

## Hats off to Minsk 2014



Photo: Andre Ringette / IIHF-IIHF Images

**Russia back on top:** The Russians put their Sochi troubles behind them and played like champions, going unbeaten en route to the 2014 IIHF World Championship gold medal.



■ ■ Dear hockey friends, what a great ending to a memorable season.

### RENÉ FASEL EDITORIAL

One might have said after Sochi that such a great show could not be repeated in 2014. Well, Belarus came through in fine fashion during its turn at hosting the World Championship, putting on a month-long festival of hockey with enthusiasm and dedication to a degree which I have not seen before.

It was not just the hockey itself, although the performance of the host team, the French Cinderella story, and the fine play of a resurgent Russian squad deserves mention. It was as much about what was going on in the stands and outside the Minsk and Chizhovka arenas as what happened on the ice that struck me with the impression of a country that is deeply passionate about hockey.

I would like to thank the Belarusian Organizing Committee, which met the many challenges of hosting a World Cham-

pionship for the first time, and the volunteers, who without their hard work the tournament could not have taken place.

But most of all I wish to thank the fans who came out in support not just for the Belarusian team but for all the games. They will have something to be proud of for years to come, as I am happy to report that the attendance record for the 2014 IIHF World Championship was a staggering 640,044. That, my friends, is 87,947 spectators more than the previous record of 552,097 set by the Czech Republic. Your move, Prague and Ostrava.

■ As usual we had our Annual Congress during the tail end of the World Championship. We shared some good news, and some not-so-good news as we looked towards the future and discussed the necessary steps we must take in order to preserve and to grow our sport into the next decades.

We discussed among other things certain rule changes that will be implemented in the next season. I was pleased to see the good dialogue between our federations and the IIHF Competition Committee in making sure that everyone knew the implications of the rule proposals that were put forth.

Communication is the key when implementing big changes, and I thank the IIHF staff for their hard work in preparing the proposals and sharing them with our MNAs.

■ We are always looking to improve our sport, and this summer is no different. Despite the weather getting warmer, the skates and sticks will stay out and hopeful hockey stars will also put on their running shoes and exercise gear as we open up our annual IIHF Hockey Development and High Performance camps.

These camps will bring young people in from around the world of all ages and skill levels. It is my belief that these programs form the backbone of our development efforts, and we must strive to figure out more ways in which we can help to build the next generation of hockey stars.

So as you prepare to take time off to soak up the sun with friends and loved ones, take a moment to reflect on what has been a fantastic year for ice hockey and look forward to ways in which we can raise the bar in 2015.

René Fasel  
IIHF President

# Welcome Oman: IIHF adds fourth Persian Gulf state to hockey family

■ The 2014 IIHF Annual Congress has accepted the Oman Ice Sports Committee as its 73rd member. Oman becomes the fourth IIHF member country from the Gulf region after the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar.

Oman was granted associate member status. The sport of ice hockey in the sultanate of over three million inhabitants dates back to 2002.

"Hockey came into existence thanks to the personal effort of a few individuals who built the Omani ice hockey team almost 12 years ago," said Anad Al-Balushi, the President of the Oman Ice Sports Committee.

"The team practised once a week at the Al Khuwair ice skating rink," said Al-Balushi, who also became the team's coach in 2009. The team has participated at several invitational events in the Gulf region.

The team now plays at a newer rink in the Qurum area of the Omani capital of Muscat sized 44.9 on 24.64 metres.

There are currently 24 senior and 15 junior players registered in Oman and 12 female players who are interested in playing hockey.

"We at the Oman Ice Sports Committee are thrilled and excited to be part of the IIHF and part of the world ice hockey community. Every hockey player in Oman had this dream of our country being a member of IIHF," Al-Balushi said.

"This opportunity gives us the key to strive to appear outside Oman and get exposure of ice hockey around the globe in addition to competing and showing our skills and ability in IIHF-affiliated tournaments. We are happy by this news and willing to go beyond expectations with the help of the IIHF."



In June Oman played against Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Qatar in the 2014 Gulf Ice Hockey Championships, finishing third overall.

## OBITUARIES

**Egon Frei** passed away on 11 May due to a heart stroke. He was 75. Born in St. Moritz, Frei officiated in Switzerland and in IIHF tournaments before becoming a long-time referee-in-chief in his country. He worked as an IIHF Referee Supervisor at many events, last time at the 2004 IIHF World Championship in the Czech Republic.

## NEWS & NOTES

**CANADA:** Hockey Canada announced that **Benoit Groulx** will be the head coach of Canada's National Junior Team at the 2015 IIHF World Junior Championship.

Groulx, 46, was an assistant coach under Brent Sutter with Canada's National Junior Team at the 2014 IIHF World Junior Championship, where Canada finished fourth. The native of Hull, Quebec, is in his second stint as head coach of the QMJHL's Gatineau Olympiques, having taken the team to three Memorial Cups (2003, 2004 and 2008). Dave Lowry (Ottawa, Ont./Victoria, WHL) and Scott Walker (Cambridge, Ont./Guelph, OHL) will serve as assistant coaches.

**CANADA:** **Bob Nicholson** will join the Edmonton Oilers organization as Vice-Chairman of Oilers Entertainment Group (OEG), a new sports and entertainment company that will manage the Katz Group's sports and entertainment assets, and operate Rogers Place, the new home of the Edmonton Oilers. Nicholson, recently retired as President and CEO of Hockey Canada, will continue to serve as Vice President of the International Ice Hockey Federation.

Nicholson will work to expand the group's sports and entertainment offerings, deliver fan experiences, secure major new sponsorships and events, and operate Rogers Place, set to be among North America's leading sports and entertainment venues when it opens its doors in September 2016. Mr. Nicholson will also serve as an Alternate Governor for the Edmonton Oilers on the NHL Board of Governors.

**FINLAND:** Several changes were done in the national teams' staff. New men's national team head coach **Kari Jalonen** will be joined by **Ville Peltonen** as an assistant coach. Another Finnish legend, **Jere Lehtinen**, was named

General Manager. Coming home from the KHL, **Hannu Jortikka** will take over the gold-winning U20 national team and succeed **Karri Kivi**, who goes the opposite way. **Mika Marttila** will be the new coach of the U18 national team, **Pasi Mustonen** for the women and **Jari Risku** for the U18 women's national team.

**GREAT BRITAIN:** **Doug Christiansen** has resigned from his position as head coach of the Great Britain men's national team, it was announced by Ice Hockey UK. Christiansen led the team at the 2014 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Division I Group B in Vilnius, Lithuania, following two years as an assistant coach.

**IIHF:** The International Ice Hockey Federation has hired **Irina Strakhova** as Assistant to the President, starting from 1st June. Irina is Russian / German with a background in figure skating. She finished her studies at the University of Heidelberg in Sport Management in the summer of 2013. Last February Irina was in Sochi working in the Field of Play for the Figure Skating Competitions.



**Patrick Bieler** will join the IIHF's IT Department as an IT Coordinator. Patrick is a 24 year old Swiss, currently living in Cham. He has done his apprenticeship in IT and before joining the IIHF, he was working for the Swiss Mail Company as well as for Bechtle Services AG.



**KAZAKHSTAN:** The Kazakhstan Ice Hockey Federation's accepted the resignation of national team coach **Ari-Pekka**

**Selin** and his staff, along with general manager **Nurlan Orazbayev**.

Finnish coach Selin, guided the national team for one season. A successor has not been named yet. Kazakhstan finished the World Championship in 16th and last place after losing all seven preliminary-round games.

**RUSSIA:** **Vladislav Tretiak** remains President of the Ice Hockey Federation of Russia (FHR). He was voted to serve a third four-year term in a duel for presidency with another hockey legend, Vyacheslav Fetisov.

Tretiak, who has also been an IIHF Council member since 2012, first became President of the national body for ice hockey in 2006.

During his successful career as a goalkeeper, the player legend won three Olympic gold medals and ten IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship titles with the Soviet national team. He was acknowledged as the best goalkeeper of the century during the IIHF's 100-year anniversary in 2008.

**USA:** Former U.S. women's national team player **Caitlin Cahow** will join the administration of President Barack Obama it was announced by the White House. Cahow was named member of the President's Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition. The 29-year-old represented the United States in two Olympic Winter Games winning silver in Vancouver 2010 and bronze in Turin 2006. In IIHF Women's World Championship play she won three gold medals (2008, 2009, 2011) and one silver (2007) and was named to the All-Star Team of the 2011 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship in Switzerland.

## PARTNERS



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iceTimes is published bi-monthly.

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# Annual Congress 2014

## Five major rule changes approved, new rulebook in the works

By Martin Merk

■ The 2014 IIHF Annual Congress approved the contents of the 2014-2018 IIHF Rule Book and also made changes to the IIHF Statutes & Bylaws and regulations.

The IIHF Rule Book is revised every four years. Several rule changes determined as minor and housekeeping were voted en bloc including: the definition of an ice surface as a surface made of frozen water, that players taller than two metres can request exceptions for a longer shaft of the stick, to allow and include one-piece catching gloves, a new rule for slew-footing to distinguish from the tripping rule and new dimensions of the dasher boards and protective glass.

In addition, Congress addressed 19 major rule changes proposed by five IIHF committees and several member national associations. In total the IIHF received 86 proposals on 57 rules. The major rule proposals were discussed within the IIHF, at committee level, several outside experts and at a special Rules Workshop held on Friday with the delegates of the 64 member national associations in attendance before the final vote was held on Saturday.

■ Major proposals that were accepted for the IIHF Rule Book 2014-2018 include:

- Moving the blue lines to 22.86 metres (old: 21.33) from the end of the rink to increase each offensive zone by one and half a metres and standardize the length of the offensive zone at all IIHF Championships.
- The dimension of the rink is adjusted to 26-30 on 60 metres (old: 29-30 on 60-61 metres) with other dimensions in IIHF competition needing IIHF approval.
- Hybrid icing will be introduced beginning in the upcoming season in all IIHF Championships and qualifications.
- Spin-o-rama or lacrosse-type of moves in penalty shots where the player completes a 360° turn as he approaches the goal will be prohibited.
- Goalkeeper equipment should be reduced and that the "cheater piece" on the goalkeepers' catch glove is the first piece to be removed as a recommendation. This will be tabled for discussions with manufacturers. As such, it will not yet be included as a rule in the IIHF Rule Book 2014-2018. The purpose is to give the IIHF and manufacturers the opportunity to discuss this initiative along with other measures to reduce the size of goalkeeper equipment.

■ Following proposals for major rule changes were rejected:

- To penalize any deliberate grabbing, twisting or holding of an opponent's head with a major penalty.



The major and minor rule changes will be integrated into a new IIHF Rulebook, to be released later in summer 2014.

- To move the goal line closer to the end of the rink (from 4 to 3.3 metres).
- To reinstate the red-line offside.
- To double the penalty for goalkeeper interference to 2+2 minutes
- That goalkeepers cannot freeze the puck if the shot originates from outside the blue line.

### ■ Statutes & Bylaws, regulations, Code of Conduct:

As of next season teams in IIHF competitions will change ends for the overtime period with the approved amendments of the IIHF Sport Regulations.

There have also been changes to the IIHF Statutes & Bylaws that are done every four years including:

- The judicial bodies have been redefined with an independent IIHF Disciplinary Board dealing with violations and a new independent IIHF Appeal Board (instead of the IIHF Council) to deal with appeals in cases that exceed a four-game suspension or a fine of CHF 20,000. The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) remains the court of last instance.
- The eligibility rules for players with multiple citizenships have been adjusted. A player wanting to represent a country and hasn't played for another country before, needs to have played two consecutive hockey seasons and 16 consecutive months (480 days, old: 730 days) in the national competitions of the country he wants to represent after his 10th (old: 12th) birthday. Female players need to have participated on a consistent basis for at least one hockey season and have been member of the new national association for at least 12 consecutive months during that period.
- For players who want to change their national team eligibility to another country than they have represented before, the old duration of having played for four consecutive years (1460 days) in the national competitions of their new country remains.

The IIHF Code of Conduct has been introduced with the adoption of the new IIHF Statutes & Bylaws where the

IIHF is at the forefront among international sport federations in implementing rules and procedures for players, team officials, on and off ice officials and IIHF representatives concerning sensitive topics including manipulation of competitions. Gambling or betting on any event these persons are directly or indirectly involved are prohibited. Any sanctions imposed on such incidents occurring in domestic competition can be widened to an international sanction.

The IIHF Rule Book 2014-2018 and the new IIHF Statutes & Bylaws will be produced during the summer for the upcoming hockey season.

Photos: Andre Ringette / HHOF- IIHF Images

### ■ 28 tournaments set for 2014/2015

28 tournaments will be played next season in the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship program.

The Swiss Ice Hockey Federation announced the venues for the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship. The event will be played in April in central Switzerland in the cities of Zug and Lucerne.

The worlds' best U20 teams will go to the 2015 IIHF World Junior Championship in Toronto and Montreal, Canada, as was previously announced. The 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship will be played in Malmö, Sweden, while the women's U18 category will be played in Buffalo, United States.



Several 2015 IIHF events were contested for hosting rights.

Due to the big interest in hosting IIHF events, several tournaments had more than one applicant and a vote among the participating teams and the IIHF Council was required.

The 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Division I Group A with the best nations outside the top-16 will be hosted by Donetsk. The Ukrainian bid won a tight vote against the Poland/Krakow bid. The Division I Group B will be played in Eindhoven, Netherlands, after Tallinn, Estonia, had pulled out.

# Off to Denmark for 2018

## Copenhagen, Herning chosen to host World Championship

■ The 2014 IIHF Annual Congress allocated the 2018 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship to Copenhagen and Herning, Denmark.

The Danish bid got 95 votes and won against the bid from Riga, Latvia, which earned 12 votes from the IIHF member national associations. The proposed dates are 4-20 May 2018.

The next three IIHF Ice Hockey World Championships are: Prague and Ostrava (Czech Republic) in 2015; Moscow and St. Petersburg (Russia) in 2016; and a co-hosted event in Cologne (Germany) and Paris (France) in 2017.

Denmark will be a first-time host for the IIHF's flagship event after having hosted championships in lower divisions and last year a Final Olympic Qualification group. 13th in the IIHF World Ranking, Denmark has been the highest-ranked nation that has never had the chance to host the IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship before.

"It will be the first time that we will host the tournament in Denmark. It will be the biggest sport event on Danish ground. You made history twice," said Henrik Bach Nielsen, the President of the Danish Ice Hockey Union and an IIHF Council member.

Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark with 1.9 million inhabitants and 3.8 million in the Danish-Swedish Oresund region, is the main venue for the bid with the hockey town



The 2018 World Championship bid committee following the announcement of Herning, a city of 86,000, as second venue.

With a capacity for 12,000 fans, the Royal Arena in Copenhagen is being built and expected to open its gates by the beginning of 2016. A practice rink will be built adjacent to the Royal Arena. The arena will be located in an area between the city centre and the airport. It will be a 10-minute journey by metro and the venue's train station allows direct connections to the airport and to Sweden. There's also a motorway exit close to the arena. A fan zone is planned by the arena operator.

Herning is a three-hour journey from Copenhagen by car or train, or a 45-minute flight from the nearby Billund Airport. The Jyske Bank Boxen that opened in Herning in October 2010 is a multifunctional arena for 12,000 spectators, in-

cluding an event area with a football stadium and exhibition halls nearby that can be used for additional functions such as a fan zone and press centre. A railway station, bus stops and highway exit are nearby. The arena has hosted international handball and volleyball events, as well as concerts with stars like Prince, Rihanna or Lady Gaga.

Denmark presented its bid under the slogan "We are ready" after having lost a joint bid with Latvia last year against the German-French bid.

"We have a plan to move our great sport forward and today we can say we are ready. Let's create a new home for hockey," Bach Nielsen.

Denmark has played in lower divisions for decades before earning promotion in 2002. Since 2003 the Danes have been playing in the top division and have begun producing NHL-calibre talent with currently eight players in the big league.

"Until some years ago hockey had little coverage in Denmark. We kept believing in ourselves and were willing to become better. We want to be a top hockey nation," Edmonton Oilers' defenceman Philip Larsen said in his speech. "We are still one final step missing: the chance to show our fans what we can do on home ice. By that we can show all the other small nations what they can accomplish with hard work and team spirit."

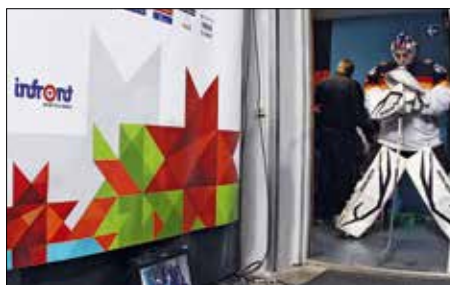
# IIHF extends contract with Infront

■ The IIHF has extended the extensive media and marketing partnership with Infront Sports & Media for the IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship until 2023.

The agreement, which includes the IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship as well as the two Division I tournaments (Group A and B) has been unanimously ratified by the delegates of the 2014 IIHF Annual Congress in Minsk, Belarus. Infront will continue to market all commercial rights for the IIHF's flagship event as well as providing a comprehensive array of services including the state-of-the-art multimedia production.

IIHF President René Fasel commented: "A comprehensive agreement that holds such high impact for the development and growth of our sport of ice hockey needs to fulfil more than just financial criteria. It spurs the future of our flagship events and must therefore be based on reliability, mutual understanding and trust. The experienced Infront team knows the spirit of the IIHF events, the objectives of its commercial partners as well as the needs of ice hockey fans worldwide better than any other party."

Kalervo Kummola, IIHF Vice President and Head of the IIHF Negotiation Group, added: "This prolongation is based on an intensive, long-term and very well-structured process. We are very satisfied with the outcome, as both the IIHF and its Member National Associations will benefit from the new agreement. The attractive and future-oriented offer has convinced the Negotiation Group, the IIHF Council and ultimately the IIHF Congress not to change the winning team, ensuring financial stability for the years to come and allowing for long-term planning."



The IIHF-Infront partnership will be extended to 2023.

Philippe Blatter, President & CEO of Infront Sports & Media, said: "Our long-term relationship with the IIHF is truly unique in sport. We thank the IIHF for its great trust in our team and its ability to continue setting benchmarks for the federation's flagship events. Our partnership has not only enabled impressive growth for the IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship, but also marked media, marketing and audience records on a regular basis. Jointly with the IIHF and our commercial partners, we are fully committed to further boost the sport of ice hockey in the coming years at the highest quality levels and expand the impact of the IIHF events and assets."

Bruno Marty, Infront's Executive Director Winter Sport, said: "The IIHF events are a most important pillar of our comprehensive winter sports portfolio. We are looking forward to continue our joint success story with the IIHF and to further strengthen both the popularity and the premium value of its flagship event on an international scale. I am convinced that we will be able to cement the championship's position as a consistent, highly exclusive communication platform, enhancing its impact particularly also in emerging markets and media."

Infront's role covers the development and marketing of the sponsorship programme for the IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship, with the line-up currently comprising major international blue-chip brands, many of them loyal partners to the tournament, some since two to three decades. In addition, Infront handles all commercial licenses, including merchandise.

In its role as a media capacity, Infront handles the distribution of the global media rights across all platforms. In 2014, Infront established a new record TV coverage, with the event being now available in more than 150 countries and territories. Last year, the cumulative audience of the championship almost hit one billion.

Infront has also been a driving force in the ongoing improvement of the multimedia media production standards and the digital media offer, providing live streaming and highlights in premium quality to fans worldwide. The strategic development of the IIHF digital media platforms will be further increased as of 2015 with Infront contributing to a dedicated optimization project. In addition, Infront will support the federation to establish a new one-stop-shop solution to manage and commercialise its extensive archive footage.

Overall, the collaboration between the IIHF and Infront has ever since set benchmarks in all aspects of the IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship. Milestones include the Guinness World Record with Škoda for the longest main sponsorship of a world championship in history, the introduction of HDTV production in 2009 or the Opening Game of the 2010 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship in Germany with over 78,000 people marking the highest spectator attendance at an ice hockey game played indoor.



# IIHF Hall of Fame welcomes stars

## Soviet, Swedish and Canadian legends, Belarusian hero join

By John Sanful



■ Six members were inducted into the 2014 IIHF Hall of Fame, including former Belarusian captain Ruslan Salei, who received an emotional tribute.

The induction ceremony took place in Minsk on the afternoon of the final day of the World Championship. Those honoured by the International Ice Hockey Federation in the Players category included Vyacheslav Bykov, Andrei Khomutov, Niklas Lidstrom, Steve Yzerman and posthumously, Ruslan Salei. Murray Costello was honoured in the Builders category and Dr Mark Aubry given the Paul Loicq Award.

■ Induction ceremony host Paul Romanuk opened the event with a welcome to all in attendance, including IIHF Congress members, dignitaries and media.



Paul Romanuk was the host for the 2014 HOF ceremony.

■ The first member of the class of 2014 honoured was Vyacheslav Bykov. The five-time World Championship gold medallist first apologized for his 'broken' English which was, much like his time as a player, impeccable. Bykov spoke of his commitment to the game of hockey and in wanting to continue as an ambassador for the sport.

"It is my duty to promote the sport and work for hockey, a game I think is the best in the world."



A lighthearted moment as Bykov's jersey was a bit long.

■ Niklas Lidstrom was introduced as a player with the "presence, mind, shot and touch" and someone who was among the greatest defencemen in history, if not the greatest.

Lidstrom remembers growing up in Sweden he aspired to play for the national team and that through hard work, persistence and dedication he was able to do so on multiple occasions and lead Tre Kronor to gold.



The class of 2014 is the 18th to be inducted since the Hall was established in 1997.

"I didn't play that many World Championships. I played three of them, and one I came in late in the tournament. I played in four Olympics, and we had both ups and downs in those events. Being a Red Wing for 20 years is hard to top, but any time you get to represent your country, that means so much, especially winning a gold medal for Team Sweden in 2006. That was one of the top moments in my career."



Lidstrom joins the IIHF Hall of Fame two years after retiring.

He also thanked his parents for their sacrifice in helping him to obtain his dream and current Swedish head coach Per Marts whom he said was instrumental in his development from the ages of 16 to 21.

■ Murray Costello, who has been a tireless advocate for the sport of hockey, was also honoured. When he retired from hockey in 1960, Costello went on to become an influential individual both in Canada and internationally, working in the IIHF Council and becoming a key figure in the establishment of women's hockey. Costello was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto in 2005.

■ Dr Mark Aubry won the Paul Loicq Award. Aubry said his life "has been a hockey game" and touched upon player



Fasel and Dr. Mark Aubry with the Paul Loicq Award.

safety: "Players are bigger, faster, stronger and concussions are an important topic," he said. "The IIHF will continue to strive in this matter to educate on this issue."

■ Steve Yzerman, though honoured, could not attend the induction. His responsibilities as general manager of the Tampa Bay Lightning and preparing for the upcoming NHL draft in June kept him away. Instead, IIHF Vice President and outgoing Hockey Canada President Bob Nicholson accepted the honour on his behalf. Nicholson emphasized not only Yzerman's outstanding achievements as a player for both the Detroit Red Wings and Team Canada but as an executive and the architect of back-to-back Olympic gold medals in 2010 and 2014.

■ Andrei Khomutov also echoed thanks to family, coaches and teammates and how much they mean to him. Khomutov teamed with Bykov to form an impressive combination for the Soviets over the early eighties through mid nineties.



Soviet linemates Bykov and Khomutov together again.



Ruslan Salei's induction was witnessed by brother Vadim.

■ The emotional moment of the ceremony came when the widow of Ruslan Salei, Bethann, and their children spoke via video feed. Salei perished along with his Lokomotiv Yaroslavl teammates in the fateful crash that rocked the international hockey community in 2011.

Bethann Salei spoke of the sacrifice that her husband made for the game he loved so much. Salei's mother and brother were in attendance.

"I think it's great that he gets recognized here in his home country," Lidstrom said of his former teammate with the Red Wings. "He had a great career. He was a great teammate when he played with me in Detroit for one season. He was a great family man, and that plane crash... we miss him dearly and the rest of the guys who went down with it."



# Ten things we learned

## Belarus puts on a show to remember on and off the ice, Russia

By Lucas Aykroyd

The first-ever IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship held in Belarus is over, but the lessons we learned from the action (May 9-25) will last beyond 2014. Here are 10 lessons that stood out.

### 1) There's strength in numbers

What do Artyom Anisimov, Anton Belov, Sergei Bobrovski, Nikolai Kulyomin, Yevgeni Malkin, Yevgeni Medvedev, Alexander Ovechkin, and Viktor Tikhonov have in common? All eight men played for Russia at both the Olympics and Worlds this year. Although they fell short on home ice in Sochi, they united to help Russia win ten straight games en route to gold in Minsk.

In 2012, an IIHF.com article showed that "seven is the magic number" when it comes to winning the World Championship. In other words, the average number of players on gold-medal Worlds rosters who participated in the last Olympics was seven – based on rosters between 2010 and 2012.

Sure, it's been done with fewer (like the Swedes in 2013, with just the Sedin twins and Henrik Tallinder back from the 2010 Games in Vancouver), but a solid turnout of elite Olympians heightens your chances. That's a big reason why Russia has won four out of the last seven Worlds.

### 2) New coaches boost Russia

When Oleg Znarok debuted behind the Russian bench with gold, it marked the fourth straight time that a brand-new Russian coach has medaled at the Worlds. Vladimir Kriukov and Vyacheslav Bykov both took bronze in 2005 and 2007 respectively, while Zinetula



Head coach Oleg Znarok helped get Russia's mojo back.

Bilyaletdinov's perfect record in 2012 matched Znarok's path to gold. Russia posted an impressive 42-10 goal differential in Minsk.

Can Znarok keep his skillful skaters playing solid defence? And can the ex-Dynamo Moscow coach keep his own emotions in check in crucial situations? Those will be interesting trends to watch as Russia quests toward its first Olympic gold since 1992 in Korea.

### 3) Nordic powers think team first

Unlike Russia, neither Finland nor Sweden iced a star-laden lineup in Minsk. But the Swedes (bronze) and Finland (silver) remain first and second in the IIHF World

Ranking thanks to their team-first approach.

Coach Par Marts got Tre Kronor playing together immediately, with five straight wins to start the tournament, and Joakim Lindstrom and Oscar Moller of Skelleftea AIK, the defending SHL champions, sparked enough offence to carry a team that relied on its top-ranked penalty kill (95.3 percent) and Anders Nilsson's goaltending.

For Erkki Westerlund's squad, it took longer to get going. Finland squeaked into the medal round courtesy of a Swiss win over Latvia. But then Suomi found its team game in a 3-2 quarter-final win over Canada and a 3-0 semi-final victory over the Czechs. Despite falling 5-2 to Russia in the final, the Finns could take pride in their hang-tough group mentality. They went deep with captain Olli Jokinen and MVP goalie Pekka Rinne as their only big-name NHLers.

### 4) Pour la France, rien n'est impossible

When the French shocked Russia 2-1 last year, it seemed like a nice one-off for coach Dave Henderson's crew. But France's prowess en route to an eighth-place finish – matching its all-time best result from 1995 – indicated that Les Bleus must be taken seriously by every opponent.

Not only did France beat Canada 3-2 in a shootout to open the tournament in Minsk, but it also rallied from a 3-1 third-period deficit to defeat Slovakia 5-3. Both Sweden and the Czech Republic were hard-pressed to earn one-goal victories over the French.

With tournament all-star Antoine Roussel keying the offence in a bigger role than he gets with the Dallas Stars, assisted by linemates Stephane Da Costa and Pierre-Edouard Bellemare, it showed that France is poised to give its fans a good show when Paris co-hosts the 2017 Worlds with Cologne, Germany.

### 5) Jagr says goodbye in style

Even though Jaromir Jagr didn't medal in what he declared would be his final Worlds, the legendary 42-year-old right wing still led the Czechs with eight points. He dominated in the offensive zone with his puck-handling skills and body positioning. Now the Czechs must figure out how they can possibly replace his scoring ability.

Now, of course, retiring from the national team is a reversible decision (just ask Olli Jokinen). And if the NHL's sixth all-time leading scorer doesn't go deep into the playoffs next year with New Jersey, it may be difficult for Jagr to resist playing in Prague 2015.



A new IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship attendance record was set in Minsk 2014, as 640,

### 6) Script all too similar for Canada

In 2014, Canada rejoiced after defending its Olympic title in Sochi. Yet in Minsk, the motherland matched its all-time longest Worlds medal drought with its fifth straight quarter-final exit. And it's worse than from 1998 to 2002, because in both 1999 and 2000, Canada at least made the bronze medal game. Every year, something different has gone wrong in the quarter-finals, be it an untimely penalty (2012), an inability to score in the shootout (2013), or goaltending gaffes (2014).

Some Canadian fans will say: "I only worry about best-on-best." Considering Canada's always-trumpeted depth, wouldn't that attitude be more appropriate for a nation with a smaller talent pool? Canada should aim to ice a medal-worthy team every year. This will be a challenge for outgoing Hockey Canada president Bob Nicholson's successor.

### 7) America's getting richer – in talent

Similar to Canada, the Americans often stumble at the Worlds with an inexperienced roster, and they came sixth in Minsk. But in a few years, their kids could be lethal on the international stage.

It goes beyond the towering Seth Jones, chosen as Best Defenceman and a tournament all-star. Diminutive puck wizard Johnny Gaudreau (the Hobey Baker Award winner) and clutch scorer Tyler Johnson (a Calder Trophy nominee) were among the other U.S. players who left a lasting impression.



# d from Minsk

## rebounds, French hockey makes a statement



044 fans turned out for the games in Minsk and Chizhovka arenas.

Photos: Andre Ringuette / HHOF-IIHF Images

### 8) Upsets are the new norm

Every year, players dutifully intone: "There are no easy games here. Anyone can beat anyone." But this year, it was actually true. If you bet on France knocking off Canada and Slovakia, Denmark topping the Czechs, or Latvia beating Finland – not to mention a host of one-goal escapes for "Big Seven" countries – then you're probably enjoying champagne and caviar right now.

### 9) Godlike goaltending is essential

In Minsk, the three medal-winning teams ranked first (Russia), second (Sweden), and fourth (Finland) in highest-overall save percentage. Their goalies also combined for eight out of the 11 total shutouts at the tournament, with three apiece to finalists Russia and Finland. Get the picture?

### 10) Belarus is a true hockey nation

Finishing seventh on home ice was a stunning success for the Belarusians, and fans went wild at Minsk Arena for them, as well as for neighbouring Russia. Setting a new tournament attendance record of 640,044 was another feather in Belarus's cap. And as veteran World Championship attendees will tell you, no city has done a better job at promoting the tournament with banners, signs, and flags everywhere than Minsk. Can the Czech Republic up the ante as next year's host? Stay tuned.



### Top Performers: Directorate Awards and Media All-Star Team



**Pekka Rinne, G, FIN**  
All-Star Team Goaltender  
MVP  
5-2-0-2, 1.88 GAA, 92.83 SVS%



**Sergei Bobrovski, G, RUS**  
Directorate Best Goaltender  
9-0-0, 1.13 GAA, 95.03 SVS%



**Seth Jones, D, USA**  
Directorate Best Defenceman  
All-Star Team Defenceman  
8GP, 2G, 9A, 11P, +8



**Anton Belov, D, RUS**  
All-Star Team Defenceman  
10GP, 2G, 3A, 5P, +10



**Viktor Tikhonov, F, RUS**  
Directorate Best Forward  
All-Star Team Forward  
10 GP, 8G, 8A, 16P, +10



**Antoine Roussel, F, FRA**  
All-Star Team Forward  
8GP, 6G, 5A, 11P, +6



**Sergei Plotnikov, F, RUS**  
All-Star Team Forward  
10GP, 6G, 6A, 12P, +7

## 2014 IIHF World Ranking

■ Bronze medalist Sweden defended its first position in the IIHF World Ranking, 35 points ahead of Finland, while Russia moves up from fourth to third place after winning gold at the 2014 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship in Minsk, Belarus.

After missing the semi-finals in Minsk, Olympic champion Canada dropped down to fourth place. Host Belarus, which reached the quarter-finals for the first time in five years, made the biggest jump from 15th to 11th place.

Rank	Country	Points	Move
1	Sweden	3990	0
2	Finland	3955	0
3	Russia	3915	+1
4	Canada	3850	-1
5	Czech Republic	3745	0
6	USA	3740	0
7	Switzerland	3470	0
8	Slovakia	3445	0
9	Latvia	3300	+1
10	Norway	3265	-1
11	Belarus	3170	+4
12	France	3165	0
13	Germany	3125	-2
14	Slovenia	3040	0
15	Denmark	3005	-2
16	Austria	2950	0
17	Kazakhstan	2910	0
18	Italy	2860	0
19	Hungary	2560	0
20	Ukraine	2500	+1
21	Japan	2470	+1
22	Great Britain	2450	-2
23	Korea	2415	0
24	Poland	2355	+1
25	Netherlands	2305	-1
26	Lithuania	2170	0
27	Romania	2075	0
28	Croatia	2010	+2
29	Estonia	1985	-1
30	Spain	1810	-1
31	Serbia	1740	0
32	Israel	1530	+1
33	Mexico	1530	-1
34	Australia	1300	0
35	Iceland	1295	0
36	Belgium	1215	0
37	New Zealand	1070	0
38	China	980	0
39	Bulgaria	870	0
40	South Africa	845	+1
41	Turkey	840	-1
42	Luxembourg	695	+1
43	DPR Korea	675	+2
44	Ireland	410	-2
45	United Arab Emirates	405	+2
46	Greece	360	-2
47	Georgia	355	+1
48	Hong Kong	260	new
49	Mongolia	260	-3

# Austria, Slovenia do it again

## Japan misses out on historic opportunity

By Martin Merk



■ The elevator ride continues between the top two levels in international hockey.

For the fifth consecutive time it's the same four teams that are involved in promotion and relegation. Italy and Kazakhstan went down in Minsk and will be replaced by Slovenia and Austria, who earned promotion and their tickets to the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship in the Czech Republic.

The two neighbouring countries qualified to re-join the top-16 nations in the tightest battle since the Division I has been played in two tiered groups with both promoted teams determined in the Division I Group A.

Apart from Austria and Slovenia, who earlier this year played in the 2014 Olympic Winter Games, also Japan was in the race for promotion on the last day of the six-team tournament that was played in Gwangju, Korea, thanks to a 2-1 upset win against Slovenia on the first day. All the Japanese needed was a win in the last game against Hungary. It would have been the best result in Division I / B-Pool play since 1995 and the ticket back to the top division where Japan had its place as the Asian representative between 1998 and 2004 before losing this status with zero wins in 36 games.

"It's an exciting time for us to play this last game to move up to the top division," said long-time head coach Mark



Prague and Ostrava will welcome Slovenia (pictured) and Austria at the 2015 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship.

Photo: Soorian Kim

Mahon ahead of the last day. But the Japanese missed out on the opportunity as Hungary won its fifth Division I game in a row against the men from the land of the rising sun.

Japan led 4-3 until late in the game. Hiroki Ueno scored the fourth goal a few minutes after Seiji Takahashi had missed out on a penalty shot. But with the goalie replaced by a sixth skater, the Hungarians launched the Marton Vas Show. The forward-turned-defenceman tied the game with 66 seconds left in regulation time with a shot from the blueline that slipped past Yuta Narasawa, who had replaced injured Yutaka Fukufuji during the game.

After a scoreless extra period, the veteran again showed offensive skill and coolness in the shootout. While his two teammates missed, Vas scored in the first round and also converted two more penalty shots.

"I didn't forget what I was doing before. It's a matter of confidence," said Vas, who played his first World Championship event as a defenceman, after his four goals against Japan.

Division I gold in a 3-1 win.

The Slovenes, who same as Austria had several Olympians missing on the roster, bounced back after the weak start and had the tournament MVP in 20-year-old goalkeeper Luka Gracnar.

"It's been a tough game and tournament. We called the last games quarter-final, semi-final and this was our gold medal game and luckily it ended up well. We deserve what we achieved," said Jan Urbas, who scored Slovenia's first two goals and had the assist on the third.

Austria finished with silver and a ticket to Prague. "This young team has worked really hard and deserved to be promoted. It's a great performance one could almost compare to the qualification to the Olympics," said Emanuel Viveiros after his last game as Austria's head coach.



# Finland takes inline hockey crown

## Wins first gold in 11 years, Slovenes promoted to top division

By Adam Steiss



■ Team Finland capped off a dominant 2014 inline hockey season with an undefeated record and its first IIHF Inline Hockey World Championship gold medal in 11 years, defeating Canada 6-2.

Down 3-2 in the final period, Canada gave up an early power-play goal to the Finns. Kari Lohtander scored on slapshot from the left circle to give his team the 4-2 lead. Then Kim Stromberg added another on the power play after Canada's Kirk French was called for slashing.

The nail on the coffin for Canada was a technical goal given to the Finns after an attacking Finnish player was brought down by a player on the Canadian bench. The 6-2 lead put the game out of reach and denied any chance at a Canadian comeback, giving the Finns the victory and their first gold medal of the 2010s.



Finland went undefeated in six games at the Inline Worlds.

Photo: Ivana Hoskova

"Feels amazing, I was there as a player 11 years ago and it's been a long time and a lot of great people involved with inline hockey in Finland," said team captain Jesse Saarinen, who played on the last Finnish team to win inline gold. "It's a great reward for everybody who's been working for this for a long time and I'm just so proud of the team that we were able to put the Finnish Lion back to the top."

The win gave Finland its first inline hockey gold medal since 2003. Canada got its seventh overall medal at the inline hockey worlds, and its third silver, while the United States earned their 14th medal in the 17-year history of the tournament after beating Sweden for bronze.

In Division I, Slovenia will be back among the top dogs at the 2015 IIHF Inline Hockey World Championship, defeating Australia 10-5. Croatia won the bronze medal game, edging Latvia 4-3. The tournament saw the return of Team Brazil and the debut of Latvia, which after a tough start that saw the team outscored 20-7 in the preliminary round, upset Austria 4-3 in a quarter-final shootout.

But the best story had to be the Aussies, who after years of competing hard but never reaching the finals, kicked down the door to the Division I gold medal game in dramatic fashion, upsetting the favoured Croats in the semi-final in overtime 6-5, giving the team its best-ever inline result.





# Dainius the Great

## New Jersey Devil shines for home country

By Henrik Manninen

■ The best teams below the 2014 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship were playing in the Division I Group A, but it was the Group B staged in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius that had the biggest star as Dainius Zubrus celebrated his homecoming.

Already last summer, when Zubrus was invited to the Presidential Palace where he received the Order for Merits to Lithuania from President Dalia Grybauskaitė, Zubrus promised that he would represent his native country in the event it hosted in Vilnius if the New Jersey Devils wouldn't make the play-offs.

Zubrus kept his word and played his second Division I tournament after 2005 for his homeland where two NHL players were born, him and retired Darius Kasparaitis.

Lithuania used the boost improving to a bronze-medal finish behind Poland, which will be promoted to Division I Group A, and a surprising Croatian team. Zubrus led the tournament in scoring with two goals and seven assists, and 41,224 fans flocked to the arena in five game days. We talked to the 35-year-old NHL veteran in Vilnius.

**Welcome home! Or is it right to still call Lithuania your home after you 17 seasons in the NHL?**

Yes, I am saying that to people but they don't really believe me. My hometown is Elektrenai, 50 kilometres from Vilnius, but I have recently bought an apartment in Vilnius for me and my family because I want to feel like home when I am here. Of course, having been in the United States all those years I probably feel more comfortable there, but it does feel like I am coming home when I return to Lithuania.

**How frequently do you make your way back to Lithuania?**

I am here every summer. As a President of the youth hockey league in Lithuania, I am trying to do the best I can to get hockey to a higher level than it is now. I am trying to promote the game so I also travel around the country to skate with kids, meet with politicians and for the last three years I have been bringing over hockey equipment as I was lucky enough to get the NHLPA to donate 3x50 sets.

**And do you feel the development of hockey in Lithuania is heading in the right direction?**

I believe we are. The reason I am the President of the youth hockey league is because that's where it all starts. The more kids playing hockey, the better the chances are

for good results. We have almost doubled the amount of kids playing hockey in Lithuania and I think in ten years we will see our level being raised. Of course I would love to see more hockey rinks being built, because without those it is really tough to go higher up in hockey.

**Looking at your own development as a youngster, how did you first pick up the game in your home town of Elektrenai, home of 14,000 people and a well-known hotbed for hockey?**

I have a brother, Audris, who is two years older, and Alexei Nikiforov, our first coach, visited his school when he was in second grade and I was still at home. The coach invited them to come down to the rink and try hockey

It will have to be reaching the Stanley Cup final twice (Flyers 1996-97 and Devils 2011-2012). Of course it is a huge disappointment when you lose. In my rookie year I was 18 years old when we got to the final and unintentionally you think you'll eventually get there again. I didn't get to the finals for another 15 years, so I'd say my second final series was probably more special, because I knew how hard it was to get there. I also played a lot of minutes then and I knew it might be my last chance to play at that level.

**You represented Lithuania for the second time. How would you compare this event with the one nine years earlier in the Netherlands?**

Being able to play in front of our own fans is a different feeling. Team-wise I really didn't know what to expect last time, and for some reason I think this team is sticking together more.

**And finally, how do you look ahead to the future?**

I have two more years left on my contract (with the Devils) and I want to play as long as I can and I want to win a Stanley Cup. I love the game, I love coming to the rink. I watch and analyse pretty much all my games, my shifts and things that I can do better. I take

a bit of a break in the summer time, but I enjoy working out and getting in shape and do what is necessary to get yourself ready for the whole year, and when it's time to push yourself during summer training and you might not feel like it, I dream about winning the Stanley Cup and that won't change.



Photo: Sarunas Mazeika

*Playing for Lithuania, Dainius Zubrus led the tournament in scoring with nine points (2G+7A) earning Best Forward honours.*

and also bring along their brothers. It was Soviet times then and I was six years old. From day one I was basically skating with kids two years older than myself, so right away I had to push myself a bit harder. Eventually I was the best player on our team so I had to go somewhere else to get even better. I think it's ok to start playing hockey in Lithuania, but once you run out of competition you need to go somewhere else, and that's what I did.

**Your formative years as a hockey player began before the break-up of the Soviet Union. Did it have an influence?**

I think so. One good thing was the equipment was all given to me. It might not have been of the best quality, but at least you had something. My family was not poor by any means, we lived a regular life in a regular apartment with my dad being an electrician and my mother working in a kind of a mall. We always had food on the table, but I am not sure if we would have been able to afford too many other things.

**You have played almost 1,100 regular season games in a 17-year long NHL. What are your best memories?**

**Fact File: Dainius Zubrus, F Lithuania**

- Born: 16 June, 1978 in Elektrenai, Lithuania/USSR
- Drafted in 1st round of 1996 NHL Entry Draft by the Philadelphia Flyers (15th overall)
- 1,169 NHL games played, 574 points (221 G + 353 A)
- Played in six IIHF World Championships
- Played Russian national team during the World Cup of Hockey in 2004. Since then has played internationally for Lithuania, most notably in the 2005 and 2014 Division I Group B World Championships
- First coach, Alexei Nikiforov, also trained Darius Kasparaitis

# Teenage Kings: USA nabs eighth U18

## American U18 program back on top, Czechs make history

By Adam Steiss



■ The United States National Under-18 Team has added an eighth IIHF U18 World Championship title to its trophy cabinet, as the Americans blew past the Czech Republic 5-2 on their way to a gold medal victory at the 2014 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 World Championship.

The gold medal adds more luster to a development system that has grown into a dominant force at this tournament. Since finishing seventh, eighth, and sixth at the first three U18 Worlds, the United States has won a medal in all but one of the last 13 U18 World Championships, including an incredible five gold medals in the last six tournaments.

"We were able to get a quick start right away and get up 3-0," said captain Louis Belpedio. "A lot of emotions, two years together and to hear that final horn at the end is obviously exciting and I'm glad I was able to do it with the guys on this team."

And for coach Cole Danton, it was an emotional win for a program that lost one of its own a year ago.

"After the game I mentioned how proud of them I was and all the work that they put in and that they earned it the right way," said Cole.

"We also mentioned coach Tim Taylor, this was the last age group he worked with, and he died a year ago today. I wanted to get through this for him, every time I go to an international tournament I think of him and I miss him and since this is the last group he worked with it's special to us and to USA Hockey."

For the Czechs, they can hold their heads high despite losing the chance to cap an amazing and unprecedented success in the 2014 tournament with a miracle upset. They finished with a silver medal, the first time the team has ever finished so high in this tournament.

Czech goaltender Vitek Vanecek was tested almost immediately at the outset of the game with a breakaway shot by Ryan Hitchcock. Vanecek made the save on that chance, but soon after a shot from the blue line by defenceman Jack Dougherty found the back of the net for Team USA's first goal of the game.

Then at 13:05 Austen Matthews jumped on a rebound in front of the Czech net to go up 2-0. Before the Czechs could catch a breath they were down three goals, when less than a minute later during another scramble in front of their net the puck came to Frank Milano for the 3-0 score.

Czech coach Jakub Peter called a timeout to try and calm his team down, and with 33 seconds left the Czechs got on the board when Jiri Smejkal mopped up on a shot from Radek Vesely following a two-on-one rush.



The United States has now medalled in 12 out of the last 13 IIHF U18 World Championships, winning five of the last six.

Early in the second period a giveaway in the neutral zone by the Czechs sent the puck down to their own zone. Frank Milano got to it first and made a no-look backhand pass in front of the net to an oncoming Dylan Larkin for the 4-1 lead, and then Matthews scored his second of the game, assisted by Brandon Fortunato.

A shot from near the blue line that found its way through allowed the Czechs to cut the lead down to three goals with 6:40 left in the second period, courtesy of David Kase, who scored his country's biggest U18 goal a game earlier against the Canadians to get the Czechs to the final.

But the Americans, who have built a reputation at the U18 tournament as a tough defensive team, shut down the Czech Republic offence all the way to the final whistle.

Milano finished with a goal and two assists, earning him the Best Player nod for Team USA.

"Feels great, probably the best feeling ever in my life," said Milano. "We lost to Switzerland in the first game and that was kind of a wakeup call for us, and we knew that every team was going to bring its A-game so we needed to do so as well, and now we got a gold medal. I plan on spending the rest of my life with this gold around my neck (laughs)."

The victory was especially sweet for forward Jack Eichel, who after missing out on a gold medal in the final loss to Canada last year got his second U18 gold in three years, in this his last season of eligibility.

"It's hard to put in words right now, but it's the best feeling ever," said Eichel. "We've gone through so much stuff in the last two years and it's all for this tournament, to win and cap it off in this tournament is the best thing ever."

For the entire team and the USA program, it is another feather in the cap for a country that is a true dynasty at the junior hockey level.

Despite the loss, the Czechs achieved the best result for their U18 national team, having advanced to the 2014 IIHF U18 World Championship gold medal game for the first time ever, thanks to a 4-3 overtime win over Canada in the semi-final game.

Kase was the overtime hero for the Czechs in that game, stealing the puck from Matt Barzal in the Canadian zone and lofting it past goaltender Mason McDonald and into the net for the winning goal.

"I read the play of the defenceman and was able to anticipate where he was going to go with the puck," said Kase. "Luckily I got the puck and saw the goalie go down so I chipped it over and it went in."

"I saw the puck go in, unbelievable feeling and the biggest goal of my life."

Photo: Jana Chytilova / IIHF-IIHF Images

"Before we got here we said that this was going to be the most important ten days of our lives," said Czech head coach Jakub Petr. "These guys were mentioning big players that played for our country before in this tournament, but none of them ever played in a final. It's been the greatest experience of my coaching career and the best experience of my life."

Canada finished with a medal for the third straight year at the 2014 U18 Worlds, coming back from a tough loss in the semi-final against the Czech Republic to defeat Sweden 3-1.

Lawson Crouse had the game-winning goal in the second period, and Mason McDonald stood up in net the rest of the way to deny Tre Kronor a medal with a 38-save performance. Sweden's William Nylander, son of former NHLer Michael Nylander and a top prospect heading into the 2014 NHL Draft, finished the tournament with 16 points in seven games to earn the Directorate Top Forward nomination.



### U18 World Championship Directorate Awards

**Mason McDonald, G, CAN**  
Directorate Best Goalkeeper  
4-0-2-0, 1.94 GAA, 92.98 SVS%



**Haydn Fleury D, CAN**  
Directorate Best Defenceman  
7GP, 0G, 1A, 1P, 0

**William Nylander, F, SWE**  
Directorate Best Forward  
7 GP, 6 G, 10A, 16P, +8





# IIHF Snapshots

Wrapping up the final tournaments of the 2014 hockey season



Photo: Ivana Hoskova

Slovenia went undefeated at the IIHF Inline World Championship Division I to move up.



Photo: Richard Wolowicz / HHOF-IIHF Images

Russia gets the party going with the World Championship trophy as the guest of honour.



Photo: Andre Ringette / HHOF-IIHF Images

One of many Belarusian fans who turned out in droves for the 2014 World Championship.



Photo: Richard Wolowicz / HHOF-IIHF Images

Alex Ovechkin and the Russian bench get ready to hit the ice to celebrate their gold medal.



Photo: Richard Wolowicz / HHOF-IIHF Images

Could it really be over? Jaromir Jagr announced his retirement from the national team.



Photo: Ivana Hoskova

Brazil celebrated its return to the Inline World Championship with a 6-3 win over Hungary.



Photo: Richard Wolowicz / HHOF-IIHF Images

France had a memorable 2014 IIHF Worlds, with Paris three years away can they aim higher?



Photo: Soohan Kim

Korea and Japan added a new chapter to their growing Asian rivalry at the Division IA Worlds.



# "There was no way we could not play our best"

## Coach Hanlon talks Belarus' home-ice effort, Swiss future

By Martin Merk

When the Belarusian national team needed a good result more than ever it was able to count on the guidance of its most successful coach, as Glen Hanlon came back to lead the team from the brink of relegation in 2013 to the quarter-finals on home ice in Minsk.

He talked with Ice Times about the 2014 World Championship on home ice and his new job in Switzerland.

You're the most successful coach in Belarusian World Championship history, leading the team to the quarter-finals for the third time. Were you surprised about the team's performance in Minsk considering the difficult years before?

I was not surprised. I felt before the tournament all teams could beat all teams. I knew it would be close and we would need some luck. We had tremendous leadership from our veteran players. They handled the home pressure extremely well. Our young defencemen that we added at the end from North America had a level of confidence that made our team believe.

**How big was the home-ice advantage for the team?**

The pressure of home ice can help or hurt you. I think in the first game it was difficult for us to relax and play. After our second game, which we won, we started to enjoy our situation of playing at home. There were times in the tournament when we had so much support there was no way we could not play our best. In the end home ice was an advantage and I know all the players will remember being on the ice for the World Championship in Belarus as one of their top moments in hockey.

**Minsk set a new all-time attendance record. Did you feel all the euphoria and festivities of Belarusian and foreign fans in the city?**

For sure I felt it. I was in the city the whole year leading up to the tournament and there was much preparation and talk about the tournament. I do not think the world realized how important hockey is to the people of Belarus. It is the same in Belarus as all the leading hockey countries. I knew the Belarusian people could hardly wait for the hockey fans to arrive. The organizing committee and all the volunteers worked hard to make everything run smoothly.

**What was the key to success for the team to over-perform in Minsk?**

We played the ultimate team game. On defence Vladimir Denisov came to the top and gave us leadership and a defenceman that could play 25 minutes. We got two strong highly pressure games from Vitali Koval. When he became ill Kevin Lalonde came in and played spectacular. He worked very hard to stay prepared for the tournament and when he got his chance he grabbed the starting position and kept it. Part-way through the tournament the line of Kaluzhny, Grabovski and Sergei Kostitsyn gave us one of the top lines in the tournament and were always a threat. Also, we got some very timely goals from Andrei Stepanov. The main thing



Hanlon and the Belarus national team overcame home ice pressure and gave their fans a memorable 2014.

was by the end of the tournament everyone played their role and accepted it.

**What was a special moment for you at Minsk Arena?**

For sure it was on the bench after the win vs. Latvia to put us in the quarter-finals. I have never heard an arena that loud.

**Knowing Minsk for many years, what did you think about the atmosphere in the city and how Minsk and its people presented themselves to the world?**

I knew it would be great. The city is very clean, safe and beautiful. People asked "is it like this only for the tournament?" The answer is no. They work hard to keep the city like this all the time. It also gets better every year.

**In Minsk it also became known that you would leave the team and take over the Swiss national team. Why did you decide to leave?**

I had decided to leave long before the tournament. There were many reasons for this decision. Some were hockey and some were family reasons. Not one reason was personal. My coaching staff of Eduard Zankovets and Oleg Mikulchuk were good friends and a strong support voice for me. Our off-ice staff of medical and equipment managers were all friends and they worked very hard to make everything perfect. I also enjoyed my relationship with the Belarusian players. All of us had been together for many years.

**You will take over a Swiss national team that sensationally won silver in 2013 but failed to reach the quarter-finals in both Sochi and Minsk. Where would you realistically place the team among the top hockey nations and what are your goals for the upcoming years with the team?**

There is a very small window between winning and losing in the World Championship. I like how the World Ranking works because it is an accumulation of points over a period of time. We are in the right grouping of teams. Sean Simpson did a good job of expanding the pool of players to pick from to play in the top tournaments. The U18 and U20

teams continue to develop and see success. The domestic league continues to get better with good coaching and strong ownership groups. These are all important factors.

**The slogan of your introduction to the Swiss media was "welcome on board" on a Lake Zurich cruise. How does it feel to be at the helm of the Swiss national team program and what were your impressions during your first stay?**


It was a fun day and a unique idea for a press conference. I think everyone enjoyed it. I thought our communication department should get a lot of credit for creating a positive start. Our federation is very organized and detail oriented. Everything was in perfect order, which made my short stay highly productive. You can tell that they

enjoy working with each and they are a strong team behind the teams we put on the ice.


Having a group like this makes coaching easier. Every detail is taken care of before the players arrive. It allows players and coaches to focus all their attention to on ice. The off-ice staff plays a major role in creating team harmony. We have a good staff and I look forward to moving forward and working with them. The city of Zurich is beautiful, but I knew this in advance. My family looks forward to the move and embracing Swiss culture.

**Switzerland had coaches who shaped the team over a long time span with Ralph Krueger and Sean Simpson. What will the team and its playing style look like in the upcoming years under you?**

These coaches worked hard to put together an exciting team. The Swiss domestic league is quick and fun to watch. For these reasons I need to continue to make these the qualities of the Swiss team. I need to keep developing these strengths and work to add a few of my own qualities that I strongly believe in. These two great coaches have laid a foundation and built upon that foundation. Now I must continue to keep adding blocks to allow the players to play at their highest level and feel the thrill of a successful team.



## Fact File:



**Glen Hanlon**

- Born: 20 Feb. 1957 in Brandon, Manitoba, Canada
- Playing career: 447 NHL games as a goalkeeper for the Vancouver Canucks, St. Louis Blues, New York Rangers, Detroit Red Wings
- Coaching career: Head coach with the Washington Capitals, Belarusian national team, Jokerit Helsinki, Dynamo Minsk, Slovak national team, Swiss national team