry on.

Photos: Laszlo Mudra



*In two years, Peter Russell has coached Team GBR to back-to-back gold medals and promotion to the top division.*

### Have new arenas helped spur development?

We have a new arena opening in Leeds, and Sheffield now has three pads. We're around 64 ice rinks in the country. But we've also hosted a lot of championships, which have been successful. But the biggest asset to us is what's happened to Scotland and England Associations. There's an England program and a Scotland program, and they run from August to April where they play international tournaments. They train every month, and then we pick the best players to try out for the GB national teams.

### You've had a year to prepare for your return to the top. What have you been doing to make it a successful one?

Let's go back to Belfast when we won I-B in 2017. In my opinion we were under a bit of pressure as hosts, but we won that and moved up. Then we went to Budapest last year and we took each game as it came. It was a dream for us to get promoted to the top. Since then, Andy Buxton, the GM, and myself, with the assistance of a lot of other people, started to prepare for Slovakia.

The biggest challenge was to find teams to play. In the past, in I-A and I-B, we've had exhibition games. The trouble is, the top teams all have their own schedules and play other top teams. Italy had the same problem. So I spoke to president Fasel and asked if he could help. He put me in touch with the Russian Olympic team, but we couldn't play them because of visa issues. Then I went to the KHL and asked for help. I got Dynamo Riga to come over, which was really good for the team.

I got Italy and Hungary to come over, which was good. We got Torpedo to come for two games. We won one and lost one. It's about getting the players ready for the speed and tempo when we get to Slovakia. We'll play Slovakia in Poprad, so as it turned out, we've never had such great preparation. It's been a lot of work but very worthwhile, and the fans in the UK have seen some great teams they wouldn't normally see.

### Of course, the big challenge is to stay up. How do you approaching the games in Slovakia with that in mind?

We'll take each game as it comes, but our first game against Germany and last game against France are big, but so is everything in between. Anything to expect from Canada, Finland, U.S. would be a fairy tale given the players they have. But hockey's a funny game, you never know...



# Coming up

## 2019 IIHF ICE HOCKEY WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

SLOVAKIA; Bratislava & Kosice 10.-26.05.2019

[Click here for 2018/19 IIHF tournament list](#)

The 2019 IIHF Guide and  
Record book, available now on  
IIHF.com and Amazon!



## Partners



INTERNATIONAL  
ICE HOCKEY  
FEDERATION



**TISSOT**  
SWISS WATCHES SINCE 1853

## Suppliers

**BAUER CCM**



**GRAF**  
made in Switzerland



**GUFEX**

**SHER-WOOD**



**TRUE**



INTERNATIONAL  
ICE HOCKEY  
FEDERATION

IceTimes

is a bi-monthly publication by the  
**International Ice Hockey Federation**

For information or to subscribe: [media@iihf.com](mailto:media@iihf.com)  
[www.iihf.com](http://www.iihf.com)

### About this issue

**Editor-in-Chief:** Adam Steiss (IIHF)

**Editor:** Martin Merk (IIHF)