

A nation on their shoulders



Photo: Andre Ringette / HHOF-IIHF Images

It's gold or bust: The World Junior Championship is a part of the holiday tradition in Canada. Will the Canadian national junior team give the country a gold present in 2015?



Pressure, everyone faces it. But for the young men taking to the ice on 26 December, pressure takes on a whole new meaning.

RENÉ FASEL EDITORIAL

For a young hockey player, playing in the IIHF World Junior Championship is the culmination of a life dedicated to hockey. Of course, some of these players we will watch in Toronto and Montreal will move on to have excellent careers in the NHL and elsewhere. But for most of them, the World Juniors is the last chance to play hockey at the highest international level.

That's what makes this tournament so intriguing and such a pleasure to watch. These young men leave it all out there on the ice, and in the process they produce a brand of hockey that is truly special.

■ Although I'm sure all of Canada is hoping to watch their home team compete for gold on January 5, the road to Toronto will not be easy. As we discuss on page 6, the rest of the world has caught up and at this moment in

the history of the tournament we can say that the World Juniors is the most balanced and competitive it has ever been.

For the players, it raises the stakes that much higher, and for us hockey fans it makes the games that much more exciting to watch.

■ Whatever happens, the 2015 World Juniors will be co-hosted by a pair of great sports towns. Fans travelling to the World Juniors will get to experience two nerve centres of the Canadian hockey universe.

Whether taking in the sights at Toronto's Hockey Hall of Fame or searching for ghosts of past Canadiens greats at the Montreal Forum, there will be plenty to see and do in both cities.

■ As we close the book on a memorable Olympic year, we look ahead with excitement to what will be another entertaining season for international hockey.

We welcome the return of the Women's World Championship top division tournament following the Olympic hiatus. Hosted by Malmo this year, the Women's Worlds

should continue the exciting style of hockey that the whole world got to enjoy in Sochi.

The U18 women's tournament will follow the World Juniors in North America as the girls compete for gold in Buffalo. We had another fantastic World Girls' Ice Hockey Weekend this year (more on page 12), and I thank all of the participating nations, the volunteers, and the parents for taking the time to help bring the love of hockey to a new generation.

Later on this year we have the men's U18s in Switzerland and then the big show gets going in Prague and Ostrava, Czech Republic, with the 79th edition of the IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship.

I would like to wish everyone a very happy holidays and hope you all get some time to spend with your loved ones. While we may not have an Olympic tournament to look forward to this year, we certainly will not lack for some great hockey in 2015, beginning right after Christmas.

René Fasel
IIHF President

NEWS & NOTES

BELARUS: Igor Rachkovski was unanimously elected as new President of the Belarusian Ice Hockey Association. He succeeds Yevgeni Vorsin, who didn't run for re-election after four years.

Rachkovski had previously served as First Vice President of the National Olympic Committee of the Republic of Belarus since 2012 and President of the Belarusian Sailing Federation since 2008. Yaraslau Zauharodni will rejoin the BIHA as General Secretary.

SPAIN: The assembly of the Spanish Ice Sports Federation (FEDH) elected Frank Gonzalez as its new President. Gonzalez had been the Vice President for the last two terms and was responsible for ice hockey within the organization. He was elected to the IIHF Council in 2003 and is currently serving his third term.

RUSSIA: Alexander Medvedev, the founder of the Kontinental Hockey League, resigned as the league President on 1 December. Dmitri Chernyshenko was unanimously

elected as his successor by the Board of Directors.

Medvedev was chairing the Russian-based, multi-national league since its launch in 2008. He was also an IIHF Council member from 2008 to 2012.

Chernyshenko was the President and CEO of the Organizing Committee for the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi. He will be joined on the KHL's Executive Board by another former Sochi 2014 board member, Alexei Krasnov.

SWEDEN: Tommy Boustedt was named as new General Secretary of the Swedish Ice Hockey Association. He has previously served as the Director of Development and National Teams at the Swedish Ice Hockey Association for the last 13 years.

Before 2001 the 55-year-old was coaching the Swedish national team at several tournaments during the hockey season and several club teams including Hammarby Stockholm, Djurgarden Stockholm and Frolunda Gothenburg in

the top Swedish league. During Boustedt's era Sweden has won numerous medals including Olympic gold in 2006, the IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship in 2006 and 2013 and the IIHF World Junior Championship in 2012.

IIHF: International Paralympic Committee Ice Sledge Hockey and the International Ice Hockey Federation signed a Memorandum of Understanding at the 127th IOC Session in Monaco on 7 December, agreeing on a historic partnership on the promotion and coordination of sledge hockey.

The MOU includes an agreement to create an ongoing awareness campaign for ice sledge hockey and to partner on digital and print communications initiatives. Refereeing and coaching of the sport will also be incorporated into the syllabus of IIHF annual programs and ongoing training opportunities.

In addition, IPC Ice Sledge Hockey will work with the IIHF to publish guidelines for venue owners and operators on how to make ice rinks more accessible.

OBITUARIES



Viktor Tikhonov – died on 24 November in a hospital in Moscow after long illness. He was 84.

With Tikhonov the international hockey family lost its most decorated coach ever. As the head coach of the Soviet Union and Russia, the Moscow-born coach led the national team to three Olympic gold medals and eight World Championship titles between 1979 and 1992 and the 1981 Canada Cup. He also won one Olympic silver medal, one World Championship silver medal and two World Championship bronze medals.

After his first experiences as assistant coach with Dynamo Moscow and the Soviet national team at the 1968 Olympics, Tikhonov moved to Dinamo Riga as a head coach and led the Latvians from the third to the top Soviet league. The success story in Riga made him a choice for top jobs in the Soviet Union.

In 1977 he became head coach of the army team CSKA Moscow and at the same time of the national team. From then on he was coaching the Soviet/Russian national team during 17 consecutive seasons and even longer with CSKA.

In his first tournament the Soviets finished the preliminary round in Prague in second place after a loss to host Czechoslovakia but in the medal round they beat the same opponent 3-1 to win the first gold medal in three years. From now on the national team would medal in every World Championship and Olympic tournament until the 1992 Olympics and most often the colour was gold. He was inducted into the builders' category of the IIHF Hall of Fame in 1998 and is also a Russian Hall of Fame member.



Pat Quinn – Canadian coaching great died at the age of 71 on 23 November after a lengthy illness.

Quinn was a hugely influential presence in all levels of the game, spending four decades in the NHL as a player, head coach and general manager. Not only was Quinn successful in the NHL where he won the Jack Adams Awards

as the Coach of the Year in 1980 and 1992, he left an enduring legacy for Canada on the international stage.

In his first stint as the national team coach he led Canada to a bronze medal at the 1986 World Championship. 16 years later he became Canada's head coach in Salt Lake City 2002 and led his country to its first Olympic gold in 50 years.

Under Quinn Team Canada also won the 2004 World Cup of Hockey. He also was the head coach at the 2006 Olympics and led Canada to gold in both the 2008 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship and in the 2009 IIHF World Junior Championship. He was the only coach to win gold in all these four competitions.

A former NHL defenceman for the Toronto Maple Leafs, Vancouver Canucks and Atlanta Flames, the Hamilton, Ontario native became an NHL coach with the Philadelphia Flyers two days after his 36th birthday when he was promoted from the farm team in the midst of the season.

In his first full season he led the Flyers to the 1980 Stanley Cup finals with a record-breaking streak of 35 wins. Later he also coached the Los Angeles Kings, Vancouver Canucks, Toronto Maple Leafs and Edmonton Oilers during a span of 20 years.

Georgi Milanov – Former Bulgarian national team goalkeeper and head coach passed away 2 November after a long illness. He was 62.

Milanov won the best goalkeeper award in the Bulgarian Championships in 1984-1985 with Slavia Sofia. He played for the Bulgarian national team too, one time in the World Championship B-Pool (1976) and afterwards five times in the C-Pool, but his main success was in the coaching ranks.

As head coach for Slavia, the team won 17 titles (last 5 in a row) and 11 national cups in 25 years (1988-2012). He was the national team head coach for nine IIHF Ice Hockey World Championships.

Jan Vodicka – Former Olympian died at the age of 82 on 23 November. He spent 12 years in the top Czechoslovak league winning one championship (1951) with his hometown team Ceske Budejovice and represented his country in the 1956 Olympic Winter Games in Cortina d'Ampezzo.

He also played for Tankista Prague, and was also the first goalkeeper in Czechoslovakia to use a catching glove.

Attila Rajz – The former Hungarian national team forward died on 16 November. The 38-year-old collapsed due to a pulmonary embolism during an amateur tournament in Hungary.

Rajz won eight domestic titles with Szekesfehervar and played for the senior national team in three IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship events.

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IIHF 2014 Semi-Annual Congress

Korean ice hockey teams to compete in PyeongChang 2018

The 2014 IIHF Semi-Annual Congress took place on the Spanish island of Tenerife last September. The major announcement was the automatic qualification of the Korean men's and women's national teams for the next Olympic ice hockey tournament.

The Korean men's and women's national teams will be competing on home ice at the 2018 Olympic Winter Games in PyeongChang, following a decision by the IIHF Congress to grant the country automatic entry into the ice hockey events.

"After careful deliberation and discussions with the IOC and the Korea Ice Hockey Association (KIHA), we have decided to grant an automatic qualification to the men's and women's national teams for PyeongChang 2018," said IIHF President René Fasel.

The decision came following meetings held during Congress, where the KIHA presented a comprehensive four-year plan to intensify the development of the men's and women's teams. The plan has the backing of the IOC, the Korean government, and national sponsors, who together with the KIHA have pledged to invest over \$20 million U.S. into the national team program in the leadup to the Games.

In addition to the financial investment, the KIHA plans to organize annual exchange programs for their players with the world's top hockey leagues and organizations. A major effort will be also made towards increasing the number of domestic and international games for the national team.

"Korean hockey has been working for a long time for this opportunity, and to have this presented to us today is overwhelming," said Korean men's national team head coach Jim Paek. "I don't want to make any promises but as long as we focus on the process every day to get better I think we'll be very competitive and hopefully we'll represent the country well."

On the women's side, a packed schedule of overseas training camps for the team is in the works, along with a National Team Development Program and a planned expansion of the domestic women's league.

"The IIHF is confident that, given the sizeable investment into the men's and women's programs, along with the changes in the KIHA's structure and operations, Korea should have a chance to show the world it is capable of competing at the highest level of international hockey," said Fasel.

"This is a winning situation for Korean hockey," said Paek. "I believe that when you have success people will gather to that and gain interest in the game, and to be a part of these Olympics is a big motivation for us."



The 2014 Semi-Annual Congress took place in Tenerife with 54 member national associations in attendance.

Photo: Adam Stejs

Now that they have a ticket to PyeongChang, the real work begins for Paek and the rest of the Korean national team. When asked about the next step, the former NHLer had one word:

"Prepare," said Paek. "We're behind the eight ball in a sense, because to build a national world competition team takes time and we only have a short period of time, so we need a strategy and a plan to maximize our potential."

The 2018 Winter Olympic Games take place from 9-25 February 2018. The playing format is still to be confirmed, but Korea will be the last seeded team.

Targeting 2016 Youth Olympics

IIHF Sport Director Dave Fitzpatrick confirmed that the 2016 Youth Olympic Winter Games (12-16 February, 2016) will feature both a men's and women's ice hockey tournament and a men's and women's skills challenge competition.

Both the Skills Challenge and the tournaments will be contested in an Under-16 age category. The Skills Challenge is open to all IIHF Member National Associations. A National Skills Challenge Program will be operated between 1 October 2014 and 7 May 2015 for the nations that wish to send athletes to the Skills Challenge. Each nation's top skills challenge athletes will then compete in a Final Skills Challenge Qualification event to be



The Skills Challenge will return for the 2016 Youth Olympics.

Photo: Raitis Purins / IOC

operated by the IIHF in July 2015 to decide the final 16 male and 16 female participants that will be qualified and seeded by the end of July 2015.

Norway's men's and women's team will be automatically qualified for both hockey tournaments. The rest of teams will be selected from a combined men's and women's Under-18 ranking from the 2014 and 2015 IIHF Championship Program. A total of 10 national teams from 9 nations will contend in a single round robin preliminary round of 10 games, followed by two semi-final and two medal games.

Krakow steps up to host Division IA Worlds

Krakow, Poland has been confirmed as the new host of the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey Division I Group A World Championship.

The allocation of the tournament to Poland came after the Ice Hockey Federation of Ukraine had to withdraw its bid after winning the right to host the World Championship in May at the 2014 Annual Congress, due to the ongoing political tensions in the country.

Krakow, the former capital of the country, will be the host city of the Division I Group A Worlds. The games will take place at Krakow Arena, which has a seating capacity of 15,328 and is also scheduled to host the 2014 FIVB Volleyball Men's World Championship tournament and 2016 European Men's Handball Championship.

The arena boasts Poland's biggest LED facade, 5,200 square metres of LED strip lighting that wraps around the stadium, and one of Europe's biggest LED screens at 540 square metres.

"We've been waiting for the decision regarding the tournament for a few months now," said Polish Ice Hockey Federation President Dawid Chwalka. "It is a difficult situation for Ukraine and it is regrettable that they cannot host the tournament, but we hope that with a good location, and good atmosphere and great fans we can put together a great World Championship."

The tournament will take place during the 90th anniversary of the Polish Ice Hockey Federation, which has been an IIHF member since 1926. It will be contested between Italy, Kazakhstan, Japan, Ukraine, Hungary, Poland, in April 2015.

In other tournament allocations, Poland was also confirmed to host the IIHF Ice Hockey U18 Women's World Championship Division I Qualification tournament. China will host the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship Division I Group B.

Slovaks, Swiss throw their hats in 2019 World Championship bids submitted

■ The Slovak Ice Hockey Federation and the Swiss Ice Hockey Federation have announced their bids to host the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship.

The championship will be allocated at the 2015 IIHF Annual Congress in Prague, Czech Republic, held during the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship next May.

Slovakia, eighth in the World Ranking, hosted its only IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship as an independent country in 2011, with Bratislava and Kosice as the venues. Bratislava was also one of the host cities in 1959 and 1992 when the event took place in Czechoslovakia.

The Slovak Ice Hockey Federation currently intends to go again with Bratislava and Kosice as the host cities but it also keeps its options of another city open in case that



Photo: Jeff Vinnick / IIHF-Images

The 2019 Worlds hosts will be named at the next IIHF Congress.

a new multifunctional arena will be built elsewhere in the country.

Switzerland, seventh in the World Ranking, hosted

the IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship in 1935, 1939, 1953, 1961, 1971, 1990, 1998 and most recently in 2009 in Berne and Zurich-Kloten.

The venues for the 2019 bid have not been named yet as the domestic bidding process is going on.

Following their letter of intent, both applicants have now time until January 2015 to provide the IIHF with a detailed bid project plan and questionnaire with further information on their bids and venues.

The next IIHF Ice Hockey World Championships have previously been allocated to:

Prague & Ostrava, Czech Republic, 1-17 May 2015
Moscow & St. Petersburg, Russia, 6-22 May 2016
Cologne, Germany & Paris, France, 5-21 May 2017
Copenhagen & Herning, Denmark, 4-20 May 2018

IIHF medical study released

Insight on flexible boards, head injuries at Worlds, Olympics

■ A seven-year study on player injuries at IIHF Ice Hockey World Championships and the Olympic Games was recently released by the IIHF Medical Committee.

The study analyzed 528 recorded injuries from 2006 to 2013 that occurred in all divisions of the men's World Championship program, the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, and the qualification tournaments for the Vancouver 2010 and the Sochi 2014 Games.

Among the notable findings made by the study was that the number of injuries sustained during international ice hockey competitions is relatively high, but that certain arena characteristics, such as flexible boards and glass, appeared to reduce the risk of injury.



Photo: Jeff Vinnick / IIHF-Images

Dr. Markku Tuominen (pictured) is a member of the IIHF Medical Committee.

While nearly 70 per cent of injuries occurred away from the boards (68.5%), of all the injuries sustained by players shoulder injuries were the most common (27.3%), with over half of those resulting from contact with the boards (63.2%).

It was found that there was a 29% lower risk of an injury at the arenas where flexible boards and glass were used compared to arenas with traditional boards and glass. There were fewer concussions when flexible boards and glass were used instead of traditional boards and glass, along with a noticeable trend towards a decrease in all other types of injuries.

"This was the first study in which effect of flexible boards and glasses to the injury risk were investigated," said Medical Committee member Dr. Markku Tuominen. "Of course we expected that flexible boards and glasses decrease the risk of injury, but it was still very interesting to find that the total injury rate fell 29% when flexible boards and glasses were used. Especially also that flexible boards and glasses decreased shoulder injuries by 60%, which was also statistically significant."

The majority of concussions occurred without board contact (55.8%). Every 10th player diagnosed with a concussion returned to play during the same game.

"Of the players diagnosed with a concussion, 11.5% returned to play in the same game," said Tuominen. "The majority of concussions occurred before the 2012 Zurich Consensus Guidelines, which do not allow return to play in the same game. In future our target is that if there is a doubt that a player has concussion, he or she doesn't come back to the same game anymore."

■ Concussions accounted for a small yet clinically important number (9.9%) of injuries in the tournaments. The most common cause for concussion was via a check to the head (51.9%). A penalty was called in only 32.7% of the events that caused a concussion. For those players diagnosed with a concussion, 11.5% returned to play in the same game, less in the top-level men's divisions (5.6%). Estimated time loss was more than 3 weeks in 7.7% of the cases.

The centre position had the highest risk of concussion at 25%, the defence position next at 20.2%, and the wing position 17.3%. About 42% of concussions occurred during the first period.

During the study period, 528 injuries in 511 incidents were reported in 844 games. Additionally, 27 injuries occurred during team practices. Injuries involved the head and face in 210 cases (39.8% of game injuries), the lower body in 162 cases (30.7%), the upper body in 115 cases (21.8%), and spine or trunk in 41 cases (7.8%).

■ The study concluded with a statement underlining that the knowledge of the risk factors and mechanisms of ice hockey injuries are needed to initiate systematic injury prevention, and that further research is necessary to determine if facial injuries in ice hockey can be reduced by enforcing existing rules or mandating full facial protection. Possible rule changes should also be considered to reduce risk of concussion.

"It is not very easy to find new rules which reduce the risk of concussion without making big changes to the game also," said Tuominen. "For example: Shall we slow down the speed of players? Can we decrease number of hits chancing the size of the rink? What is clean hit? These are not so easy questions. Despite of that our target must always be that the best players can play all the games."

"We need more discussion how to make our game safer. All the rules, equipments and attitudes must support that. Flexible boards and glasses are one part of it, but we need more ideas from all the people who work in ice hockey. Now we have knowledge from the game to which we can compare the results in the future."

Hall of Fame Induction Class of 2015

Great Czechs, two women, new honour among highlights



The IIHF Hall of Fame Selection Committee has added seven new names to its pantheon of greats.

In honour of the golden era of Czech hockey, goaltender Dominik Hasek and longtime captain Robert Reichel will be inducted. Joining them is Scott Niedermayer, Fran Rider, and Maria Rooth. Monique Scheier-Schneider is the 2015 recipient of the Paul Loicq Award.

The new class will be honoured during the medal weekend of the World Championship in Prague next year. A new trophy will also be introduced, named after the great Swiss star of the 1930s, Richard "Bibi" Torriani, to be given for the first time to Italian Lucio Topatigh.

"We wanted to create a trophy which honours a player for a great international career irrespective of where he or she played," explained Fasel. "We wanted to ensure we recognize players who didn't necessarily win Olympic and World Championship medals but who still had remarkable careers."



Dominik Hasek
b. Pardubice, Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic), January 29, 1965

Dominik Hasek began to play professionally in Czechoslovakia at the age of 16, and two years later was selected by Chicago 199th overall at the 1983 NHL Entry Draft. Internationally Hasek also got going early and took the Czechs to two U20 silvers and also won silver at the World Championship at age 18.

His unconventional style was inimitable, and he won five of his six Vezina Trophies in the 1990s with the Buffalo Sabres. But it was his two years between 1996 and 1998 that he made history.

Hasek was named winner of both the Hart Trophy and Lester B. Pearson Award as the league's best player, the only goalie to win the Hart twice. Because of his success with the Sabres, he didn't play for the Czechs at all between 1991 and 1998, but when he returned, for the Nagano Olympics, he delivered a historic performance. He stopped all five Canadian skaters in a semi-finals penalty-shot shootout and then recorded a shutout against Russia in a 1-0 win for gold, the first ever for the country. He led the Detroit Red Wings to the Stanley Cup in 2002 and 2008, ensuring his place in hockey lore on both sides of the ocean.



Scott Niedermayer
b. Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, August 31, 1973

Even before he established himself in the NHL with the Devils, Scott Niedermayer had won both national and international championships. In the case

of the former, he led Kamloops to the Canadian Hockey League's Memorial Cup in 1991-92, and in the case of the latter, gold with Canada at the 1991 World Junior Championship.

Niedermayer led Canada to gold at the 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake. Two years later he teamed with brother, Rob, and won gold at the 2004 World Championship, making him the 14th member of the Triple Gold Club. Later that fall he starred with Canada to win the World Cup. This gave him every possible championship a Canadian player could win, and he finished his career with perhaps his most cherished victory, a gold at the 2010 Olympics while wearing the "C" on his sweater.

Niedermayer skated in nearly 1,300 NHL regular-season games and 202 more in the playoffs and was named Conn Smythe Trophy winner in 2006 after leading Anaheim to a surprising Stanley Cup victory. He was never a passerenger on his many team victories but instead a dominant player and leader, and his play easily transferred from the small ice of the NHL to the big ice of IIHF competition.



Robert Reichel
b. Litvinov, Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic), June 25, 1971

One of the greatest leaders in Czech hockey history, Robert Reichel wore the "C" for his country on eight occasions. The first time came in 1990 at his third U20 tournament, and the Czechoslovaks won their second straight bronze. He then made his way to the Calgary Flames, the NHL team that had drafted him the previous year. Reichel improved in each of his first three years in the league, culminating with consecutive seasons of 40 goals and going to 88 points and then 93 in 1993-94, his best statistical year in the NHL.

Reichel's first international gold medal came in the 1996 World Championship. In Nagano 1998 Reichel helped the team to its first ever Olympic gold. Playing Canada in the semi-finals, the game went to a shootout. While goalie Dominik Hasek stopped all five Canadian shooters, Canada's goalie Patrick Roy stopped all Czech shooters except the first—Reichel—who snapped a shot off the far post that found the back of the net.

Reichel captained the 2000 and 2001 World Championship teams that took gold. He also wore the "C" at the 2003 Worlds and the 2004 World Cup. Reichel was that special kind of player who raised his level of play when wearing his national team sweater. His inclusion among the IIHF's best has been a certainty since the day he retired in 2010.



Fran Rider
b. Toronto, Ontario, Canada, June 5, 1951

The first person inducted into the IIHF Hall of Fame as a Builder for contribu-

tions specifically to women's hockey, Fran Rider is the very apotheosis of passion and determination, both for the length of her tenure as well as the breadth and scope of her remarkable career. In 1975 Rider established the Ontario Women's Hockey Association, the only organization in the world devoted only to women's hockey. In 1982, Rider created the first national championship for women's hockey in Canada.

In 1990 the first official IIHF women's tournament was played in Ottawa. TSN covered the final game, a Canada-United States matchup, which started the great rivalry that continues to this day. Finances limited the IIHF commitment to a bi-annual tournament at first, and any lingering doubts of the game's rising stock were put to rest in 1992 when Finland and Sweden played a thrilling bronze-medal game that went to a shootout.

Rider was at the forefront of the Olympic push. The OWSA worked within Canada to develop the women's game, but its role internationally was a fight for the greater good. When the Americans stunned Canada in the final women's game in Nagano to win the first ever Olympic gold, it was women's hockey that was the bigger winner.



Maria Rooth
b. Angelholm, Sweden, November 2, 1979

Perhaps the most skilled European female hockey player of all time, Rooth first played for Damkronorna at the 1997 Women's Worlds at age 17, and a year later she participated in the first ever Olympics in which women's hockey was a medal sport. After that she moved to the U.S. to play hockey for the University of Minnesota-Duluth. The Bulldogs won three successive championships (2001-03), and Rooth captained the team for the last two.

Rooth and the Swedes won their first Olympic medal in 2002 by claiming bronze, but her defining moment was unquestionably the semi-finals of the 2006 Olympics. Playing the United States in a game the U.S. was heavily favoured to win, the Swedes fell behind 2-0.

But Rooth scored twice and the Swedes played perfect hockey in overtime, sending the game to a penalty-shot shootout. Rooth scored the winning goal, and the Swedish "Miracle" saw the U.S. relegated to the bronze-medal game while Damkronorna qualified for the gold-medal game.

This marked the first time a finals was not competed by the two North American teams. Rooth won one more bronze, at the 2007 Women's Worlds, and retired in 2010.

She has run her own hockey school for girls in Sweden for the last ten years, and in 2005 the Bulldogs retired her number 27, the first ever sweater so honoured in NCAA women's hockey.



Torriani Award:
Lucio Topatigh
b. Gallio, Italy, October 19, 1965

Lucio Topatigh was blessed with a long-time commitment and love of the game that made his career to Italian hockey like Gordie Howe's was to the NHL. Topatigh played some 23 seasons in Serie A and more than 1,000 games, incomparable and unmatched numbers. On the international scene he played some 18 IIHF tournaments, 14 in the top level.

His dedication to his national team is unique, making him the ideal candidate to be given the inaugural Richard "Bibi" Torriani Award for contributions to his national team at IIHF competitions. Topatigh first wore the Azzurri colours in 1983 at the European U18 Championship B Pool, at age 17. Three years later he made his senior debut, playing for the Azzurri for the last time at his own Olympics, in Turin, in 2006, at age 40.

Known as "Il falco di Gallio" (the Hawk of Gallio), Topatigh was a rugged right winger and a top scorer in both the Serie A and internationally. And although Italy never won a medal at the top level of international hockey, it managed to stay in the top pool for eleven straight years during the prime of Topatigh's career. He won the Italian Championship four times, all with Bolzano. By the time he retired for good at age 43, his place as perhaps the finest Italian hockey player of all time was solidified.



Paul Loicq Award:
Monique Scheier-Schneider
b. Schifflange, Luxembourg, October 15, 1954

Monique Scheier-Schneider may come from the relatively small hockey country of Luxembourg, but her involvement in the game has been long and impressive, spanning some four decades at all levels of the game. She worked as an off-ice official for IHC Beaufort starting in 1974, and although she handled those duties for some 12 years she added to her responsibilities two years later when she became the secretary for the Hiversport Huskies' minor-hockey program.

Starting in 1992, Scheier-Schneider became the General Secretary of the Luxembourg Ice Hockey Federation, a post she continues to hold today, some 22 years later. Additionally, she has worked as team manager for the junior and senior national teams, and in 2008 she became only the third woman to be elected to Council.

She has also been the president of the nation's major hockey club, Tornado Luxembourg, which plays in the French minor-league system, since 2002. Her influence on the game is clear within her family. Scheier-Schneider's brother, Alain, is vice president of the Luxembourg Ice Hockey Federation, while two of her sons and three nephews play for the national team.

Certain uncertainty at Juniors

No obvious favourites in balanced tournament

2015



WORLD JUNIOR
CHAMPIONSHIP
CANADA
Toronto - Montreal
in the tournament. In 2014, that seems like a very long time ago, indeed.

by Andrew Podnieks

There was a time several years ago when some pundits suggested that Canada would ruin the U20 World Championship because it qualified for the gold-medal game every year, thus eliminating the element of surprise or even competition in the tournament. In 2014, that seems like a very long time ago, indeed.

Hockey, like all sports, is cyclical, and certainly Canada's dominating era in which it qualified for the gold-medal game ten successive years (2002-11) is remarkable, but the World Juniors have produced a different winner each of the last four years and five times in the last six years. In fact, the IIHF's flagship U20 tournament has become wildly unpredictable, the surprises producing drama and excitement equal to the years when Canada dominated.

■ The tipping point might well be credited to an American forward named John Carlson. The date was January 5, 2010, and Canada played the United States in the gold-medal game in Saskatoon. The Americans were looking impressive, leading 5-3 with less than three minutes to play, on the verge of ending Canada's five gold medals in a row.

But then miraculously, Jordan Eberle, who scored with only seconds remaining against the Russians the previous year to propel Canada to another gold, surpassed those heroics, scoring not once but twice in the dying moments to tie the game and send it to overtime. Canada had the momentum and was on course to win for an unprecedented sixth time in a row. But Carlson stunned the hometown team with a goal at 4:21 of OT, giving the U.S. gold.

The next year, Canada was again in the gold game, leading Russia 3-0 after two periods and a virtual lock to claim another gold. But if the previous year's rally was incredibly dramatic, the team's third-period collapse in 2011 was epic as Russia scored five unanswered goals to steal gold. That was the last time Canada was in the championship game.

In 2012, Canada won bronze, but it was Sweden and Russia battling for gold. That marked the first time since 2001 that Canada was not in the final game, but it turned out to be arguably the most exciting game in Sweden's junior hockey history. Shots favoured the Scandinavians, 58-17, but the goaltending of Andrei Makarov was equal, and the game went into overtime without a goal being scored. It took a brilliant rush from Mika Zibanejad midway through the fourth period to give the Swedes their first U20 gold in 31 years.

In 2013, in the hockey-mad city of Ufa, Russia, perhaps the finest U20 in Europe ever was staged. This time it was Sweden back in the gold-medal game playing a U.S. team coached by Hall of Famer Phil Housley. After a scoreless first period, Sweden took the early lead in the second only to have the pint-sized Rocco Grimaldi score twice before the end of the period for the Americans.



Tough field: Finland's 2014 gold medal victory marked the fifth time in five years that a new IIHF World Junior Champion was crowned. Going into 2015, competition parity is better than ever.

They added an empty-netter with 16 seconds left and won a surprising gold, their second in four years.

Sweden made it a hat trick of gold-medal appearances in 2014, advancing to a finals game against arch-rivals Finland. Playing on home ice, in Malmo, the Swedes were certainly favoured, but they played from behind much of the game. They trailed 1-0 and tied it, trailed 2-1 and tied it, and sent the game into overtime. This time, Finland again got the next goal, and Sweden had no opportunity to reply. Rasmus Ristolainen was the OT hero for the Finns, again an underdog winner, to be sure.

■ In the last four years it has been Russia and Sweden that have dominated. The Russians are the only team to have won a medal each year—gold, silver, and two bronze—all coming after beating Canada (except the silver). The Swedes have a gold and two silver and the Americans a gold and bronze. Canada has a silver and bronze, and Finland its 2014 gold.

The shocking omission among these results is the poor showing of the Czech Republic. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, this nation was certainly the best in the world, but it hasn't won a U20 medal of any colour since

a bronze in 2005. Since then it has finished between 5th and 7th every year, showing no signs of breaking through to return to the elite group. However, a silver medal at the 2014 U18 tournament, the country's first, might signal a turnaround.

Equally, though, no other nation outside the "big six" has ever won a medal in the 27 years of the event, with only two distant exceptions. In 1998, Switzerland won bronze, and the next year Slovakia won the same medal.

■ In 2015, the stakes are high, especially for the hosts. Toronto and Montreal, as co-hosts, have already set records for tickets sold, and this will almost certainly translate into the biggest and most successful U20 ever held. Canada has hosted the tournament ten times in the past and has won a medal every time, so getting onto the podium is, if not a certainty, then expected. Four of those medals have been gold, but incredibly the Soviets/Russians have also won gold in Canada four times. Indeed, Russia traditionally plays better in Canada than it does in Russia, making CCCP at worst co-favourites in 2015.

Perhaps another fact in Canada's favour, though, is the country's depth. It hopes to have Connor McDavid in the

lineup, and in all some eleven players from last year are eligible to return. Russia has only four possible returnees, Sweden seven, and Finland eight.

Canada has now gone without a medal two years in a row. The only longer drought was from 1979 to 1981 during the days when the nation sent a club team to the tournament. In short, for Canada to play in front of home crowds and not secure at least a bronze would be an historic disappointment within the country. But the problem is that perhaps at no time in U20 history has there been such parity among the top teams.

The days of dynasties appear to be over. The Europeans have caught up to the North Americans, in terms of coaching and player development among the top teams, in terms of hosting (think Ufa and Malmo), in terms of treating this like a world-class tournament.

Canada is now one of five teams capable of winning, but nothing is guaranteed any more. Four different winners in the last four years is testament to the World Juniors of the 21st century.



Mac or Jack?

Two stars set for New Year's Eve battle

■ The runaway favourites to be selected first overall at the 2015 NHL Entry Draft also happen to be the two players whose nations will be relying on them to win gold at the 2015 World Junior Championship in Toronto and Montreal this holiday season.

The two also happen to represent two distinct brands of hockey, the CHL in Canada, which develops more NHLers than any league in the world, and NCAA hockey, which offers a greater balance between sport and education.



McDavid will make his second WJC appearance.



Eichel is coming off a gold medal at the 2014 U18s.

Connor McDavid is the Canadian with the Erie Otters in the OHL, and Jack Eichel is the American playing in the NCAA. Both are considered 1A and 1B right now for the draft, and general managers agree that whoever has the better year this year will be the one to be drafted first overall.

One huge test for both players will surely be the World Juniors where they'll be playing against the best players under 20 in the world, competing against opponents who have already been drafted or who will likely be drafted in 2015 as well. And if that's the case, imagine the drooling being done by fans, NHL general managers, and TSN for the game at the Bell Centre on December 31—Canada vs. U.S. Not only is it the traditional end-of-year battle that has produced many great games, it will feature McDavid and Eichel playing head-to-head. The intensity and pride of the two players will reverberate down the bench, through the stands, and across the airwaves.

Eichel is playing for a BU team that got off to a 6-1-1 record in its first eight games. He had six goals, nine assists, and 15 points to lead the team in all three categories and has earned rave reviews for his ability to play a skilled game at a high speed. The 18-year-old is a little

dropped jaws for the wrong reasons. In a game against Mississauga on November 12, McDavid dropped the gloves and got into a fight. At some point he missed a punch, and his hand hit the dasher, breaking a bone in his right hand and sending him to the press box for six weeks. He'll almost certainly be ready for Team Canada, but the OHL's leading scorer didn't help his season with the decision to fight.

Both players have previous IIHF experience. McDavid was a dominant force at the 2013 WM18, leading Canada to a gold medal, but when he made the U20 team a year later as a 16-year-old he was used very sparingly by coach Brent Sutter and didn't have an impact.

Eichel played at the 2013 U18 against McDavid and wasn't nearly as impressive, but he was dominant in that event a year later. He also played at the 2014 U20 and was given greater responsibilities than McDavid, responding with five points in as many games.

Without question both players will be in the NHL next year and their junior careers will reach their pinnacle in Toronto and Montreal. But for hockey fans, that pinnacle will reach its climax on New Year's Eve. Circle that date and get ready for the biggest junior game of the 2014-15 season!



■ Born: Newmarket, Ontario, January 13, 1997 (17)
■ Centre—shoots left
■ 6' 185 lbs.
■ Plays for Erie Otters, Ontario Hockey League
■ Scored eight goals and six assists in seven games at the 2013 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship
■ Netted 28 goals and 99 points in 56 games last season with the Canadian Hockey League Erie Otters.



■ Born: North Chelmsford, Massachusetts, October 28, 1996 (18)
■ Forward—shoots right
■ 6'2" 194 lbs.
■ Plays for Boston University Terriers, NCAA Division I
■ Scored ten points in seven games at 2014 IIHF U18 World Championship, won gold with Team USA
■ Scored nine points in his first five games with Boston College.



Twin hockey heartlands

Toronto, Montreal ideal hosts for biggest WJC ever

2015



WORLD JUNIOR
CHAMPIONSHIP
CANADA
Toronto - Montreal

by Lucas Aykroyd

Hockey is a global game, but with due respect to the likes of Stockholm and Moscow, devotion to our favourite sport runs deepest in Toronto and Montreal.

It's not just because these two Canadian hockey meccas are co-hosting the IIHF World Junior Championship in 2015 – and will again in 2017. There are numbers to back this up.

Last year, SC Bern of the Swiss NLA had easily the highest average per-game attendance of any European club (16,347). But meanwhile, the Montreal Canadiens averaged a whopping 21,273 at the Bell Centre, and the Toronto Maple Leafs got 19,439 at the Air Canada Centre.

According to Forbes Magazine, the Leafs are the NHL's most valuable franchise at \$1.15 billion US, while the Canadiens sit third at \$775 million.

"Everybody knows about those two names," said Leo Komarov, the multilingual Finnish forward who now plays for Toronto.

So it's no wonder Hockey Canada hopes to set new World Junior records in both revenue and crowds this Christmas. (The current attendance record came in 2012, when Calgary and Edmonton combined for 444,718 spectators.)

There are close to 40,000 minor hockey players just in Toronto, which will host the 2015 medal games.

■ But of course, passion for hockey isn't measured in numbers alone. Both these beautiful cities boast a rich hockey history, from the early days of amateur play to the heady heights of international showdowns.

Montreal, Quebec's biggest city, is recognized by the IIHF as the site of the first organized indoor hockey game ever. It took place on March 3, 1875 when a McGill team led by James Creighton, inventor of the first hockey rulebook, defeated Captain Fred Torrence's Victoria team 2-1 at the Victoria Skating Rink.

In 1892, Lord Stanley, the Governor General of Canada, donated the Stanley Cup to be awarded to the nation's top hockey club, and the Montreal AAA club became the first champions in 1893.

Toronto, the capital of Ontario, was also caught up in hockey's surging popularity. Toronto captured its first Stanley Cup in 1914, the pre-NHL era, and became the first NHL-based Stanley Cup champion in 1918.

Legendary arenas in each city augmented the mystique. The Montreal Forum opened in 1924 at a cost of \$1 million, and soon became known as the "Cathedral of Hockey." Despite the economic woes of the Great Depression, Toronto Maple Leafs owner Conn Smythe opened Maple Leaf Gardens in 1931.



Photo: Montreal Canadiens, inset: Hall of Fame



Photo: Toronto Maple Leafs, inset: Hall of Fame

Neither site has yet seen a Stanley Cup, but the Centre Bell (top) and Air Canada Centre (bottom) will be rocking.

In what's now called the "Original Six" NHL (1942-67), Montreal and Toronto forged one of hockey's all-time greatest rivalries. Both clubs won 10 Cups apiece in that era. The Canadiens were led by superstars like Maurice "Rocket" Richard, Jean Beliveau, and Jacques Plante. The Leafs had their own luminaries in Syl Apps, Ted "Teeder" Kennedy, and Turk Broda.

The rivalry intensified because each team represented one of bilingual Canada's founding nations. The Canadiens were dubbed the "Flying Frenchmen," while the Leafs had strong support among Anglophones. In 1955, when Richard was suspended for swinging his stick and punching a linesman, his fans saw it as an attack on French Canada by English-speaking NHL president Clarence Campbell, and a riot broke out in Montreal.

Since the Habs ("Les Habitants") and the Leafs were the only two Canadian teams back then, they gained supporters nationwide, inspired by famous broadcasters

like Hockey Night in Canada's Foster Hewitt. To this day, when these clubs visit Western Canada, half the crowd cheers for the Canucks (or Oilers, or Flames), while the other half roots for the visitors.

The Canadiens continued to shine into the 1970s. Coached by Scotty Bowman, the NHL's winningest bench boss, they forged their last Cup dynasty (1976-79) with Guy Lafleur, Larry Robinson, and Ken Dryden. And they won two more Cups (1986, 1993) thanks to Patrick Roy's brilliant goaltending. It was compelling theatre. "When you grow up in Montreal, one day you want to be a professional hockey player," said Mario Lemieux.

The Leafs, who haven't taken the Cup since 1967, have had their ups and downs, largely due to spotty management and fiscal decisions. Still, their fans' hearts remain loyal.

■ In international hockey, Montreal and Toronto made a

splash in 1972 as the first two host cities for the historic eight-game Summit Series. It pitted Canada's NHL pros against the Soviet national team.

The Soviets shocked the world with a 7-3 win in the Montreal opener, highlighted by two beautiful Valeri Kharlamov goals. Game Two in Toronto saw Canada rally for a 4-1 victory, featuring Pete Mahovlich's dazzling shorthanded tally on a shorthanded rush. (Canada, of course, would narrowly take the series on Paul Henderson's last-minute goal in Game Eight.)

When the Canada Cup (now the World Cup of Hockey) kicked off in 1976, both cities were front and centre again. Borje Salming, the Leafs' star Swedish defenceman, got a five-minute standing ovation before Tre Kronor debuted with a victory over the Americans at Maple Leaf Gardens. And Canada's Darryl Sittler, the Leafs' offensive leader, got the overtime winner versus Czechoslovakia in Game Two of the best-of-three final in Montreal.

In the 1981 Canada Cup, Montreal witnessed the shocking 8-1 Soviet thrashing of Canada in the one-game final. The 1987 edition saw the Russians defeat Canada 6-5 on Alexander Semak's overtime marker in Game One of the final at the Forum – before the hosts famously bounced back to take the Cup with two 6-5 victories of their own in Hamilton.

In the last Canada Cup in 1991, Canada beat the Americans 4-1 to open the finals in Montreal (best-remembered for Gary Suter injuring Wayne Gretzky on a questionable hit), and then wrapped it up with another win in Hamilton.

With Mike Richter's stellar goaltending and Brett Hull's super shooting, the Americans made history by triumphing in the 1996 World Cup of Hockey final in Montreal. The new arena there had just opened earlier that year. Toronto's Air Canada Centre was five years old when it had the 2004 World Cup final. Canada edged Finland 3-2 on Shane Doan's goal.

How about the World Juniors? Montreal hosted the IIHF's annual U20 showcase for the first time in 1978. The Soviets won gold with Vyacheslav Fetisov and Sergei Makarov, and a 16-year-old Wayne Gretzky topped the scoring race with 17 points as Canada took the bronze.

And in 1986, when Hamilton, Ontario got the World Juniors, three games were played in Toronto. One was a 6-5 win over Finland for Canada, which settled for silver behind the Soviets.

But the 2015 tournament will truly be something special. For decades, fans in these hockey-mad cities have loved their international stars, from Salming and Mats Sundin in Toronto to Mats Naslund and Saku Koivu in Montreal. Now they'll be going wild for the next generation of talent – as Canada quests for its first World Junior gold since Ottawa 2009.

The temperatures may be chilly outside, but the arenas will heat up with hockey passion. It's the perfect way to start a cycle that will see Canada host the World Juniors every second year through 2021.

Adventures away from the arenas

Lots to see in Canadian hockey towns



Photo: A.J. Messier / Hall of Fame

Fans travelling to Toronto should make a stop at the Hockey Hall of Fame (right, foreground) and the CN Tower (left).

by Lucas Aykroyd

■ For visiting fans at the World Junior Championship, the top priority will be to see as many games as possible.

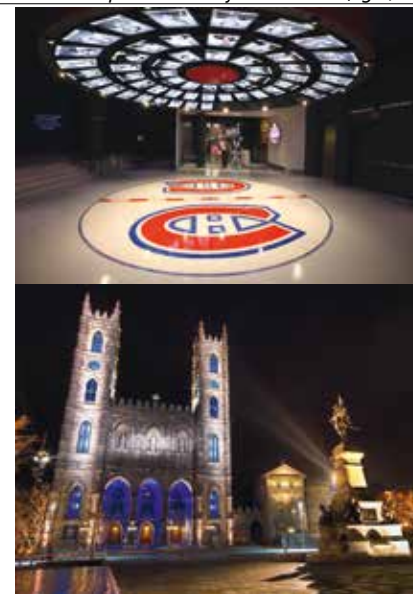
In between, there'll be interactive displays, hockey artifacts, and more at the Fan Festivals outside the arenas. It'll all be anchored by Hockey Canada's huge Century Tour exhibit, which celebrates the organization's 100th year (Dec. 19-23 and 26-31 in Montreal, Jan. 2-5 in Toronto).

But even beyond the Air Canada Centre and Bell Centre, you can have a blast as a hockey tourist.

■ In Toronto, don't miss the Hockey Hall of Fame. You could spend days at this magnificent building at the corner of Yonge and Front Streets, reliving memories from IIHF tournaments, recording your own broadcasts of great hockey moments, shooting on computer-controlled goalies, watching action-packed documentaries, or getting your photo taken with the Stanley Cup. There's also a full-scale replica of the 1970s Montreal Canadiens dressing room. (Dominik Hasek, Peter Forsberg, Rob Blake, and Mike Modano are among the latest inductees, so you're in fine company here.)

Feeling hungry? Visit Wayne Gretzky's restaurant in Toronto and sample "Grandma Gretzky's favourite" cheddar and potato perogies or "Wayne's Wings in garlic Parmesan butter." It showcases "Great One" memorabilia, from his 1987 Canada Cup stick to kitsch like a Gretzky doll and lunch box. Or, in Montreal, grab a bite at m:brgr, star defenceman PK Subban's favourite hamburger joint, where they actually named one of their prime patties PK76 in his honour.

There are other restaurants with hockey connections too. In Toronto, check out Shakey's, founded by ex-Leaf Mike "Shakey" Walton, for excellent homestyle chili. Momesso is owned by the family of Sergio Momesso, a 1986 Cup winner with Montreal – it's famous for its submarine sandwiches.



Montreal's Notre-Dame Basilica (bottom) and the Canadiens Hall of Fame (top) in the Centre Bell.

■ Ready for some sightseeing? Just a short walk from the Air Canada Centre is the new Ripley's Aquarium of Canada, next to the CN Tower. After viewing the sharks, turtles, and exotic fish, you can buy Ripley's-themed hockey sweaters and pucks in the gift shop. Visitors to the Western Hemisphere's tallest free-standing structure can purchase miniature CN Tower plastic hockey sticks as souvenirs.

Those with a sense of history will want to tour Montreal's Notre-Dame Basilica. The 1829-built, Gothic Revival-style Catholic church witnessed one of the biggest funerals in Quebec history on May 31, 2000, as thousands gathered to pay their respects to the late Maurice "Rocket" Richard.

■ Even though the legendary Montreal Forum has been converted into a shopping mall and movie multiplex, it still acknowledges its glorious past with a Richard statue, plus 24 bronze Stanley Cup banners at the Atwater Street entrance. It was declared a National Historic Site in 1997. Similarly, you can go to Maple Leaf Gardens, now a Loblaws grocery store, and check out the red dot that marks where centre ice was (in Aisle 25, in case you're wondering).

If you love sports-themed artwork, head to the Sport Gallery in Toronto's Distillery District. It specializes in reproductions of photos that originally ran in Sport Magazine (1946-2000), and there are plenty of vintage hockey shots for sale.

To get into the spirit of hockey, strapping on a pair of skates is the way to go. You'll find many opportunities to rent blades and skate outdoors in both host cities. Toronto is home to 51 outdoor rinks – more than anywhere else in the world – and Nathan Phillips Square, next to the city hall, is always a popular choice. The rink at the Old Port is Montreal's largest, offering splendid views of Old Montreal and different musical themes nightly.

Showdown on the North Sea

Trophy, CHL spot on the line at Continental Cup Super Final



by Martin Merk

The new Champions Hockey League was launched in August, but the IIHF Continental Cup, which plays it Super Final next month, remains the longest-running European club competition.

As a complement the CHL, this year the Continental Cup functions also as a qualification event for champions from non-CHL domestic leagues. The winner of the Super Final this year will for the first time gain a spot for the 2015/2016 Champions Hockey League season.

18 teams entered the Continental Cup and after three rounds the four finalists have been determined. The Super Final will be played from 9th to 11th January in Bremerhaven, the biggest German city located near the North Sea. The best team from the Super Final – except for Bremerhaven, which cannot qualify due to playing only in the second-tier league of its country – will play in the Champions Hockey League in the 2015/2016 season, which will be extended from 44 to 48 teams.

Yertis Pavlodar (Kazakhstan)

■ For the first time since Torpedo Ust-Kamenogorsk in 2008 a Kazakh team has made it to the final of the Continental Cup. Yertis Pavlodar will even be the top-seeded team thanks to its great performance in the preliminary round.



The qualification is emblematic of the changes in Kazakhstan in the last few years. While in the past only two or three Kazakh teams played professional hockey in the top-two Russian leagues, domestic competition and opportunities for players have increased with the ten-team Vysshaya Liga that is led by Yertis again.

With more funding in Kazakh hockey also outside of the traditional ice hockey centres, the league has also lured professional players from anywhere between Canada and Russia.

Although Kazakh forward Alexei Vorontsov is the team's scoring leader, the team also relies on imports with 15 players from Slovakia or the Czech Republic on the roster. 35-year-old Slovak forward Martin Huijsa was his team's scoring leader in the Continental Cup with two goals and as many assists, followed by fellow countrymen, twin brothers Richard and Robert Huna, who are all in their third season in the city located on the road between the capital of Astana and Novosibirsk.

Angers Ducs (France)

■ With champion Briancon Diables Rouges in the Champions Hockey League, runner-up Angers Ducs represents France in the Continental Cup. Angers has never won a French championship to this day but has been a top-four team in most of the last seven years.



As the Ice Times went to print, Angers was third in the league with a 9-3 record. When hosting a Continental Cup preliminary-round group on home ice, the team from western France started with two wins before suffering a



Photo: Massimo Patis

The Fischtown Pinguins have been punching well above their weight class, making the Super Final as a Division II team.

tight defeat that was still enough to win the tournament. As in many other teams in the league there is a remarkable Canadian presence. Real Paiement spent most of his coaching career in Canada including coaching at the World Juniors before moving to Angers in 2014. Goaltender Jean-Sebastien Aubin also hails from Montreal and is one of the top netminders in the French league.

Also the top-five scorers are imports with Canadian forwards Yannick Tifu, Tim Crowder, Guillaume Lefebvre, Swedish forward Johan Skinnars and Canadian defenceman Sebastien Bisailon. Robin Gaborit, who played exhibition games for the men's national team the last four seasons but hasn't made it to the World Championship yet, is the best Frenchman in scoring.

Neman Grodno (Belarus)

■ Founded in 1988, Neman Grodno is starting to harvest the fruits of their work. This year the team from the city close to the border with Poland and Lithuania won the second straight championship after beating Yunost Minsk in the final and the fifth in total with many of the players hailing from the city.



After missing out the qualification for the final one year ago, Neman Grodno advanced as the second-placed team of a tight preliminary-round group in Angers where they were involved in a three-team tie with the hosts and the Belfast Giants. Same as in the league scoring has been a weakness for the team after losing the best two scorers of the last season.

Despite that, Neman Grodno hopes to shine with more home-grown players having to step up but in the Belarusian Extraliga Neman was ranked fifth in early December with a 17-14 record.

Russian coach Vasili Spiridonov, who led Metallurg Zhlobin to a second-place finish in the Continental Cup two years ago, is behind the bench since this season.

The best three scorers are long-time players of the club. Murmansk-born Vyacheslav Lisichkin, 34, is in this 17th season, followed by Grodno products Pavel Boyarchuk and Sergei Malyavko, both 24.

Fischtown Pinguins Bremerhaven (Germany)

■ Although the Continental Cup will not include teams from second-tier leagues in the future, the Fischtown Pinguins Bremerhaven were given an exception this season after missing last year's competition due to an administrative conflict within their country. The team from northern Germany reacted with strong performances in two preliminary rounds and will host the final tournament in the 2011-built Eisarena Bremerhaven with a capacity for 4,422 spectators.



In six games in the Continental Cup the team has lost only one game so far, 3-2 against Yertis Pavlodar. Canadian import Andrew McPherson, who hasn't scored a single goal in domestic play until early December, and Russian-born defenceman Andrei Teljukin were difference makers with two goals apiece in the third round.

However, during DEL2 play the performance differs significantly from the international success. As Ice Times went to print the team was ranked only 11th in the 14-team league with a 12-10 record due to a weak period in October. Although one of the best teams defensively, the Fischtown Pinguins had too little to offer offensively so far. But when the Continental Cup comes to Fischtown, the host club hopes to present itself again in the best light like in the preliminary round.

WOMEN'S HOCKEY NEWS

Japan headed to the big dance

Defeat Czechs in qualification series, to compete in Malmo



by Jack Gallagher

Goals by Moeko Fujimoto and Ami Nakamura sent Japan to a 2-1 victory in the decisive game of the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship Qualification Series in Yokohama, Japan.

The result means Japan advances to the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship in Malmo, Sweden, next spring. It will mark the sixth time, after 1990, 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2009 that Japan has qualified for the women's top division tournament.

The loss sends the Czech Republic to the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship Division I Group A in Rouen, France.

The qualification for the worlds is a welcome one for Japan after they lost all of their games at the Sochi Olympics earlier this year and had to battle for their spot in the Women's World Championship against the Czechs.

Japan coach Yoshifumi Fujisawa, in his first year on the job, was relieved after the triumph.

"It was a tough game. We both wanted to win," Fujisawa said. "Our game plan was to be aggressive. It was back and forth all the way."



Photo: Toshinobu Himori

Japan held on to win the best-of-three series with a tight 2-1 victory over the Czech Republic.

Japan goalie Nana Fujimoto had 13 saves in the win while Czech goalie Klara Peslarova stopped 19 shots.

Japan took the opener 2-0 on Saturday on goals by Naho Terashima and Shiori Koie and fine net play by Fujimoto, with the Czechs answering back 2-0 in Game 2 on Sunday with goals from Alena Polenska and Denisa Krizova and strong netminding by Peslarova.

The Asians made it 2-0 in the deciding game on a two-on-one break when Kubo found Ami Nakamura in the slot and she scored with 8:51 left in the game.

"Our coach told us before the game that the first goal was going to be the most important," Moeko Fujimoto stated. "I was really happy that I got it."

"The Czech defender behind me was aggressive, so I tried to keep my stick in position and my teammate saw me," said Nakamura of the decisive goal.

The Czechs cut the deficit to 2-1 when Vanisova scored an unassisted goal with 8:20 remaining and the final minutes of the contest were tense as the Europeans mounted a fierce bid to tie the score.

"We kept our pace after they scored. That was important," noted Moeko Fujimoto. "Our mood did not change, so we had no problem."

Fujisawa, while content with securing a spot in the Worlds, knows much work lies ahead. "We feel good now, but we have to compete with the top seven countries," Fujisawa stated. "It will be tougher. We have to keep challenging ourselves going forward."

Vozak felt that the pressure may have been a bit much for his team this night.

"The moment was too heavy for us," Vozak said.

■ In the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship from 28th March to 4th April in Malmo the Japanese will play among the lower-seeded teams in Group B against Germany, Switzerland and host country Sweden where they hope to reach one of the top-two places to advance to the final round and avoid relegation-round play.

■ In Division I Group A play in Rouen the Czechs will face Norway, Denmark, host France, Austria and Latvia with the tournament winner being promoted to the 2016 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship that will be staged in Kamloops, Canada.

U18 Women's Worlds off to Buffalo

Canada takes three-year golden streak into USA

by Adam Steiss

As the World Juniors winds down, just to the southwest of Toronto another tournament gets going when the IIHF Ice Hockey U18 Women's World Championship kicks off on 5 January in Buffalo.



This year will be the eight edition of the IIHF's flagship junior women's hockey tournament, which has produced many of today's top female hockey stars like Amanda Kessel, Marie-Philip Poulin, Anna Shokhina, and Klara Peslarova.

■ Playing not too far from home this time around, Team Canada will look to make it four gold medals in a row for the women's Under-18 program. The Canadian women, who regularly compete with the Americans each year for gold, put up a statement win over the States last year, scoring three goals in as many minutes during the second period on their way to a 5-1 romp at the 2014 U18 Women's Worlds in Budapest.



Photo: Mikko Kymariemi / HHO-IFH Images

Canada defeated the States 5-1 in last year's U18 final.

Canada's roster will likely see some turnover from last year's gold-winning team, but should be able to count on the services of 2014 tournament top scorer Sarah Potomak, who had nine points in five games in Budapest.

■ Defending home ice in 2015, Team USA will be more than eager to avenge its loss in the last three U18 gold medal games. The Americans will get a chance for a measure of payback early in the preliminary round, as the two teams will square off against each other in their opening game on 5th January.

The Americans will be counting on the services of 2014 IIHF Directorate Top Defenceman Jincy Dunne, who barely missed out on a trip to Sochi with the women's senior team but was an integral part of the U18 squad last year.

■ One of the teams that managed to give Canada a scare last year was Russia, which has been growing its U18 program slowly but surely. Leading the charge is 17-year-old forward Anna Shokhina, who had a season to remember after not just making the national Olympic team but who played very well in Sochi. Shokhina followed up the Olympics with a near-massive upset of the Canadians, as Russia took the defending champs to overtime in the U18 semi-final before ultimately falling 1-0.

The field is wide open after the North American teams, The Czech Republic, Finland, and Sweden will aim to take the next big step and challenge the North Americans. The 2014 bronze medalists Czechs will be missing the services of one of the best young goaltenders in women's hockey, as Klara Peslarova has moved on to the senior team. Likewise the Finns will be without Olympian Emma Nuutinen, while Japan and newly promoted Switzerland, featuring Olympic bronze medalist Alina Muller, are in the mix.

2014 WORLD GIRLS' ICE HOCKEY WEEKEND

World Girls' Ice Hockey Weekend 2014: From Argentina to Japan



For the fourth year in a row, thousands of girls across the world participated in World Girls' Ice Hockey Weekend.

With more than 340 events in 32 countries, participants were introduced to the game and learned how to play in a relaxed and fun setting.

Here's a rundown of some of the events that took place during the month of October.

Great Britain: Dumfries

British hockey has always had a strong Scottish accent and now the women's game is starting to develop north of the border. After launching the country's only women's team earlier this month, the Solway Sharks of Dumfries were eager to give more local ladies a chance to try out the game during World Girls' Ice Hockey Weekend. And there's more to come, with the Shark Tank due to stage the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship Division II Group A in April. Dumfries wasn't the only UK rink involved with the weekend - the National Ice Centre in Nottingham also joined in the celebrations.

Singapore: Jurong

40 participants came to Singapore's World Girls' Ice Hockey Weekend event at the ice rink at JCube in Jurong East. The full-size ice rink was used to set up five fun stations where each group spent about 10 to 15 minutes.

"Everyone loved it and they asked when will be the next such event. The parents were very supportive and hope to have more events for their girls," said Diane Foo of the Singapore Ice Hockey Federation.

"Our national team players had a good time as well. This was our first time hosting the event and we never expected to see so many female participants who are interested to try ice hockey. We hope there are more of these events to come along so that more female participants will go into this sport. It's a good opportunity to recruit more female player to participate in the sport."

Hong Kong

The Women's Ice Hockey Organization in Hong Kong staged the World Girls' Ice Hockey Weekend event at Mega Ice in the MegaBox shopping mall at Kowloon Bay, Hong Kong's full-size ice rink.

No less than 115 people were part of the event including eight organizers from the women's national team, 18 additional women's national team players, four more players from the league and 85 new players including 46 of the age group 3-10, nine between 11-18 and 30 adults.

National team members helped the newcomers put on their equipment and led the on-ice instruction with national team head coach Hiroki Wakabayashi and assistant coach Anqi Tan. This year the organizers reached capacity limit and had to stop registration and extending the event to two days was not an option due to the high prices for ice time in Hong Kong.

"This event is an amazing way to promote the sport of ice hockey to the community. The fact that this event took place in a mall also really helped advertise the sport in general," said women's national team GM Kevin

Leung. "Also the media reaction was positive and helped reinforce that female players can participate in this sport too and it is not only a fun game but also quite safe with the proper instructions."

Korea: Seoul

The country of the next Olympic Winter Games also held its annual World Girls' Ice Hockey Weekend event. 30 girls and women from the U10 category to adults came to the Mokdong rink in Seoul to get their hockey gear

these networks will help recruit more players and develop girls' hockey in the near future," Hong added.

Argentina: Bariloche

The girls were introduced to ice skates and hockey equipment before they had some basic lessons in skating without and with a hockey stick before getting a puck and learning to pass and shoot before finishing the event with stretching and refreshing drinks.

55 girls and women between the age of 6 and 40 entered the city's Olympic Ice Rink in the event hosted by ASC Corona 2010 Brasov.

"Everyone had fun and would like to repeat the experience as soon as possible," said Zoltan Olti-Pasca, President of the club's ice hockey department. "It was a thrilling experience that they would like to repeat more often."

Norway: Tromsø

Any event taking place in Tromsø, Norway is bound to be the northern-most event in the world, and the GHD is no exception. Over 30 young girls aged between five and 13 showed up at the Tromsø rink, 300 kilometers north of the Arctic Circle, to play some hockey.

The beginners group had basic skating drills, with some play with parachute and other games. Other groups had stick and puck handling exercises, skating drills, and

"Not only the games were important, but there was also time for fun, entertainment, social contacts. Many people enjoyed the well-organized weekend and they are looking forward to the next girls-only weekend," said Arnoud van Berkel, executive director of the Ice Hockey Association of The Netherlands.

For the first time the Ilse Robben award, named after the former women's national team player and top-level referee who died of breast cancer five years ago, was given to Nancy van der Linden, a former national team player who is now the assistant coach of the women's national team.

Australia: Brisbane

Ice Hockey Queensland and the Brisbane Goannas Women's Ice Hockey Club, with assistance from Southern Stars Club and equipment from the Brisbane Buccaneers, hosted an event at Acacia Ridge Iceworld in the Brisbane region with 30 participants between the age of 6 and 45 showing up to try hockey.

"It was an awesome day for all. He already had queries as to when the next event would be held, questions about joining local clubs, and also about the Brisbane Goannas junior program Geckos 2 Goannas and the Australian Women's League," said the Goannas' Vice President Jad Daley. "We definitely increased participation and awareness about women's and girls' ice hockey."

Slovakia: Zilina

Zilina, the fourth-largest city of Slovakia, is one of the places with the largest World Girls' Ice Hockey Weekend events each year. Almost 100 girls were on the ice accompanied by boys and stars from female and male ice hockey such as Zuzana Tomcikova and Robert Petrovicky.

Russia: Moscow

Women's hockey has won hearts in Russia thanks to the Olympic Winter Games in Sochi despite failing to win a medal. Now Russian hockey hopes to capitalize on the effect. 70 curious girls came to the World Girls' Ice Hockey Weekend at the Meteor sports school and got a session from former national players such as Zhanna Shelkova and Larisa Mishina, aimed at passing on their passion for the game onto the next generation.

Malaysia: Selangor

Also this year Malaysia is organizing to girls' events during the World Girls' Ice Hockey Weekend. The first took place on Saturday at Sunway Pyramid Ice Rink in Selangor, Petaling Jaya.

25 participants came to the rink located in a shopping mall with the average age of 13. After getting the gear from the equipment manager, Hafiz, volunteers from the Jazura Girls Ice Hockey Club helped the participants to get ready for the ice session. They saw a short video and got introductions from the captain, Adilah.

"On ice, the participants were taught basic strides, had the opportunity to stick handle a tennis ball, go through mini obstacle courses, and had a race to bring out their competitive spirit," said Nur Versluis, women's program director of the Malaysia Ice Hockey Federation.

"The event has brought more awareness to the community of the sport and has increased the interest in ice hockey for the participants."



Snapshots from around the world



Sweden: Karlskrona

Karlskrona HK's event was one of the biggest ones in Sweden, with 31 seven-to-16-year-old girls attending the Girls Hockey Weekend at the Telenor Arena.

Their busy day started with introduction to the equipment and the sport, continued with an ice session that included skating exercises, mini games, competitions, and ended with a team photo and an information session about future practices.

"They loved it, and the parents were interested to hear what we had to say so we think the event will have a positive impact on getting more girls to play. If I had one wish, I'd use it to get GHW promoted on television, to get the word out even more," said Conny Olausson, manager of Karlskrona HK's women's hockey.

another group played a game. The girls changed groups every fifteen minutes," says Kristin Fenton, leader of the local skating and ice hockey school. "The parents' comments were very positive and I think the girls had fun on the ice and afterwards. We know more girls will join our club thanks to the event."

Netherlands: Maaseik

146 participants and 50 volunteers took part in the Ice Hockey Association of The Netherlands' girls' weekend in Maaseik.

Players of mixed ages and different experience levels from all over the country came to the de Wintertuin rink for a round-robin competition with eight teams and players.

and meet their instructors. One coach and ten players of the women's national team came to the rink to assist the girls.

The beginners started with skating lessons while the intermediate-level group went on with sticks and puck and the advanced group had a game.

"The girls enjoyed the time with their new friends on the ice and their parents were happy to see their daughters play hockey. Many parents and participants asked me whether the Korea Ice Hockey Association will have the same event next year. They are already excited about the 2015 World Girls' Ice Hockey Weekend," said YeunHwa Hong of the Korea Ice Hockey Association.

"It is a great opportunity for girls to make hockey friends and build their network in women's hockey. I believe

"Parents felt really happy with this event where the girls felt enthusiastic. Some parents told me that they had thought ice hockey was a 'men only' sport because of hits and speed but seeing girls laughing and enjoying the games changed their minds," said Dario Exequiel Guajardo Baruzzi, head coach at the ice rink and member of the development commission of the Argentine Ice and Inline Hockey Association (AAHHL).

"We think and hope this event will help to increase our number of female players so we are studying to do it more often as a regular activity."

Romania: Brasov

Two World Girls' Ice Hockey Weekend events in Romania were held in Brasov and Miercurea Ciuc. It was the first World Girls' Ice Hockey Weekend held in the country.



2014/2015 IIHF referee assignments

World Championship Division I Group A

Referees	Linesmen
Ansons, Andris (LAT)	Dalton, Andrew (GBR)
Hradil, Rene (CZE)	Golyak, Dmitri (BLR)
Linde, Marcus (SWE)	Hribar, Matjaz (SLO)
Romasko, Yevgeni (RUS)	Jensen, Rene (DEN)
Trilar, Viki (SLO)	Moszczynski, Wojciech (POL)
Wiegand, Marc (SUI)	Rovensky, Tibor (SVK)
TBD	Waldejer, Alexander (NOR)

World Championship Division I Group B

Referees	Linesmen
Grumsen, Jacob (DEN)	Beelen, Louis (NED)
Ingram, Jeff (CAN)	Hlavaty, Marek (CZE)
Salonen, Anssi (FIN)	Monnaie, Frederic (BEL)
Warschaw, Shane (AUT)	Nieminen, Pasi (FIN)
	Pardatscher, Ulrich (ITA)
	Perdub, David (SRB)
	Yamaguchi, Sotaro (JPN)

World Championship Division II Group A

Referees	Linesmen
Hansen, Roy Stian (NOR)	Bogdanovs, Maksims (LAT)
Krcelic, Vedran (CRO)	Caillot, Thomas (FRA)
Meszynski, Pawel (POL)	Dahl, Havar (NOR)
Sewell, Liam (GBR)	Gunnarsson, Sindri (ISL)
	Johnstone, Michael (AUT)
	Sakovic, Marko (CRO)
	Sigmarsson, Orri (ISL)

World Championship Division II Group B

Referees	Linesmen
Orolin, Tomas (SVK)	Burger, Jonathan (RSA)
Rebeschin, Max (ITA)	Hurtik, Christoffer (GER)
Roshchyn Nikitin, Alexey (ESP)	Jaksys, Benas (LTU)
Simankov, Andrej (LTU)	Lukosevicius, Vytautas (IRL)
	Mori, Marco (ITA)
	Park, Jun Soo (KOR)
	Progin, Marc-Henri (SUI)

World Championship Division III

Referees	Linesmen
Barcelo, Geoffrey (FRA)	Aygun, Murat (TUR)
Feng, Lei (CHN)	Gladchenko, Anton (UKR)
Kincses, Gergely (HUN)	Kaya, Cemal Ersin (TUR)
Plaksunov, Yevgeni (KAZ)	Markizeti, Grega (SLO)
	Tichon, Gil Haim (ISR)
	Trandafir, Mihai - Ariel (ROU)
	Yefremov, Vladimir (KAZ)

World Junior Championship

Referees	Linesmen
Baluska, Vladimir (SVK)	Browne, Jordan (CAN)
Bruggemann, Lars (GER)	Dehaen, Pierre (FRA)
Gofman, Roman (RUS)	Lazarev, Gleb (RUS)
Jerabek, Antonin (CZE)	Lhotsky, Miroslav (CZE)
Kaukokari, Mikko (FIN)	Malmqvist, Andreas (SWE)
Miller, Geoffrey (USA)	Mills, Bevan (CAN)
Ohlund, Linus (SWE)	Pesonen, Jani (FIN)
Olenin, Konstantin (RUS)	Ponomarijow, Nikolaj (GER)
Patafie, Steve (USA)	Ritter, Judson (USA)
St-Jacques, Pascal (CAN)	Wust, Simon (SUI)
Vinnerborg, Marcus (SWE)	
Wehrli, Tobias (SUI)	

U20 World Championship Division I Group A

Referees	Linesmen
Brill, Marcus (GER)	Cristeli, Christian (ITA)
Hicks, Michael (GBR)	Hagerstrom, Markus (FIN)
Pajula, Jari-Pekka (FIN)	Haurum, Henrik (DEN)
Sir, Robin (CZE)	Kavanagh, James (GBR)
	Kosaka, Kenji (JPN)
	Lega, Simone (ITA)
	Smura, Mariusz (POL)

U20 World Championship Division I Group B

Referees	Linesmen
Alarie, Jonathan (CAN)	Aasum, Remi (NOR)
Mollard, Ken (SUI)	Badyl, Pavel (BLR)
Toppel, Rasmus (DEN)	Jucers, Raivis (LAT)
Tsernyshow, Igor (EST)	Nemeth, Marton (HUN)
	Smeibidlo, Martin (AUT)
	Soos, Daniel (HUN)
	Sysyuev, Alexander (RUS)

U20 World Championship Division II Group A

Referees	Linesmen
Nalivaiko, Vladimir (BLR)	Andersen, Thomas B. (DEN)
Nikolic, Manuel (AUT)	Grozaj, Tomislav (CRO)
Tzirtziganis, Tim (BEL)	Nagy, Attila (HUN)
Zviedritis, Gints (LAT)	Nedeljkovic, Ivan (SRB)
	Stupak, Mikhail (KAZ)
	Vyleta, Roman (SVK)
	Yltyinen, Emil (SWE)

U20 World Championship Division II Group B

Referees	Linesmen
Bliek, Damien (FRA)	Biec Cebrian, Sergio (ESP)
Halm, Stian (NOR)	Furnadziej, Mikulash (BUL)
Haszonits, Miklos (HUN)	Garcia Banos, Alejandro (ESP)
Moschen, Andrea (ITA)	Korte, Jos (NED)
	Liu, Jiaqi (CHN)
	Loos, Mathieu (FRA)
	Mathe, Istvan (ROU)

U20 World Championship Division III

Referees	Linesmen
Marczuk, Wlodzimierz (POL)	Cairns, Ryan (NZL)
Ross, Cory (AUS)	Davis, Jake (USA)
Stano, Peter (SVK)	Hofstatter, Michael (AUT)
Yamauchi, Hideki (JPN)	Kawai, Shinobu (JPN)
	O'Loughlin, Braden (NZL)
	Park, Jae Hyung (KOR)
	Russelhuber, Casper (AUS)

U18 World Championship

Referees	Linesmen
Bergamelli, Jimmy (FRA)	Buese, Markku (GER)
Harnebring, Andreas (SWE)	Espinoza, Franco (SUI)
Iverson, Brett (CAN)	Gebauer, Jiri (CZE)
Koch, Andreas (SUI)	Korba, Martin (SVK)
Lindqvist, Petri (FIN)	Lundgren, Ludvig (SWE)
Mullner, Robert (SVK)	Oliver, Brian (USA)
Oskirko, Yuri (RUS)	Otnakhov, Alexander (RUS)
Pesina, Vladimir (CZE)	Piche, Nicolas (CAN)
Pitoscia, Christopher (USA)	Sormunen, Hannu (FIN)
Rohatsch, Marian (GER)	Tscherrig, Michael (SUI)
Smetana, Ladislav (AUT)	
Solem, Per Gustav (NOR)	

U18 World Championship Division I Group A

Referees	Linesmen
Balodis, Juris (LAT)	Cohen, Daniel (USA)
Darnell, Tom (GBR)	Korepanov, Artem (UKR)
Gamper, Daniel (ITA)	Kupcus, Kriss (LAT)
Kepa, Przemyslaw (POL)	Nothegger, David (AUT)
	Palei, Yakov (RUS)
	Palkovi, Botond (HUN)
	Reimer, Jonas (DEN)
	Szachniewicz, Slawomir (POL)
	Van den Acker, Maarten (BEL)
	Zganc, Gasper Jaka (SLO)

U18 World Championship Division I Group B

Referees	Linesmen
Deweerd, Chris (BEL)	Flockhart, Ally (GBR)
Hallin, Robert (NOR)	Furet, Yann (FRA)
Ibatulin, Eduard (KAZ)	Kaliada, Vasili (BLR)
Piragici, Tripimir (CRO)	Rakovic, Damir (SLO)
	Szachniewicz, Slawomir (POL)
	Tilkku, Toivo (EST)
	Wernstrom, Emil (SWE)

U18 World Championship Division II Group A

Referees	Linesmen
Fazekas, Djordje (SRB)	Hoefler, Marcus (GER)
Gregersen, Jens Christian (DEN)	Janusauskas, Karolis (LTU)
Lascar, Valentin (ROU)	Locans, Maris (LAT)
Shrubok, Andrei (BLR)	Nordberg Pettersen, Thomas (NOR)
	Tilkku, Toivo (EST)
	Toparceanu, Adrian Cosmin (ROU)
	Wernstrom, Emil (SWE)

U18 World Championship Division II Group B

Referees	Linesmen
Babic, Vladimir (HUN)	Aleksic, Uros (SRB)
Govorun, Olexander (UKR)	Belic, Vanja (CRO)
Sterkens, Ramon (NED)	Fazekas, Tibor (SRB)
Zmic, Milan (SLO)	Kaidarov, Mergen (KAZ)
	Oosterling, Stef (NED)
	Smrek, Martin (SVK)
	Stoyanov, Luczear (BUL)

U18 World Championship Division III Group A

Referees	Linesmen
Bourreau, Alexandre (FRA)	Borga, Cedric (SUI)
Ciamaga, Christopher (USA)	Brunker, Andrew (AUS)
Haxell, Peter (NZL)	Chae, Youngjin (KOR)
Liu, Wubin (CHN)	Chi, Hongda (CHN)
	Huot, Pierre-Luc (CAN)
	Ohlson, Fraser (AUS)
	Suchanek, Libor (CZE)

U18 World Championship Division III Group B

Referees	Linesmen
Takizawa, Shinichi (JPN)	Finch, Oliver (NZL)
Taylor, Matthew (AUS)	Kanazawa, Kensuke (JPN)
	Watson, Chris (NZL)

Women's World Championship

Referees	Linesmen
Ariano-Lortie, Gabrielle (CAN)	Angerer, Bettina (AUT)
Eskola, Anna Maria (SUI)	Connolly, Kate (USA)
Fialova, Drahomira (SUI)	Gagnon, Stephanie (CAN)
Gran, Gabriella (SWE)	Heikkinen, Jenni (FIN)
Guay, Katie (USA)	Johansson, Veronica (SWE)
Hertrich, Nicole (GER)	Leet, Kaire (EST)
Huntley, Jamie (USA)	Linnek, Lisa (GER)
Ketonen, Kaisa (FIN)	Novotna, Ilona (CZE)
Picavet, Marie (FRA)	Nygard, Anna (NOR)
Timoglas, Katarina (SWE)	

Women's World Championship Division I Group A

Referees	Linesmen
Findurova, Zuzana (SVK)	Boniface, Anne Sophie (FRA)
Grison, Lisa (CAN)	Girard, Charlotte (FRA)
Kiefer, Michaela (GER)	Gruber, Mirjam (ITA)
Szkola, Melissa (USA)	Kiefer, Daniela (GER)
	Kuonen, Anne-Ruth (SUI)
	Todd, Justine (CAN)
	Visala, Jenni (FIN)

Women's World Championship Division I Group B

Referees	Linesmen
Aberg, Henna (FIN)	Auno, Satu (FIN)
Bandlofsky, Katja (GER)	Cadonau, Tanja (SUI)
Dewar, Brandy (CAN)	Frattarelli, Michaela (USA)
Hillier, Samantha (USA)	Narusawa, Tomomi (JPN)
	Nilsson, Stina (SWE)
	Stastna, Gabriela (CZE)
	Weegh, Harriet (AUT)

Women's World Championship Division II Group A

Referees	Linesmen
Morrison, Kristine (USA)	Bauer, Melanie (GER)
Ruzickova, Radka (CZE)	Dinant, Marine (BEL)
Ugajin, Kyoko (JPN)	Hauan Dahl, Elise (NOR)
Zuyeva, Yana (RUS)	Hetherington, Leigh (GBR)
	Jaatinen, Jenni (FIN)
	Kasasova, Tatiana (SVK)
	Lack, Amy (GBR)

Women's World Championship Division II Group B

Referees	Linesmen
Celarova, Nikolaeta (SVK)	Phillipsen, Trine Viskum (DEN)
Ivanova, Elena (RUS)	Pobozniak, Joanna (POL)
Liu, Chunhua (CHN)	Shestakova, Oxana (KAZ)
Winklmayr, Ulrike (AUT)	Silhavikova, Viera (SVK)
	Steinberg, Olga (RUS)
	Streitova, Tereza (CZE)
	Vestheim Krogh, Cathrine (NOR)

Women's World Championship Division II Group B Qualification

Referees	Linesmen
Gardner, Ainslie (AUS)	Fu, Zhennan (CHN)
Wada, Etsuko (JPN)	Lee, Kyung Sun (KOR)
Xu, Jingwei (CHN)	Thomassen, Alicia (NZL)
	Tochigi, Yukka (JPN)
	Wang, Hui (CHN)

U18 Women's World Championship

Referees	Linesmen
Cuglietta, Deana (GBR)	Hammar, Anna (SWE)
Glenn, Jerilyn (USA)	Kudelova, Michaela (SVK)
Hengst, Debby (NED)	Lee, Tae-Ri (KOR)
Nakayama, Miyuki (JPN)	McMahon, Jennifer (CAN)
Senuk, Lacey (CAN)	Pagon, Natasa (SLO)
Weiss, Ramona (GER)	Spresser, Jacqueline (USA)
	Stratton, Vanessa (CAN)
	Strohmenger, Svenja (GER)
	Tauriainen, Johanna (FIN)

U18 Women's World Championship Division I

Referees	Linesmen
Fuchsel, Maria Raabye (DEN)	Anex, Magali (SUI)
Greiere, Sintija (LAT)	Larsen, Loise Lybak (DEN)
Kontturi, Maija (FIN)	Mikhalyova, Yekaterina (KAZ)
Morin, Vanessa (CAN)	Stefkova, Michaela (CZE)
	Toribio / Rousselin, Sueva (FRA)
	Tschirmer, Julia (GER)
	Tschorne, Helga (ITA)

U18 Women's World Championship Division I Qualification

Referees	Linesmen
Haack, Tijana (GER)	Besedicova, Ivana (SVK)
Huizeling, Natascha (NED)	Brekelmans, Vivienne (NED)
Maleckiene, Ramune (LTU)	Gerkena, Jana (IRL)
Ustinova, Arina (RUS)	Klaffki, Alexandra (GER)
	Koivuluoma, Henna-Maria (FIN)
	Owren, Bente (NOR)
	Sandor, Zsuzsanna (HUN)



Three Swedes in CHL semis

Finnish club Karpat also in the hunt for first trophy



CHAMPIONS HOCKEY LEAGUE

The semi-finals of the Champions Hockey League are set.

Lulea HF and Skelleftea AIK will play a northern Swedish semi-final game while Finnish champion Karpat Oulu will face Sweden's Frolunda Gothenburg in the other pairing.

Frolunda was the only team that advanced to the semi-finals recovering from a loss in the first leg of the quarter-finals.



Photo: Champions Hockey League via Getty Images

The semi-finals will be played as home-and-away games on 13th and 20th January with the aggregate score determining the two finalists. The first games will be played in Skelleftea and Gothenburg.

The one-game final will be played on 3rd February on home ice of the club with the better overall record in this season's Champions Hockey League, group stage and playoff combined.

Lulea HF-Skelleftea AIK
Karpat Oulu-
Frolunda Gothenburg
Game 1-13.01.2015
Game 2-20.01.2015

The semi-finals will be played as home-and-away games.

EWCC finalists named

Four-man officiating system introduced



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONS CUP

The finalists for the 2014/2015 IIHF European Women's Champions Cup are known.

Group winners HC Lugano (SUI), Linkopings HC (SWE), SKIF Nizhni Novgorod (RUS) as well as the Espoo Blues (FIN) advance to the final round-robin tournament (20-22 February 2015) that will determine the best European club team in women's hockey.

In the last three years the European club champion in women's hockey came from Russia and this season an EWCC tournament took place in the country for the first time in seven years when SKIF Nizhni Novgorod hosted

Group E with HK Poprad (Slovakia), the Sabres Vienna (Austria) and SK Karvina (Czech Republic) as the other participants.

For the first time the "four-man officiating system" with two referees and two linesmen was implemented in an IIHF women's hockey tournaments following a series of test games last summer during the IIHF Women's High-Performance Camp.

The historic first puck-drop with four officials was performed in Nizhni Novgorod for the game between the Vienna Captials and HK Poprad with referees Kaisa Ketonen (FIN) and Marie Picavet (FRA), and linesmen Yekaterina Mikhalyova (KAZ) and Olga Steinberg (RUS).

IIHF 2015 TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

Men's World Championships

IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship	
2015 CZECH REPUBLIC, Prague & Ostrava	01 - 17.05.2015

IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Division I Group A	
2015 POLAND, Krakow	19 - 25.04.15

IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Division I Group B	
2015 NETHERLANDS, Eindhoven	13 - 19.04.15

IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Division II Group A	
2015 ICELAND, Reykjavik	13 - 19.04.15

IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Division II Group B	
2015 SOUTH AFRICA, Cape Town	13 - 19.04.15

IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Division III	
2015 TURKEY, Izmir	03 - 12.04.15

U20 World Championships

IIHF World Junior Championship	
2015 CANADA, Toronto & Montreal	26.12.14 - 05.01.15

IIHF Ice Hockey U20 World Championship Division I Group A	
2015 ITALY, Asiago	14 - 20.12.14

IIHF Ice Hockey U20 World Championship Division I Group B	
2015 HUNGARY, Dunaújváros	14 - 20.12.14

IIHF Ice Hockey U20 World Championship Division II Group A	
2015 ESTONIA, Tallinn	07 - 13.12.14

IIHF Ice Hockey U20 World Championship Division II Group B	
2015 SPAIN, Jaca	13 - 19.12.14

IIHF Ice Hockey U20 World Championship Division III	
2015 NEW ZEALAND, Dunedin	19 - 25.01.15

U18 World Championships

IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship	
2015 SWITZERLAND, Zug & Lucerne	16 - 26.04.13

IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship Division I Group A	
2015 HUNGARY, Debrecen	12 - 18.04.15

IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship Division I Group B	
2015 SLOVENIA, Maribor	12 - 18.04.15

IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship Division II Group A	
2015 ESTONIA, Tallinn	22 - 28.03.14

IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship Division II Group B	
2015 SERBIA, Novi Sad	16 - 22.03.15

IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship Division III Group A	
2015 CHINESE TAIPEI, Taipei City	22 - 28.03.15

IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship Division III Group B	
2015 NEW ZEALAND, Auckland	17 - 19.03.15

Women's World Championships

IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship	
2015 SWEDEN, Malmö	28.03 - 04.04.15

2015 Ice Hockey IIHF Women's World Championship Qualification	
2015 JAPAN, Yokohama	08 - 11.11.14

IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship Div. I Group A	
2015 FRANCE, Rouen	12 - 18.04.15

IIHF Women's World Championship Division I Group B	
2015 CHINA, Beijing	06 - 12.04.15

IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship Div. II Gr. A	
2015 GREAT BRITAIN, Dumbfries	30.03 - 05.04.15

Congress News

(continued from page 3)

European Women's Champions Cup shelved, Inline World Championship moved to bi-annual format

As a result of the long term IIHF budget revision presented at the Semi Annual Congress, the IIHF will no longer be in a position to support the European Women's Champions Cup as of the 2015-2016 season.

The proposal was presented to the IIHF Semi Annual Congress and was unanimously approved by the delegates. For the upcoming Season 2015-16, there will be no financial and operational support granted by the IIHF and the EWCC competition will no longer be part of the IIHF sanctioned events.

The IIHF Inline World Championship will also be moved to a bi-annual format following the 2015 tournament. In 2016 a Qualification tournament for Europe and Rest of the World teams will be held to determine who participates in the World Championship taking place in 2017 in Slovakia.

"Just have fun"

Le Petit Viking left a big mark in Montreal

by Risto Pakarinen

■ Speedy Swedish winger Mats Näslund was voted into the World Juniors All-Star Team as Team Sweden got silver in Montreal in 1978.

Eight years later, he was the star of the 1986 Montreal Canadiens team that won the Stanley Cup. For him, Montreal is a happy place.

Mats, what do you remember from that 1978 tournament?

The first thing that comes to mind is that we played our group stage games in Chicoutimi way out somewhere [500 kilometres from Montreal]. I've actually played a game there since that tournament, and got four teeth knocked out [laughs], oh well.

We also played both at the Quebec Nordiques arena and the old Montreal Forum. For us, it was a fantastic adventure. I think we even got to see a Canadiens game there during the trip.

And the tournament went well, too. You were voted into the All-Star team, Sweden got the silver medal, and you led the team in scoring with ten points in seven games.

Oh, for sure, I have such great memories of the tournament, and I'm reminded of it regularly because I have a huge metal Canada goose statue at my summer cottage. I think I was first star in three games and the prize was so big I had to get help from local Swedish companies to get them shipped to me at home.

How did you hear that the Canadiens had drafted you [in the second round in 1979]?

I got a call from Björn Wagnsson about a month before the draft. Back then, he represented every Swedish player in the NHL so it was natural to sign with him. Björn called me again the day after the draft and asked me if I had heard who had got drafted to the NHL, and then told me that the Canadiens had drafted me. It was nice to have that World Juniors experience with me when it was time to get to the NHL.

You ended up with one of the most legendary teams in the world, but you didn't sign with them right away. What was your route to Montreal?

I was the first European player to play for the Canadiens, so times were different. The timing was just right. They had seen me at the World Juniors and the 1979 World Championship in Moscow, and I had a good Olympic tournament in Lake Placid in 1980, too, but it wasn't until 1982. They had got ousted from the playoffs in the



Näslund faced off against the likes of Wayne Gretzky (pictured) and Vyacheslav Fetisov at the 1978 World Juniors in Montreal.



Näslund wearing the 'A' and celebrating the 1986 Stanley Cup.

first round two years in a row and maybe they figured it was good time to take a chance on a Euro player. Other teams had tried it and it had worked.

You scored 110 points during the 1985-86 season, which is something no Canadian has done since. You made the All-Rookie team, you won the Lady Byng, and of course, the Stanley Cup. In Montreal, known to be a hockey crazy city. How crazy is it?

Everybody talks hockey, everybody knows hockey. They know who the players are so it's difficult to fly under the radar there. It's a tough environment and there are lots of example of players who haven't been able to deal with the pressure. When the team's winning, it's great. Your neighbours know how many points you scored, your barber knows it, and the cab drivers know it.

And if you score 110 points and win a Stanley Cup, you become a celebrity?

Absolutely. While the NHL has changed since my time, and nobody scores as many points as back then, the fact

is still that I did score that many points.

Can the pressure be too much to handle even when the team's winning?

I think it's mostly positive in the playoffs, actually. During the regular season, things can get a little hairy, but it's nice to have the fans' support in the playoffs.

You were called Le petit Viking, because, well, you're Swedish, and not that tall. Has that ever been a concern for you?

I've never thought about being a short player, and I probably didn't allow myself to think about it, because it would have ruined things. Besides, I don't know anything else, I've never been a tall

person. Of course, there were 19 players on the other team who were willing to check me, and just two who were ready to take a run at our bigger players. Montreal had had a bit of a tradition with smaller, skilled players, though.

What kind of pointers would you give to the youngsters who now head over to Montreal and Toronto to play in World Juniors?

When I played in the World Juniors, my teammates and I didn't know what would be waiting for us there. We just played. These days, the players know everything, who's going to get drafted first and who fourth, and maybe having all that knowledge isn't always good. But as with sports in general, the key is just to have fun.



Fact File: Mats Näslund, F Sweden

- Born: October 31, 1959, Timrå, Sweden (age 55)
- Played for Brynäs, Montreal Canadiens, HC Lugano, Malmö Redhawks, Boston Bruins
- Registered 92 points (35 goals + 57 assists) in 102 career NHL playoff games
- Inducted into IIHF Hall of Fame in 2005
- Member of IIHF Triple Gold Club, has won the Swedish league championship, an Olympic Gold, a World Championship and a Stanley Cup.

