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IceTimes

Can Czechs win at home?

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Worlds crown >

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World Championship >

From the IIHF President

Bringing the world to a familiar place

by René Fasel

The Czech Republic and the sport of ice hockey have a long and storied history together. Returning to Prague, for what will be the tenth time that we've held a World Championship in this beautiful capital city, it feels like a homecoming.

Through the 20th century this nation's creation and development was punctuated by incredible exploits and stories in ice hockey, from the time of the Bohemian national ice hockey team through the Czechoslovak years to the Czech Republic's gold medal in Nagano 1998. There are so many memorable World Championship moments to choose from, more of which you can read on page 5.

The last time we were in Prague, it was a party to say the least. That was back in 2004, where fans coming to see the tournament set a new attendance record that was only broken last year in Minsk. I don't doubt that the organizers in Prague and Ostrava will pull

out all the stops to try and recapture the record in 2015.

This year we also return to the eastern Czech city of Ostrava, which proved an excellent venue back in '04 and which I expect will bring in many fans from neighbouring Slovakia to watch their national team play.

These past weeks leading up to the start of the World Championship saw us wrap up many of our men's U18 and women's senior tournaments, including a hard-fought Women's World Championship that saw the United States win its sixth Women's World Championship. We also witnessed some spirited performances from bronze medalists Finland and also Japan, which managed to stay in the top division and put up four wins in the tournament, the first time this country has had such success at the top level.

As we shift into the final month of the hockey season, we also look forward to our 140th Annual Congress, taking place in Prague from the 14 to 16 May. I anticipate positive reports of the upcoming World Championship organizers starting with Russia 2016, and also look forward to hearing about the progress of 2018 Winter Olympic Games hosts Korea. We will also examine proposals to change certain sport and championship regulations.

Meanwhile, this upcoming World Championship will be a bit special as the IIHF, along with our marketing partner Infront Sports, are rolling out the first phase of our digital media project designed to bring the international ice hockey game to a wider audience.

On the tournament website/app we will have enhanced statistics and comprehensive tournament video material that will also be featured in innovative ways on our social media channels. Our goal is to bring the "behind-the-scenes" experience of the Worlds into the fans' homes, so that we can promote the game to a younger audience. Our love for ice hockey should be exported, and we look forward to drawing new fans from around the world to our beloved game.

It's great to be back in Prague and Ostrava, let's finish the year in style!

It's great to be back in beautiful Prague and Ostrava...



News and Notes

Photo: Jeff Vinnick / HHOF-IIHF Images



IIHF

The qualification structure for the Olympic men's tournament will have an immediate impact on the IIHF World Championship, as the 2015 IIHF World Ranking will be used to seed the top eight automatic entries and the qualification program.

The Olympic men's tournament format will be the same as in Sochi, with four teams seeded into three groups. The top eight teams in the 2015 IIHF Men's World Ranking – which is determined following the results of the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship – will be automatically seeded 1-8 in the tournament. Korea currently holds the 12th seed as

tournament host, leaving three qualification positions available.

The men's Olympic qualification program will operate from November 2015 through to September 2016. Each of the qualification phases will be a four-team round-robin format, with a total of 12 teams split into three groups.

CANADA

Dave Lowry has been named head coach of the Canadian national junior team for the 2016 IIHF World Junior Championship.

Lowry, who has been head coach of the Canadian Hockey League's major junior Victoria Royals for three seasons, was an assistant coach in 2015 when Canada broke a five-year world junior drought to claim gold in Toronto.

Lowry's three assistant coaches will be Martin Raymond, Dominique Ducharme and D.J. Smith. "It's the highest opportunity to coach in junior hockey," Lowry said. "To be a part of it last year and to have gone through the process of building a team and watching a team come together and watching a team win and have success... I knew that this would be a great opportunity."

Lowry has been Victoria's head coach since 2012 and was named the Western Hockey

League's coach of the year in 2013/14. Prior to that, he spent three seasons as an assistant coach with the NHL's Calgary Flames. Before joining the Flames, Lowry spent four seasons coaching with the WHL's Calgary Hitmen.

DENMARK

The Danish Ice Hockey Association has appointed Enver Hansen as Chief Executive of the 2018 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship organizing committee.

Hansen previously served as General Secretary/Chief Executive in the Danish Ice Hockey Association, and has been with the organization since 2003.

"During his 11-year leadership of the Danish Ice Hockey Association, we saw a tripling of our revenue built on a solid economy, and Denmark has achieved a position among the top nations of the ice hockey sport," said Danish Ice Hockey Union President Henrik Bach Nielsen.

Hansen's responsibilities will be taken over by the Association's Sport Director, Ulrik Larsen, who has a background in banking and also was a club director with Herning Blue Fox.

The 2018 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship will take place in Copenhagen and Herning in May 2018.

GERMANY

Former German women's national team player **Franziska Busch** was named new women's hockey appointee by the German Ice Hockey Association.

The 29-year-old represented Germany in 225 international games, including the Sochi 2014 Olympics. Busch competed in two Olympics and eight Women's World Championships (six at the top division) for her country.

"We are glad that we were able to secure the services of Franziska as a long-time women's national team player for this responsible task," the German Ice Hockey Association's General Secretary Michael Pfuhl said. "Already as a player Franziska spoke up for the interests of women's hockey and we are convinced that all female ice hockey players in Germany get a dignified representative of their interests in Franziska."



Photo: Jeff Vinnick / HHOF-IIHF Images

Obituaries

Herman Knoll

Former Austrian national team player and coach Hermann Knoll passed away on 27 March at the age of 83. Knoll represented Austria in 80 international games including two Olympic Winter Games in Cortina 1956 and Innsbruck 1964. He also played field hockey at the Olympic Summer Games in 1952.

He also represented Austria at the 1957 World Championship as well as in six B-pool tournaments and one C-pool World Championship in the '50s and '60s.

At the national level Knoll won championships as a player with EK Engelmann Vienna and with KAC Klagenfurt. In between he left Austria hitching a lift to Bremerhaven to take a ship to Canada and play there for a year.

Knoll was a player and player-coach in Austria until he was 40. He later won championships as a coach with Klagenfurt and was also coaching the U20 national team leading it to the top division for the first time ever in 1980/81.



Djordje Ljoljic

Ljoljic, the General Secretary of the Serbian Ice Hockey Association (pictured), passed away on 22 March at the age of 66, shortly before the end of the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship Division II Group B his country hosted in Novi Sad. He died of cancer after long illness.

Ljoljic served Serbian hockey for many years and has been a delegate for Yugoslavia, Serbia-Montenegro and Serbia respectively since 2002. He has been a member of the IIHF Coaching and Development Committee since 2003.

He was also the General Manager of the Serbian men's and U20 national teams at various events, most recently at the 2014 IIHF Ice Hockey U20 World Championship Division II Group B in Jaca, Spain.

Before becoming General Secretary, he has worked in various functions for the ice hockey club of Crvena Zvezda Belgrade (Red Star) between 1984 and 2002. In his life outside of hockey, Ljoljic was a professor of special pedagogy and spent his whole teaching career working with children with disabilities.

Frede Jensen

Denmark's longtime national team doctor Frede Jensen passed away at age 88 on Friday 6 March. Known as "the man with the magic hands" by everyone involved in Danish ice hockey, Jensen worked with the national team from 1969-2012 and was the country's first-ever IIHF Medical Supervisor.

Jensen was born in Skovlunde, Denmark on 30 June, 1927. A talented handball player, at age 27 he graduated from Copenhagen University with honors in 1954.

He was a General Practitioner in Herning from 1958 till 1990, while also working as the team doctor for Blue Fox Herning and the Danish National Team until 2012. He was made an honorary member of the Danish Ice Hockey Association and was also a recipient of the "Golden Pin", the highest honour bestowed by the Danish Sports Confederation.

Jaroslav Holik

Holik passed away at the age of 72 after a long illness. He was a legend in his home country, first as a player then as a coach. Born in Havlickuv Brod, Holik moved to the more prestigious army team Dukla Jihlava at the age of 19, and when he was 22 he played his first World Championship. He represented his country in seven IIHF Ice Hockey World Championships and in the 1972 Olympic Winter Games.

He was on the team that beat the Soviet Union twice at the World Championship in 1969, significant for being the first big international ice hockey event after a Soviet-led invasion in Czechoslovakia. But most fans who followed hockey in that era will remember Holik for scoring the game-winning goal against the Soviets in the 1972 World Championship, when the event was held on home ice in Prague, it was Holik who scored the game-winning goal in the 3-2 victory over the Soviet Union en route to a historic gold medal.

Holik won a medal in six of the seven World Championships, one gold, two silver and three bronze. He also won an Olympic bronze in Sapporo 1972. He also coached the Czech U20 national team at four IIHF World Junior Championships, winning back-to-back gold in 2000 and 2001.

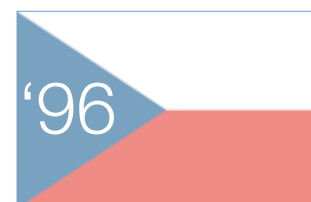
Great Czech memories at the World Championship

By Andrew Podnieks

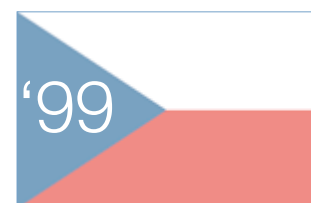
It was in 1993 that the Czech Republic first played as an independent nation at the World Championship, held that year in Germany.

The Czechs won bronze, and in the ensuing 22 championships have won six gold medals, one silver, and five bronze. Highlights, there have been many. Here, in chronological order, are some of the special medal memories!



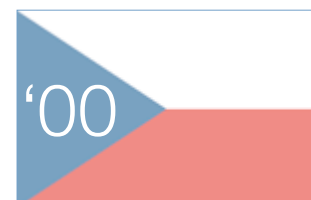


May 5, 1996 – An incredible game between the Czechs and Canada decided gold at the 1996 Worlds. Steve Thomas got the Canadians on the board early, but Robert Lang tied the game two minutes later. Lang scored again early in the second, but Thomas matched him to make it 2-2. The game got more and more tense, and as the minutes ticked off the clock overtime seemed imminent. With just 19 seconds left in regulation time, Martin Prochazka scored, and Jiri Kucera added an empty netter 13 seconds later to seal the 4-2 win and give the Czechs their first gold.



May 16, 1999 – After winning gold in Nagano, the Czechs finished third at the 1998 Worlds, but a year later they won it all. In a best-of-two finals,

a format used for only three years (1997-99), they won the first game, 3-1, over Finland, and lost the second, 4-0, forcing overtime. Jan Hlavec scored the golden goal at 16:32.



May 14, 2000 – The Czechs and Slovaks met for gold at the Ice Palace in St. Petersburg, Russia.



The Czechs rush the ice after Hlavec's decisive goal against Finland at the 1999 World Championship. Photo: Jukka Rautio / Europhoto

It was a politically charged game between the geographic neighbours and one-time unified nation.

The Czechs jumped out to an early 3-0 lead by the 12:25 mark of the opening period. Mar-

tin Strbak got the only goal of the second, for the Slovaks, and after the Czechs made it 4-1 their opponents got two late goals to make the last few minutes nerve-wrecking. Robert Reichel ensured victory with a goal at 18:58 for a 5-3 Czech win.



May 13, 2001 – Becoming the first nation since the old Soviet Union in 1983 to win three World Championship golds in a row, the Czechs fought

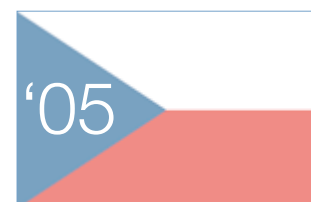
off Finland in Hanover, Germany in the ultimate game of the 2001 Worlds. After falling behind 2-0, Jiri Dopita tied the game late in the third and then David Moravec scored the game winner in overtime. This marked the height of the defence-first era. The Czechs went undefeated in 2001 (8-1-0) and allowed only 13 goals in the nine games. In the 56



IIHF 2015 Hall of Fame inductee Robert Reichel in 2000. Photo: IIHF Images

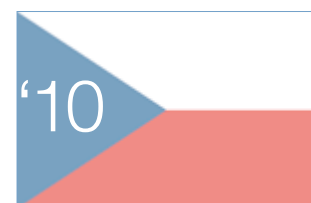
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games they played to win these three goals medals (1999-2001), they played 28 games and allowed only 56 goals, an average of exactly two per game.



May 15, 2005 – In a season in which there was no NHL hockey, the 2005 World Championship was perhaps the most talent-laden of all

time. The gold-medal game came down to the Czechs and Canada, the latter featuring everyone from goalie Martin Brodeur to Joe Thornton, Rick Nash, and Simon Gagne. But it was Tomas Vokoun's shutout performance that gave the Czechs a dominant 3-0 win, perhaps their most impressive ever. Vaclav Prospal scored early in the first and Martin Rucinsky early in the third, while Josef Vasicek added an empty netter to ensure the win.



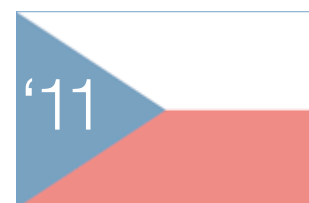
May 23, 2010 – On the heels of a disappointing Olympics in Vancouver, the Czechs and Russians ended up playing for World Championship

gold in Cologne just three months later. In front of a packed house at the Lanxess Arena, the Czechs stunned the Russians when Jakub Klepis scored just 20 seconds after the



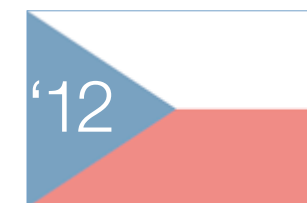
Karel Rachunek's game-winning goal with eight and a half seconds left in the 2010 Worlds semi-final vs Sweden. Photo: Matthew Manor / HHOF-IIHF Images

opening faceoff. The Russians never recovered. Tomas Rolinek made it 2-0 in the second period, and a goal by Russia's Pavel Datsyuk with only 36 seconds left to play spoiled Tomas Vokoun's shutout.



May 11, 2011 – The quarter-finals of the 2011 Worlds pitted the Czechs against the surprising United States, but it was

39-year-old Jaromir Jagr who had a game for the ages, scoring three goals in a 4-0 win. The game came more than 21 years after his first appearance with the senior team, at the 1990 Worlds. The Czechs went on to win bronze thanks to another hat trick, this from Roman Cervenka, in a 7-4 win over the Russians.



May 20, 2012 – The

Czechs' most recent medal was a bronze in Helsinki, in 2012. After losing to the Slovaks in the semi-finals, the Czechs faced the Finns for third place. Most of the drama came late in the first period. Teams exchanged goals, but then Jiri Novotny and David Krejci made it 3-1 for the Czechs. Although the Finns got to within a goal midway through the third, the Czechs held the fort and claimed the bronze, their 12th medal in 22 years of independence.



Peter Nedved after the 2012 bronze medal game. Photo: IIHF Images

Prague: beyond the rink

By Lucas Aykroyd



For hockey fans in Prague this May, the main attraction is the 34 World Championship games. But the Czech capital offers lots to do outside the O2 Arena.

This is a perfect place to be a “hockey tourist.” If you lack game tickets, you can catch all the action on TV in the bustling Fan Zone – or head into the city, where giant screens will be set up in places like the Old Town Square. In the square, check out the famous 1410-built Astronomical Clock, featuring mechanical figures like a skeleton and a miser that move when the clock chimes on the hour.

You could also dig into soup, steaks, and pasta at the hockey-themed Restaurant Hokejka while watching games. The Prague tourism board touts U Hrocha, a crowded pub near the Prague Castle, for beer lovers.

Founded in the late ninth century, this city of 1.2 million people on the Vltava River boasts



Prague's iconic bridges are among the most photographed sights in this European capital, set to host the 2015 Worlds. Photo: Czech Tourism/Libor Svacek

many amazing sights that, according to reputable historians, are even older than Jaromir Jagr.

Precious medieval artifacts abound at the 19th-century-built National Museum in Wenceslas Square, where demonstrations were held during the 1989 Velvet Revolution as the Czech people transitioned out of the Soviet Bloc. Parks, gardens and international embassies dot the beautiful Mala Strana district.

The Charles Bridge, constructed by King Charles IV more than 600 years ago, is festooned with baroque statues, and connects the Old Town with the Lesser Town. It's a superb photo-op.

If partying is your priority, don't miss the huge Karlovy Lazne nightclub, located just steps away from the Charles Bridge. The five-floor club pulsates with musical styles from oldies to hip-hop, and the decor includes mosaic til-

ing from its original incarnation as a 15th-century spa.

For an exciting example of contemporary architecture, check out the Dancing House on the Rasin Embankment. The 1996-completed building, which houses a Dutch insurance company, resembles a dancing couple. And there's a hockey connection here. It was co-designed by Frank Gehry, who created the trophy for the World Cup of Hockey in 2004.

Hockey fans with a cultural bent may recall that after superstar goalie Dominik Hasek and his Czech teammates won gold at the first “NHL Olympics” in 1998, an opera called Naganos was composed in their honour by musician Martin Smolka and dramatist Jaroslav Dusek. That 2004 production is no longer playing at the Estates Theatre, but you can still head there during the Worlds to enjoy Mozart classics like Don Giovanni and The Marriage of Figaro.

If you have time for more extensive exploration, official tournament partner Sivek Hotels offers guided day trips such as “Kutna Hora, the UNESCO town” or “Pilsener brewery tour with lunch.”

Regardless of who captures the IIHF World Championship gold medal this year, you'll have a winning experience in Prague.

Ten things we learned from Malmo 2015

By Lucas Aykroyd



Malmo, Sweden hosted its second IIHF tournament in as many years, following up last year's popular World Juniors event with a successful Women's World Championship.

Here are 10 lessons to take away from the eight-team battle that took place at the Malmo Isstadion and Rosengards Ishall.



Photo: Andre Ringuette / IIHF-IIHF Images

This is America's tournament

The United States has now captured six out of the last eight World Women's Championships. Beating Canada 7-5 in a thrilling final on April 4 provided some revenge after Canada's Marie-Philip Poulin scored twice, including the overtime winner, in the 2014 Olympic gold medal game in Sochi, Russia. The Americans looked more powerful and poised than ever, scoring a whopping 37 goals in just five games – and doing so without Olympic aces like Amanda Kessel and Kelli Stack. There wasn't a game where coach Ken Klee's squad didn't dominate.

The Americans looked more powerful and poised than ever...

Canada playing catch-up

The Canadians own the last four Olympic gold medals, and that may have obscured the larger trend: in terms of skill and speed, they've been steadily losing ground to the U.S. for years. Yes, their veterans still have the eye of the tiger, as evidenced by the dramatic Sochi comeback and the rally to make it 5-5 in the Malmo final before falling short. Coach Doug Derrrough had a younger, more experimental roster for 2015, with no Hayley Wickenheiser

or Jayna Hefford. Yet out of the newcomers, only blueliners Courtney Birchard and Brigette Lacquette stepped up offensively (four points apiece). Is this new generation ready to take over? It's a big question mark.

Hilary for President!

While Hilary Knight modestly credited her speedy linemates Brianna Decker and Kendall Coyne, it was no accident that the 25-year-old New Hampshire native was named MVP, Best Forward, and media All-Star. There's simply no other power forward like her in women's hockey today. She led the scoring derby with 12 points, and this was the fourth time in her Women's Worlds career that she's potted five or more goals. The best is still to come for Knight.

Playing with power is priceless

The U.S. has boasted the best power play in women's hockey since the 1990s, and it was a big difference-maker in this tournament. The Americans went 13-for-19, a jaw-dropping conversion rate of 44.83 percent. (Switzerland was second at 5-for-15 and 33.3 percent.) In the final, the U.S. got three power play goals to Canada's one.

Finland is back

Before these Women's Worlds, Finland's fortunes seemed as dark as a December day in Lapland. The Finns, despite often coming in as bronze medal favourites, hadn't won anything at this tournament since 2011, and had

a shootout. Nana Fujimoto, their starting net-minder, excelled throughout the tournament, posting a 1.52 GAA and 93.7 save percentage en route to Best Goalkeeper honours. But head coach Yoshifumi Fujisawa particularly had to love the fact that his leading scor-

grasp in Sochi, leading Switzerland 2-0 on the final day, but wound up losing 4-3. Experienced coach Leif Boork wasn't able to right the ship here. The Swedish federation will be looking to right the ship heading into the 2016 Women's Worlds in Kamloops, Canada.

any other team suffered. Beyond explosive forwards Olga Sosina and Iya Gavrilova, the attack was punchless. Thirteen Russian skaters registered zero points. More depth and more tenacity are required to keep Russia in medal contention.

Records are made to be broken

Some top female talents rewrote the Women's Worlds record book this year. Finland's Karoliina Rantamäki became the all-time leader in tournaments (13) and games played (69). Switzerland's Florence Schelling, is now tops in all-time games for a goalie (33). And Canadian veteran Caroline Ouellette now shares the record for most Women's Worlds medals with Hayley Wickenheiser and Jayna Hefford (12).

The gap is tightening

Only two games in Malmö were decided by five or more goals (the two U.S. wins over Russia). That's part of a trend that's been ongoing for five years. There was nothing like Canada's 18-0 obliteration of Slovakia in its 2010 Olympic opener in Vancouver. And that's good for the sport. Granted, the non-North American nations are still a long shot to win gold. But nations like Finland and Sweden can make it tough on the superpowers at times, and when we finally start seeing new uniforms in those gold medal games, it'll do much to grow this sport worldwide.

their all-time worst result (fifth) at last year's Winter Games. But led by the stellar efforts of all-star goalie Meeri Räsänen (1.99 GAA, 93.24 save percentage) and all-star defender Jenni Hiirikoski, the Finnish captain, Pasi Mustonen's team wound up joyously dancing in a circle after topping Russia 4-1 for bronze.

Japan's sun is rising fast

The Japanese had many reasons for joy after retaining their place in the elite division for just the second time ever (2008, 2009). They started brilliantly by stunning host Sweden 4-3 in

er, Rui Ukita, is just 18 years old. It bodes well for the future of Japanese women's hockey.

Swedes struggle with pressure

The last time Sweden won a World Women's medal, actress Emma Watson had just agreed to portray Hermione in the last three Harry Potter movies. That bronze in Winnipeg 2007 feels like a long time ago now. Blowing a 1-0 lead against Russia in this year's quarter-finals was the latest example of how the Damkronorna have struggled to succeed under pressure. They had bronze within their

Russia remains a wildcard

At the 2013 Women's Worlds in Ottawa, Russian women's hockey appeared to have undergone a renaissance. With ex-NHL star Alexei Yashin as GM, the Russians claimed bronze for the first and only time since 2001. Could they achieve the dream of medalling on home ice in Sochi? Sadly, the answer was no. In Malmö, the Russians had their moments, including eliminating the host nation. But they were blown out twice by the Americans. The 9-2 and 13-1 defeats – the latter in the semi-finals – were more lopsided than

Photo: Francois Laplante / HHOF-IIHF Images



Photo: Francois Laplante / HHOF-IIHF Images



Photo: Andre Ringue / HHOF-IIHF Images



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Video highlights: 2015 Women's Worlds gold medal game



[Click here to view all the game highlights from the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship](#)

Directorate Awards

Best Goalkeeper: Nana Fujimoto, Japan
(4W-1L, 1SH, 93.75 SV%, 1.52 GAA)

Best Defenceman: Jenni Hiirikoski, Finland
(6 GP, 2G, 2A, 4PIM, 20SHG)

Best Forward: Hilary Knight, USA
(7G, 5A, 12P, +8, 26SHG)

Media All Star team

Goalkeeper: Meeri Raisanen, Finland
Defence: Monique Lamoureux, USA
Defence: Jenni Hiirikoski, Finland
Forward: Brianna Decker, USA
Forward: Hilary Knight, USA
Forward: Natalie Spooner, Canada
Most Valuable Player: Hilary Knight, USA



2015
ICE HOCKEY
WOMEN'S WORLD
CHAMPIONSHIP
SWEDEN
 Malmö

Directorate Top Goaltender



Nana Fujimoto G, Japan

Fujimoto was the talisman for the Japanese even going back to the qualification series against the Czech Republic, guiding her teammates into the top division and then posting a tournament-best 1.52 GAA once there. Fujimoto's heroics also bailed out Japan in the relegation round against Germany, punching Japan's ticket to Kamloops for next year's Women's Worlds.



2015
ICE HOCKEY
WOMEN'S WORLD
CHAMPIONSHIP
SWEDEN
 Malmö

Directorate Top Forward, All-Star, MVP



Hilary Knight F, USA

The States' Hilary Knight added another stellar Worlds tournament to her career numbers, leading all scorers with 12 points in five games. Knight was at her best in each of Team USA's pivotal games against rivals Canada, scoring in both matchups and leading her team in shots on goal. Knight now has five World Championship gold medals in several appearances.

Czechs run table



The Czech women's national team is back among the top nations, sweeping the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship Division I Group A.

One year ago when the Division I was played for the first time during an Olympic season, the Czech won that tournament too. But because there was no top division in the Women's Worlds in the Olympic year, the Czechs had to play a qualification series against the last-ranked team of the Olympic Winter Games. They lost it against Japan.

This time the Czechs will be promoted directly to the 2016 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship in Kamloops, Canada, and replace Germany, which was relegated at the recent Women's Worlds in Malmo, Sweden.

"I think we belong to the top division. Last year we managed to win without losing a point," said Czech head coach Jiri Vozak. "The style of hockey in the top division will be completely different. We have to adapt to and prepare for it."



*The unbeaten Czechs outscored opponents 20:4.
Photo: Stephane Heude*

The Czechs had several multiple-goal scorers who gained experience playing against top nations from the U18 program such as Alena Polenska (24, 4+3), Katerina Mrazova (22, 3+4) and Denisa Krizova (20, 3+2). All of them play abroad. Polenska, who has been the national team's captain since the age of 18, is a professional player in Russia and the other two play for colleges in the NCAA.

The Czechs had more shots and goals than anybody else, less shots and goals against their own net than any other team, the best power play and just one goal conceded on the PK.

Klara Peslarova (18) was statistically by far the best goalkeeper of the event with a save percentage of 95.35%.

"Many players from our team, including me, haven't played in the top division of the Women's World Championship yet. It will be a new experience," she said. "I think there is a big difference (between the top division and the Division I Group A). There are Canada, USA, Sweden, Russia... We can play even games with them but still the hockey will be completely different."

Austria finished in second place, while 6th place Latvia went winless in five games and will be relegated to Division IB.

Slovakia wins return



The Slovak women's national team earned its straight return to the second tier of the program after winning the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship Division I Group B in Beijing.

Slovakia, which also qualified for Vancouver 2010 along with the Chinese, was relegated to the third level of the program only last year and aimed at an immediate return.



2015 Division IB champs Slovakia celebrate with silver medalists Netherlands. Photo: CIHA

The Slovaks started with a 4-3 win in a shootout against recently promoted Italy and steadily improved throughout the tournament. A 3-2 victory over the Netherlands was followed by a 9-0 blanking of DPR Korea and a 1-0 win against Hungary thanks to Livia Lucova's only goal and a 22-save shutout from Romana Kiapesova.

Host China had to settle for bronze. The Netherlands had one extra point on their account thanks to a shootout win against the Chinese on the opening day and claimed the silver medals after last year's fourth-place finish.

Recently-promoted Italy played well and challenged their opponents in tight defeats before winning against DPR Korea 4-2 on the last day to secure their Division I Group B spot for next year. DPR Korea will be relegated.

Danes move up



Denmark won the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship Division I Group A and will compete at the 2016 top division U18 tournament in Grand Forks, USA.

Denmark started the tournament with an easy win on the opening day of the tournament against hosts Hungary, 9-1. Alexander True led all goal scorers with two goals.

A 4-3 overtime win the next game against runners-up Belarus turned out to be the critical game of the round robin.

Belarus led 3-1 at one point and had a 3-2 lead going into the third period but Denmark was able to fight back to force overtime. Tobias Ladehoff scored in the closing minutes of regulation to send the game into overtime, and Denmark didn't waste time in the extra period as 25 seconds in Nikolaj Krag scored the game winner.

Krag came up big again in the team's final game against Norway. After a scoreless first



A 4-3 OT win against Belarus was the decisive game for Denmark. Photo: Istvan Derencsenyi

period Jonas Roendberg scored the first goal of the game, but less than a minute later Norway tied it up thanks to Jacob Noer. With just under four minutes left Krag scored not only the game-winning but also the gold-clinching goal of the game.

"I am very happy and very satisfied. I think we deserved it because we were the best team throughout the tournament. Today we were a very disciplined team and we really wanted the goal. We are a very big family that does not want to disappoint each other," said Denmark coach Martin Struzinski after the game.

Austrian U18s to Group A



A cross-border bus trip to Slovenia was a full success for the Austrian juniors who won the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship Division I Group B in Maribor.

It was two sons of former national team players who had a strong influence in the success.

Dominic Divis is the son of former national team and NHL goalie Reinhard Divis, who is working for the Austrian Ice Hockey Federation in goaltending coach development and as a goaltending coach for various national teams. His 17-year-old son has been playing for Linz' U20 and U18 teams and lead all goaltenders in Maribor with a 92.94% save percentage.

Tournament scoring leader Christof Kromp, son of former national team player Wolfgang Kromp, scored seven goals and notched ten points.



Austria went 5-0 in the tournament, posing a +20 goal differential. Photo: Denis Zelnik

Next year will be the first time after four years the Austrian U18 national team will be ranked among the top-16 teams in the world.

"In the last two weeks we all worked on this goal [to earn promotion]. For Austria ice hockey this success is very important," head coach Dieter Werfring said.

Host Slovenia won the silver medal. Ukraine sent Lithuania down to the Division II Group A with a 4-1 win.

Chinese Taipei clinches trophy

Host wins Challenge Cup of Asia

By Martin Merk



Chinese Taipei won the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey Challenge Cup of Asia on home ice at the Annex Ice Rink in Taipei City, after defeating the United Arab Emirates 5-4 in the deciding game.

It is the third consecutive gold medal for Chinese Taipei in the Challenge Cup, a competition that is played between the Asian nations not competing in the World Championship program or at the bottom level. The final game played out similarly to last year's, when the United Arab Emirates hosted the tournament in Abu Dhabi.

Both teams started strong in the event. Chinese Taipei steamrolled over Macau and Thailand, 30-0 and 9-0 respectively, and beat Mongolia 8-2 before the final game.

The United Arab Emirates also entered the last day with the maximum number of points



Chinese Taipei has enjoyed success this year from both its men's (pictured) and its women's national team, which won the Division I CCOA. Photo: Igotshot

after wins against Thailand (5-2), Mongolia (6-1) and Macau (7-0).

In front of 808 fans at the packed rink Chinese Taipei reacted better in a hectic start of the game marked by penalties on both sides. Yen-Lin Shen opened the scoring on a two-man advantage and two minutes later Yen-Chin Shen made it 2-0.

But the Emirati regrouped and scored three unanswered goals in the first six minutes of the second period, giving the United Arab Emirates the lead for the first time.

Chinese Taipei used its time-out and Yen-Chin Shen tied the game at three with his second

goal of the night but Omer Al Shamisi scored on a breakaway with the UAE playing short-handed three-on-five to restore the lead for his team, 4-3.

In the third period it was the host team that came out strong and dominated the period. Lifeng Lu capitalized on a power play at 12:32 to tie the game at four and at 17:21 he scored the game winner.

Lu won the scoring race with five goals and 17 points ahead of his teammates Hai-Hsiang Chang – the top goal scorer with ten markers – Yen-Chin Shen, To Weng, defenceman Yen-Lin Shen, Chang-Hsing Yang and Mongolian forward Mishigsuren Namjil.

UAE netminder Ahmed Al Dhaheri was the best goalkeeper with a save percentage of 94.24%. He kept his team in the game especially in the last encounter in which Chinese Taipei outshot the United Arab Emirates 63-30.

Mongolia earned the bronze medal at the tournament. The team, which from a country where hockey is only played in the winter months due to the lack of indoor ice rinks, was outperformed by the Emirates and Chinese Taipei but notched up easy wins against Thailand (6-2) and Macau (8-1). Fourth-ranked Thailand earned its only win against Macau. The former Portuguese colony of 620,000 inhabitants that became a special administrative region of China in 1999 was promoted to the top division of the program only one year ago.

The other nations of the program will compete in the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey Challenge Cup of Asia Division I, which will take place from 18 to 24 April in Kuwait City. Top-seeded host Kuwait will play against Kyrgyzstan, Singapore, India, Malaysia and Oman.

For Oman it will be the first participation in an IIHF-sanctioned event since becoming member of the International Ice Hockey Federation in 2014.

League roundup

Recapping league results from around the world



AUSTRIA – Facing off against the Vienna Capitals, EBEL's top-ranked team Salzburg needed only the first four games of the best-of-seven series to crown itself the champion for the fifth time.

After Salzburg put up 6-1, 5-4, and 5-1 wins to put the Caps on the brink, Brett Sterling scored what would end up being the series' winning goal in Game 4 as Salzburg triumphed 4-3.

"It's just unbelievable. The team was outstanding throughout the entire season. The way we were able to come back from behind in so many games and never stopped believing in ourselves. This is a team full of character. I'm so happy, I don't know what more to say," said Sterling.



BELARUS – Shakhtyor Soligorsk claimed the Belarusian championship for the first time. The team earned the President's Cup after blanking Yunost Minsk 4-0 in the playoff final.

It is the first-ever league title for Shakhtyor Soligorsk. The club was founded in 2009, and in its first season reached second place in the regular-season in 2010 before losing in the finals. Their second participation in the final series led to gold for the team, which allowed a goal-against average of only 1.76.



DENMARK – Denmark is a land of dynasties, as far as hockey is concerned, and the latest one is called SonderjyskE Voyjens. This season, they beat Esbjerg Energy in five games, finishing them off 6-1 in the last game.

From 1998 on the Danish Metal Ligaen has been a two-horse show, with Sonderjyske winning it six times in the last ten years, while Herning took the remaining four titles.

SonderjyskE's hero was Thomas Spelling, the team's 22-year-old forward who led the playoffs in both scoring and goal scoring with 13+17=30 points in 15 games, 12 points in the final five games. By hoisting the Prince Henrik Cup (pictured) the team also clinched its spot in the Champions Hockey League.



FRANCE – The Gap Rapaces came back from a 3-1 deficit in the final series against Epinal to win Game 7 5-3 and claim the French Ligue

Magnus for the first time in 37 years.

For Gap it's the third French championship after 1977 and 1978 and the second straight championship for head coach Luciano Basile, who led Briancon Diables Rouges to the title last year. He became the first coach in France to win back-to-back titles with two different clubs.

Thanks to the win the Gap Rapaces will join next year's Champions Hockey League.



GREAT BRITAIN – The Sheffield Steelers clinched the British Elite Ice Hockey League Championship in what was an emotional season for the team.

The club was rocked by news that Amy Usher, one of its most passionate supporters, had lost her battle with cancer just days before the decisive games of the season. But, inspired by a determination to pay the best possible tribute to the 21-year-old, the Steelers gritted out two comeback wins against the Nottingham Panthers and Cardiff Devils to snatch a title that many had thought was beyond them.

The title puts Sheffield into the Champions Hockey League next year, following in the footsteps of the Nottingham Panthers in last season's competition. GB's se-

Photo: Annemette Stollig



cond spot in the Champions Hockey League went to Braehead Clan. Next season's CHL will be the first time the Clan has competed on the European stage since the club was formed near Glasgow five seasons ago.



ITALY – Asiago Hockey won the Italian championship for the fifth time. It's the fourth Serie A title in six years for the team from the Vicenza region.

It was also the fourth title for John Parco, who led the team to two titles as head coach and was also on championship teams as an assistant coach and team captain. For only the second time in history an Italian championship had to be decided in seven games. Ritten Sport gave Asiago a tough battle in its title defence campaign but Asiago won the deciding game 4-2.

 **JAPAN – The Tohoku Free Blades from Japan have won their third Asia League title after sweeping Korean club Anyang Halla 3-0 in the best-of-five final series.**

The Free Blades, who finished the regular season in third place, previously eliminated second-seeded Morskie Lvy Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk from the Russian island of Sakhalin 3-1 in the semi-finals. Regular-season winner Anyang Halla beat High1 Chuncheon in three games in an all-Korean semi-final to set up the showdown with Tohoku.

It's not the first time the two teams reached the final series. In 2011 a disastrous earthquake and tsunami hit the Tohoku region just as the Free Blades had finished practice at their rink. The Anyang Halla team had just landed in Japan and was on the bus ride for the first game. The series had to be cancelled and both teams were declared co-champions.

Despite not even playing one home game in this year's final, the Free Blades nevertheless managed the sweep by outscoring Anyang 16-8 (6-3, 4-3, 6-2). Go Tanaka (pictured) was the scoring leader and the top goal scorer of the playoffs with ten goals and four assists.

The Asia League included nine teams this

Photo: Asia League Ice Hockey



season – four from Japan, three from Korea, one from China and as the newest entry Morskie Lvy Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk from Sakhalin, a Russian island to the north of Japan.

 **NORWAY – The Stavanger Oilers (pictured) won the regular season and the Norwegian championship, defeating Storhamar in seven games.**

It was the fifth title for the Oilers and head coach Peter Thoresen, and the fourth in a row.

For Thoresen, the championship was his 15th. He won five as a player, and besides the five with Stavanger won three coaching Storhamar and another two behind Vålerenga Oslo's bench

"The fact that we win the title again is bigger

Photo: Oddmund Sola

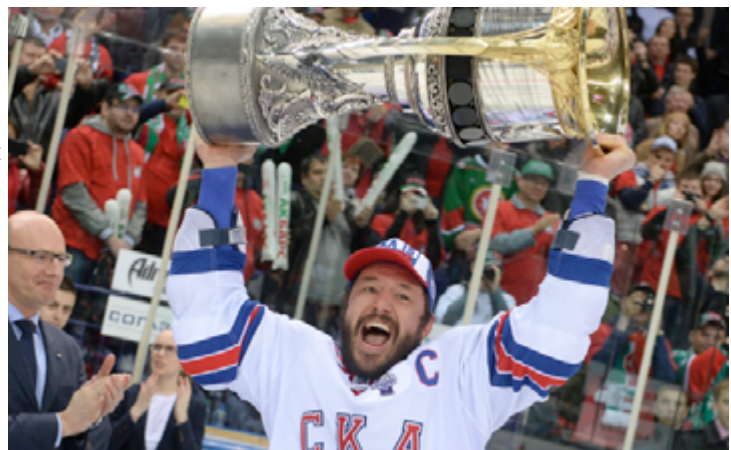


than the fact that it's my 15th title," said Thoresen, who also has something of a personal dynasty within Norwegian hockey. His son Patrick just won the Gagarin Cup in the KHL. Patrick's brother Steffen, who plays for Lorenskog, is also a Norwegian national team player.

 **RUSSIA – In the KHL championship, SKA St. Petersburg defeated Ak Bars Kazan in five games to lift the Gagarin Cup for the first time, ending a 69-year wait for a major domestic trophy since the club was founded back in 1946. A 6-1 win in Kazan, paced by two Ilya Kovalchuk (pictured) goals, wrapped up a 4-1 series victory.**

Along the way the team set several records. Hot-shot Yevgeni Dadonov hit 15 post-season goals, beating Mikhail Anisin's 2012 tally of 14

Photo: Alexei Filippov / RIA Novosti




to set a new KHL playoff mark. Vyacheslav Bykov became the first man to coach two different teams to Gagarin Cup glory, repeating his 2011 success with Salavat Yulayev Ufa. Bykov is also the only coach to wrap up a final series in five games, something he has now achieved twice.

Kovalchuk was full of praise for the way Bykov and his colleagues pulled the club into a single entity: "I'd like to thank the organization for bringing in Vyacheslav Bykov and our coaching team of Igor Zakharkin, Nikolai Borshchevsky, Sergei Zubov and Maxim Sokolov," the forward said. "It's a real family and we've been a tight-knit team all season. Our directors flew with us to every game in the play-offs and we all shared in making the locker room into a family home. That really played a big role; we've not had anything like that at SKA before."


 SPAIN – **Club Hielo Jaca won its 12th Spanish League title, beating CG Puigcerda 5-1 in Game five of the finals at home in front of 1,600 spectators.**


It's the fourth title in the last six years for the club, which is now the most successful in the country. Jaca won the opening game of the series 3-2 only to be pushed to the brink of elimination as Puigcerda came back with 3-2 and 5-2 wins in Games 2 and 3. The champions edged Puigcerda 2-1 in Game 4, and put away the series in the deciding game thanks to a natural hat trick from Vincent Montreuil.

IIHF Councillor and President of the Spanish Ice Sorts Federation Frank Gonzalez presented the trophy to longtime Jaca captain José Antonio Biec who has played in four IIHF World Championships and who announced his retirement following his team's league victory.


 SLOVAKIA – **HC Kosice has won their eighth Slovak Extraliga title in history after an emotional six-game final series against HC 05 Banská Bystrica.**

Kosice has faced Banská Bystrica three times in Slovak playoff history but for the first time in the finals. The teams split the first four each,

each winning at home. A shootout win in game 5 for Kosice set them up for Game Six in Banská Bystrica, where the visiting team won 2-1.


 SWITZERLAND – **Davos became Swiss champions for the 31st time in the club's history. The team dominated the Zurich Lions 0-3 in Game 5 to win the final series 4-1.**

The Swiss league title, Davos' first since 2011, came in a year where the perennial contenders were not considered to be among the favourites after losing a few veteran players, in fact during the regular season not one Davos player registered among the top 20 in scoring. But Davos came through thanks to a late season surge into the playoffs and a scintillating performance from goaltender Leonardo Genoni, who registered a 94.28 save percentage in the post season and shut out two-time defending champions Zurich twice in the final series.

The victory gave a sixth title to the trophy case for head coach Arno Del Curto, who has been behind the bench for Davos since 1996. Del Curto has been voted top coach of the Swiss League three times and is considered among the top coaches in Europe.

Note: League results recaps up to mid-April; more in next edition

Swiss fans on top

by Martin Merk

SC Bern No.1 in European Attendance Ranking

In the annual European attendance ranking published by the IIHF, Swiss club SC Bern stays on top for the 14th consecutive time, with an average of 16,164 fans coming to the PostFinance Arena during the regular season.

The Swiss National League A is also top in Europe with an average league attendance of 6,762. Back in second place is Dynamo Minsk, the team from Belarus that plays in the Russian-based Kontinental Hockey League. After dropping from second to sixth place last year, Dynamo Minsk is back in second place thanks to a strong season. On average 14,120 fans came to Minsk Arena, the venue of the 2014 Worlds.

Overall the attendance in Europe has grown. The top-100 clubs in Europe from 14 different countries averaged 5,905 fans compared to 5,830 last year. The KHL improved to third place and increased its average attendance by 8.8 per cent to 6,324 with the joining of Jokerit Helsinki and a strong growth in Minsk and Kazan as the main drivers.

Attendance in European Leagues 2014/2015

	13/14	Club	Average	% of cap.
1	1	SC Bern	16,164	94.36
2	6	Dynamo Minsk	14,120	93.60
3	2	Eisbaren Berlin	13,018	91.68
4	3	SKA St. Petersburg	12,125	97.00
5	5	Adler Mannheim	11,320	83.24
6	4	Kolner Haie	11,161	60.33
7	9	Jokerit Helsinki	10,932	80.00
8	10	ZSC Lions Zurich	9,331	83.31
9	8	Frolunda Gothenburg	9,087	75.45
10	-7	Slovan Bratislava	8,975	89.26

Attendance in European Leagues 2014/2015

Rank	League	Attendance
1	Switzerland - National League A	6,762
2	Germany - Deutsche Eishockey Liga	6,419
3	Russia - Kontinental Hockey League	6,324
4	Sweden - Swedish Hockey League	6,036
5	Czech Republic - Extraliga	5,113
6	Finland - Liiga	4,336
7	Austria - EBEL	2,967
8	Great Britain - Elite Ice Hockey League	2,312
9	Norway - Get-ligaen	1,860
10	Slovakia - Extraliga	1,728
11	France - Ligue Magnus	1,719
12	Denmark - Metal Ligaen	1,481
13	Belarus - Extraliga	979
14	China/Korea/Japan - Asia League	954
15	Netherlands - Eredivisie	878
16	Italy - Serie A	800
17	Poland - Polska Liga	796
18	Hungary/Romania/Slovakia - MOL Liga	703

[Click here to view full attendance ranking](#)

Gallery



This beauty of a penalty shot from Great Britain forward Ben O'Connor was the talk of the tournament at the Division I Group B Worlds. Photo: Colin Lawson



Top: Selfie time! Monique Lamoureux takes a snap after the gold medal game.
Bottom, from left: Finland's Noora Tulus #24, Niina Makinen #14 and Evenliina Suonpaa #1 with the bronze trophy. Photos: Andre Ringuette/HHOF-IIHF Images)



Russia's Valeria Pavlova #15 puts the puck past Finland's Marjo Voutilainen to score Team Russia's first goal of the game during the preliminary round of the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship.
 Photo: Francois Laplante/HHOF-IIHF Images



Team Denmark celebrating its promotion to the U18 World Championship top division. Photo: Istvan Derencsenyi



Canada's Laura Fortino attempts to stop the puck from crossing the goal line while goalie Genevieve Lacasse looks on. Photo: Andre Ringuette/HHOF-IIHF Images



Finland's Riikka Valila celebrating with the third place trophy after a 4-1 bronze medal game win over Russia at the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship. Photo: Andre Ringuette / HHOF-IIHF Images



Swiss goaltender Florence Schelling broke Chinese goalie Hong Guo's record for Women's Worlds games played by a goaltender (29), having now played a tournament-record 33 Women's Worlds games for Switzerland. Photo: Francois Laplante / HHOF-IIHF Images



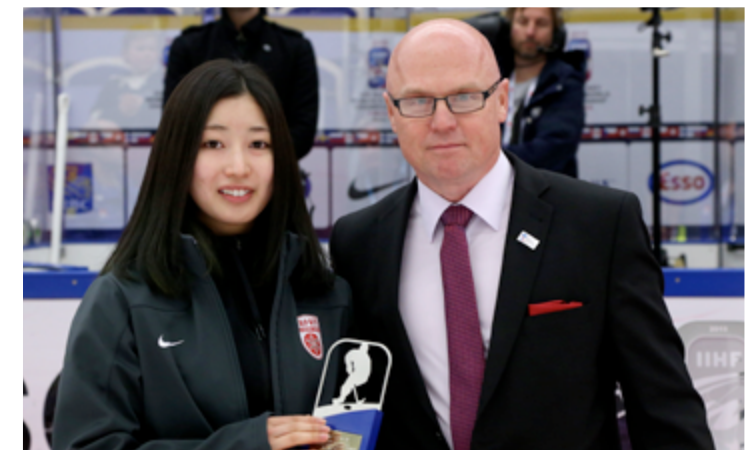
The Czech Republic women's national team battling against France at the 2015 IIHF Women's World Championship Division I Group A. Photo: Stephane Heude



Team Austria singing their national anthem after winning the gold and promotion to the U18 World Championship Division I Group A tournament next season. Photo: Denis Zelnik



USA head coach Ken Klee speaks to his team after their 7-5 gold medal game win over Canada at the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship. Photo: Andre Ringuette / HHOF-IIHF Images



Mikael Haglund of the Local Organizing Committee presents the Directorate Top Goaltender Award to Japan's Nana Fujimoto after the gold medal game between USA and Canada at the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship. Photo: Andre Ringuette / HHOF-IIHF Images



Former member of the Swedish National Women's team and 2015 IIHF Hall of Fame inductee Maria Rooth poses with her award from the Swedish ice Hockey Association at the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship. Photo: Andre Ringuette / HHOF-IIHF Images

Hasek's Incredible Journey

New Hall of Famer recounts life in the crease

by Andrew Podnieks

How did you come to be a goaltender?

I started playing hockey when I was six, and from my first practice I was a goalie. I wore the pads and had the stick and goalie gloves and a helmet—we didn't have masks at that time. I never wanted to play out.

Who were your hockey heroes when you were a kid?

I'm from Pardubice where hockey is sport number one. I used to watch the team all the time when the best players were Vladimir Martinec, Jiri Novac, goalie Jiri Crha, who played in the NHL. I admired them and watched them and tried to get better myself. Of course, the goalie I admired the most was Jiri Holecek.

What did you know about the NHL?

In the 1970s there were no videos and satellites, so I wasn't able to follow the NHL, but I knew some of the big names like Bobby Orr, Phil Esposito, Gordie Howe, Bobby Hull. It was



impossible for me to follow the NHL or watch them play. The first game I remember was the 1976 Canada Cup. I was able to watch that.

One of your first international games was at the 1983 U20s in a 7-7 tie against Canada. What do you remember of that event?

It was in Russia. It wasn't the best game from my point of view, but we finished second after losing to Russia 4-3. The thing I remember the most was that I was the youngest player on that team!

Would you agree that if you played today, you might not have been as good because a goalie coach would have told you how to play?

It may sound funny, but I was lucky because I never had any goalie coach. I could do whatever I wanted. I tried to do what other goalies did, but some things worked and some didn't, so I made my own style.

What was the highlight of your NHL career?

I don't want to say one thing because my career was so long and I had many great seasons. Of course, at the end, the best thing is to win with the team. However, I had a great nine years in Buffalo, even though we never won the Cup. I became the starting goalie; I

won individual trophies; and, I won the Olympic gold medal during my time with the Sabres. So my time with the Sabres was one highlight, but then I won the Cups with the Red Wings.

And what about your international career? I assume Nagano stands out?

In the 1980s I was close to winning the World Championship once, in 1987, but we never achieved that, so my biggest international highlight is the 98 Olympics, for sure. I played my last World Championship in 1990, and after that I was in the NHL and we always made it to the playoffs. I was so glad when they opened the Olympics to NHL players and I could compete again for my country.

What is a bigger memory—the shootout against Canada or the shutout in the gold-medal game?

Probably the shootout against Canada. I stopped all five shots, and Robert Reichel scored the one for us. However, the last game was for the gold medal. I remember everything from that game. But in a shootout, if you don't give up any goals, you help the team in a special way.

In the final game did you play really well or were you more just steady?

I played steady. They had a few good chan-



In Nagano 1998, Hasek and Co. went through the United States, Canada, and Russia in the playoff round to win the gold.

ces in the first and second periods, but I don't think I was spectacular. The whole team played very well defensively, and I think we deserved to win. I knew that if I made one mistake, we might not have achieved our dream.

No. 39 is a strange one. How did you come to wear that?

I used to wear number 9 in the Czech league. One of our players was sick, and they gave me that number and I played well, so I stuck with 9. When I got to Chicago, no one asked me



Hasek speaks to media after being inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 2014. Photo: Dave Sandford / HHOF-IIHF Images

about a number. In Buffalo, Rick Semoni, the equipment manager, asked me what number I wanted. I wanted to stick with 9, but because this was a different country and different stage of my career, I put a 3 in front of it. I don't know why 3 but that's how it got

to be 39. And, you know, when I came back and played one final year in the Czech Republic with Pardubice, I went back to number 9 again—18 years later!

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Coming up

**IIHF ICE HOCKEY
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP**
CZECH REPUBLIC, Prague and Ostrava
01.05-17.05.2015
(Pictured: O2 Arena in Prague)

IIHF ANNUAL CONGRESS
CZECH REPUBLIC, Prague
14-16.05.2015



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