



DENNIS LARUE
 Born: July 14, 1959 in Savannah, Georgia, USA
■ OLYMPIC ROLE CALL
 □ 1988 Calgary, as an international referee for USA.
 □ 2002 Salt Lake City, USA as an NHL referee
 □ 2006 Torino, Italy as an NHL referee
 □ 2010 Vancouver, Canada as an NHL referee.
■ NHL ROLE CALL:
 □ Official in the NHL since the 1990-1991 season.
 □ Was selected to officiate the 2009 Stanley Cup finals.

OLD MAN WINTER:

International and NHL referee Dennis LaRue knows a thing.... or four about officiating at the Olympics. Vancouver 2010 will be LaRue's fourth Olympic appearance, making him the most experienced veteran among the officiating crew and one of the few people among all ice hockey Olympians at his fourth Olympic Games.

PHOTO: IIHF ARCHIVES/NHL IMAGES

Dennis LaRue Whistles into History

Fourth Olympic Games tops all officials... and most players too

By Andrew Podnieks

□ When referee Dennis LaRue steps onto the ice in Vancouver for his first assignment of the 2010 Olympics, he will set a record for officials that might never be equaled. Having first gone to the five-ringed circus in Calgary in 1988, LaRue will have 22 years of Olympic officiating experience, beating current record holder Marc Faurette who also has 18 years to his credit.

"I didn't know that," said LaRue when first told of the historic trivia. Indeed, he will be only the second official in Olympic history to appear in four Olympics. Kurt Hauser of Switzerland was the first, but he did it in just 12 years with consecutive appearances in 1948, '52, '56, and '60. Another LaRue record is the 14-year gap between Olympic appearances. After Calgary, he became an NHL referee and didn't make it back to the international game until 2002 in Salt Lake City.

□ LaRue's rise to officiating stardom was perhaps, more than any other referee, two-pronged, his international and professional experience often going hand in hand. None of this could have been predicted from his birth certificate, however, which shows Savannah, Georgia as his place of birth.

"My father was in the military," he explained, "and we moved around a fair bit when I was young. He was stationed in Georgia, which is how I got to be born there, but we settled a little later in Spokane, Washington, and that's where I grew up, really."

□ LaRue senior played a lot of hockey during his days in the Air Force, and this rubbed off on Dennis who first learned to skate outdoors on the local ponds. However, unlike many officials who took their playing careers to a certain level only to quit and shift to officiating, LaRue started holding a whistle soon after he started playing the game.

"To be honest, officiating was a great way to get more ice time, and it helped put a few coins in the jeans, as it were. I started out lining games, but it was a pretty natural progression for me to become a referee. I spent a lot of time at the arena. I'd ref two or three games in the morning and then play a game in my own league in the afternoon."

□ LaRue was blessed with a tinge of serendipity which so often takes one along a particular career path. His last year of playing came with a Spokane team coached by former NHL goalie Al Rollins. Rollins knew of LaRue's refereeing moonlighting and "made a few phone calls" as LaRue described it. The result afforded LaRue the chance to work some pre-season games in the Western Hockey League.

At the same time, LaRue was also invited to USA Hockey's development program for officials. "I did well there, and then when I got into the WHL I did my first serious work," he said. "But I never felt that this was my career or that I was on the road to something I'd be doing all these years later. At that time, officiating definitely wasn't my career objective."

The progression continued apace for LaRue. He was invited to become part of the NHL's trainee program, which meant working lower-level games while being guided by the best of the best.

Meanwhile, back on the international side of things, LaRue was asked to work some games at the U.S. Olympic Festival where he again acquitted himself well. Through all of these combined efforts, he was nominated by USA Hockey to represent his country at the 1988 Olympics in Calgary, the only way any official can work the Olympics (excepting recent NHL participation).

□ After that, LaRue started to work in the AHL under the guidance of his NHL mentors, and in 1989 he got into his first NHL game. He never looked back. Like all professional refs, however, his NHL work eliminated him from ever working in the international arena. All of that changed in 1998, though, when the league closed for two and a half weeks to allow its players and officials to participate in Nagano. LaRue wasn't part of this first crew, but four years later he was. He went again in 2006 and will now see his third NHL Olympics, in Vancouver.

"I've been extraordinarily fortunate, there's no doubt about that," LaRue noted. "The Olympics are such a great time to make friends and meet other people, especially European officials. It's a great fraternity we have."

□ Looking even further ahead, LaRue and his brethren have no control over whether they will go to Sochi, Russia in 2014, so he doesn't think about what he can't control. "There's nothing we can do about it, so we don't really talk about it," he admitted. If the NHL participates, its officials participate. If it doesn't, they don't. End of story. But for LaRue, that doesn't matter. Vancouver is what matters, and that's where he's headed.



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Get ready for the best hockey event EVER



THE MOST IMPORTANT TOURNAMENT... EVER! Canadian newspaper Globe and Mail knows how to put pressure on the hockey teams headed to Vancouver for the upcoming Olympics. In the center, René Fasel holds up the paper where the editor isn't afraid to use superlatives. To the left, defending Olympic champion captain Mats Sundin celebrates in Turin while a Russian trio basks in the World Championship glory. To the right, women's favorites USA and Canada face off in the last World Championship, while Finland celebrates another bronze.



It struck me when I saw the headline of the special Olympic pull-out section in Canada's national newspaper: The Most Important Tournament - EVER.

■ This is when I realized that Vancouver 2010 will not be your average ice hockey event.

RENÉ FASEL EDITORIAL

I would be lying if I said that I don't take special pride in taking part in the XXI Olympic Winter Games. As a member of the International Olympic Committee, I took part in the 2003 voting which awarded Vancouver with the games and I never made it a secret how I voted. I felt, and I certainly still feel today, that Vancouver was the best applicant and that the show we will witness in February will be second to none.

Shortly after the decision, I was proud to be appointed chairman of the co-ordination commission for Vancouver 2010, overseeing the planning and implementation of the entire event, not only ice hockey. I have learned to know the people and the city like no other previously held event.

But I go to Vancouver first and foremost as a hockey man, very confident that we will be able to live up to the expectation from the *Globe & Mail* newspaper and from the world's hockey community.

■ Will this be the most important tournament ever? Probably. Not during our lifetime have we had the opportunity to stage a men's and a women's Olympic hockey events in the motherland of the sport with all the best players made available to the respective nations.

■ The hockey we will see in Vancouver between February 13 and 28 will determine how our game will be played in the next four years. Will it be fast and fearless or tactical and speculative?

All teams, both men's and women's, have pressure. On the female side, Canada is the defending Olympic champion, but the United States has won the last two IIHF World Championships and they are on top of the World Ranking.

We have a similar situation in the men's event. Sweden is the defending champion, Russia is the two-time consecutive World Champion and leader of the World Ranking. Canada faces a pressure to win, similar to the expectations prior to the 1972 Summit Series.

Team USA would love to win their first Olympic gold in 30 years on Canadian ice, while the Finns, Czechs and Slovaks play roles of underdogs, a situation they relish.

■ But the pressure is not only on the teams. The IIHF, together with VANOC, must run a perfect tournament and we expect nothing less from staff and officials. Everyday we want the players, and to a certain extent the coaches, to be the front figures. The less the organizers are mentioned the better.

Finally, I must mention the thousands of volunteers. Without them, an event like this would not be possible. Thank you for your commitment and for your love of sport.

Let's all work towards the same goal, that the legacy of Vancouver 2010 will be remembered as "The Best Tournament - Ever."

René Fasel
 IIHF President

Former IIHF council member, Rickard Fagerlund, dies

■ ■ Former president of the Swedish Ice Hockey Association and IIHF council member Rickard Fagerlund passed away on New Year's Eve at the age of 72 in his native Södertälje, Sweden.

Fagerlund suffered a heart attack during the Christmas holidays and never recovered. He passed away on New Year's Eve.

Only two weeks earlier the IIHF announced that he was inducted into the IIHF Hall of Fame, to the builders' category.

■ ■ "Rickard will always be remembered as the energetic person who revitalized Swedish hockey in the 80s and 90s," said Rene Fasel. "Lot's of the success Sweden is enjoying today in hockey must be credited to Rickard's work."



Always charismatic, outspoken and available, Fagerlund made sure that ice hockey got more than its share of exposure in newspapers and on television. Under his guiding hand, hockey grew enormously in popularity, public awareness, and active participation.

■ ■ He became a member of the IIHF Council in 1994 and as chairman of the Marketing Committee was in charge of several programs that increased the visibility of the IIHF.

Fagerlund will be posthumously inducted on May 21 during the 2010 IIHF World Championships in Germany.

■ ■ Fagerlund was born on January 25, 1937 in Södertälje, Sweden. He served as president of the Swedish Ice Hockey Association for 19 years, from 1983-2002. During his term, Sweden won four IIHF World Championship gold medals and five silver medals. As well, Sweden captured one Olympic gold medal (1994), one silver (with the women's team) and two bronze.

NEWS & NOTES FROM THE HOCKEY WORLD

■ **GERMANY:** The European Women's Champions Cup final will be played in Berlin, Germany, March 12-14. Tornado Moscow opens the tournament against the Espoo Blues. The four-team tournament will be staged at Sportforum Hohenschönhausen, where one of the preliminary-round EWCC tournaments took place.

■ **RUSSIA:** A game in Russia's KHL was suspended on January 9 after only 3:39 as teams Vityaz Chekhov and Avangard Omsk were out of players. In total 691 penalty minutes and 18 game misconducts were assessed before the game was over with 56:21 left to play.

■ **ZURICH:** All 12 participating men's Olympic teams named their final 23-man rosters from December 23-January 1. Several nations have also named their captains and assistant captains. On the women's side, all rosters were announced on a more relaxed schedule. To see all the Vancouver rosters, go to the Olympic page on iihf.com

■ **SWITZERLAND:** The winner of the 83rd Spengler Cup in Davos, Switzerland was Dynamo Minsk. Participating for the first time, the Belarusian KHL team won the traditional Holiday event with a 3-1 victory over host, Davos.

■ **SWEDEN:** Sweden's Frölunda Gothenburg and Färjestad Karlstad set a new European attendance record for a regular season game. Frölunda's 4-1 win at the Ullevi Stadium drew 31,144 fans. The game, which

It was Fagerlund who led the revival of the Swedish hockey program in the 1980s that led to the successes in the '90s and into the 21st century. No other Swedish association president enjoyed so much success during his tenure as Fagerlund.

Fagerlund started as a player, with a local club BK Star in his home town of Södertälje, but was very soon recruited to the big-league club Södertälje SK where he won the Swedish championship in 1956. He played eight games with the national team, Tre Kronor, becoming one of the very few top nation association presidents with national team credentials.

■ ■ The Swedish Association established a Rickard Fagerlund memorial fund to benefit promising junior coaches.

was billed as the 'record game', lived up to its promise surpassing the 30,076 record from a game between Langnau and Bern in the Swiss league game at Berne's Stade de Suisse in 2007.

■ **ZURICH:** With the upcoming Olympics where rule difference between the NHL and IIHF will be highlighted, the IIHF considered it essential to communicate its stance that there is no such thing as a clean hit to the head. This rule will be enforced during the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver. In a video on IIHF.com, René Fasel, Murray Costello and Dave Fitzpatrick talk about hits to the head.

■ **SLOVAKIA:** The Slovakian Ice Hockey Association celebrated its 80th-year anniversary during the month of December. The celebrations included an anniversary book that was presented during an exhibition game between Slovakia and the Czech Republic in Kosice mid-month.

■ **CANADA:** Hockey Canada announced that Mark Messier will be Canada's general manager for the 2010 IIHF World Championship in Germany. This will be Messier's first time in a management role with Team Canada. The retired NHLer represented Canada five times in international competition during his career.

■ **SWITZERLAND:** The major European team sports created an association to promote and develop the interests of European team sport. The association will also further increase the information exchange that has taken place informally over recent years. The team sports of basketball, handball, football (soccer), ice hockey, rugby and volleyball are all a part of the newly-formed group.

■ **SWITZERLAND:** The ZSC Lions Zurich were named Switzerland's 2009 Team of the Year. The award came after ZSC became the first Swiss team to win a major European club competition after defeating Russia's Metallurg Magnitogorsk in the Champions Hockey League final in January 2009 and the 2009 Victoria Cup against the Chicago Blackhawks.

World Juniors smashes Canadian TV records

■ ■ While the nation of Canada may not have been pleased with the outcome of the World Junior Championship (USA beat Canada in overtime for the title), one group was beaming ear-to-ear after the final whistle, Canadian broadcaster TSN.

An astounding 12.3 million viewers, or more than one in three Canadians, tuned in to some of the entire broadcast. The average audience, 5.3 million, is an all-time record for the network.

The 5.3 million viewers was also the largest audience recorded on Canadian television since 2005. It is the sixth largest audience for any broadcast on Canadian television in records that date back to 1994.

Audience levels peaked at 7.5 million viewers in the final minutes of the third period as tournament MVP Jordan Eberle scored for Team Canada and sent the dramatic game into overtime.

"TSN has covered some of the biggest sporting events in the world over the past 25 years, but this one will go down as one of the most exciting and emotional games we have ever broadcast," said Phil King, President of TSN.

"It is wonderful that so many Canadians watched and cheered on Team Canada," said Bob Nicholson, President of Hockey Canada.

The gold medal game caps off what will go down as the most successful World U20s ever for TSN. The average audience for the six games with Team Canada was 3.1 million viewers..

TSN also saw impressive audiences for its broadcast of non-Canada games. The Russia-Switzerland quarterfinal had an average of more than one-million viewers and the USA-Sweden semifinal set a new standard for digital television with an audience of 902,000 for its broadcast on TSN2.

TSN has been televising the U20s since 1991. Eight of the top 10 programs of all time on TSN have been U20 broadcasts with seven of those games registering audiences of more than 3 million viewers.

Throughout the tournament, World Juniors on-demand content registered 1.4 million video views. The tradition returns December 26, 2010, as Canada looks for redemption at the 2011 IIHF World U20 in Buffalo and Niagara Falls, New York.

2010 Olympic Media Guide

■ ■ Like with every other top-level event, the IIHF has produced a media guide for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver. It is the first time that the IIHF has endeavored to produce a complete history of both the men's and women's Olympic tournaments. Included are complete records and player registers along with a year-by-year look at the Olympic tournaments. If you are interested in receiving a copy, please send an email to wiedeke@iihf.com. Please be advised that the media guide supplies are limited and all requests may not be fulfilled.



TRIPLE GOLD CLUB INDUCTION

■ ■ *The following 22 players form an elite group that has won the IIHF World Championship, the Olympic gold, and the Stanley Cup. As part of this year's Olympic Winter Games, the 22 members of the Triple Gold Club will be formally inducted in a ceremony on February 22. More than 400 people are expected to attend the ceremony, which will be held at the Molson Canadian Hockey House, located next to the CHP Arena in Vancouver. Each player will receive a customized TGC jersey, a Tissot watch with his name engraved and a unique TGC membership pin.*

TOMAS JONSSON
b. Falun, Sweden, April 12, 1960
SC 1982, 1983 (New York Islanders)
WS 1991 (Sweden)
OG 1994 (Sweden)
Member as of Feb. 27, 1994, Olympic final win vs. CAN

MATS NASLUND
b. Timrå, Sweden, October 31, 1959
SC 1986 (Montreal Canadiens)
WS 1991 (Sweden)
OG 1994 (Sweden)
Member as of Feb. 27, 1994, Olympic final win vs. CAN

HAKAN LOOB
b. Roma, Sweden, July 3, 1960
WS 1987, 1991 (Sweden)
SC 1989 (Calgary Flames)
OG 1994 (Sweden)
Member as of Feb. 27, 1994, Olympic final win vs. CAN

VALERI KAMENSKY
b. Voskresensk, Soviet Union (Russia), April 18, 1966
WS 1986, 1989, 1990 (Soviet Union)
OG 1988 (Soviet Union)
SC 1996 (Colorado Avalanche)
Member as of June 10, 1996, Stanley Cup vs. Florida

ALEXEI GUSAROV
b. St. Petersburg, Soviet Union (Russia), July 8, 1964
WS 1986, 1989, 1990 (Soviet Union)
OG 1988 (Soviet Union)
SC 1996 (Colorado Avalanche)
Member as of June 10, 1996, Stanley Cup vs. Florida

PETER FORSBERG
b. Örnsköldsvik, Sweden, July 20, 1973
WS 1992, 1998 (Sweden)
OG 1994, 2006 (Sweden)
SC 1996, 2001 (Colorado Avalanche)
Member as of June 10, 1996, Stanley Cup vs. Florida

VYACHESLAV FETISOV
b. Moscow, Soviet Union (Russia), April 20, 1958
WS 1978, '81, '82, '83, '86, '89, '90 (Soviet Union)
OG 1984, 1988 (Soviet Union)
SC 1997, 1998 (Detroit Red Wings)
Member as of June 7, 1997, Stanley Cup vs. Philadelphia

IGOR LARIONOV
b. Voskresensk, Soviet Union (Russia), Dec. 3, 1960
WS 1982, 1983, 1986, 1989 (Soviet Union)
OG 1984, 1988 (Soviet Union)
SC 1997, 1998, 2002 (Detroit Red Wings)
Member as of June 7, 1997, Stanley Cup vs. Philadelphia

ALEXANDER MOGILNY
b. Khabarovsk, Soviet Union (Russia), Feb. 18, 1969
OG 1988 (Soviet Union)
WS 1989 (Soviet Union)
SC 2000 (New Jersey Devils)
Member as of June 10, 2000, Stanley Cup vs. Dallas

VLADIMIR MALAKHOV
b. Ekaterinburg, Soviet Union (Russia), Aug. 30, 1968
WS 1990 (Soviet Union)
OG 1992 (Russia)
SC 2000 (New Jersey Devils)
Member as of June 10, 2000, Stanley Cup vs. Dallas

ROB BLAKE
b. Simcoe, Ontario, Canada, Dec. 10, 1969
WS 1994, 1997 (Canada)
SC 2001 (Colorado Avalanche)
OG 2002 (Canada)
Member as of Feb.24, 2002, Olympic win vs. USA

JOE SAKIC
b. Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada, July 7, 1969
WS 1994 (Canada)
SC 1996, 2001 (Colorado Avalanche)
OG 2002 (Canada)
Member as of Feb.24, 2002, Olympic win vs. USA

BRENDAN SHANAHAN
b. Mimico, Ontario, Canada, Jan. 23, 1969
WS 1994 (Canada)
SC 1997, 1998, 2002 (Detroit Red Wings)
OG 2002 (Canada)
Member as of Feb.24, 2002, Olympic win vs. USA

SCOTT NIEDERMAYER
b. Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, Aug.31, 1973
SC 1995, 2000, 2003 (New Jersey Devils), 2007 (Anaheim Ducks)
OG 2002 (Canada)
WS 2004 (Canada)
Member as of May 9, 2004, World Championship vs. SWE

JAROMIR JAGR
b. Kladno, Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic), Feb. 15, 1972
SC 1991, 1992 (Pittsburgh Penguins)
OG 1998 (Czech Republic)
WS 2005 (Czech Republic)
Member as of May 15, 2005, World Championship vs. CAN

JIRI SLEGR
b. Jihlava, Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic), May 30, 1971
OG 1998 (Czech Republic)
SC 2002 (Detroit Red Wings)
WS 2005 (Czech Republic)
Member as of May 15, 2005, World Championship vs. CAN

NICKLAS LIDSTROM
b. Vasteras, Sweden, Apr. 28, 1970
WS 1991 (Sweden)
SC 1997, 1998, 2002, 2008 (Detroit Red Wings)
OG 2006 (Sweden)
Member as of Feb. 26, 2006, Olympic win vs. FIN

FREDRIK MODIN
b. Sundsvall, Sweden, Oct. 8, 1974
WS 1998 (Sweden)
SC 2004 (Tampa Bay Lightning)
OG 2006 (Sweden)
Member as of Feb. 26, 2006, Olympic win vs. FIN

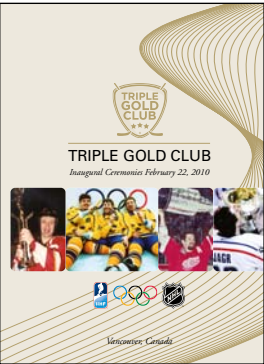
CHRIS PRONGER
b. Dryden, Ontario, Canada, Oct. 10, 1974
WS 1997 (Canada)
OG 2002 (Canada)
SC 2007 (Anaheim Ducks)
Member as of June 6, 2007, Stanley Cup vs. Ottawa

NIKLAS KRONWALL
b. Stockholm, Sweden, Jan. 12, 1981
OG 2006 (Sweden)
WS 2006 (Sweden)
SC 2008 (Detroit Red Wings)
Member as of June 4, 2008, Stanley Cup vs. Pittsburgh

HENRIK ZETTERBERG
b. Njurunda, Sweden, Oct. 9, 1980
OG 2006 (Sweden)
WS 2006 (Sweden)
SC 2008 (Detroit Red Wings)
Member as of June 4, 2008, Stanley Cup vs. Pittsburgh

MIKAEL SAMUELSSON
b. Mariefred, Sweden, Dec. 23, 1976
OG 2006 (Sweden)
WS 2006 (Sweden)
SC 2008 (Detroit Red Wings)
Member as of June 4, 2008, Stanley Cup vs. Pittsburgh

Legend:
OG=Olympic Games
SC=Stanley Cup
WS=World Championship



Who's Next?

by Andrew Podnieks

■ ■ There are three indisputable facts about with the Triple Gold Club. First, there are currently 22 members. Second, there are 337 active players who have won at least one of the three championships needed to become a TGC member. Third, of those 337, only 42 have two TGC titles under their belt now. Of those 42, who are the ones most likely to become full-fledged members?

Since the Vancouver Olympics is the next major Triple Gold Club event, here's a closer look at the 23 players who have won the Stanley Cup and World Championship that have the chance to join the elite group.

■ ■ The 23 include Jason Arnott, Rod Brind'Amour, Ilya Bryzgalov, Mike Commodore, Matt Cooke, Mathieu Dandenault, Kris Draper, Sergei Fedorov, Johan Franzen, Frantisek Kaberle, Pavel Kubina, Jere Lehtinen, Kirk Maltby, Rob Niedermayer, Steve Reinprecht, Eric Staal, Darryl Sydor, Petr Sykora, Oleg Tverdovsky, Josef Vasicek, Radim Vrbata, Cam Ward, Justin Williams.

Of these 23, only six were named to their Olympic teams, but all six can be said to have a chance the gold in Vancouver. The Russians have Fedorov and Bryzgalov, and given their back-to-back wins over Canada at the 2008 and 2009 World Championship, they are as likely as any team to win gold in 2010.

The Czechs have Kubina and Vasicek, and are still one of the elite six that can win any tournament. Canada has Eric Staal and Finland has Jere Lehtinen, a Stanley Cup winner with Dallas and a member of Finland's lone World Championship gold team from 1995. Chances are excellent that the TGC will expand by at least one name in Vancouver.

■ ■ After the Olympics come the Stanley Cup playoffs. So, who are the 15 players that could join the group with the Stanley Cup win? The list includes Eric Brewer (CAN-St. Louis), Jiri Dopita (CZE-Brno), Niclas Havelid (SWE-Linköping), Jarome Iginla (CAN-Calgary), Paul Kariya (CAN-St. Louis), Robert Lang (CZE-Phoenix), Owen Nolan (CAN-Minnesota), Mattias Ohlund (SWE-Tampa Bay), Pavel Patera (CZE-Kladno), Martin Prochazka (CZE-Kladno), Robert Reichel (CZE-Litvinov), Martin Rucinsky (CZE-Sparta Prague), Ryan Smyth (CAN-Los Angeles), Jaroslav Spacek (CZE-Montreal), and Martin Straka (CZE-Plzen).

Of these 22, only eight are in the NHL and, putting all subjectivity aside, perhaps Iginla is the only one on a team with what one might say is a good chance to win the Stanley Cup.

■ ■ The final, and smallest group of players who have won Olympic gold and the Stanley Cup still need a win in Germany to complete the triple. The only names on this list are Martin Brodeur, Adam Foote, Milan Hejduk, Alexei Kovalev, and Samuel Pahlsson.

Brodeur's Devils aren't likely to miss the playoffs. Foote has never played for Canada at a World Championship. Hejduk, Kovalev and Pahlsson would likely play if they were available. The TGC might well see a new member added at the Worlds, but it would likely be a single player only.

■ ■ And so a close look at how Triple Gold Club membership might be achieved during this present season reveals just how difficult it is to become a member, just how few realistic chances there are for the Triple Gold Club to expand, and why to date there have been only 22 men to win all three championships.



Olympics & NHL: A golden era

By Szymon Szemberg

Three classic rivalries, six different teams, three different winners; that's the gold medal game record from the new era of men's Olympic ice hockey tournaments. What's in store for Vancouver 2010?

■ ■ International hockey entered the new age in Nagano twelve years ago when the National Hockey League for the first time in its then 80-year history took a break to release its best players for the Olympic Winter Games.

And in the blink of an eye everything became clear - the five ringed circus became the event where all players were available for their national teams and where everyone was more than eager to participate. There were no excuses, the Olympics was now a best-on-best event.

But very few, if any, could have predicted how the first three men's Olympic tournaments of the NHL-era would shape up. Not only would the hockey world see six different teams appear in the finals (1998, 2002 and 2006), but the pairings ironically showcased three of hockey's greatest rivalries, all based geographically.

Nagano 1998, Salt Lake City 2002 and Turin 2006 brought us hockey of epic proportions; great wins, stunning performances and unbelievable upsets.

Nagano 1998 - Czech Republic vs. Russia 1-0

Favorite Canada was defeated by Dominik Hasek's heroics in the unforgettable shootout where the Czech goaltender stopped all five Canadian shooters. Robert Reichel's lone marker against Canadian Patrick Roy was enough to secure a spot in the finals.

After only five years as a new and independent nation, the Czech Republic managed what Czechoslovakia failed to do in 72 years - to win the Olympic ice hockey gold. The final was a conservative, low scoring affair with a most unexpected hero.

Czech defenseman Petr Svoboda, 32, scored the only goal of the game in the third period. It would be his first, and only, goal he ever scored for his senior national team - on his only shot in the final. Just like in the late 60s and early 70s, despite having a superbly skilled team, the Russians couldn't find a way to defeat the Czechs. One ironic twist to the win: Of all medal contenders, the Czech Republic was the only team which iced more players from European leagues (12) than NHLers (11).

Salt Lake City - Canada vs. USA 5-2

The pressure on Canada to win Olympic gold - the first one since 1952 - was beyond belief. Not only had the drought lasted five decades, the failure of Nagano was still fresh in the minds of everyone in the nation.

The Canadians stumbled to the final. The only game they won in the preliminary round was against German, they edged Finland by one goal in a shaky quarterfinal (2-1) and they were fortunate to meet Belarus in the semis, a team which two days earlier scored one of the biggest upsets in Olympic history, a dramatic 4-3 win over Sweden. But the Belarusians had run out of gas and were no match in the 8-1 semifinal.



THE MASKED MEN: While each of the three Olympic gold medal winning teams in the Olympic NHL-era have had very different make-ups, one thing is common. The Czech Republic, Canada and Sweden each relied on an NHL netminder to pull them through to the gold, just one example of how the NHL has made its mark on Olympic hockey. From left to right - Dominik Hasek (Czech Republic, 1998); Martin Brodeur (Canada, 2002) and Henrik Lundqvist (Sweden, 2006).

Host USA was the opponent in the gold medal game and up until that day an Olympic team, USA had never lost a game in regulation on home ice (1932, 1960, 1980 and they were 4W-1T prior to the 2002 final). But coach Herb Brooks' magic from Lake Placid 1980 would not carry over to the final. Joe Sakic saved his best for the last game, scoring two goals en route to a 5-2 win and was awarded the MVP honors. For Canada, the win restored the country's hockey honor.

Turin 2006 - Sweden vs. Finland 3-2

The 2002 finalists failed miserably in Italy. The 1998 finalists lost in the semi-finals; Russia ousted by Finland 4-0, the Czechs outclassed by Sweden 7-3. So despite the whole world taking part, the gold medal pair came from the sparsely populated and remote northern corner of Europe.

There is no question that Finland was by far the best team of the tournament - for seven games and forty minutes. But they had no answer when Saku Koivu's stick broke on the opening faceoff of the third period (has there ever been an unluckier player in the history of the game?) This led to a goal scored and assisted by Sweden's three best players in the last 15-years; Nicklas Lidström, Peter Forsberg and Mats Sundin.

Sweden not only became the only nation to win two Olympic hockey golds in the last four Winter Games, but later that year (in Riga, Latvia) it became the only team to win an Olympic gold medal and a World Championship gold medal in the same year. This, while Finland cemented its standing as the eternal second-place finisher.

Major pressure on Canada & Russia

There is no question that this development since 1998 was good for the international game. Hockey, which is constantly mocked by others (mostly soccer aficionados in Europe) that it has no competitive depth, had three different winners and six different gold medal participants in its prime event. Not soccer, not basketball, not handball, not volleyball can show this parity in their top events.

Can we expect an entirely new pair of finalists again in Vancouver? Yes, if you believe that miracles in hockey come about every 30th year. It was in Lake Placid 1980 the last one took place, when an amateur and collegian Team USA - expected to finish between sixth and ninth - took the gold in what is still today highlighted as one of the biggest Olympic upsets in any sport.

Many believe that at least one - most likely two - of the 1998-2006 finalists will appear in the gold medal game in Vancouver.

The exciting thing about the men's Olympic tournament is that all of the top-six nations are under pressure. Some less, some more. This is how the Pressure-Meter looks leading up to the Greatest Hockey Tournament...ever!

1. Canada For the first time in history - and likely last for many years - can Canada host an Olympics when it can ice their best players in a NHL city on a North American sized rink. Add the fact that Canada finished 7th in Turin and lost the recent World U20 final to the U.S... well, you get it. Canadians demand nothing less than gold. *Pressure Meter Rating: 9.5*

2. Russia As the Soviet Union they dominated the Olympics between 1956

and 1988. As the Commonwealth of Independent States (later Russia) they won in 1992 in Albertville. But there are no gold medals after that. Russia is back as a super-power with two straight World Championship titles and tops of the IIHF World Ranking. Coach Bykov wants a triple. *Pressure Meter Rating: 8*

3. Sweden Outgoing headcoach Bengt-Ake Gustafsson wants to show that Turin was no fluke, however since 2006 there has been little success. The only one of the Turin heroes missing is Mats Sundin. The Sedin twins will play on home ice and Niklas Kronwall can emerge as the anchor on defense, replacing 39-year old Nicklas Lidström. *Pressure Meter Rating: 7.5*

4. USA The U20s in Saskatoon showed that the Americans can win on Canadian ice. They may have the best current goaltender in Ryan Miller. They are young and underrated, but good enough to win every game by one goal. But, they haven't won a major IIHF senior title in 30 years. *Pressure Meter Rating: 6*

5. Finland The eternal bridesmaid returns. If they didn't win with the team they had in Turin, when will they ever? But this time, if they stand there with the silver medals, they'll take it. *Pressure Meter Rating: 5*

6. Czech Republic The bronze in Turin, and a silver the same year at the Riga Worlds. But there have been no medals since then. The country that dominated international hockey from 1996-2001 has regressed dramatically. Nobody bets a penny on them in Vancouver. And this is actually their chance. *Pressure Meter Rating: 4*

As for the rest of the pack: 1. Slovakia (Zedno Chara was born to play on a small rink). 2. Belarus (only if the Kostitsyns and Grabovsky are playing). 3. Switzerland Remember the upsets vs. Czechs and vs. Canada in Turin.

Americans dethrone Canadians

By Lukas Aykroyd & Jenny Wiedeke

Another unforgettable edition of the IIHF World U20 Championship was played over the holidays with the top junior players treating record audiences to great performances. It seemed only fitting that the gold medal game was decided in a dramatic overtime with USA's John Carlson putting in the game-winner to snap Canada's five-in-a-row streak at the World Juniors. But besides that golden moment, what else ranks as the "Best of" during the 10-day event?

DECEMBER 26th - LOPSIDED THUMPINGS

Appearing in his third straight World Juniors, Swedish forward Magnus Paajarvi-Svensson leads the way with five points in the tournament-opening 10-1 win over an undermanned Czech squad. Meanwhile Canada manhandles opening opponent Latvia in a 16-0 thumping which leads many in the Canadian media to speculate about the current World Junior format.

DECEMBER 27th - NEVER FINNISHED

The Finns look doomed in their opener against the Czechs, falling behind 3-0 and trailing late in the third period. But Finnish defenceman Sami Vatanen scores two spectacular goals on rink-length rushes, and the blue-and-white boys rally for a 4-3 victory.

DECEMBER 27th - FAN FAVORITES

Is there anything to cheer about in a 7-3 loss to Sweden? The hapless Austrians actually generate a mini-highlight for themselves when they score three straight goals to pull into a 3-3 tie with Tre Kronor late in the second period. The Regina crowd of 5,025 goes wild, even though the good times won't last. Austria will remain winless at the tournament, including two previous appearances (1981, 2004), but the team won't forget the warm reception it got in snowy Saskatchewan.

DECEMBER 28th - CANADA MEETS KING CONZ

Switzerland goaltender Benjamin Conz gets on the Canadian fans' radar after he faces nearly 50 shots against the overpowering Team Canada. Conz's flare for dramatic saves earns him the respect of everyone in Saskatoon. Conz faced nearly 100 shots in his first two games against the Americans and Canadians.

DECEMBER 28th - BOOS AFTER BOBKOV'S BRILLIANCE

Also in Regina a goaltender shines. Outshot 46-17, the Russians hardly look competitive in their round-robin meeting with Finland. But goalie Igor Bobkov makes all the difference, posting a 2-0 shutout. Afterwards, fans at the Brandt Centre chant the Metallurg Magnitogorsk netminder's name, and boo when star winger Nikita Filatov is mysteriously named Russia's Player of the Game instead.

DECEMBER 30th - WHO TO CHEER FOR

Fans in Saskatoon have a quandary when Switzerland and Latvia face-off. The fans have pulled for both underdog nations throughout the event. All Swiss and Latvian jer-

seys in the arena are sold out. In the end, Switzerland wins, 7-5.

DEC. 30th - 50-50 CHANCE

Sure USA and Canada play in their first of two epic battles, but the real heart-stopping story line of the night goes to the 50-50 jackpot in the arena, which is on pace to crack 250,000 dollars before the system becomes overwhelmed and is shut down. For those interested in the game, Canada won another New Year's Eve classic, 5-4, in a shootout.

JANUARY 2 - CINDERELLA

Switzerland continues its unlikely march to success in Saskatoon, earning a place in the semi-finals after neutralizing the Russian offense in a 3-2 win. The Russian team cannot believe that it is ousted by the Alpine nation, while the Canadians can't believe their luck that Russia won't be their semi-final opponent.



TOUGH BREAK: Despite leading the Canadian comeback, Eberle watches the U.S. flag get hoisted.



DIRECTORATE AWARD WINNERS



Best Goalkeeper:
Benjamin Conz (SUI)

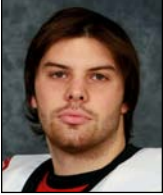


Best Defenseman:
Alex Pietrangelo (CAN)



Best Forward:
Jordan Eberle (CAN)

MEDIA ALL-STAR TEAM



Goalkeeper:
Benjamin Conz (SUI)



Defenseman:
Alex Pietrangelo (CAN)



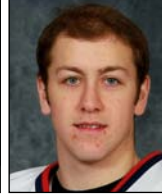
Defenseman:
John Carlson (USA)



Forward & MVP:
Jordan Eberle (CAN)



Forward:
Nino Niederreiter (SUI)



Forward:
Derek Stepan (USA)

JANUARY 2 - SLOVAKS SAFE

As the Swiss are enjoying their success, the Slovaks are coping with going from the semi-finals last year to the relegation round this year. Slovakia hangs on for a 3-2 win against Austria in the relegation round game to secure a spot at next year's World Juniors in Buffalo.

JANUARY 3 - THE FALL OF A GIANT

The Americans dispatch Sweden, the U20 silver medalists the last two seasons, with a straight forward 5-2 win. Towering goaltender Jacob Markstrom is no match for the USA's pressure offense as the Swedes again leave the ice amid a flurry of frustration with yet another World Junior gold slipping past them.

JANUARY 3 - THE CLOCK STRIKES 12

Switzerland runs out of magic and energy against the well-rested Canadians in the semi-finals. Conz makes 18 saves in the first period, but can't keep pace as Canada romps, 6-1.

JANUARY 4 - THE FALL OF A GIANT: PART II

In a reflection of coach Vladimir Plyushev's frustration,

Nikita Filatov is stripped of the Russian captaincy before the fifth-place game. Filatov, who has played for both the Columbus Blue Jackets and the KHL's CSKA Moscow this season, only has one goal in the tournament. Russia's closing 4-3 loss to Finland leaves it in sixth place, its worst since 2001's seventh-place ranking.

JANUARY 5 - A BRONZE BASHING

Sweden takes out its frustration on Switzerland in the bronze medal game as they skate to an 11-4 win. Despite the double-digit loss, the Swiss still land two players on the media all-star team, a first for the country. Sweden is shutout of the individual awards, but the team walks away with the bronze medals around their necks.

JANUARY 5- GOOD AS GOLD

Move over Canada, there's a new king in town. Just in time for hosting duties in 2011 in Buffalo, the Americans find their way back to the top of the U20 podium. Despite Canada's loss, the World Junior trophy still stays on North American soil, where it has been since 2003 when the last European nation, Russia, won the gold.

An eye on the future USA Hockey's NTDP

□ Sure, it may have a difficult acronym that hockey aficionados almost always fumble, but there's no doubting that USA Hockey's National Team Development Program (NTDP) has made its mark on the hockey world.

One needs to look no further than this year's American success at the World Junior Championship to gauge the impact that the more-than decade-old program has had not only on USA Hockey, but the landscape of junior development around the globe.

The Ann Arbor, Michigan-based program started in 1996 and brought together the top 16 and 17 year-old players to compete on season-long, standing national U17 and U18 teams. The philosophy of NTDP pioneer Jeff Jackson was simple: Take the best players in the country and make them even better by exposing them to tougher and older opponents, and offer the best in on and off-ice training.

□ The program had an immediate impact on the international scene by allowing the IIHF to create a U18 World Championship playing category. Before the Americans expressed interest in participating at the U18 level, the IIHF held only European championships. A few years later, the Canadians jumped on board the U18 wagon, and now the level is the IIHF's most-extensive with seven events per year.

While the NTDP struggled in its infancy, it finally gained its footing when then-head coach Mike Eaves gave the Americans their first gold medal at the 2002 U18 World Championship. The success opened the flood gates as the U18 gold followed in 2006, 2006 and 2009, while the Americans struck gold in 2004 at the U20s, and of course this last edition, with a roster made up heavily of NTDP alumni at all events.

The change in fortune at the international events has also changed the landscape of IIHF junior championships. Other nations have been forced to step up their development efforts to keep pace with the now-North American powerhouses. Countries that have not started to focus on junior development programs that goes beyond the norm are finding themselves more and more often fighting to stave off relegation.

□ For the fans, the emergence of the Americans as a bona fide contender year-in and year-out has sparked some rivalries back to life. USA-Canada on New Year's Eve is the most talked about game before most World Junior championships, while USA-Russia and even USA-Sweden are now highly-anticipated, competitive games.

For USA Hockey, the impact of the NTDP has been much more than a medal count. The numbers speak for themselves:

- 164 NHL Draft Picks
- 32 First Rounders
- Three number-one overall picks
- 10 Olympians
- 46 Alumni have played in at least one NHL game the last three seasons.

With the NTDP just now hitting full stride, the future of American hockey, and international hockey on the junior stage continues to look bright.

WOMEN'S OLYMPIC HOCKEY

Miracle Man Mark Johnson mining for second gold medal

By John Sanful

■ ■ *Mark Johnson will never be forgotten for his two goals that set the stage for the United States' shocking 4-3 victory at the 1980 Winter Olympics, the Miracle on Ice. Johnson and Team USA would go on to win the gold medal that year and set the bar high for remarkable upsets. During the IIHF's 100 Year Anniversary in 2008, the Miracle on Ice was named international hockey's Top Story of the Century. 30 years later he's going for another Olympic gold.*

Mark Johnson was on hand that evening in 2008 in Quebec City where he held the acceptance speech on behalf of the 1980 U.S. Olympic team. Thirty years after the Miracle, Johnson will be seeking to once again bring gold home, this time as head coach of the United States Women's Olympic ice hockey team.

As a head coach, Johnson has led the University of Wisconsin to three national titles. IIHF.com's John Sanful spoke with Johnson recently about past achievements and the prospects of the USA women's hockey team at the Olympics next month.

Since the announcement of your team in December, how do you feel about the makeup of your squad?

I'm excited for a couple of reasons. We have some good leadership with some of the players who have played in multiple Olympics and have had success. The experience they bring to the group is priceless. You mix that with some younger players that are going through this for the first time who bring energy and enthusiasm and youthfulness. There is a very good balance. I like the chemistry, I like the mix and it will bode well for us.

Your team took part in the Four Nations Cup in November where it lost to Canada in the finals. Did you get a good sense of your team and what you need to work on?

We lost the final game of the tournament to Canada so you walk away with a second place finish, which leaves a bitter taste in everybody's mouth. We were still in the process at that time of giving kids opportunities to showcase themselves in trying to make this team. It was a challenging event because you had to play four games in five nights not to mention the travel. It was good competition and I think by going through that process gives us the opportunity to improve as a hockey team in getting ready for Vancouver.

Who are some of the players to watch for on your team?

We have four-time Olympians Angela Ruggiero and Jenny Potter who have won all the medals from the bronze to the gold and have a lot of experience. There's Natalie Darwitz who is a key player along with Julie Chu. On the younger side both of our goaltenders Jessie Vetter and Molly Schaus have shown they can play at a real high level and be successful. Obviously, Meghan Duggan and Hilary Knight are two players who have played in the last couple World Women's Championships and have to play well for us to be successful.

Will the Vancouver Olympics help introduce new stars on the women's team?

For people who have not been following women's hockey the past few years, they will get the first chance to see these young players on this platform. They will recognize some of the names, but also get introduced to some real up and coming young players.

Is women's hockey growing in popularity?

I see it in the venues we play in and where I coach in Wisconsin. Under the USA Hockey umbrella more girls are being introduced to hockey, more kids are playing hockey so I want to say that it is becoming more popular as more girls and their families get involved.

In preparing for the Olympics, is there anything you take from your time as a player that you do different from, say, the World Championships or other tournaments?

I think you get more time to prepare and go through the process than at other tournaments when you have players for a handful of practices. This is a unique experience because you spend five months together playing exhibition games and developing into a team. Having gone through that as a player and now as a coach is a journey.

It's been thirty years since Team USA won the gold at the 1980 Winter Olympics at Lake Placid. What do you remember from your time as a player in that tournament? There's a lot you remember. It was a special moment for the players, coaches and the support staff. What stuck out for me was the awards ceremony, putting the gold medal around



RED, WHITE & BLUE: Mark Johnson gets clarification during a World Championship game

my neck and listening to the national anthem. After playing the Russians on Friday and beating them, it took some twenty-four hours to realize it was not a dream. As an Olympic athlete so much went on during that two-week period. I cherish every moment from that time.

The goal you scored to tie the Soviet Union at two at the end of the first period changed the momentum of that game. What do you remember about it?

I think the biggest thing was whether there was enough time on the clock for the goal to count. Before that we were doing what we were trained to do, which was to go until the horn goes off. I was doing nothing different and putting myself in a position to make a play. I was fortunate enough to get the puck in the net with enough time on the clock. We went into the locker room with the score tied and that created some excitement. It helped the team move forward and continue to play confident hockey.

That gold-medal winning team inspired so many young players at the time, some of whom went on to play in the NHL and helped the USA win the 1996 World Cup. That's a piece of the 1980 legacy isn't it?

I think when we went into the Olympics a lot of us were just fulfilling that dream of getting a chance to wear the USA jersey in an Olympic tournament. What happened after the fact (by winning the gold) nobody was prepared for, thought or even fantasized about so to hear comments from so many people who were players, or not, that were inspired by what we did puts a smile on my face. Being one of the participants on that team still makes me feel I was part of something special.

Like your father you've won three college championships with Wisconsin, your father coached the 1976 men's Olympic team and you are now coaching the women's team. The Johnson family sets the bar pretty high.

(Laughs) My dad would say that we are fortunate to have had these opportunities. You need good players to be successful. I always enjoyed putting on that USA jersey whether it was in the Olympic games or with our national team and getting a chance to coach our women's team in Vancouver is very, very special and I am honored to be leading this group.

What's been the key to your success coaching at the University of Wisconsin and philosophy for the team going to Vancouver?

At Wisconsin we have a core group of talented players and are well supported by our athletic department. Like with any championship team you go through a process and you give yourself the best opportunity to win if you are willing to become a team and play as a group. I certainly learned that in 1980 and I try to inspire this team to do the same thing. It is easy to talk about but harder for a group of players to go through it. Everybody wants to be on ESPN, everybody wants to be the score the big goal, but if you are going to be successful, everyone has to become a team player before they become an individual player.

Many people expect the tournament to come down to USA and Canada, but what about some of the other teams in the tournament?

Everyone anticipates USA and Canada, but you can never get ahead of yourself. I've been through that as a player. If you don't respect your opponents anything can happen. You look at Sweden or Finland and what they have been able to do over the last few years makes them dangerous. In a short tournament like the Olympics you cannot have any bumps in the road and be ready to go from your first game. Once that is complete you move on to the next one. It's a process and we won't look ahead ourselves.

IIHF Hall of Fame names Class of 2010

■ ■ *The IIHF will add another five hockey greats to its Hall of Fame in May when Dieter Hegen (GER), Arturs Irbe (LAT), Vladimir Krutov (RUS), Riiikka Nieminen (FIN) and Rickard Fagerlund (SWE) join the elite IIHF Hall of Fame. The IIHF Hall of Fame has three categories, Players, Builders and Officials. Lou Vairo (USA) has also been named the Paul Loicq Award recipient, which is given annually to an individual that has gone above and beyond the call of duty for international hockey. Below you can read more about each member of the Class of 2010.*

DIETER HEGEN - GER April 29, 1962 in Kaufbeuren, West Germany



There are only five players in the world who have played in five Olympic hockey tournaments and one of them is Dieter Hegen. While representing his national team, 'Didi' had 111 goals in 290 appearances, which included two IIHF European Junior and World U20 Championships. At the 1981 U20s, he earned the scoring title.

By the end of his career, Hegen played in 12 IIHF World Championships, one Canada Cup, and one World Cup. It was in 1998 that Hegen tied the record for most Winter Olympic tournaments. His 290 games with Team Germany places him 13th on the all-time list for most national team games. Hegen was captain of the Germany from 1996-1999 and was named by the *Eishockey News* the best left winger in German history.

Domestically, Hegen amassed many individual awards including rookie of the year in 1981 and eight All-Star team selections. He was the league's leading goal scorer in 1989 and 1992, and he claimed German Player of the Year honours the same season. Statistically, Hegen was just as dominant nationally as he was internationally, finishing his career as the second leading German scorer of all time tallying 613 goals.

ARTURS IRBE - LAT February 2, 1967 in Riga, Latvia (Soviet Union)



The most famous Latvian-born ice hockey player of all time, Irbe has had a very unique career. Irbe's initial international success came during the 1985 IIHF European Junior Championship when he was named the top goaltender en route to a silver medal for the Soviet Union squad. Not long after, Irbe burst onto the professional stage with Dinamo Riga, winning Rookie-of-the-Year and leading the club into the finals against the perennial champion CSKA Moscow during the 1987-88 campaign.

Irbe played in two consecutive IIHF World and European Championships for the gold medal winning Soviet Union - claiming the IIHF Directorate Award for Top Goaltender in 1990. In 1991, when Latvia earned its independence, Irbe began a stellar 12-year NHL career. He appeared in two NHL All-Star games and led the Carolina Hurricanes to the Stanley Cup Finals in 2002. Perhaps Irbe's proudest moment came when he dressed for his native Latvia in the 1996 IIHF B Pool World Championship, leading Latvia to promotion to the top division.

In all, Irbe represented Latvia in eight more IIHF World Championships and two Olympics, including the 2006 competition when he was selected Latvia's flag-bearer for the opening ceremonies. In one of the most emotionally charged international games in modern history, Irbe led Latvia to a 3-2 win over Russia in the 2000 IIHF World Championship in St. Petersburg, Russia. Irbe is currently the goaltending coach with the NHL Washington Capitals.

VLADIMIR KRUTOV - RUS June 1, 1960 in Moscow, Russia (Soviet Union)



Vladimir Krutov is one of the best forwards ever to play the game. Together with centre Igor Larionov and winger Sergei Makarov, Krutov formed arguably the best forward line on the international scene. His resume says it all: Two-time Olympic champion (1984 and 1988), one Olympic silver (1980) and five IIHF World Championship golds where he was named Best Forward twice. He was selected to the World Championship All-Star Team every year from 1983-1987.

Ironically, the one year when Krutov led the World Championship in scoring - 1987 - the team did not win gold. His biggest individual accomplishment was leading the 1988 Olympic tournament in scoring with 15 points in just 8 games. Krutov was instrumental in the Soviet Union's sensational 1981 Canada Cup victory at the Forum in Montreal, and he totaled 139 points in 114 major international games.

Krutov amassed 503 points in 438 games with his club team CSKA Moscow, the national champion eleven times during Krutov's career. In 1981, Krutov was made an Honoured Master of Sports in the Soviet Union, the equivalent to being inducted into a national hall of fame.

RIIKKA NIEMINEN-VÄLILÄ - FIN June 12, 1973 in Jyväskylä, Finland.



Riiikka Nieminen represented Finland in 118 games scoring 109 goals, 95 assists and 204 points with only 24 minutes in penalties. She sprung to international fame by winning the scoring title in the first Olympic women's ice hockey tournament. While leading Finland to a bronze medal in 1998, Nieminen had seven goals and five assists in just six games. She was one of the first women's hockey players from Europe whose individual skills fully equaled her rivals from Canada and the United States.

Nieminen played in three Women's European Championships and four World Women's Championships. In 2002 she played in her second Olympics. She led Finland to three European Championship titles and four World Women's Championship bronzes.

Nieminen played for years in the Finnish Women's Hockey League, with Etelä-Vantaan Urheilijat (EVU), Keravan Shakers, KalPa, JYP and JyHC in 116 games. She amassed 179 goals and 163 assists for a total of 342 points and was inducted into the Finnish Hockey Hall of Fame in 2007.

RICKARD FAGERLUND - SWE January 25, 1937 in Södertälje, Sweden



Rickard Fagerlund was president of the Swedish Ice Hockey Association for 19 years, from 1983-2002. During his term, Sweden won four World Championship golds and five silvers. As well, Sweden captured one Olympic gold (1994), one silver (women's) and two bronze. It was Fagerlund who led the revival of the Swedish hockey program in the '80s that led to the successes in the '90s and into the 21st century.

Fagerlund made sure that hockey got its share of exposure in Sweden. Under his guiding hand, the sport grew in popularity, public awareness, and participation. He became a member of the IIHF Council in 1994 and as chairman of the IIHF Marketing Committee headed several programs that increased the visibility of the IIHF.

One of Fagerlund's main assets was his knowledge of the game. He started as a player, with a local club BK Star in Södertälje, but was soon recruited to the big-league club Södertälje SK where he won the Swedish championship in 1956. Fagerlund even managed to play eight games with the national team, Tre Kronor, becoming one of the very few top nation association presidents with national team credentials. Fagerlund passed away in December.

LOU VAIRO - USA Paul Loicq Award



Lou Vairo's career has been spent promoting hockey in all parts of the world. One of the game's most accomplished coaches, Vairo has directed national and professional teams in both the United States and Europe for parts of four decades.

Since his first professional coaching position with the Austin Mavericks of the United States Hockey League (1975), Vairo has had a profound impact on the game. He has been instrumental in the growth and development of hockey in the U.S., the Netherlands and Italy and Vairo was the force behind the IIHF Development Camp.

A true visionary, he was one of the main architects of the current player development system for the United States' national teams and he has coached the U.S. men's national team in the Olympics (1984, 2002), the World Championships (1983, 2000-2003) and the World U20 Championships (2003). Vairo has been widely involved in the structure and content of USA Hockey's Coaching Education Program and is an advocate of inviting the international hockey community to the U.S. to share their concepts.



CC CHAMPS: Red Bull Salzburg won its first-ever Continental Cup title after sweeping through the Super Final in mid-January. The Austrian-based team went undefeated in the four-team round robin tournament and brought home the big CC plate.

SPOTLIGHT ON BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

On a wing and a Prayer: Buliding hockey in Bosnia

By Alan Adams

■ ■ You can excuse Brad Collins for having his own definition of the term, *On A Wing And A Prayer*. For Collins, it speaks to the healing power hockey has had in Bosnia, a country that was savaged by war from 1992-1995. The Bosnian war claimed around 100,000 lives and forced 2.2 million people to flee their homes.

Collins is a Canadian missionary for the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism. In 2002, he traded the safe confines of North American to the war-torn streets of Sarajevo on a mission of hope.

Because it is against the law to preach the bible in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Collins looked to hockey - after all he is Canadian - to spread his message and it has worked.

His program has grown from a half-dozen kids in '02 to more than 200 today. Bosnia competed in the 2008 world ball hockey championships. In one tournament last summer, what was once unthinkable happened - a team of Serbs competed against Muslim teams for the first time.

Players recently traded their sneakers for skates, although only ice time the program receives is once a month, at 11 p.m., in Sarajevo. Remember this is a country where it gets cold enough to play ice hockey about one month every year. And it is a country where nobody has money to play.

But hockey is catching on.

"I brought over a few hockey sticks and those sticks started something," says Collins.



No kidding.

When Collins landed in Sarajevo, the city that greeted him wasn't anything close to the same Sarajevo that played host to the 1984 Olympic Winter Games.

"When you land and you get out, what you see are homes that have been blown up. When I first landed there, I do not think there was a house that wasn't damaged because of the war," says Collins. "It looked so beautiful on the outside but on the inside it was torn to pieces. This is a country where there was no trust and that was the first thing we had to build. And even today we are still building trust."

Collins went right to work. He posted a sign advertising a new hockey program and waited to see how many kids, if any, would show up.

"None of them knew about hockey, not one bit. One kid was so interested in hockey and he started rounding up the other kids, and by the first day we had about 10 kids and it started growing," he says. "By the end of the week we had 36 and we were growing."

"I could see they were interested in the game. Anything new they were curious about and this peaked their curiosity."

These were kids on the streets of Sarajevo who probably had never seen a hockey stick, let alone hold one in their hand and then learn the game. Collins recalled trying to get the kids to show him whether they shot left or right.

Once that was determined, "they just started having fun."

The games were being played in a passageway that crossed beneath a city street. Shortly after, Collins secured the loan of a small gym where the kids played games of three-on-three.

Then in 2003, in partnership with the Canadian military community at NATO's Camp Butmir in Sarajevo. The idea was to give the kids a safe and secure place on the base to practice their sport once or twice a week.

Collins was witnessing how hockey was working its magic. Slowly but surely, Collins was winning the trust of the kids.

"I worked with them day after day and I never gave up. If you do not give up on them they will come closer to you," he says.

"We see big changes in them. This is giving them hope. This is giving them dreams and it

is giving them something. You have to understand that they had nothing, nothing. If you would have seen some of the houses they were living in."

"At first you have to build on the trust and then they open up more. Each one of these kids have had some sort of abuse and there are walls and it takes time."

Collins then paused for a second before he resumed his story, and he told his interviewer about Mici Hordzic.

Hordzic's family was living in Srebrenica, which was the sight of the worst ethnic cleansing during the war. He lost his father and grandfather and his mother suffered a nervous breakdown. He was six months old when his grandmother carried him on her back for three days to Sarajevo.

Hordzic thought he could never trust again but hockey has become his shelter from the storm, his passion.

Collins then told a story about an incident last fall when Hordzic was part of a group that was driving smaller kids home after an hour of late-night ice time when they were blind-sided by a drunk driver.

"Four guys got out and they came up to (our) van and were smashing windows. Our guys backed up and formed a circle around the little kids and they let the drunks do what they want. They protected the little kids. They understand they want to make something to their life."

What Collins has done through his hockey program is identify leaders and nurture them.

The goal of his program is to a) get kids off the street; b) get kids to stay in school ("No school, no hockey," he says); c) If you do those and give back to the community, Collins will arrange for a free university education.

The results speak for themselves: Sixteen kids who started with Collins in 2002 are either in university or are in their final preparations to further their education. Four of the sixteen are taking courses in sports administration.

"These are the next generation of leaders the country needs," says Collins.

Eight years after Collins landed in Bosnia, the hockey program now boasts more than 200 players on three official hockey clubs in three separate cities.

It's not that Collins hasn't had help along the way.

The NHL Players' Association has donated 75 sets of equipment in the last two years, and former NHL goalies John Vanbiesbrouck and Frank Caprice have both been in Bosnia for hockey camps.

The NHLPA brought Collins and Hordzic to Canada in November for an event at the Hockey Hall of Fame, and Hordzic was a guest on Hockey Night in Canada after he and a handful of the leaders attended a Toronto Maple Leaf game at the Air Canada Centre.

It was at this point that Collins recalled talking to Hordzic and his Bosnian teammates before they left Sarajevo two years ago for the world ball hockey championship in St. John's Newfoundland on Canada's East Coast.

"That was the first dream come true. I kept on telling them over the year, 'You are going to the world championship and you have already won.' It was a dream come true. You should have seen the faces of them."

The last word goes to Vanbiesbrouck. He was at the Hall of Fame ceremony when Hordzic was introduced to the crowd and those gathered at the shrine were told of how he lost his family to ethnic cleansing and how hockey brought him back to life.

"Hockey is the best sport in the world," Vanbiesbrouck said at the time. "It breaks down all borders and it reaches people and it unites. The heart of the player is to give back - I believe that."

And to think it started on a wing and a prayer by Collins.

A BOSNIA PHOTO GALLERY

Above: NHLPA goals and dreams crew presents a Bosnian team leader with Jersey.

Right & Middle: The Bosnian team is all smiles after competing in the World Ball Hockey Championships in St. John's., Newfoundland.

Far Right: Veteran NHL goalie Frank Caprice and a Bosnian boy nick named 'Stevie Yzerman'



RESULTS SUMMARY

IIHF World U20 Championship

Saskatoon & Regina, CANADA Dec. 26 - Jan. 5
Preliminary Round - Group A

Latvia - Canada	0-16	(0-5, 0-6, 0-5)
Slovakia - United States	3-7	(2-1, 1-4, 0-2)
United States - Switzerland	3-0	(0-0, 1-0, 2-0)
Slovakia - Latvia	8-3	(5-0, 2-2, 1-1)
Canada - Switzerland	6-0	(2-0, 3-0, 1-0)
Latvia - United States	1-12	(0-6, 1-1, 0-5)
Canada - Slovakia	8-2	(3-0, 4-1, 1-1)
Switzerland - Latvia	7-5	(2-3, 1-1, 4-1)
Switzerland - Slovakia	4-1	(0-0, 1-0, 3-1)
United States - Canada	4-5	(1-1, 2-1, 1-2) PS

Canada	4	3	1	0	0	36-6	11
United States	4	3	0	1	0	29-6	10
Switzerland	4	2	0	0	2	11-15	6
Slovakia	4	1	0	0	3	14-22	3
Latvia	4	0	0	0	4	9-43	0

Preliminary Round - Group B

Czech Republic - Sweden	1-10	(0-4, 1-2, 0-4)
Russia - Austria	6-2	(4-1, 1-1, 1-0)
Austria - Sweden	3-7	(0-2, 3-2, 0-3)
Czech Republic - Finland	3-4	(2-0, 1-1, 0-3)
Finland - Russia	0-2	(0-1, 0-1, 0-0)
Austria - Czech Republic	1-7	(1-1, 0-3, 0-3)
Sweden - Russia	4-1	(2-0, 1-1, 1-0)
Finland - Austria	10-1	(5-0, 3-1, 2-0)
Sweden - Finland	7-1	(1-0, 3-0, 3-1)
Russia - Czech Republic	5-2	(1-0, 1-1, 3-1)

Sweden	4	4	0	0	0	28-6	12
Russia	4	3	0	0	1	14-8	9
Finland	4	2	0	0	2	15-13	6
Czech Republic	4	1	0	0	3	13-20	3
Austria	4	0	0	0	4	7-30	0

Relegation Round

Slovakia - Latvia	8-3	(5-0, 2-2, 1-1)
Austria - Czech Republic	1-7	(1-1, 0-3, 0-3)
Slovakia - Austria	3-2	(2-0, 0-2, 1-0)
Czech Republic - Austria	10-2	(5-0, 2-2, 3-0)
Czech Republic - Slovakia	5-2	(1-1, 3-1, 1-0)
Austria - Latvia	4-6	(1-4, 2-0, 1-2)

Czech Republic	3	3	0	0	0	22-5	9
Slovakia	3	2	0	0	1	13-10	6
Latvia	3	1	0	0	2	11-22	3
Austria	3	0	0	0	3	7-16	0

Latvia and Austria are relegated to 2011 U20 World Championship, Div. I

Playoff Round

Quarterfinals

Russia - Switzerland	2-3	(0-0, 2-1, 0-1) OT
United States - Finland	6-2	(2-0, 1-1, 3-1)

Semi-finals

Canada - Switzerland	6-1	(1-0, 2-1, 3-0)
Sweden - United States	2-5	(0-1, 2-1, 0-3)

5th place game

Russia - Finland	3-4	(2-1, 0-1, 1-2)
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Bronze medal game

Sweden - Switzerland	11-4	(5-0, 5-4, 1-0)
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Gold medal game

Canada - United States	5-6	(2-2, 1-1, 2-2) OT
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Directorate Awards

Best Goaltender:	Benjamin Konz (SUI)
Best Defenseman:	Alex Pietrangelo (CAN)
Best Forward:	Jordan Eberle (CAN)

Media All-Star Team

Goaltender:	Benjamin Konz (SUI)
Defensemen:	Alex Pietrangelo (CAN), John Carlson (USA)
Forwards:	Jordan Eberle (CAN), Derek Stepan (USA), Nino Niederreiter (SUI)
MVP:	Jordan Eberle (CAN)

Top Scorers

1 Derek Stepan	USA	F	7	4	10	14
2 Jordan Eberle	CAN	F	6	8	5	13
3 Taylor Hall	CAN	F	6	6	6	12
4 Jerry D Amigo	USA	F	7	6	6	12
5 Alex Pietrangelo	CAN	D	6	3	9	12
6 Andre Petersson	SWE	F	6	8	3	11
7 Nino Niederreiter	SUI	F	7	6	4	10
8 Kirill Petrov	RUS	F	6	4	6	10
9 M. Paajarvi Svensson	SWE	F	6	3	7	10
9 Anton Rodin	SWE	F	6	3	7	10

World U20 Championship, Div. I, Grp. A

St. Gervais & Megeve, FRANCE December 14-20

Slovenia - Denmark	0-3	(0-0, 0-0, 0-3)
Ukraine - France	3-6	(1-1, 2-1, 0-4)
Japan - Germany	0-9	(0-4, 0-3, 0-2)
Germany - Slovenia	6-0	(1-0, 0-0, 5-0)
France - Japan	1-4	(0-0, 1-2, 0-2)
Denmark - Ukraine	7-3	(2-1, 5-1, 0-1)
Japan - Slovenia	1-4	(0-1, 1-0, 0-3)
Germany - Ukraine	6-2	(2-0, 4-1, 0-1)
Denmark - France	5-0	(4-0, 1-0, 0-0)
France - Germany	1-2	(1-0, 0-0, 0-2)
Slovenia - Ukraine	2-1	(0-0, 0-1, 1-0) PS
Denmark - Japan	6-2	(1-0, 1-0, 4-2)
Ukraine - Japan	6-2	(1-1, 2-1, 3-0)
Germany - Denmark	4-0	(1-0, 2-0, 1-0)
France - Slovenia	1-2	(1-0, 0-1, 0-1)

Germany	5	5	0	0	0	27-3	15
Denmark	5	4	0	0	1	21-9	12
Slovenia	5	2	1	0	2	8-12	8
Ukraine	5	1	0	1	3	15-23	4
Japan	5	1	0	0	4	9-26	3
France	5	1	0	0	4	9-16	3

Germany is promoted to 2011 World U20 Championship in Buffalo

France is relegated to 2011 World U20 Championship, Division II

World U20 Championship, Div. I, Grp. B

Gdansk, POLAND December 14-20

Italy - Belarus	3-2	(1-2, 0-0, 1-0) PS
Croatia - Kazakhstan	1-10	(0-4, 0-2, 1-4)
Poland - Norway	2-5	(1-2, 1-1, 0-2)
Kazakhstan - Italy	1-3	(1-0, 0-2, 0-1)
Norway - Croatia	18-2	(6-1, 6-0, 6-1)
Belarus - Poland	6-1	(1-1, 1-0, 3-0)
Belarus - Norway	2-3	(1-1, 1-1, 0-0) PS
Croatia - Italy	1-2	(0-1, 0-0, 1-1)
Kazakhstan - Poland	6-3	(1-1, 2-1, 3-1)
Belarus - Croatia	16-4	(7-0, 5-1, 4-3)
Norway - Kazakhstan	4-2	(2-0, 0-2, 2-0)
Italy - Poland	0-1	(0-0, 0-1, 0-0)
Kazakhstan - Belarus	1-5	(0-1, 0-3, 1-1)
Norway - Italy	3-0	(0-0, 1-0, 2-0)
Poland - Croatia	5-6	(3-2, 1-1, 1-3)

Norway	5	4	1	0	0	33-8	14
Belarus	5	3	0	2	0	30-12	11
Italy	5	2	1	0	2	8-8	8
Kazakhstan	5	2	0	0	3	20-16	6
Croatia	5	1	0	0	4	14-51	3
Poland	5	1	0	0	4	12-22	3

Norway is promoted to 2011 World U20 Championship in Buffalo

Poland is relegated to 2011 World U20 Championship, Division II

World U20 Championship, Div. II, Grp. A

Debrecen, HUNGARY December 13-19

Great Britain - China	8-0	(2-0, 3-0, 3-0)
Korea - Mexico	12-0	(6-0, 3-0, 3-0)
Hungary - Spain	8-2	(5-0, 2-1, 1-1)
Great Britain - Korea	7-1	(1-1, 4-0, 2-0)
Spain - China	12-1	(2-0, 8-1, 2-0)
Hungary - Mexico	28-0	(10-0, 11-0, 7-0)
China - Mexico	6-3	(2-0, 2-2, 2-1)
Great Britain - Spain	6-5	(2-2, 1-2, 2-1) OT
Korea - Hungary	0-6	(0-3, 0-2, 0-1)
Spain - Korea	5-2	(2-0, 1-0, 2-2)
Mexico - Great Britain	1-25	(0-9, 0-15, 1-1)
China - Hungary	1-20	(1-6, 0-7, 0-7)
Mexico - Spain	0-6	(0-2, 0-2, 0-2)
Hungary - Great Britain	4-5	(1-2, 2-2, 1-0) PS
Korea - China	5-0	(2-0, 1-0, 2-0)

Great Britain	5	3	2	0	0	51-11	13
Hungary	5	4	0	1	0	66-8	13
Spain	5	3	0	1	1	30-17	10
Korea	5	2	0	0	3	20-18	6
China	5	1	0	0	4	8-48	3
Mexico	5	0	0	0	5	4-77	0

Great Britain is promoted to 2011 World U20 Championship Division I

Mexico is relegated to 2011 World U20 Championship, Division III

World U20 Championship, Div. II, Grp. B

Narva, ESTONIA December 12-18

Romania - Belgium	5-3	(0-1, 1-2, 4-0)
Lithuania - Serbia	5-1	(0-1, 3-0, 2-0)
Netherlands - Estonia	5-3	(2-2, 2-0, 1-1)
Serbia - Romania	3-5	(0-3, 0-1, 3-1)
Lithuania - Netherlands	6-1	(2-0, 3-1, 1-0)

Estonia - Belgium	4-5	(1-2, 2-1, 1-1) PS
Lithuania - Romania	9-5	(4-2, 2-0, 3-3)
Netherlands - Belgium	5-1	(2-1, 2-0, 1-0)
Estonia - Serbia	4-5	(1-1, 1-1, 2-2) PS
Serbia - Netherlands	5-10	(0-1, 3-4, 2-5)
Belgium - Lithuania	2-7	(1-1, 1-4, 0-2)
Romania - Estonia	2-1	(1-0, 0-1, 0-0) PS
Belgium - Serbia	4-3	(1-1, 1-2, 2-0)
Netherlands - Romania	5-4	(3-2, 1-0, 1-2)
Estonia - Lithuania	3-7	(0-3, 2-3, 1-1)

Lithuania	5	5	0	0	0	34-12	15
Netherlands	5	4	0	0	1	26-19	12
Romania	5	2	1	0	2	21-21	8
Belgium	5	1	1	0	3	15-24	5
Estonia	5	0	0	3	2	15-24	3
Serbia	5	0	1	0	4	17-28	2

Lithuania is promoted to 2011 World U20 Championship Division I

Serbia is relegated to 2011 World U20 Championship, Division III

World U20 Championship, Div. III

Istanbul, TURKEY January 4-10