



From the IIHF President

New season, new challenges

By René Fasel

The World Juniors, one of our most highly competitive and popular tournaments and a highlight of the holiday season, is returning to Helsinki once again.

The capital of Finland has been a great supporting city for this tournament in Europe. This will be the sixth time that Helsinki has hosted the World Juniors, and in this hockey town we have witnessed some exciting games.

The first World Juniors held in this city was way back in 1980 and was won by the Soviet Union, with Finland finishing second. The Finns competed well throughout each of their stints in their capital city, and finally managed to win it all in 1998 on an overtime goal from Niklas Hagman.

Having claimed another gold medal in Malmo 2014, the Finns will be looking for more gold come the first puck drop on 26 December.

Since 1980 the World Junior Championship has grown into an annual competition that is always tightly-fought and laden with talent. Each year we get to have a look at the next generation of hockey superstars competing for their country in ten days of fast-paced and hard fought hoc-

With hockey players developing at a much faster pace than in the past, this has been a huge benefit for our flagship junior hockey tournament.

It is no secret that this tournament enjoys immense popularity especially in countries like Canada. For hockey fans, the World Juniors is a part of the holiday tradition. I expect that there will be many fans travelling to Helsinki to enjoy the World Juniors in one of Europe's best winter destinations, those making the trip can read more about the city on Page 13.

The start of the World Juniors also marks the beginning of the top division international hockey tournaments. Following up the World Juniors will be the IIHF Ice Hockey U18 Women's World Championship in St. Catharines, Canada. We will also have club events such as the IIHF Continental Cup and the Champions Hockey Leaque semi-final round taking place in January.

Preparations continue also for the Youth Olympic Games in February. We are developing a Learn and Share program for the participants in the men's and women's ice hockey tournaments as

well as the Skills Challenge. The program will be aimed at helping these young hockey players in their careers by informing them about issues in sport such as match-fixing and also by engaging them in developing their own player safety campaigns and initiatives.

These kinds of programs are a great example of what an event like the Youth Olympics can offer to elite athletes just starting their sporting careers. It allows them the chance to learn about the Olympic values, explore other cultures and develop the skills to become true ambassadors of their sport.

Through the Learn and Share program the IIHF will be interacting with ice hockey players from over 25 countries, affording us the opportunity to gain insight into the challenges and issues facing young hockey players today and use that insight to help build a better sport for the next generation.

But before we get started, I would like to wish happy holidays to all hockey fans out there. We at the IIHF hope you have an enjoyable end to the year, and we look forward to bringing you some exciting hockey tournaments in 2016.





News and Notes

IIHE

The International Ice Hockey Federation has named its newest additions to the IIHF Hall of Fame. You can read the full bios on Page 6.

Former players Peter Bondra, Sergei Fyodorov (Fedorov), Valeri Kamenski, Ville Peltonen and builders Pat Quinn and Ben Smith make up the 2016 induction class. Hungarian forward Gabor Ocskay is the recipient of the Richard "Bibi" Torriani Award, and Nikolai Ozerov has been given the Paul Loicq Award.

The 2016 IIHF Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony will take place in Moscow on 22 May, the final day of the IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship.

FINLAND

Harri Nummela was elected as new Chairman of the Finnish Ice Hockey Association. He will take over from Kalervo Kummola, who steps down after 18 years but continues his term as an IIHF Vice President.

The 47-year-old, who is an Executive Board member of the OP Financial Group, won the election in the first round with 16 votes while the other candidates, the two club presidents Heik-



ki Hiltusen of Vaasan Sport and Jukka Toivakan of Jukurit Mikkeli, earned nine and five votes respectively.

As a junior player Nummela won junior championships with Tappara Tampere where Teppo Numminen and Janne Ojanen were among his teammates.

Finnish hockey legend Saku Koivu was newly elected to join the board and replaces Kalevi Halonen while Toivakka was re-elected to serve another term as a board member.

FRANCE

The Rouen Dragons were selected as host for the 2016 IIHF Continental Cup Final that will take place from 8 to 10 January 2016.

The Dragons finished the semi-final round with the best record and will face Denmark's Herning Blue Fox, Italian champion Asiago Hockey and Polish champion GKS Tychy in the battle for the winners' plate.

The lle Lacroix rink venue will host the final tournament for the fourth time after 2009, 2012 and 2014. In 2012 the Dragons won the Continental Cup on home ice in the city 120 kilometres northwest of Paris – one of the biggest success stories for French ice hockey in international play.

NORWAY

After 15 seasons, coach Roy Johansen is leaving the Norwegian national team and will be replaced by Petter Thoresen.

Come the 2016 Worlds in Moscow and St. Petersburg, Johansen will have coached Norway in 15 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championships (including Division I).

Johansen took over the team after it was relegated from the top division in 2001. In his fourth year he led Norway back to the elite nations. Since then the Norwegians have established themselves in the top division and reached the quarter-finals three times (2008, 2011, 2012). During Johansen's era Norway also qualified for the Olympic Winter Games in 2010 and 2014.



Thoresen signed a three-year contract as Johansen's replacement. Like Johansen he's a highly distinguished coach in Norway having won 14 national championships as a player and coach with Valerenga Oslo, the Storhamar Dragons and the Stavanger Oilers. With the Oilers he has most recently won four consecutive Norwegian titles and the 2014 IIHF Continental Cup. In half a year he will leave his club to work with the national team.

As a player Thoresen played 96 international games, fifth most among Norwegian players, including five Olympic Winter Games between 1980 and 1994. On the ice his sons Patrick and Steffen also represented Norway internationally. Patrick Thoresen has played two NHL seasons for the Edmonton Oilers and the Philadelphia Flyers.

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RUSSIA

Two ice hockey arenas that have hosted major international IIHF tournaments have been chosen by the International Olympic Committee, the International Paralympic Committee, and the International Association for Sports and Leisure Facilities to be awarded for their exemplary architecture.

The Bolshoy Ice Dome in Sochi, which played host to the Olympic Games men's ice hockey tournament and women's gold and bronze medal games, as well as the 2013 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship, won two of the awards.

The architects of the Ice Dome, the South African firm Ruben Reddy Architects and SIC Mostovic of Russia, received both the IOC/IAKS Award in the Silver medal category, and the IPC/IAKS Distinction award.

The Bolshoy Ice Dome was the centrepiece for not only the ice hockey tournament during the Winter Olympics but also the entire coastal cluster. The 12,000-capacity arena's eye-catching exterior was designed with the aim to evoke images of a Faberge egg, or a frozen drop of water.

The arena's most notable feature was the 38,000 LED lights that were installed on the roof, which



during the Olympic ice hockey games flashed the score of the game in progress inside, along with the flags of the participating teams.

Another arena to be recognized for an architecture prize was the Bossard Arena in Zug, Switzerland. Swiss architects Sheitlin Syfrig Architekten AG received a bronze medal for the arena, home to EV Zug of the Swiss National League A. The arena opened in 2010 and holds 7,015 spectators.

SWITZERLAND

The Swiss Ice Hockey Federation named Patrick Fischer as its new men's national team coach for the remainder of the season. He will be assisted by two other long-time national team forwards. Felix Hollenstein and Reto von Arx.

The 40-year-old signed a contract valid until the 2016 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship in Moscow and St. Petersburg, Russia, that will be automatically extended for two more years if Switzerland reaches the quarter-finals.

Fischer, Hollenstein and von Arx were some of the best Swiss forwards in the '90s and early 2000s in the Swiss league and on the national team. The trio combined for 420 games, 103 goals and 201 points on the national team. All won championships in Switzerland and captained some of the best club teams. Fischer and von Arx also briefly played in the NHL.

Fischer ended his players' career in 2009 and was coaching HC Lugano for the last three years. He was Sean Simpson's assistant coach at the 2013 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship where Switzerland won the silver medal and in 2014.

The SIHF has also named **Daniela Diaz** as the new bench boss for the women's national team, succeeding Gian-Marco Crameri.

Diaz has previously guided the ZSC Lions Zurich to several championships in the Swiss Women's Hockey League since 2010. The sister of Raphael Diaz, who is under contract with the New York Rangers, she has also represented Switzerland as a player at many





international events between 1997 and 2007 including the 2006 Olympic Winter Games and four Women's World Championships in the top division.

"The hiring of Daniela Diaz is a positive signal for Swiss women's hockey," said Raeto Raffainer, director of national teams. "She is capable to tie in with the results of the past despite a couple of retirements of core players and to qualify for the Olympics again."

Switzerland, currently in fourth place in the IIHF Women's World Ranking, will play in Group B of the 2016 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship in Kamloops, Canada, where they will play Sweden, Japan and the Czech Republic for a place in the final round with the top-four teams seeded in Group A.



Obituaries

ZBYNEK KUSY

Zbynek Kusy, the former General Manager of the Czech national team and Vice President of the Czech Ice Hockey Association, passed away on 20 November at the age of 49. The



sudden and unexpected death came as a shock for the Czech hockey community.

Kusy was reportedly expected by friends of his for a golf trip to Dubai but was eventually found dead in his apartment. According to Czech media reports police assumed that he most probably died of a heart attack.

Kusy was working for HC Pardubice for 27 years. From 1999 to 2012 he was the General Manager and won three championships (2005, 2010, 2012) with the club. During that period he also served as General Manager of the Czech national team for six years winning World Championship gold in 2005.

He also served as Vice President of the Czech

Ice Hockey Association from 2001 to 2008 and chaired the organizing committee of the 2004 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship in Prague and Ostrava. He later worked as General Manager for Slavia Prague's football team and most recently served as politician on the assembly of the Pardubice region where he was the chairman for the Sport, Leisure and Tourism Committee.

VIKTOR YAKUSHEV

Viktor Yakushev passed away on 18 November at age 67.

Yakushev worked as an official at the 1991 Canada Cup, and was a driving force in officiating development in the Soviet Union and later in Russia.

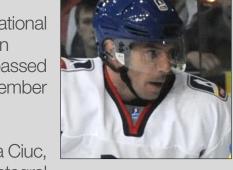


Under his guidance a vast majority of referees and linesmen working games in Russia and elsewhere were trained.

He later joined the KHL as head supervisor in the new League's Refereeing Department, where he organized and attended many referees' seminars and similar events.

ENDRE KOSA

Long-time national team defenceman Endre Kosa passed away on 9 November the age of 40.



Born in Miercurea Ciuc. Kosa played an integral

part in his hometown club's rise to their most successful era to date. He was crowned Romanian league champion nine times, lifted the MOL Liga trophy in 2010/11 and also wore the colours of Romania on 60 occasions during 13 senior World Championship tournaments.

Kosa was 26 when he made his debut at the 2001 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Division II Group B on home ice in Bucharest where he scored four points in five games from the blueline as hosts Romania went undefeated to win promotion to Division I.

Kosa represented Romania at the Olympic Pre-Qualification in Nikko, Japan and later had a big role in Romania's fourth-place finish at the 2013 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Division I Group B in Donetsk, Ukraine. At the time of his death he was working in his second year as coach of the U10 and U12 teams in Miercurea Ciuc. Kosa was married with two children.

ISAO KATAOKA Isao Kataoka passed away on Wednesday, 9 December. He was 79

vears old.

In 2001 Kataoka was the recipient of the Paul Loicq Award presented



annually by the IIHF to a person who has served the IIHF in an extraordinary manner promoting the sport of ice hockey worldwide.

The former Executive Director and Vice President of the Japan Ice Hockey Federation and recent President of the Hokkaido Ice Hockey Federation played an important role in preparing and organizing many IIHF tournaments in Japan, many of them in his hometown of Sapporo. He also contributed greatly to the success of the 1972 Olympic Winter Games in Sapporo and the 1998 Games in Nagano.

With his experience and knowledge of ice hockey, he managed these great events perfectly and helped the organizers prepare facilities to the great satisfaction of the participants. Kataoka's enthusiasm and aspiring attitude in the development of ice hockey administrators and officials of the next generation was greatly appreciated and respected by the ice hockey family in and outside of Japan.



IIHF names Hall of Fame Class of 2016

Legends to be honoured in Moscow

By Andrew Podnieks

Introducing the 2016 IIHF Hall of Fame draft class:

Peter Bondra b. Lutsk, Soviet Union (Ukraine), 7 February 1968

The defining moment in Slovakia's hockey history occurred on 11 May 2002, in Gothenburg, Sweden. With exactly 100 seconds left in the third period of the Slovakia-Russia gold-medal



game, Peter Bondra rifled a shot under the blocking arm of Maxim Sokolov, his second goal of the game, to give Slovakia a 4-3 win over Russia and its first ever gold medal.

That Bondra scored the historic goal was fitting, as he has been a mainstay on the national team since its inception.

Three months after Salt Lake City 2002, which Bondra did not play in, Slovakia coach Jan Filc was able to assemble a dream team for the World Championship. In the preliminary round robin, the Slovaks won two games and lost a 3-1 decision to Finland. In the next round, they won all three games, including key victories over Sweden, 2-1, and Russia, 6-4 (in which Bondra had two goals and an assist). This qualified the team for the playoffs.

In the quarter-finals, Bondra was the hero against Canada. Trailing 2-0 late in the second period, Bondra scored at 19:59 to give his team life heading to the third. Satan tied the game early in the final period, and Bondra scored the game winner less than a minute later to eliminate the Olympic gold medallists.

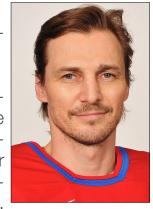
In the gold-medal game against Russia, Bondra scored one of two Slovak goals early in that final game, but the Russians rallied to tie the score, 3-3, midway through the third. That set the stage for Bondra's goal of the century for Slovakia.

A year later, he helped Slovakia win bronze at the World Championship, and he also played at the 2006 Olympics. In the NHL, Bondra's remarkable career saw him eclipse the vaunted 500-goal plateau and 1,000-game mark. After 16 years he retired in 2007 at age 39, his reputation solidified in both international and NHL circles.

Sergei Fyodorov

b. Pskov, Soviet Union (Russia), 13 December 1969

Because he was so dominant in North America, one tends to think of Sergei Fyodorov first as an NHL player and only second as a Russian international star. Yet, despite defecting from the



Soviet Union after a brilliant junior career, Fyodorov played in nine top-level tournaments for his country, winning gold at the World Championship three times.

The 1989 World Junior Championship in Alaska was best remembered for the play of the Pavel Bure-Sergei Fyodorov-Alexander Mogilny line. The threesome led the tournament in scoring and earned a gold medal for the Soviet Union.

As an NHL rookie, Fyodorov had 31 goals and 79 points in 77 games, proving even at age 21 that he belonged in the league. He improved in goals and points in each of his first four years, peaking in 1993-94 when he had 56 goals and 120 points. At the end of the year, Fyodorov won the Hart Trophy and Lester B. Pearson Award, both honours acknowledging his place as the best player in the league. He also won the Frank Selke Award as the top defensive forward, a combination no player before or since has won.

Fyodorov represented Russia at the 1996 World Cup of Hockey and was among the best players in the event. At season's end, he helped the Red Wings win their first Stanley Cup since 1955. The Red Wings repeated as Cup champs in 1998. Fyodorov led all players with ten goals in 20 post-season games. He also won silver with Russia at the 1998 Olympics in Japan.

Fyodorov won a third Cup with Detroit in 2002, and and also a bronze medal in Salt Lake. He earned his third World Championship gold in Quebec City in 2008, making the pass to goal scorer Ilya Kovalchuk in overtime to give Russia a 5-4 win over host Canada ending a 15-year gold drought. In 2015, Fyodorov was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto after finishing his NHL career with 1,179 points in 1,248 regular-season games.

Valeri Kamenski

b. Voskresensk, Soviet Union (Russia), 18 April 1966

By the time Triple Gold Club member Valeri Kamenski made his NHL debut with the Quebec Nordiques late in the 1991/92 season, his place in international hockey had already been well es-



tablished. He had played in two World Junior Championships, winning a silver medal in 1985 I Welcome I Bulletin I IIHF I Competition I Results I Gallery I Interview I Û I ⊠



and a gold in 1986. He also won gold at the World Championship three times, starting in 1986, just four days after his 20th birthday, a silver in 1987, gold again in 1989 and 1990, and a bronze in 1991.

As well, Kamenski claimed Olympic gold in 1988 in Calgary, the last time the old Soviet Union competed at the quadrennial event

To NHL fans. Kamenski first burst onto the scene a year earlier, during Rendez-vous '87 in Quebec City. He scored twice and added an assist in the second of the two-game series, a 5-3 win which gave the Soviets a split in the memorable showdown. While Wayne Gretzky was named MVP for Team Canada. Kamenski was named the top Soviet player. He was still only 20 years old.

It wasn't until 1993/94 that Quebec Nordiques fans had a true chance to see what Kamenski could do. That year, he scored 28 goals and showed flashes of genius with the puck for which he was famous. In the '95/'96 season Kamenski scored 38 goals and 85 points as the Colorado Avalanche won the franchise's first Cup, and with the win Kamenski became only the fourth member of the Triple Gold Club.

Ville Peltonen

b. Vantaa, Finland, 24 May 1973

Four Olympics, 13 World Championships, two World Cups, and 22 years of professional hockey are the impressive markers in Ville Peltonen's career.



Like Bondra, Peltonen is best remembered for achieving history at the World Championship. In the 1995 gold-medal game in Stockholm, the 21-year-old Finn scored three goals to give his country its first WM gold with a 4-1 victory over the favoured Tre Kronor.

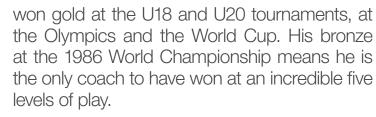
Peltonen played on a line that year with Jere Lehtinen and Saku Koivu, the three claiming all spots among forwards at the tournament allstar team. The linemates had first played together at Peltonen's inaugural senior appearance for Suomi, at the 1994 Olympics in Lillehammer. Finland won bronze that year, and a tradition was born. If Peltonen was in the lineup, Finland had a great chance of winning a medal.

Peltonen played in 19 top-level events and won 13 medals, an unprecedented number among Finnish players. Along with a few stints in the NHL he also played in Finland, Sweden, Switzerland and Belarus (in the KHL), often captaining his team, often leading it in scoring. The left winger wore the "C" for his country at six World Championships, more than any other player in Finnish history. His father, Esa, was inducted into the IIHF Hall of Fame in 2007, making this the second father-son team in IIHF history after Kalevi (father) and Teppo Numminen.

Pat Quinn

b. Hamilton. Ontario. Canada, 29 January 1943 d. Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, 23 November 2014

No coach in IIHF history won gold in as many events or won medals in as many events as Pat Quinn, Quinn



As a player Quinn won the Memorial Cup in 1963 with the Edmonton Oil Kings and later made it to the NHL, playing 606 games with Toronto, Vancouver, and Atlanta, before retiring in 1977.

He moved quickly up the coaching ranks, joining Philadelphia in 1977/78 as an assistant and later in the season as the head coach of the Flyers.

It was under his leadership that the Flyers went on a record-setting 35-game unbeaten streak in 1979/80. Quinn was twice named coach of the vear (1980 and 1992). He took the Flyers to the Cup finals in 1980 and the Vancouver Canucks as far in 1994.

It was in Salt Lake that Quinn became famous for enjoying a late-night cigar on the same bench every night in the athletes village where men and women from various sports and various countries chatted with him and listened to his experiences and his informal advice. Quinn led Canada to gold that year, the nation's first top-of-the-podium finish in half a century, and he replicated those efforts two years later at the World Cup of Hockey.

Although the Turin Olympics were disappointing for Canada, Quinn happily accepted the challenge to coach the nation's U18 entry in 2008. Despite having no junior experience, he guided the teens to gold. One year later, he did the same at the World Junior Championship.

Quinn passed away at 71, but his legacy lives on in his achievements behind the bench with those players he coached and his influence on many more athletes away from the ice. His personality, his hockey smarts, and his competitive spirit make him one of the legends of the coaching fraternity.







Ben Smith

b. Gloucester, Massachusetts, United States, 21 January 1946

Ben Smith III was a fine hockey player in his own right, playing three years of college hockey at Harvard before embarking on a coaching career that would endure until his retirement.



Smith's first full-time head coaching job was at Yale, but after five rewarding years he left to take an assistant position under Jack Parker at Boston University. Smith stayed with BU for nine years, including a championship 1989/90 season, and he later made his way around top schools, coaching at Dartmouth for a year and Northeastern for five in the 1980s and into the 1990s.

His first international opportunity came when he took a year off to work as an assistant coach for the U.S. men's team for the 1988 Olympics in Calgary. In 1996, Smith gave up men's hockey and college hockey to coach the women's national team, becoming the first full-time coach employed by USA Hockey. Nagano 1998 proved to be Smith's crowning glory as the Americans stunned Canada twice in three days.

First, Smith's team scored an unprecedented six goals in the third period to win the final game of the round robin, 7-4, and three days later the team played a flawless game, winning 3-1 against their northern rivals and claiming the historic gold.

In 2005, the U.S. played a perfect gold-medal game, beating Canada 1-0 in a shootout for its first ever Women's World Championship gold medal. Smith ended his career a year later after a bronze at the 2006 Olympics in Turin.

Richard "Bibi" **Torriani Award: Gabor Ocskay**

b. Budapest, Hungary, 11 September 1975 d. Budapest, Hungary, 24

March 2009

Few players have had success in both domestic lea-

gue and international play to the extent of Hungarian Gabor Ocskay. He spent his entire career with the Alba Volan Szekesfehervar team, leading the team to nine championships in his 16 seasons (1993-2009).

Ocskay first represented his country as a 17-yearold, playing in both the U20 World Championship C-Pool and senior World Championship C-Pool. He went on to play in 16 straight World Championships between 1993 and 2008, notably in 1998 and 2000 when the team won the C-Pool to earn promotion to B-Pool.

The nation's finest moment came in 2008. however, when it beat top-seeded Ukraine, 4-2, on the final day of the World Championship Division I Group B in Sapporo, Japan, to earn Ocskay and his teammates promotion to the top division for the first time in 70 years.

This incredible achievement was diminished by Ocskay's untimely death. He had missed much of 2004 with heart trouble, but he appeared to have made a full recovery. However, just two days after helping Alba Volan win its seventh straight league title in March 2009, Ocskay suffered a fatal heart attack.

Six weeks later, the Hungarian national team travelled to Switzerland for the World Championship, thrilled by the historic achievement but heavy-hearted because their great number 19 was not there with them.

While his untimely death stunned the Hungarian hockey world, Ocskay had long ago established himself as an influential athlete in his homeland. His father had also played internationally, but the vounger Gabor was adored by fans and respected by opponents. In all, he played 187 games for Hungary and was named player of the year three times in the domestic league.

Paul Loicq Award: Nikolai Ozerov

b. Moscow. Russia. 11 December 1922 d. Moscow, Russia, 2 June 1997

Nikolai Ozerov is best remembered as the sports voice of a nation for decades



He covered some 30 World Championships in hockey and all Super Series in the 1970s and 1980s when Soviet teams toured the NHL with much fanfare (and success). Additionally, Ozerov covered 17 Olympics (Summer and Winter) and eight FIFA World Cups. He later established an informal club with young journalists, exchanging thoughts, sharing experiences, and providing guidance to a new generation.

country, first in radio and later in television.

His longevity and popularity ensured he was formally recognized many times over. These included some 15 medals in the Soviet Union and, perhaps most importantly, the Silver Olympic Medal in 1992, the highest honour the IOC can bestow on a person.



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2017 World Juniors goes into the cold

Outdoor game marks return to Buffalo

By Martin Merk

USA Hockey has selected the city of Buffalo, USA as host for the 2018 IIHF World Junior Championship.

Games will be played at the First Niagara Center, HARBORCENTER. For the first time in the history of the tournament, an outdoor game will also be played, at Ralph Wilson Stadium.

The 10-nation tournament features the world's best male players under 20 years of age and is a 31-game event that takes place over the course of 10 days. The tentative dates are 26 December 2017 to 5 January 2018.

"It is a pleasure to have the IIHF World Junior Championship return to Buffalo," said Rene Fasel, President of the International Ice Hockey Federation. "The last tournament held here in 2011 generated a huge following and we are even more excited about the organizing committee's plans to hold an outdoor game as part of the



Buffalo's Ralph Wilson Stadium, site of what will be the first-ever outdoor game of the IIHF World Junior Championship.

tournament. This will be the first time ever that we've had such a game as part of the World Juniors, and an outdoor ice hockey game at Ralph Wilson Stadium will without a doubt be a memorable occasion."

The 18,690-seat First Niagara Center, home of the NHL's Buffalo Sabres, was already the main venue of the 2011 World Juniors while HARBORCENTER will serve as secondary venue. The IIHF World Junior Championship will include an outdoor game as part of the preliminary round, with the preferred match-

up of the organizers being USA vs. Canada. Ralph Wilson Stadium is home to the NFL's Buffalo Bills. It hosted the 2008 NHL Winter Classic between the Sabres and the Pittsburgh Penguins in front of 71,217 spectators, the second highest single-game attendance in an NHL game.

"It was an extremely difficult decision as all three finalists in contention to host the event were exceptional," said Dave Ogrean, executive director of USA Hockey. "We're excited to be returning to Buffalo and are most thankful for the extraordinary support of the Pegulas, and everyone involved with the Sabres and Bills organizations and Pegula Sports and Entertainment. We look forward to an outstanding event."

Pittsburgh and St. Louis were the other candidates in the last part of the bidding process while Chicago and Tampa were also finalists before the field was narrowed to three.

"Needless to say we're thrilled to be selected," said Terry Pegula, owner of the Buffalo Sabres and Buffalo Bills. "USA Hockey had three terrific finalists and we are truly honoured to be hosting this magnificent event. I know our community and region will be great hosts for teams and fans from around the world for what we expect to be the best World Junior Championship ever held in the U.S."

"The World Juniors is one of the most anticipated championships on the hockey calendar each year and we look forward to having the event back in our country in 2018," said Jim Smith, President of USA Hockey. "We know Buffalo and Western New York will be outstanding hosts and an outdoor game will be a terrific addition to an already great event."

The next IIHF World Junior Championship opens this week in Helsinki, Finland, while the 2017 IIHF World Junior Championship will be hosted in Montreal and Toronto, Canada.

Two years ago Rasmus Ristolainen's goal gave Finland World Junior gold. Prior to then the team last won the tournament in 1998 in Helsinki.



Finland.





As the Finnish capital prepares to host the World Juniors for a record-setting sixth time, the field is wide open. It's the perfect environment to catch the next wave of international hockey stars.

The tournament will feature ten teams competing at the Hartwall Arena and Helsinki Ice Hall, ideal locations for the tournament that kicks off the international ice hockey season.

"Hartwall Arena has been upgraded in many ways - fans who've been there before will notice new LED boards and other entertainment elements inside the arena," said tournament general secretary Timo Backman. "Helsinki Ice Hall has also been renovated since the last World Juniors in 2004."

Canada, as the defending champion with the deepest talent pool, is a top favourite. Yet it'll be tough to match the firepower of the 2015 team, which scored a tournament-best 39 goals with now-NHLers like Connor McDavid and Max Domi setting the tone.

Watch for the nifty Brayden Point to spark the offence with his creative playmaking, while fellow returnee Lawson Crouse brings traditional Canadian physicality. Head coach Dave Lowry will lean heavily on Joe Hicketts, the lone retur-



Finland will count on the services of top-rated prospects like Jesse Puljujarvi to repeat the success of Malmo 2014.

ning defenceman, who's also Lowry's captain with the WHL's Victoria Royals.

The Boxing Day battle between Canada and the U.S. will spotlight Auston Matthews, who is expected in June to become the first #1 overall American draft pick since Patrick Kane (2007). Despite recent injury woes, the Arizona-raised 18-year-old has dazzled the Swiss National League A this season, excelling against men with the ZSC Zurich Lions.

Winger Matthew Tkachuk could revive the prosperous partnership he enjoyed with Matthews with the U.S. National Team Development Program U18 team. Returning blueliner Zach Werenski's savvy puck-moving should be a major asset. USA Hockey hopes head coach Ron Wi-



LAST FIVE WORLD JUNIOR CHAMPIONS:

RUSSIA (2011 vs. Canada) **SWEDEN (2012 vs. Russia) UNITED STATES (2013 vs. Sweden)** FINLAND (2014 vs. Sweden) CANADA (2015 vs. Russia)



Ison – behind the bench for more than 1.400 NHL games - will celebrate the 20th anniversary of his 1996 World Cup of Hockey victory with another triumph. The U.S. also won the last World Juniors in Finland held 12 years ago.

Unusually, the defensively diligent Finns enter this tournament with a bonanza of blue-chip forwards. Towering, draft-eligible kids like Jesse Puljujarvi and Patrik Laine are expected to score as Finland aims to improve on last year's seventh-place finish. Fervor among fans and media will be high. Coach Jukka Jalonen, who earned gold at the 2011 IIHF World Championship in Slovakia, must make sure his charges keep level heads.

How about Finland's Nordic archrivals? The Swedes, under third-time head coach Rikard Gronborg, should be disappointed if they don't at least medal. At every position, they boast re-



turnees in their bid for just their third World Junior gold ever (1981, 2012). Goalie Linus Soderstrom played all seven games last year with a creditable 91.6 save percentage and 2.31 GAA. Brainy defenceman Gustav Forsling cracked the 2015 media all-star team with eight points. Forward Oscar Lindblom had nine points and tied for the team lead in goals (four).

Memories of Slovakia's 4-2 upset over Sweden in the 2015 bronze medal game are still fresh. That was Slovakia's first World Junior hardware since 1999's bronze in Winnipeg. But Denis Godla, the 2015 tournament MVP and Best Goalie, has graduated to the pro ranks, along with captain and scoring leader Martin Reway. A top-eight finish is viable.

If the latest edition of the annual CHL Canada-Russia series provides any indication, the Russians may not be as formidable as last year's



silver-medal squad. They lost five out of the six games in November, only prevailing 3-2 against a QMJHL all-star team. Russia's leading scorer was undrafted 19-year-old Andrei Svetlakov of CSKA Moscow (1-3-4). The D-man to watch in Helsinki is big, mobile Ivan Provorov of the Brandon Wheat Kings. Overall, it'll be a youth-laden roster for coach Valeri Bragin. Skill won't be an issue, but as is often the case for Russia, goaltending is a question mark.

After hovering between fifth and seventh place for the last 10 years, has the Czech program finally bounced back enough to earn a semi-final berth? In Group A, can the scoring-challenged Swiss get enough goals to doom Denmark which overachieved last year with an eighth-place result – to the relegation round? Will newly promoted Belarus be able to ride the national wave of enthusiasm that saw it make the guarter-finals at the last two senior Worlds, overco-



ming the graduation of nearly all the U20 players who claimed the Division IA title last year?

Well, that's why we play the games. And if these budding stars need a role model, they need look no further than Teemu Selanne.

The legendary patron of the 2016 tournament will see his #8 jersey retired by the Finnish national team before his country faces Slovakia Dec. 30. Selanne is the all-time Olympic leading scorer after playing in six Winter Games, earning four medals to go with his two World Championship medals. He's also the NHL's 15th-highest scorer of all-time (1,457 points) and a 2007 Stanley Cup champion.

No matter where the 2016 participants hail from, if they approach the World Juniors with the love of hockey that Selanne always showed, they'll do iust fine in Helsinki.



Five ways to have fun in Helsinki

Finland's capital a World Juniors regular

By Lucas Aykroyd

Beyond the arenas, fans can find many ways to amuse themselves in Helsinki.

It may be chilly over the holidays, but whether you prefer art galleries or saunas, this elegantly modern city of 600,000 is a hot tourist destination.

If you like art...

At the Ateneum art museum, lovers of fantasy will relish the wild, vivid 1890s paintings of Akseli Gallen-Kallela. They depict scenes from the Kalevala, the Finnish national epic, which partly inspired J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings. With more than 4,300 paintings and 750 sculptures, the Ateneum, located across from Helsinki's Central Railway Station, traces Finnish art history beautifully.

If you like beer...

Just steps away from the white splendor of He-Isinki Cathedral in Senate Square, discover a



The Helsinki Cathedral, Ateneum museum, and harbour area are among the numerous sights of the Finnish capital.

new mecca for beer lovers. Gleaming brass tanks greet you as you descend the stairs to the 2013-opened Bryggeri Helsinki.

Whether you simply crave a German-style Pils or Hef or want to pair goat cheese cheddar with sahti (a dark, ancient Finnish beer), your palate will be satisfied at this hospitable establishment.

If you like saunas...

Founded in 1928, Kotiharjun Sauna is the Finnish capital's oldest remaining public wood-burning sauna. Strip off, sweat, and beat yourself with bundled birch twigs to get the circulation flowing. Enjoy a shower, massage or cool drink in between braving temperatures of up to 120° C. Towels and separate saunas for men and women are provided. For an authentic Finnish experience, this is it.

If you like music...

Finland might be the world's most heavy metal-crazed country. Want proof? Attend the Helldone Festival at the famous Tavastia rock club, with the best-selling Finnish band HIM headlining (Dec. 29-31). Or bang your head at colourful clubs like Bar Bakkari and The Riff nightly. Classical buffs mustn't miss the "Sibelius: One must live every note" exhibition at the National Museum. It commemorates Finland's most famous composer, whose "Finlandia" graced the soundtrack of director Renny Harlin's Die Hard 2, starring Bruce Willis, 25 years ago.

If you like to shop...

Helsinki's iconic department store is Stockmann, centrally located on Aleksanterinkatu. Stock up on Finnish designs, from clothing to jewelry, by companies like Marimekko and Arabia. The adjacent Academic Bookstore is Finland's best option for bibliophiles. Hungry? Stroll a few blocks east past the Esplanadi Park to the harbour, and enter the Old Market Hall (Vanha Kauppatori). The scents and flavours of coffee, Finnish rye bread, smoked fish, and chocolate are absolutely mouth-watering.

Canada to host top teens in January

Europe teams continue to improve at U18s

By Andrew Podnieks



The U18 Women's World Championship is returning to Canada for the first time since the inaugural event in Calgary in 2008.

The first eight tournaments saw Canada and the United States each win four, and although another North American showdown seems imminent, there are plenty of players to watch both in that rivalry and European rivalries as well.

Coach Joel Johnson will be back to try to defend gold for the Americans, but he won't have star defenceman Jincy Dunne, who is in college this year now that she is over 18 (Ohio State). But seven players from 2015 are back, notably forward Rebecca Gilmore.

Canada has only three returnees. It will be without leading scorer Sarah Potomak, who is also in the NCAA (Minnesota), leaving new coach Lisa Haley with the huge pre-season task of putting together a team almost from scratch.



Russia's women's U18 national team has made great strides in a short time and won its first medal in this category last year.

Oddly, although Finland and Sweden routinely battle for bronze at the senior level, the Czechs and Russians have been more competitive at the U18 level. Russia is in a strong position. having finished third last year and able to bring back 12 players, including goalie Valeria Tarakanova and leading scorer Fanuza Kadirova.

The Czechs were the youngest team last year, though, losing the bronze, 5-1. Now with a more experienced roster, they should be even more competitive, that bronze, which they won in 2014, clearly in sight once again.

Finland and Sweden are natural rivals, but the

edge, on paper, must go to the Swedes this year. They have 13 eligible returnees, including goalie Emma Soderberg and Jessica Adolfsson, the defenceman who led her team in goals with four last year.

Finland, meanwhile, will be without Sanni Hakala, its top scorer. Indeed, the Finns will need to find goals from new talent and ways to keep pucks out of their own net with new goaltenders now that both Anni Keisala and Kati Asikainen have moved on. The Swiss and teenage wunderkind forward Alina Muller should not be counted out either as they look to improve on last year's seventh-place finish.

Japan was relegated last year and France, winners in Division I, will be playing in the top pool for the first time. But virtually all of the players who helped get the team to St. Catharines are now ineligible, leaving huge gaps. In Division I in 2015, the team scored 21 goals, 18 of which came from players not returning. The attraction for fans to the French team will be the Aurard twins. Chloe scored the other three goals for the team, and her sister, Anais, was the backup goalie. She'll likely be the starter this year.

Hockey Canada is hoping to hit a new attendance record. The current mark of 17.480 was set in Prerov and Zlin (CZE) in 2012, but St. Catharines is a vibrant hockey city and could make the record books with a good turnout.

Continental Cup Final 2016 set to go

Field wide open for Final Four teams

By Martin Merk



Rouen, the centre of ice hockey in the French Normandy region, will soon host the **IIHF Continental Cup Final** for the fourth time from 8-10 January 2016.

Four teams are qualified for the final tournament and will battle for the winners' plate and the chance to play in the Cham-Hockey League next season.

Rouen Dragons



The Rouen Dragons finished the preliminary round with the best record when they hosted one of the two semi-final tournaments, and compete for the Continental Cup championship plate on home ice.

French national team forward Sacha Treille shone with three goals and Dany Sabouring



Rouen, right, has previously hosted the IIHF Continental Cup final in 2009, 2012 (where it won the tournament), and 2014.

had a 94.12 save percentage in the Group E semi-final. Treille has been a big acquisition for Rouen, after years in the top Czech and German leagues together with his brother Yorick, who also joined the team from leaque rival Grenoble.

40-year-old former NHLer Jason Krog has also been a big addition, leading the team in

scoring in the French Lique Magnus. He joined other Canadians such as Marc-Andre Thinel and Francois-Pierre Guenette, who have been core players for the Dragons for many years.

This month Rouen signed former NHL forward Joel Perrault and Canadian defenceman Mark Matheson as it pursues its quest

for the Continental Cup plate it last won in 2012. After a mediocre 2014/2015 season the team is now coached by long-time national goalie Fabrice Lhenry.

At press time the Dragons sit at 8-4 and in fifth place just three points behind leader Gap Rapaces. Rouen also qualified for the French Cup final on 3 January against Grenoble, which will be the first hockey game held in the Paris Bercy arena after its renovation. The Dragons also reached the final of the League Cup against Gap.

Herning Blue Fox



The Herning Blue Fox won the other semi-final tournament in Asiago and are the other unbeaten team in Continental Cup play this year although it had a tough start in domestic play.

Herning started in the Metal Ligaen with five losses in six games but has meanwhile recovered and moved up to sixth place with a 13-12 record.

While the team from the host city of the 2018 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship (together with Copenhagen) had an okay performance on defence with 61 conceded goals

- third-lowest in the league - it lacked in scoring with only 65 goals and no players in the top-10 in point and goal scoring.

American forward Jordan George comes closest with 15 goals and 24 points in 20 games and three goals in the Continental Cup semi-finals followed by former Finnish World Junior medallist Tomas Sinisalo.

Herning's strentgh is on the blue line with national team experience from home-grown players Daniel Nielsen, Kristoffer Lauridsen and Rasmus Nielsen as well as Steffen Frank, who joined in October.

Asiago Hockey



Italian champion Asiago Hockey also qualified for the final tournament, finishing its Group D home tournament in

second place thanks in part to a strong showing from its Italian-Canadian players.

Goaltender Christopher Carrozzi had a tournament-best 95.35 save percentage while Anthony Luciani, who joined the team in November, Anthony Nigro and Layne Ulmer were among the top-10 in scoring. Sean Bentivoglio, who is in his fifth season in Asiago, leads the team in scoring in Serie A play with



Herning Blue Fox and Asiago Hockey have already faced each other in the semi-final round, Herning winning in a shootout.

10 goals and 33 points.

Unfortunately it hasn't been enough in domestic play, as Asiago is in fourth place in the league with a 10-11 record and 23 points behind leader Ritten Sport.

The team has several players with national-team background such as Daniel Sullivan, who was joined this year by his brother Mike,

Stefano Marchetti, Diego Iori, Andreas Lutz, Andrea Ambrosi, Enrico Miglioranzi, Matteo Tessari, Lorenzo Casetti, Federico Benetti and up-and-coming 20-year-old Asiago native Marco Magnabosco.

A CHL berth would go a long way towards marking this season a success one for the Italian club.

GKS Tychy



Polish champion GKS Tychy marched to the final through the preliminary round winning the second-round event on home ice edging the Coventry Blaze from Great Britain and then finishing the semi-final tournament

in Rouen behind the host but before Shakhtyor Soligorsk from Belarus and Ukrainian champion HK Kremenchuk.

Efficient scoring and strong goaltending from Czech netminder Stefan Zigardy have been the keys to success for this Continental Cup Final contender, the first Polish team to advance to the final tournament.

Tychy is currently in second place in the PHL behind Cracovia Krakow with a 23-8 record and is the highest scoring team in the Polish league. The offence is led by national team players Mikolaj Lopuski, Marcin Kolusz and Czech forward Josef Vitek, who moved from the second Czech league to Poland eight years ago.

Given the short history of Polish clubs at the Continental Cup, Tychy will return to Rouen as the underdog, a role the team feels comfortable with.

The Continental Cup Final runs from 8-10 January 2016.





Team Latvia are kings of Vienna

Will compete in 2017 World Juniors

By Chapin Landvoqt



The Latvian national team came to Vienna, Austria, with its sights set on earning a promotion back into the world's elite class at the U20 level.

The team rolled through the 2016 IIHF U20 World Championship Division I Group A, putting up five wins in five games to ensure its return to the top level in time for the next World Junior Championship in Montreal and Toronto, Canada. It will be Latvia's first trip to the top division after three years in Division I.

"This is awesome. Just an incredible feeling. The team really hung in there every game and this is the best feeling ever," said Haralds Egle, whoe along with several other teammates will no longer be U20-eligible when Latvia heads to Canada.

"This is my last year, but it's a great feeling knowing I helped my teammates go up and



Latvia put up an undefeated record and averaged five goals a game to book its first trip to the top division since 2013.

now will get to enjoy that incredible experience next year."

The team's MVP was its starting goaltender Matiss Kivlenieks, who put up an outstanding 1.71 goals against average and 94.1 save percentage over four starts.

"I think it's amazing that I was named the team's MVP. It's the first time anything like this has happened to me. And I have to think of how my teammates were always blocking shots and moving out bodies. They made my job a lot easier," explained Kivlenieks.

Kivlenieks was selected as Directorate Top Goaltender and teammate Karlis Cukste, who led a defence that allowed just seven goals in five games, was chosen as top Defenceman.

"Latvia is very happy. We feel we belong in the world's top group and now we've gotten back up. It's a big step for Latvian ice hockey," explained long-time international and now assistant coach Juris Opulskis. "More than 10 players in this team are 97-born and have the possibility of being on next year's squad. Our goalie Gustav Grigals, who got the shutout today, was born in 1998 and has a bright future. He's currently playing in the MHL and he's a very strong and talented goalie."

12 members of this team are eligible for the 2017 IIHF World Junior Championship.

"That's a great building block and some of those players were already first line keys in this tournament," said Latvia GM Juris Stals. "But having played well here wasn't an automatic ticket to the event in Canada. There's a lot of time, development, and hockey until then."

Italy was relegated and despite two closer results, only managed to score five goals. Host Austria closed out the tournament at home with a surprise second place finish and a Top Forward nod to Florian Baltram.

French win on home ice

Earn tiebreaker on final day

By Adam Steiss



France closed out the 2016 IIHF Ice Hockey U20 World Championship Division I Group B with a big win over Poland to earn promotion on home ice in Megeve.

Needing to score at least three goals more than the Poles to advance, the French blasted Poland in a 7-2 win on the tournament's final day. The victory gave France the tie-breaker on goal difference, as France lost to third-place Great Britain 4-3 earlier in the week and all three teams ended up with eight points.

Forward Bastien Maia put up a hat trick against the Poles and finished the game with four points. He finished atop the tournament scoring list with 11 points in four games. His linemate Guillaume Leclerc finished with six points and was selected as the Directorate Top Forward.

France's win means the team will return to Division I Group A for the first time since 2013. The



Tournament hosts France will return to Group A after a resounding win over Poland at the Palais Des Sports in Megeve.

LIETUVĀ

Elektrenai

country has made just one appearance in the top division World Junior Championship, back in 2002 under Dave Henderson.

Ukraine finished in fourth, Slovenia last. Japan, which withdrew its team shortly before the start of the tournament, will be relegated to Division II. Ukraine's Bogdan was chosen as Top Goalkeeper and Marcin Horzelski of Poland Top Defenceman.

Hungary rolls

Caps unbeaten U20 campaign in Lithuania

Hungary crushed Lithuania 8-2 on the last day of the 2016 IIHF U20 World Championship Division II Group A.

Head coach Rich Chernomaz's team came into the final day tied on points with Lithuania, but came through thanks in part to a four-goal outburst in the second period from captain Csanad Erdely and forward Istvan Terbocs and a solid defensive performance that limited the Lithuanians to 13 shots on net.

Hungary finished the tournament with an undefeated record after racking up earlier wins against Korea, the Netherlands, Estonia, and Croatia.

The Hungarian offence was firing on all cylinders and scored at least six goals in each game. In all the team potted 36 goals in the tournament while allowing just nine.

Hungary's Vilmos Gallo, who shared the tournament scoring title with Estonian forward Vadim Vasjonkin with six goal and seven assist in five games, was chosen as the tournament Directorate Top Forward.

Lithuania's Domantas Cypas and Artur Pavliukov were chosen as Top Defenceman and Top Goaltender respectively.

Lithuania finished the tournament in second place followed by Estonia, Croatia, and the Netherlands. Korea was relegated to Group B after a winless campaign that saw the team lose twice in overtime.



Romania wins qualification

Triumphant return for women's team

By Ivan Tchechankov



Romania has won the 2016 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship Division II Group B Qualification after a roller-coaster game on the final day in Bulgaria.

On the final day of the round robin comeptition, South Africa was leading with five points followed by Romania with four and Hong Kong with three.

South Africa, undefeated after the first two games, just needed a win against Hong Kong, regardless the way - in regulation, overtime or shootout – to secure the first position.

Instead a surprise 3-2 for Hong Kong was cheered loudly by the Romanian players watching from the stands as it meant a chance for them to play for the first place in the tournament.

Hong Kong finished the event with 6 points and climbed to the first place before the last game. Romania needed a win, regardless the way, in



Romania's women's national team won qualification to Division II Group B, its first tournament participation in four years.

the last game in the Winter Palace against Bulgaria to overtake Hong Kong and win the qualifying tournament. The beginning was quite good for the country, which came back to the Women's World Championship program after an absence of almost four years.

Noemi Ballo put the puck in the net after just 43 seconds and in the sixth minute the score was

already 3-0 with two goals from the youngest of the team. Ana Voicu.

Three times Bulgaria cut the deficit to two goals (3-1, 4-2, 5-3) and had some momentum in the third period after remarkable saves by goaltender Vesela Krasteva who altogether stoped a total of 61 shots.

With less than three minutes to go everything fell apart for the hosts as Romania scored three more goals in just 47 seconds to complete an 8-3 rout.

Voicu finished with five goals and having won 21 out of 34 face-offs. Ballo had two markers and three assists. So after losing the first game against South Africa in dramatic fashion Romania went all the way to the top of the table in its return to the Women's Worlds. What made this turnaround possible?

"We had to change the strategy for the second game against Hong Kong. More time on ice for the young players, different lines and using three lines made the difference," said Romanian head coach George Pogacean.

"Against Bulgaria we had changes again and during the game there were so many penalties that we had to adjust in flight. In the third period it was nerve-wracking for a long time. The girls were very emotional, which led to missed opportunities, but in the end everything was alright."

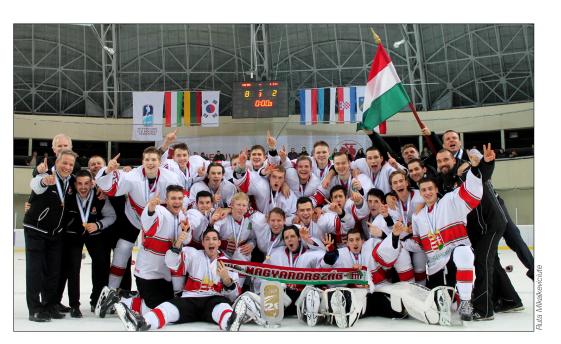
"After the defeat against South Africa we showed character and today Hong Kong gave us the chance to win the qualification. We could not miss it. Ana Voicu was indisputably the best player for us. She is only 16 and skates extremely well. She has good orientation and stick handling skills," Pogacean added.



Gallery



IIHF Council Member Beate Grupp and René Fasel with the 2016 IIHF Christmas card, designed and drawn by children from the Gustav-Werner School in Ulm, Germany. The school is for children with various forms of mental handicaps. The IIHF would like to thank them for their efforts in creating this special card.





Top: Hungary's U20 national celebrates after winning the 2016 IIHF Ice Hockey U20 World Championship Division II Group A in Elektrenai, Lithuania. Bottom: Latvian forward Rodrigo Abols scores a game-winner in a penalty shootout against Norway at the 2016 UZO World Championship Division I Group A.





Italian goaltender Hannes Treibenreif has the puck slip by him against Kazakhstan at the U20 Division I Group A.



French captain Vincent Nesa about to receive the tournament trophy after winning the U20 Division I Group B.



Bulgaria vs. Hong Kong at the 2016 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship Division II Group B Qualification.





Backchecking:

Going his way

Auston Matthews preparing for NHL in Switzerland

by Martin Merk

Auston Matthews is expected to play in his second World Junior Championship, closing out what has been a special season for the 18-year-old.

With top American players usually being drafted from college teams or Canadian junior teams and most of the top Europeans coming from pro teams on the home continent, earlier this year Matthews decided to go the European route before he will likely be picked No. 1 overall in the 2016 NHL Entry Draft. He is the first top prospect from North America to go this way before starting his NHL career.

Because he missed out of joining the draft class of 2015 by just by a few days being born on 17 September 1997, Matthews signed a one-year contract with the ZSC Lions Zurich. The unusual move has turned out rather well for everybody. In 22 games of the Swiss National League A



Auston Matthews, next year's consensus No. 1 NHL draft pick, will lead Team USA's 2016 World Juniors squad in Finland.

Matthews has scored 14 goals and notched 25 points for the top-ranked Lions. We talked with the centre before the start of the World Juniors.

How do you feel playing in the Swiss **National League?**

It feels good. It's a very good league and I'm having a lot of fun playing with this team. It's a great organization and it's been a really good time so far.

It was discussed a lot whether playing junior or college hockey in North America or in a pro league in Europe is the best solution for you this season. Any regrets with this move?

Absolutely not. I believe in it 100 per cent. I think it's been really good for me and it's a really great challenge. It was basically Zurich or major junior for me and I was fortunate enough to have this opportunity. I thought it'd be a good place for me and I think so far it has worked out pretty well.

What are the biggest differences for you coming from U.S. U18 national team and playing in junior leagues?

Well, it's professional hockey. Guys are obviously older and more mature players. It's hard to play against these guys. They have great experience. It's definitely tougher to play.

What were the biggest challenges for you in the Swiss league

Everybody is really fast and skilled and a lot of players have NHL experience and they are tough to play against. I think it's good for me to get that challenge and to prepare myself for hopefully the next level.

How important was it for you to have a former NHL coach in Zurich with Marc **Crawford?**

It is very important. He taught me a lot. He has coached very good players and I think I'm learning a lot from him.

You started to play in Arizona where hockey is not the most common sport. What made you want to play hockey?

I was just watching Coyotes game when I was younger and that's kind of how I got interested in hockey and started playing.



Who were your childhood idols?

Llike Shane Doan. He's been there ever since the team moved down. I liked to watch Daniel Briere when he used to play there.

What do you miss most in Switzerland?

Not too much, a couple of different food spots back in Arizona but there's a lot of really good places here I enjoyed going too so I haven't missed too much. This is home for a year and I've enjoyed it a lot. I like the kebabs and stuff like that, it's really good. I also tried cheese fondue.

You once said you missed Mexican food, now you have your mother with you in Zurich.

Yes, she cooks it at times so that's good.

Your next challenge will be the 2016 IIHF World Junior Championship.

It's obviously a great tournament. It's a big broadcast. Everybody looks forward to it. I'm looking forward to the camp in Boston and hopefully I'll have a chance to play for the team.

What is your prediction for Team USA?

Every year we have to expect the best and expect going to win the tournament. If you sell your team any shorter than that it's not going to happen. I think you have to go in



Rather than playing college hockey or moving to the Canadian Hockey League, Matthews chose to hone his skills in Europe.

and believe you're the best team and play like that.

Many expect you to be drafter as number one. Which team would you like? Maybe the Coyotes?

Anybody.

How was it for you to win gold medals at the U18 Worlds?

It was a great experience. To represent Team USA is always a big honour and to go and play against other countries and be fortunate enough to win a couple of gold medals is pretty special.

You played in Ann Arbor for the centralized U18 team of the National Team Development Program. Was it an important step in your career?

Absolutely. It's a great program. It really taught me a lot and helped me develop as a player and as a person.

How will your season end in spring?

If you don't expect to win a championship you may as well not even play. We expect to continue to play well and just get better and this organization is known for winning and that's what is expected of us.





- Born: 17 September 1997 Scottsdale, Arizona, USA
- Forward, shoots left
- In 2015 broke Patrick Kane's USA National Team Development Program record of 102 points in a single season with 107 in 55 games



Coming

IIHF World Junior Championship FINLAND, Helsinki 26.12.2015 - 05.01.2016

IIHF Ice Hockey U20 World Championship Division II Group B SERBIA, Novi Sad 17 - 23.01.2016

IIHF Ice Hockey U20 World Championship Division III MEXICO, Mexico City 15 - 24.01.2016

IIHF Ice Hockey U18 Women's World Championship

CANADA, St. Catharines 08 - 15.01.2016

IIHF Continental Cup Final FRANCE, Rouen 08 - 10.01.2016



Canada will be hosting the IIHF Ice Hockey U18 Women's World Championship for the first time since the tournament's inception back in 2008 in Calgary.



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